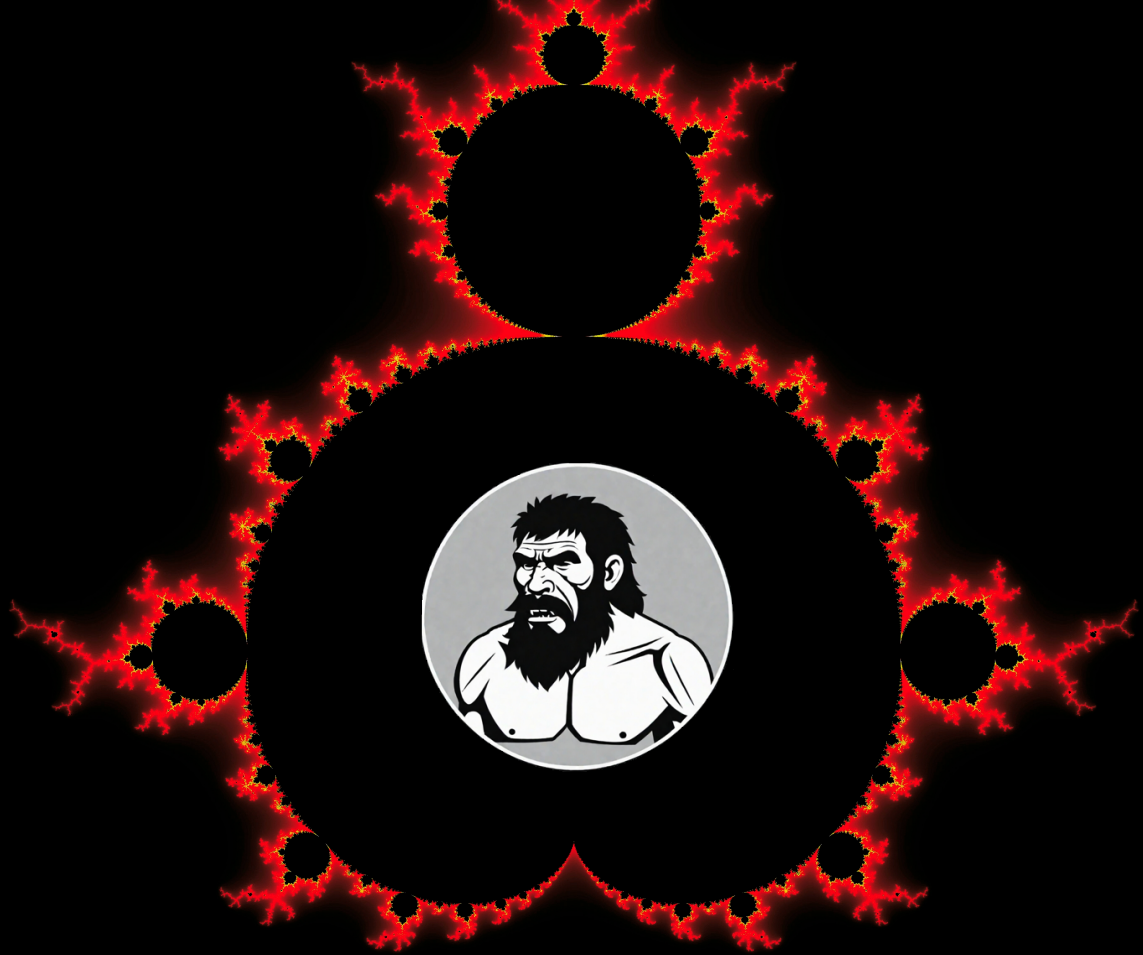


Viola Zoltán

Homo Asperger

A true story



2024

Viola Zoltán

Homo Asperger

- Reminiscences of an Old Aspie -

A book about the minority of human beings who are still cruelly oppressed in every country on Earth:
those with Asperger Syndrome.

--- A TRUE STORY ---

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Private edition



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What is the aim of this book?

This is a book about those people—in a broader sense—who "suffer" from what is called Asperger Syndrome. The word "suffer" is deliberately in quotation marks in the above sentence, and I shall explain why later.

Those with Asperger Syndrome are a subset of the target audience of this book, however I did not write it primarily for them but for those who, in sharp contrast with this previous group, do NOT have Asperger Syndrome, the so-called "normal" people. For the remainder of the book, however, I will not use the word "normal" when I mention them, but the term: *neurotypical*.

This word was actually invented by the people with Asperger Syndrome themselves (allegedly—I did not verify this statement, I just read it somewhere), because they generally don't like being referred to as "abnormal". They commonly have the opinion that *they* are the "normal" ones, it is just the World itself and the other human beings within it that have some kind of (big...) problem. Those with Asperger's Syndrome (otherwise known as 'Aspies') are still "normal", just DIFFERENT to varying degrees. However the expression "abnormal" is loaded with such pejorative unpleasant connotations like "idiot", "fool", "crazy", "worthless" etc., in fact even "dangerous".

I consider myself an exception in this area, I think. Because despite the fact that I MYSELF also have Asperger-syndrome, it has never bothered me (at least after my early school years) if someone told me I wasn't normal. I recognized that I was "abnormal" and the others were "normal", because I was already looking at the world in mathematical terms and in my mind had placed people along the

"Gaussian normal distribution curve". The expected value of this function is somewhat sloppily labeled "average" in common parlance, and in my experience people consider somebody "normal" when that person is "average". Therefore in their vocabulary these two words are synonymous concepts. The more someone deviates from this "average", the less they are considered "normal". And it was obvious to me from even a very young age, that although I had no idea who I really was at the core, it was clear that I wasn't an "average" child! I was always dead certain about this, without the slightest shadow of a doubt.

However since the Gaussian curve not only has the center area and one side, but precisely two sides, it was also obvious to me that both sides fell under the term "abnormal". And only one of these two sides is the "bad side". But I was never willing to accept the verdict of the majority, that I was a member of the less valuable group from the remaining two possibilities. After all, history teaches us that every genius, inventor, or famous artist was never a "normal" person. They were always "out of line", and somehow "outsiders" that never really integrated into human society—in every period of history. As if they were not even human but some kind of (benevolent) alien beings...

Whether admitting it openly or secretly, I have always considered myself a TRUE GENIUS, or in the worst case somebody who is perhaps not a fully developed genius, but has the necessary talent and abilities in order to become one. And that's what I wanted to be, ever since the very beginning of my early childhood. (Of course, even now as well). Presently I consider myself a genius, and have many good reasons for doing so; concrete evidence as it were, which I will present in the following chapters of this book. Just one piece of preliminary evidence—if somebody has an IQ higher than 160, they might have the grounds to consider themselves a genius, right? Even those with an IQ value of over 130 are referred to as "very exceptional geniuses" by the psychological profession. I note, however, that this is one of the most INSIGNIFICANT reasons for substantiating my deep conviction that I am a genius. My IQ-value was so unexciting to me that I only examined it as a grown adult, but even before that I was firmly convinced that I was a very valuable man with exceptional talents, and thus a genius. I doubted this so little that I had no need for any IQ-test to confirm my belief.

I feel that I must now reassure my Readers that this book is definitely NOT going to be all about "glorifying myself"! In fact only a very small part will deal with this theme, and even this is just to demonstrate to my potential Aspie readers, by my own example, that they don't have to accept the judgment of the neurotypical "gray mass" that Aspies are worthless, untalented and inferior. Because the truth is quite the opposite. In fact, EVERY Aspie, WITHOUT EXCEPTION, is a potential genius! Even if the Aspie has not realized it yet themselves. I will elaborate on this important theme in more detail later. The point is that this book's purpose, as far as Aspie Readers are concerned, is to give them self-confidence, which I know very well they desperately need.

Of course, I knew already at a young age that even if it was absolutely certain that I was a genius, it didn't mean that I was a genius in ALL fields, nor that I could attain even average abilities in those fields where I was not a genius. Soon enough it became obvious that there were entire regions of Life where I grappled with serious difficulties. Despite this, I was never willing to accept the notion that my "abnormal" nature implied that I "suffered" from some all-pervasive inferiority. As a consequence, I never considered the attribute "abnormal" to be offensive, and I still don't today, even though I know very well that the person saying it is certainly intending it to be offensive.

In these situations my usual answer was, "That's true. It's an obvious fact that I am not a 'normal' person. But you know what, if normal means being like you, then I never want to be normal, because I'd be puking at my reflection in shame every morning!"

Once when I had expressed these words to somebody, he asked me in confusion, "Why, what's wrong with my face? Is it that ugly?!"

Then I would sneer, "Wow, and you 'normal' people say that we Aspies don't understand symbolic speech and the 'figurative sense'?! There's nothing wrong with your face, don't worry, I was thinking about your character!"

Therefore I was never bothered by the "normal" versus "abnormal" subdivision of human beings, but I do have a habit of aggressively protesting if I'm given such labels as "idiot", "fool", "stupid", "worthless", "dim-witted" etc. However Aspies generally do not like calling the "majority" normal and themselves "abnormal", so they came up with the word "neurotypical" in this context, to replace "normal". Consequently, when I use this word in the remainder of the book, it will simply mean "not Aspie".

I have mentioned above that for my Aspie readers, the primary goal of this book is to increase their self-confidence. But aside from this it also includes an abundance of "stories" from my own life, personal experiences and adventures—both cheerful and sad. And I believe that upon reading these stories, these situations will be very familiar to Aspies, and they will realize that they are not alone as they once thought, as they have many *comrades* in their misfortune!

And for my neurotypical readers, the aim of this book is to introduce them to "our world". The World of Aspies... The real World is definitely NOT ours in practice, because it is designed by the neurotypical majority and is unfortunately pure TORTURE for us! Although this should not inevitably be the case. In fact, it is extremely disadvantageous even to the neurotypical majority that the World is such an unsuitable place for us Aspies. Because we possess a wealth of incredible and astonishing talents, and consequently if a smart businessperson were to pay some attention to our special requirements, they could profit from us to a staggering degree—I would not be exaggerating to say even billions of dollars! And meanwhile us Aspies would be having a whale of a time!

I will address in a later chapter of the book what I believe the best method for doing this is. The point now is only to present to You, my Neurotypical Readers, how an Aspie generally sees the World, human society and the neurotypical people living in it. On the one hand this is sure to be very amusing for you all, because it is an **extremely candid** self-confession. I want to emphasize again that this is not going to be the boasting of a vain, self-proclaimed genius, since it is not exclusively about my successes. I will also share with you facts that others would be too ashamed to admit about themselves—for example that even when I was 16 years old, I wet my bed quite frequently at night... (Don't worry, I no longer do this now as an adult...)

But this is just one example among the vast number of other such admissions in this book. Therefore I shall truthfully describe my entire childhood and even some parts of my adulthood; both good and bad aspects, as well as my strengths and weaknesses... At least I will describe them in a way that is true to me. I know in advance that my neurotypical readers will find many of the events I recount terribly amusing, and may even induce them to laugh out loud. So this book includes numerous parts that you neurotypicals will find especially entertaining, as if you were reading a funny column in

a newspaper. You may even think, "What a scream to have this poor dimwit stumbling about around us!" I can tell you right away that this will be the case for the chapter dealing with sports, for instance...

On the other hand, however, I hope that after reading this something useful remains in those "biological computers" in your heads. That when you think you are just innocently joking with us Aspies, FOR US it may be causing enormous suffering and even *life-long* emotional trauma! Especially when even you don't consider your actions a totally harmless joke. Therefore I hope that my candid "self-revelation" will help future Aspie generations a little, so that any neurotypical person reading this book might afterwards be less likely to hurt my fellow sufferers.

Here I would like to address a small semantic detail. Long before I had written even a single sentence of this book, my intention was to publish it in English. (In fact there is a good chance this book won't even be published in Hungarian—my native tongue, ONLY in English.) As much of this book entails my school years, it is important to inform my prospective English Readers that in my childhood in Hungary, the so-called "elementary school" (as I will label it from here on) included eight grades. The first four grades were called the "lower-grades", and the next four were the "upper-grades". In this book, the term "young schoolchildren" is generally synonymous with the "lower-grades", and since school began at that time at the age of six (and still does, as far as I know), it means that this group of children included boys and girls roughly below the age of ten. The eight grades of elementary school were followed by "high school" or "secondary school". There were several types of these, one being the "grammar school", which went by the Hungarian name "gimnázium", and this was considered the most "elite" type of high school in those days. I also attended "grammar school". High school lasted four years, and so a pupil would finish their studies at roughly their lawful age, which at that time was eighteen (and still is today).

Who am I?

Although this book is almost entirely about me, as it contains my reminiscences, I feel that a very brief summary is appropriate here at the beginning.

So... my name is Viola Zoltán, (in English the name order would be Zoltán Viola, since the order of names is reversed in Hungarian culture), and my date of birth is March 26, 1965. For my English Readers, I must inform you that the nickname Zoltán is "Zoli" in the Hungarian language, similar to the nickname of Samuel being "Sam" in English. I am mentioning this because the name Zoli will be used frequently in this book. Just as a matter of curiosity, I will also inform you that the name "Zoltán" is a rather ancient Hungarian name, and in the prehistoric Hungarian language had the meaning "Sultan". (However none of my family have any background in the Islamic religion or its traditions. Islam is so rare in Hungary that it is generally considered an almost nonexistent subculture.)

Right now, at the time of typing these words, I am 53 years old. I only discovered that I was an Aspie when I was well into adulthood. I don't remember exactly when, but sometime around my mid-thirties. Even then, it was only by pure coincidence. Namely, I had been reading about this topic on the

Internet; only a few paragraphs, and the entire text consisted merely of rough generalities. It was such generalized drivel that I didn't even feel that it fit me completely. For example, it attributed tremendous significance to something called "lack of eye-contact", although I must admit that even today I don't know what the hell this is. I certainly don't feel that there is anything wrong with my "eye-contact", and none of my family members or acquaintances have complained about the way I look at them, my visage, or anything else related to my eyes. People have criticized a wide variety of things about my character and behavior in the past, but never my eye-contact!

Therefore I wasn't entirely certain at that time whether or not I was an Aspie, but there were enough attributes that did fit me, which made me begin to have suspicions. And that was when I got the strong feeling that, "Mmm... I always knew I wasn't 'normal'—but perhaps I'm not the only one with these habits and attitudes?!" So I began collecting information about Asperger-syndrome. Initially it was slow, especially since some of it was contradictory. Even so, over time I had gathered enough knowledge together to indicate the high probability of me being an Aspie.

Years later, thanks to a scandalous random event (I will narrate the details in a later chapter), I visited a psychiatrist. I told her about my suspicions, and without the slightest hesitation she admitted that I was right, I was undeniably an Aspie! She said it was quite easy for a competent professional to recognize that someone was an Aspie, usually within ten minutes of friendly conversation. And in my case it was a particularly easy task, since I was citing from memory all the necessary criteria, telling her which parts of it fit me and which didn't, what symptoms I had and so on. In her opinion, it was quite possible that I knew this whole subject better than she herself did. That wasn't surprising to me at all. Naturally I would have far more knowledge about it, after all, I lived "in an Aspie's skin" every day!

And this is precisely what justifies the existence of this book—clearly someone who is an Aspie themselves is going to know best of all what constitutes "Aspieness", right?! Despite this obvious fact—or rather, axiom, so far I have only read books on this subject written by neurotypical individuals. Perhaps these writers were "experts" in a certain sense, being psychiatrists or psychologists, and I'm prepared to believe that they had no intention of distorting the truth and were even benevolent toward Aspies, wanting to help them in whatever way they could. That is all possible. Yet they weren't Aspies themselves! And that's the trouble, because it means that ultimately they can only *speculate* about things.

Even if everything they describe on this topic is true (although not all of it is... which I will cover very soon), it is likely if not certain that a whole lot of important things will have escaped their attention. In addition, they attach tremendous importance to attributes and minor details that are insignificant from an Aspie's perspective, and at the same time may not even recognize what *is* of immense importance to us.

Let's resort to an analogy. Let's assume we're not talking about Aspies, but fish. There have been plenty of books published on marine biology, haven't there? But what a huge step forward it would be in this discipline if there was a fish that could talk, in order to tell us humans what it felt like to be a fish! What was important to a fish and what was irrelevant; how a fish saw humans; whether they wanted to become a human; their opinion on how humans could help fish and how fish could help humans, and so on...

Well, this book was written with that in mind. So I will repeat what I said earlier—I didn't write it in order to glorify myself (although I admit that modesty is not one of my most characteristic attributes...), nor for the purpose of condemning myself. I am simply telling things the way they happened years ago, or at least as I remember them now, decades later.

Even if my Reader supposes that these events did not happen exactly as I described them, due to the distorting effect of time on my memories, I would like to emphasize that this book is still very informative in spite of these doubts. Because even if the events are not recounted verbatim, the fact that I have written them down means that the memories have still remained with me, and if they can incite such intense emotions after all this time, I considered them to be worthy of recording and thus have great importance for me. They do at least demonstrate how overwhelming and significant these sorts of life situations can be for us Aspies.

On the other hand, I deeply believe that there are very few "stories" that will be inaccurate, and where I suspect this may be the case, I will refer to this fact. We Aspies generally have excellent memory abilities, especially when an event evokes deep emotion in us. And all the events mentioned in this book are of this nature.

In order to reproduce my emotions as accurately as possible, I will warn my Readers in advance that this book frequently contains offensive, obscene and even pornographic language, including profanities. On the one hand, if somebody spoke to me in such a manner, then why shouldn't I write it down verbatim?! Why refine it—that would be a lie! Anyhow, it is not my disgrace but that of the person who said it!

However, there will be situations where even my own quoted words or thoughts contain bold obscenities. The reason for this is because I was thinking these exact words at the time, or thinking them NOW as I recall the event. To be more precise, the experience of the former event triggered (or still triggers now) such deep, upsetting emotions in me that induced swearing. These strong emotions may be anger, humiliation, incomprehension, a feeling that somebody was treating me unfairly, or simply a feeling of helplessness. I don't think it would be right to refine these specific expressions, because I would only be reinforcing the widespread misconception that Aspies are some sort of emotionless biological robots.

But if they aren't, then who and what are they? What is the inherent cause of "Aspieness", what is it rooted in? Well, this is what the entire next chapter is about!

My theory of the neurobiological basis of Asperger-syndrome

First of all, let's clarify at least an outline of who or what an "Aspie" is. This is important because, as I've mentioned already, even professional psychiatrists are inclined to confuse this concept with so many other things. They are generally of the opinion that being an Aspie is a subset of the so-called "autism spectrum", therefore the term "Aspie" is merely a synonymous label for "high-functioning autistic person". There are even many Aspies themselves who share this opinion, simply because they

have fallen for this false information—which is no fault of theirs, as they haven't heard of any other alternative... *until now*.

However now it is time to express *my* view on this, and I deeply believe that I can convince the majority of them in no time. Since in my opinion, not only is Aspieness not the same as autism, but it's even questionable whether or not autism itself exists at all!

Naturally I am not denying that there are some people who are labeled "autistic", but to my mind this is much the same as when during the Middle Ages (centuries before the beginning of modern medicine) the "wise doctors" told people they were suffering from a mysterious ailment called "chest disease"—merely because they had similar symptoms. And this is no joke. In the Middle Ages, "chest disease" was indeed an existing illness according to those ancient doctors. It was taught in their universities, and if somebody didn't pass the exam for the symptoms of "chest disease" then they failed! Let's see what the good doctors actually believed about this "disease"...

This dreadful disease sometimes takes a person within days, at other times several weeks, or possibly after a few months. But it can also be the case that a person lives with it for decades, while their condition wavers between improving and worsening. It is not even out of the question that over time they will recover completely. The main symptom of the disease is a severe cough, however sometimes it is only mild, and in rare cases a cough is absent. The disease is always accompanied by a strong fever, except when it is not. The patient is sometimes afflicted with severe chest pain, but it may also be quite mild, or they may feel no chest pain at all.

Well, dear Reader, which part of the above description can you say has any certainty?! Because it seems to me that there is no distinct "chest disease", but rather a range of different illnesses. Perhaps some of the symptoms of these illnesses are similar, but the course of them differs and therefore they require different treatments.

For example, the disease that kills a person in a matter of days is surely not the same as the one that allows them to live comfortably until the age of sixty! And if that's the case, then the *cause* of the disease should be treated rather than the symptoms, however at that time this was unknown to doctors. And so the mysterious "chest disease" did not actually exist in reality. On the other hand, there were many illnesses that could cause chest symptoms: pneumoconiosis, the common cold, allergies, pneumonia, tuberculosis, lung cancer, the plague, asthma, bronchitis, and plenty of others. The doctors of the Middle Ages regarded all these illnesses as a single problem, and were diligently (but of course, unsuccessfully) seeking a miracle cure that was able to eliminate every one of them. After all, to their minds they were all the same illness, "chest disease"!

Well, I believe that the "chest disease" of today's psychiatry is "autism", which *wrongly* includes Asperger-syndrome. It is incorrect to classify it as such, since even "autism" is a void concept without any real basis. At least in my opinion. However, as with "chest disease", there are a number of distinct diseases that *partly* produce similar symptoms. And since diseases of the human brain are these days still largely classified according to *symptoms*, they are all treated alike and indiscriminately labeled "autism".

But the reason Asperger-syndrome does not belong in the "autism" symptom group is not only because of the above consideration. It is rather easy to understand why it doesn't fit. In sharp *contrast*

with other diseases, "syndromes", "deficiencies" or "disorders" (which may produce similar symptoms to Asperger-syndrome), Aspieness also has explicit *benefits*, and they aren't insignificant either! And it's for this reason that I doubt (or at least dare to question) whether being an Aspie is actually a disease at all. What's more, I am totally unconvinced that it should even be considered a *disability*!

I'm fully aware that the assertion I have made in the above paragraph is rather shocking. Therefore if I want my Readers to take my undoubtedly new viewpoint at least slightly seriously, then I must support it rigorously. Well, this is precisely the aim of this chapter, before I dive into the stories about my personal life.

I hope there are few people who will dispute that an adult Aspie bears quite a few similarities to the characters portrayed in a wide variety of films and novels (generally in the sci-fi genre) as the "mad scientist". (This expression is far better known in English-speaking countries than the Hungarian equivalent, "őrült tudós"). So what constitutes a "mad scientist"? What are their distinctive characteristics? Well first of all, he¹ has a main hobby that he is obsessed with. He shows almost no interest in anything outside of this hobby, so much so that he even frequently forgets to eat. His hair is unkempt, he doesn't care about his clothing, and he's generally quite a nerdy, eccentric character, although he is sometimes comical and even weird on occasion. It is typical of him to have no sense of politeness and also lack social skills. He tends to take things literally, and often doesn't understand even the most basic jokes. When he tries to tell a joke or anecdote himself it's a pure disaster, either because no one can understand it due to the highly scientific jargon, or what he thinks is a joke is considered awful rudeness by others. If he has a wife and/or child, then his family life is also a complete disaster.

As far as his hobby is concerned, it is beyond dispute that in his specific scientific field he is an irrefutable authority... The only problem is that his hobby doesn't interest anyone except him. Of course, only until he makes the Great Discovery, which, depending on the subject of the movie could be anything—a beverage that makes one invisible, a death ray, mind-reading, teleportation, a space transport hyperdrive...

If there is somebody else with an interest in this scientific field, then they are depicted in the novel or movie as an average neurotypical citizen. It's true that they may have a doctorate with honors, while the "mad scientist" doesn't even have a degree, however this neurotypical dolt behaves perfectly normally in everyday life; he holds conservative views on the given subject, and it will be inevitably clear at the end of the story that it wasn't *he* who was right, but the "mad scientist"... At least as far as the essence of the discovery is concerned, for the social consequences are quite a different matter... And until this becomes obvious, the neurotypical scientist-antagonist humiliates the "mad scientist" countless times; for example, by making him laughable at the University, seducing his wife, alienating his children from him, putting him in awkward situations in public places (such as a restaurant), perhaps even physically beating him, and so on.

Well I hope my Readers can instantly see that all of the above attributes are totally consistent with that of Aspies! At least, the more educated among them. All right, not every one of them has discovered the hyperdrive, or the Beverage of Eternal Youth... But if we disregard the exaggeration of movies, in

¹ Dear Readers, especially feminists! When I use the "he" personal pronoun in this book when referring to an Aspie generally, this is not sexism. Of course I do not undervalue womankind, and I can prove this with numerous novels that I have written myself. But sometimes it is not possible to use "they", or it doesn't sound good, and on these occasions I prefer to use "he" and not "she", simply because it is a well-proven scientific fact that Asperger-syndrome is far more common in males than females.

the end we have to acknowledge that every Aspie really is a "mad scientist". After all, he has his own hobby in which he is *outstanding*, and very few people, if anyone, care about it in the least. The Aspie frequently holds opinions in his field that deviate from "mainstream" views, and due to this—as well as the clumsiness he shows in everyday life—he suffers an enormous amount of humiliation and neglect.

Therefore I make no secret of the fact that in my eyes "being an Aspie" is synonymous with the expression "mad scientist". Naturally I'm not saying that Aspies are actually "mad" or crazy. Not at all! I certainly don't consider myself to be mad. But they *are* in the sense that in literature and film "mad scientists" have all essentially (with strong exaggerations here and there of course) been modeled on Aspies, even if unintentionally.

So an Aspie may have many weaknesses, but despite this he also has "advantageous sides", and these have even been recognized long ago by neurotypical film-makers—his talents in the field of SCIENCE! But in which branch of science?

Well, Aspies are very skilled in subjects that are logical, and primarily those that can be approached with analytical thinking. These areas of science may include mathematics, physics, the natural sciences in general, comparative linguistics, machine design, computer programming, and all the other disciplines that require attention to the intricate details of the thing being investigated or designed... This is why, if an Aspie is fluent in more than one language, they can become a brilliant literary translator. Because they are astonishingly good at finding the necessary expressions in the target language that best reproduce the implied meanings, the message and the overall mood of the original text. Since all these things require attention to *detail*. They are tasks that Aspies are very good at. Incredibly and unsurpassably good! At least, if they had the opportunity to study the principles of that scientific field at some point.

But an Aspie is truly so great at these tasks that if he takes an interest in some sort of scientific field, then he can leave even a group of a dozen neurotypical scientists far behind, should they dare compete with him. He would solve the problem on his own in a quarter of the time that they would together, although he would be able to work on it for days at a time without sleep if necessary, because Aspies tend to have an astonishing level of endurance, especially for monotonous tasks. Any activity that is boring and mechanical... and meanwhile his mind is focusing on his actual hobby. But if his hobby is his job, then it gives him wings, and there will be no question of him taking a break just because he's "bored"! Namely, because in such circumstances he simply couldn't get bored.

Not only does he not get bored at work and outperforms the "normal people" who compete with him, at the same time he very often comes up with ingenious, unique and very effective ideas that no one else has thought of before. Because an Aspie really delves into the given problem, and where an average person sees through two or three levels of correlation, an Aspie won't stop until he has at least reached the sixth abstraction level!

On the other hand, however, this brilliant ability has a serious price, for if a problem arises that cannot be solved with analytical thinking, then unfortunately the poor Aspie is doomed to failure. All his efforts are futile, and he will just stare uncomprehendingly, at a loss as to how to proceed... I am not exaggerating—sometimes even an eight-year-old child (a neurotypical child of course) is far more capable in these sorts of activities than an adult Aspie! This is why it is said that an Aspie is a "narrow-minded specialist", and an ignoramus outside his limited field.

Well, all these things are because... and now it's time to tell you, dear Reader, what the root of this disorder is... Or rather, why I don't consider Asperger-syndrome to be a disorder at all!

What I'm going to say is unlikely to be a big secret to you—and that's that every human being has roughly the same size head. This is hard to deny, after all, it's a clearly visible fact... And that means everybody has more or less the same brain mass. The "brain" is responsible for the mind, consciousness, intelligence and emotions... Consequently, if everyone has roughly the same-sized brain, then that must mean everyone is equally clever, right? But hang on, we know very well that's not the case!

At least it seems that way... Because this is just an illusion. It is indeed true that people aren't equally clever at every activity or in every scientific field, but everybody does have a similar amount of talent overall. It's just that unfortunately we cannot count the hidden talents and abilities of an individual, since we don't have any general unit of measurement that would be suitable for all types of talents.

So if, for example, someone is very talented at music but terrible at math, and another person is the reverse, then both these people are in fact equally talented, just not in the same field. Let us suppose however, that the person gifted in mathematics was lucky enough to have attended a good school as a child; then the talent within him will fully develop and he'll become a smart, educated man, a great scientist, and may even be described as a genius. On the other hand, if the person with musical talent is born as the son of a peasant in the Middle Ages for instance, or in a refugee camp in the Near East today, and his whole life consists of shoveling chicken manure, then he will never have the opportunity to be near music. He can never study sheet music or any musical instrument, therefore his talent will remain hidden and he'll die with everybody seeing him as an untalented ignoramus his whole life.

Now, what I have described above is a good starting point, but the whole thing is not that simple of course, because everybody knows that the majority of men and women can have a talent for almost anything, and more or less the same amount of talent in each area. That is, our brain resources are roughly evenly distributed among each ability. Naturally there are small differences, but normally these differences are so small that it's more important how diligent a person is and what their interests are.

Sometimes, however, a person is born with a particularly great talent for something—in this case the resources in his brain are not evenly distributed, with far more resources in the part of his brain responsible for that specific talent. If his talent is discovered by others, then he can end up building a wonderful and successful career. This is all well and good, but there are no free lunches in the world, and the price paid for this exceptional talent is that there are far less brain resources remaining for other areas, which can sometimes have serious consequences... After all, it is logical that since everybody has a roughly equal brain size, there can only be more brain capacity available for a certain function if there is less available for other functions...

It can be observed, for instance, that the greatest scientists and artists in the world are sometimes incredibly clumsy, incompetent and ignorant in certain fields that are unrelated to their talent. Take me for example... Okay, I may not be a world-famous scientist, nor a world-famous novelist yet (and I do mean *yet*...!), but I've successfully proven that I have a strong talent in computer programming, and also as a writer, for I have already created over fifty very long novels (in the sci-fi genre). I am happy with these abilities, but on the flip side I had an awfully hard time learning how to lace up my shoes!

Especially tying the "bow" at the end. Even as an adult I only know one method of doing this, and it took me weeks of extraordinary effort to master.

So in the case of Aspies, almost all their brain resources have been concentrated in one special field—the field of logical thinking, particularly analytical deduction. All other areas have only a minimum of resources, but the one receiving the smallest amount is the area responsible for social relations and interpersonal skills. Therefore an Aspie simply doesn't understand how people "work".

From an Aspie's perspective, a normal (or neurotypical) person behaves in a confusing and chaotic manner, being inclined to do seemingly random illogical things at any moment. It is an "impossible mission" for him to figure them out, where failure is certain.

My preferred—sarcastic—expression for this is that a neurotypical person is in our eyes a "stochastically determined entity". In layman's terms this can be translated as, "an individual whose actions are unpredictable because they change randomly". It is obviously not a coincidence why I've become accustomed to using the "stochastically determined entity" expression—it is not only shorter, but sounds far more scientific and learned... Although it is actually a nonsensical phrase, like "squaring the circle", since it is a contradictory word combination. Namely, if something is determined, then it definitely cannot be stochastic... Once someone (a dear well-wisher) pointed out this fact to me (as if I didn't already know it myself...), to which I retorted that it was still more scientific, or at least less contradictory, than Christianity (which he believed in) since that is based on the ridiculous impossibility that somebody can be a virgin and a mother at the same time...

But it would be off-topic to delve into such things in detail right now, for this is the subject of a later chapter that deals with the relationship between Aspies and religion.

I expect that for many of my Readers, the question immediately arises that something in my story doesn't hold water. After all, I stated that I am a novelist, however this is impossible if I am an Aspie, since a novelist has to "understand" people. It is difficult to imagine even a single novel—let alone more than fifty novels—without human characters...

Of course there *are* plenty of human characters in my novels, although I have to admit that at first glance it does seem like a serious contradiction. But don't worry, later in the book there will be an entire chapter devoted to the relationship between Aspies and literature.

The key message of this chapter is simply that I am deeply and genuinely convinced that us Aspies don't suffer from any kind of biological brain DEFICIENCY! It is inexpedient to view some parts of our brain as deficient, while considering neurotypical people to have those brain areas functioning perfectly. A more useful approach would be to see the human brain as a biological computer, on which a wide variety of programs run—one controlling social relations, a second mathematical thinking, a third dedicated to something else, etc... The computer itself, or the "hardware", is actually the same in both us and neurotypicals (there may be some minor differences, but these are negligible), and us Aspies also have EVERY SINGLE "program" that runs on this "biological computer". Therefore there is ***nothing missing!*** The only difference between us is in how the resources were distributed among the programs—how many gigabytes of RAM they received, on what priority level they run, and so on.

Compared to neurotypical people, every program we have that is somehow related to analytical thinking has received an abundance of resources. Although we have all the other programs as well,

these hardly received any resources and thus are easily overloaded, tending to work slowly or simply "crash", and while they still function, their efficiency is drastically low. In return, however, the programs that received many resources—the "logical department"—can run at an *incredible* speed! Therefore we are certainly not "inferior"! This label would only be accurate if we performed more poorly than the neurotypical majority in *all areas*. But this is by no means the case, as is proven by the vast amount of evidence in technical publications.

And I now pose the question: *Is it right to call something that comes with such outstanding advantages a "disorder"?!*

Of course not...

Nowadays even homosexuals are protesting against being considered "sick". They believe they are just "different". Then why do us Aspies swallow the decision of the majority that we're "sick"?! I myself certainly reject this contemptuous and degrading opinion! Let's face it, it is far more reasonable to consider homosexuals "sick" than us! The reason is simple—if everyone on Earth were homosexual, then humanity would become extinct within one generation, since there would be no copulation between the sexes.

But if, on the other hand, everybody on Earth were Aspies, this wouldn't necessarily cause the extinction of humanity. In fact, it wouldn't be likely to depopulate the world at all. Just because someone is an Aspie, it does not inevitably follow that they are asexual. At least in my case, I can say with absolute certainty that I am not asexual in the slightest! On the contrary! Although sex is not the subject of this chapter, I must mention here that in my youth I had no physical difficulty in completing six "rounds" a day! Even today at the age of 54, three times daily is no great challenge for me. I know that the world average is somewhere between once a week and once a day...

Thus I cannot believe that humanity would become extinct if everybody suddenly became an Aspie... unlike the case of everyone becoming homosexual. The aim of my above comment wasn't to offend homosexuals, but to again emphasize that if we don't even consider *them* to have an illness, regardless of there being an argument to substantiate that viewpoint, then why are *we* considered sick and inferior?! A typical case of double standards, in my opinion...

Nor do I dispute that there are certain individuals labeled "autistic", who can rightfully be considered "sick".

However the purpose of this whole chapter is to point out how I distinguish Aspies from others who show some similar symptoms. MY definition is that **an Aspie is a person who, although showing certain symptoms from the "autism spectrum", and despite having obvious weaknesses in certain areas, DOES have abilities and talents in certain fields that are above and beyond those of the "average" person or neurotypical majority.**

Anyone who doesn't fit this definition is simply not an Aspie in my opinion. We could label them as "autistic" just for the sake of simplicity, because as I mentioned earlier, I don't believe in the existence of "autism" as a single, homogeneous disorder, but rather a term for many different disorders or

symptoms. But okay, let's use the word "autism", as long as we take it to mean, "People who are similar in many respects to those with Asperger-syndrome, but do not have any exceptional abilities."

It is far from my aim to abase or revile those who are "autistic", in fact I feel sympathy towards them. In addition, I think it is highly likely that I would feel far more comfortable in a society of these "ordinary" autistic people than among neurotypicals. Yet despite this, I cannot accept that Asperger's is the same state as their "problem", and the reason for this is because my theory about the unequal distribution of brain capacity described above perfectly explains the symptoms seen in the great majority of people considered "Aspies". There is no room for doubt that this theory of mine could easily be verified by direct examination of the brain (with current medical instruments and devices).

I hasten to note that if anyone reading this has believed themselves to be an Aspie thus far, yet hasn't shown any outstanding talent, you don't have to be afraid and think, "Damn it, so I'm not really an Aspie, just an ordinary autistic!" NO.

The fact that you haven't shown any talent YET doesn't necessarily mean that you won't in the future. I would be extremely surprised if the MAJORITY of Aspies received any kind of "talent development" in their childhood or adolescence. And unfortunately if a talent is not addressed at the appropriate time, it is easily lost.

During my school years, for instance, socialism was rife in Hungary, and they had an idealistic delusion of egalitarianism as the official ruling doctrine. Not only was there no talent development, but they (the teachers, politicians etc.) disapproved of and even discouraged anybody who excelled in a field of the arts or sciences. These pupils were often considered "geeks" by even the teachers themselves, and were scorned. I will write about this theme more comprehensively in the chapter about school. There was, however, a sort of "catch-up" class (albeit of questionable value) for those doing poorly in certain areas. But the children with talent were neglected... Especially if in addition they had an eccentric character, as is common among Aspies.

Therefore if you feel that you aren't particularly talented in any field, this may not necessarily be true. In fact, it is far more likely that you do indeed have some kind of talent. After all, you have read the book up to this point, so you must be interested in the subject; you have understood what you have read so far, and are at least curious about the World. You have a desire for knowledge. A researcher's mind. These are all the most distinctive attributes of talented people!

It is even possible that although you have some exceptional talent, it didn't show up because you mistakenly believed all the gossip spouted about that particular field (eg. that it's boring, difficult, inferior...), and this deterred you from pursuing it. This occurs very often in the field of mathematics, for example. It is very likely that all your memories about mathematics are no more than a few boring lessons in school, and you were glad when you were finally allowed to give it up... it's just that you didn't have a good math teacher at the very beginning! It's possible that if you started all over again now, then after two or three weeks (which you would probably find quite boring...) you may realize that this is actually a highly exciting discipline that is perfectly suited to you!

I can give you another example as well. Music... I never learned how to read sheet music, and in school my musical experiences were limited to having to memorize composers' biographies and singing along to class songs, which to my ears was just a horrible, jarring, discordant cacophony. I absolutely HATED it! Nevertheless, there is some music I enjoy listening to, in fact I'm a bit of a music nut...

although I am very particular. But until the age of 52 I believed I could only be a "consumer" of music, because I didn't have any talent for creating it. Well I certainly didn't show any exceptional talent playing on my uncle's piano, and the way I held a violin was shameful if it were even a hoe handle... Decades later I purchased a synthesizer, thinking that being a computer nerd this should suit me better, after all, it was a type of computer machine...

I was wrong. So the belief that I had no talent for music in general was ingrained in me. But I was wrong about that too! Because my fate changed when by chance I became acquainted with an instrument called the "didgeridoo". Many say this is the most difficult instrument in the world to play, and most people are unable to even produce a sound from it. Well, it took me about a minute and a half to figure out the basics of how it worked, and I could play amazing things on it without any prior practice. I will admit that I am still far from mastering this instrument, but then it is just a hobby for me. If I had have received a didgeridoo in my childhood, however, then perhaps I may have become a world-famous didgeridoo player by now!

Considering how "difficult" an instrument this is and how little I have practiced it, yet at the same time how well I can already play it, there is no doubt that I am a natural genius in this realm and was "created" specifically for this instrument! But this fact only came to light in the past year, at the age of 52. And it's not as well-known an instrument as the piano, violin or guitar... I have no talent at all for those. Didgeridoos require quite a special talent, which can only be revealed in special circumstances. It's entirely possible for my Readers to find themselves in a similar situation.

Otherwise, it is not only uncommon but almost a ***general rule***, that Aspies who have a talent primarily for logical/analytical thinking also have a talent for music. It can be observed among great scientists that almost all of them play a musical instrument, if not masterfully, at least as a hobby. The case of Albert Einstein with his violin is well-known. The reason for this has not yet fully been explored, but we can at least state that it has some relation to the fact that musical talent—like mathematical thinking—is rooted deeply in the right cerebral hemisphere and they can thereby influence each other.

I have only mentioned these things as an aside, so I will now end this topic here. It was merely in order to prove my statement that an Aspie's talent can sometimes manifest itself in quite specific areas, but it often takes a coincidence to find that particular area.

How should an Aspie be treated?

I'm talking about an adult Aspie here. First of all I will reiterate the fields in which an Aspie is exceptionally talented and useful: Logical/analytical tasks, and wherever some kind of SYSTEM has to be created, planned, investigated, analyzed, broken down into subsystems, compared with other systems, tested etc.

In all the above tasks, Aspies are absolutely superior to neurotypicals, in fact even a small group of neurotypicals are no serious rival for a learned Aspie. An Aspie would totally defeat them with one hand tied behind his back, and only dealing with the matter as a hobby. Moreover, not only will he

solve the problem earlier and with fewer errors, but it is likely that he'll take a whole new approach that no one had thought of before.

This is an ENORMOUS ADVANTAGE. To label such talent as an "illness" is in my eyes as nonsensical as saying a laptop is a faulty, ineffective hammer, since it obviously has very little usefulness for any job that requires a nail to be knocked into a wall... Well of course, this is completely true, it's just that a laptop is not designed for these sorts of tasks, but for things like doing quick calculations. However this fact doesn't prove that a laptop is a "sick hammer".

Such is the case with Aspies... They are very good at those particular tasks—analyses, creating systems, logical deductions... But as soon as the task involves something different, the failure rate is the same. And this is unfortunately what happens everyday in personal relationships—failure after failure... And the Aspie can't be held responsible for the success or failure of a task. None of it is his merit or fault, since for some reason his brain developed this way. But it doesn't necessarily have to be a tragedy for him, because I can state from my own experience that an Aspie is able to feel great if he finds a suitable environment. He doesn't feel his life is a tragedy...

The problem is that our World—that is, present human society—is not sympathetic enough to tolerate such a sizable difference. An Aspie is constantly expected to comply with requirements that, even with enormous effort, he cannot adapt to in the slightest. This is unfair, after all, nobody expects a bear to fly to the top of a fir tree and then warble beautifully like a canary...

Aspies should be treated like useful *farm animals*, or better still, like precision instruments or machines designed for very special purposes—sensitive, fragile and vulnerable, but at the same time capable of peak performance in their particular scope of duties. But only THERE, not anywhere else! And there is no need to figure out which duties are most suitable for these guys. *We already know*. Science knows their abilities precisely, but if anyone doesn't know, then by all means ask me, since as an Aspie I'm the best person to turn to with such questions...

Unfortunately democracy does not favor Aspies either. In a democracy everybody is expected to "reinvent themselves" and adapt to the circumstances, control their own destiny and find their place in the world... But this is exactly what an Aspie is incapable of, and only succeeds in the rarest of cases. It's actually impossible unless he has an enormous stroke of luck, one the size of winning the lottery jackpot. How could the poor thing find his place in the world?! He'd have to get to know the world first. But the World is unfathomably complicated for an Aspie. It's unpredictable, erratic... total Chaos!

An Aspie is happier when it isn't HE who controls his destiny but someone else, however this other person must know how to deal with an Aspie in order for the Aspie to thrive.

Dear Reader, please note that in the above sentence, terms such as "selflessly", "generously", "without exploitation" have not been included...

Since all these things are unimportant. They really are totally inconsequential! There is no problem at all with exploiting an Aspie, or to put it more kindly, "utilizing" him. Feel free to do so! Because Aspies generally don't give a flying shit if they are taken advantage of. For the most part they won't even be aware of it happening, but if they do notice they'll just shrug it off. Provided their exploiters don't bother them with the stuff of everyday life... Because if they do, then they force the Aspie to think

about awful things like exploitation and finances, and make him worry about his future, retirement and so on. And believe me, an Aspie hates being forced to think about these things even more than a nuclear war...

An Aspie can indeed be cloudlessly happy, even if he knows very well that he's being unashamedly exploited. It doesn't bother him. Moreover, he may even be proud of this fact if he's informed of how much he is benefiting his employer and how thrilled they are to have found such a brilliant man as him... The Aspie will be overjoyed to hear this and he'll smile, then take the liberty of asking for a pay raise, after all, his boss also knows that he only receives the minimum wage...

His boss will look dumbfounded and ask him why he needs a pay raise, in fact, why he needs a salary at all, after all he has neither chick nor child, not to mention a wife (or husband in the case of a female Aspie), he has a great job, everything he needs... To which the Aspie replies, "But boss, my laptop really needs a new gigabyte expansion card"...

The boss will then slap the Aspie on the shoulder in a friendly manner, saying, "Well son, you see, you're a simpleton when it comes to such matters... just stick to programming. It's not a pay raise you need, you're just complicating things again, racking your brain too much over things that aren't relevant. You just admitted yourself that it's not money you need but memory... You know what, let's not faff about with 'memory expansion', you deserve something far better! Write down on this piece of paper what type of laptop would be most suitable for your work, and tomorrow I'll go and buy you a new one. Don't be afraid to think big, and don't be shy about choosing the brand and model, because I sincerely believe you deserve the best!"

"Oh, Boss... wow! I don't know how to thank you! I would never have dared hope for this... You truly are a good man, you're like a father to me!"

"Well yes... I am a decent boss, and it's entirely natural for you to feel that way, son. Of course, I wouldn't want you to think I'm this generous with everybody, but *you* really deserve it. I'm sure it's no secret to you that everyone thinks of me as a cranky old savage who's as cold as marble... Well, I'll be candid and admit that they're right about that! It has to be that way. Business is hard and cruel... Be glad that you're not a businessman, it's not an easy profession! Far too stressful... But you're an exception—you're not on the same low level as the other average morons that I employ. I have no choice, because it's such a rarity to find a genius like you... You know that I'm right too, you've seen their incompetence, they're all idiots, every single one of them! Even if I fired them from a cannon, they wouldn't follow in your footsteps...

"Don't try to defend them out of politeness, they don't deserve it. It's impossible not to notice the gaping chasm between your abilities and theirs... Okay, they may not all be complete idiots, but it doesn't matter because what's the point in having a brain if they don't use it for anything?! They're not interested in work—in CREATION, like you are, but only in living the 'high life', attending worthless parties, watching crappy TV series, laughing at pointless jokes and so on. So even if some of them have a moderate degree of intelligence, they can't match you in diligence and perseverance, not to mention the essential quality of imagination..."

"Well, I won't go on, because it almost makes me cry to think about the hopelessness of having to struggle with the dozens of 'Average Johns' day after day, just because I can't find more outstanding geniuses like you, son! So it's obvious that in your case you deserve exceptional treatment from me.

But tomorrow you must hand me back your old computer, because there's no need for waste... I'll give it to a less valuable worker..."

And the Aspie is happy, even though he hasn't received a salary increase. But oh, how highly the Big Boss has praised him! And the boss is happy too, because the new laptop won't even cost him a third of what it would cost to pay a programmer on 'normal pay' for a month... Although it's a fact that those programmers wouldn't benefit him half as much as an Aspie would. And the Aspie isn't going to ask him for a new laptop every month...

Exploitation?! Of course! That's how the world works... But this isn't a problem, provided BOTH PARTIES ARE HAPPY.

It's a similar situation to when certain ant species keep and breed aphids as pets. Do the ants exploit the aphids? Oh yes, certainly! But the aphids don't mind this at all. If we could ask them and they were able to reply, everyone of them would be sure to state that they are very happy to be exploited by ants in this way, and they wouldn't wish for it to be any different, because now they have no trouble with anything—the ants protect them from all the dangers of the Outside World...

The main complaint of Aspies is not that they are being exploited, but that they don't all have bosses who will exploit them wisely...

I should point out one last thing here, and that's that even if we accept the theory that an Aspie is formed by the unequal distribution of brain resources among the various "brain functions", what causes some people to have a disproportionate allocation of resources? It obviously has some genetic basis, but what is the root cause of this genetic "abnormality", if this even is an abnormality?

Raising these issues is perfectly legitimate, and it's a very exciting field of discussion, but on the other hand it's also quite serious, and my view is so shocking and sharply opposed to that of the "mainstream" that it would be not useful to discuss it right now at the beginning. Thus I will reserve it for a separate chapter, at the end of this book. It will also help the Reader understand why my book was given the title "Homo Asperger".

The events prior to my school years

A popular topic of discussion among those working with Asperger-syndrome is whether this "symptom complex" is caused by genetic factors, or can be explained by a "bad upbringing" or absence of a "loving environment" in childhood. These days there is more or less wide agreement among scientists that the cause is probably genetic; I am of the same opinion. Nevertheless, I am convinced that external influences, especially in very early childhood, are capable of either improving or worsening things for the newborn Aspie to a considerable degree. So although genetics is the primary cause, it is not the only factor involved.

As for my own situation, I can sincerely state without any exaggeration that in addition to Aspie genes, I also experienced every imaginable external factor that could make my condition worse... My

father and mother were second or third cousins—I don't know their exact degree of kinship, but they were more distant relatives than first cousins. Still relatively close, although not so close that the law would have prohibited their marriage. They were aware of their kinship, and as far as I know about the subject from my family legend, they were worried about it themselves initially. But a doctor acquaintance reassured them that it wouldn't be a problem, because they were so different in physical appearance that it was highly unlikely to have any harmful consequences.

Whenever this story comes to mind I feel like swearing profanely to myself, "Fuck your whore mother, Doc, I hope you die a fucking painful death for being such a stupid asshole in your own profession...!" Of course my "ancestors" differed in appearance... after all, one of them was a male, and the other a female! Surely this idiotic doctor must have had enough knowledge about the subject to know that only a very small percentage of genes are responsible for appearance. This was a well-known fact, even in those days. Therefore external differences have little relevance compared to the compatibility of other genetic factors.

So in a certain sense, I came from an "incestuous" relationship. This obviously increased the likelihood of me not becoming an "average" child, in both a good and bad sense, because I received less of certain genes than usual, and more of other genes.

It can however also be observed in the history of Mankind, that in cultures allowing the marriage of relatives—at least in the case of a ruling family—it was fairly common for a very talented king to be born, who went on to build a prestigious empire. And he may not only have been a successful conqueror, but even a talented inventor or cultural hero... However this empire did not prosper for long, because soon the throne would be ascended by idiots, or at least untalented rulers—from the same dynasty... and this would inevitably result in the rapid downfall of the dynasty. Both the uprising and downfall of the dynasty was due to the same thing—the marriage of relatives, that is, inbreeding...

As for my mother, disregarding her not exactly "positive" behavior towards me (to which I will devote an entire chapter later), I think she can be said to be a neurotypical woman. On second thought, the fact that she didn't love me is probably the best proof that she was neurotypical, because it is more of a general rule than an exception that neurotypical people treat Aspies cruelly...

Furthermore, even for a neurotypical my mother was a highly intelligent, educated woman, a witty conversationalist in her own way. She was very fond of reading, and still loved it in her old age (although she has never read a single book *I've* written... she said she doesn't like my style, yet how could she even know what my style is if she hasn't read any of my books?!). Her neighbors and all her acquaintances considered her a friendly, helpful woman. At least, this was the opinion of all the people I knew a long time ago.

I openly acknowledge all these advantageous qualities of my mother, although despite this I shall confess at the outset: I DO NOT LIKE, NOR LOVE HER, and that's wording it very subtly, in an almost "politically correct" manner. I have every reason not to like her, but again, I will write about this difficult (yet interesting) topic in more detail in another chapter.

As for my father, I did indeed LOVE him (he is no longer alive), although I can't state that my relationship with him was absolutely perfect. But I got along well with him. As for his character, however, I am not so sure that he was necessarily a neurotypical. I wouldn't dare to label my father as an "Aspie", and he certainly wasn't "autistic". I wouldn't even say that he was odd or peculiar, but he definitely liked reading books as well, if perhaps not as much as my mother, and had an excellent sense

for mathematics. Besides this, he didn't like playing sports (neither did my mother...), although he did tell me that in his youth he often rode his bicycle. This may have been true, for in my early school years my parents took me on a bicycle trip twice, and I got to sleep in a tent. It was exciting... But regular sports were not typical of either of them.

In any case, I don't know if my father even had a single true friend. Occasionally he would get together with my uncle for a chat, and that's it. I know specifically that whenever the company he worked for organized some party or "social event", he did not like these occasions and took every opportunity to avoid them. If it was absolutely necessary for him to be there, he tried to leave as soon as he could without offending anybody. So as soon as he had the smallest excuse, he quickly grabbed the chance to "escape".

He made no secret of this either, at least not with me. I fully empathized with this view. All this was true despite the fact that by "party" I don't mean the heavy drinking of the uneducated "lower classes"... My father was a member of the intelligentsia—he was an engineer, in fact he had two diplomas in engineering: one in mechanical engineering, and one in welding engineering. Even so, he was more of a "lone wolf", disposed to retreating into himself. By no means someone as lively and vibrant as his wife—my mother.

It is beyond dispute that any neurotypical stranger would have deemed my mother to have a far more interesting personality than my father. And I believe her thinking was faster than my father's too. Perhaps I could best compare my mother to a falcon: if we consider the falcon's prey to be an unsolved problem, then my mother's preferred method was to swoop down on it with lightning speed and immediately find the solution in a fraction of a second. It was a very rare case when this did not happen. But if she was by chance unsuccessful, then she simply gave up on the problem, trusting that either time or someone else (generally my father) would solve it. So despite all my hatred towards my mother, I have to admit that she really was an interesting person, and very talented in her own way.

My father was totally different. Even if he could see the solution right away, he was in no hurry to act on it. He would first examine it thoroughly, taking into account all possibilities and outcomes, calculating and analyzing the given problem meticulously... And if he didn't find a solution right away, then nobody was worried because they all knew it would come to him in time.

He was incredibly stubborn, exactly the opposite of my mother. My father always reminded me of a bulldog—when it bites on something it never lets go; it squeezes it until it suffocates. Once it has captured something, then someone has to die: either him or the prey, but there is *no way* that he'll give up! This bulldog impression was heightened by my father's face. He had a robust lower jaw, with large teeth. I actually inherited this from him, to an exponential degree. My teeth were all crooked because my lower jaw was much larger than my upper jaw, and in addition to protruding forward, it also deviated to the left by a good half centimeter. Therefore when biting, my two upper incisors slipped behind the teeth of my lower jaw, just like a bulldog. But since my lower jaw deviated to the side as well, it resulted in my teeth being in such a big mess that even dental plates couldn't help the situation. Although I was forced to wear a wide variety of these torture devices, causing me to be ridiculed at school by the stupid, cruel mob of barbaric children.

In the end my teeth began to slowly rot, and they all had to be pulled out. Consequently, by the time I was around 40 years old, I didn't have a single tooth left. However I don't wear dentures. I did have some made for me (at a great expense...) but it was in vain, for I couldn't eat with them, nor barely

speak. Even when I tried gluing them in, they would fall out of my mouth with the slightest pressure, because the torque applied to the denture from the lateral deviation of my jaw was so great that no glue could withstand it. Now, doing some research into this as an adult, I think my mother didn't get enough vitamin K2 (in the effective "mk7 trans" form) during her pregnancy, so my jaw didn't develop enough to fit my teeth into properly.

Anyhow, I will return to characterizing my parents. It is my deep conviction that I inherited a significant amount of genes from my father that contributed to the development of my Aspie habits—even though my father was not ultimately an Aspie, just "similar" in ways. We could say he "approached the border of Aspieness", but did not cross the frontier.

It may perhaps be of interest to researchers reading this book that my father suffered from "daltonism" (red-green color blindness)—which I do not—and in addition was born left-handed. But I only found out about his natural left-handedness from him telling me, since when he was a child the teachers at school strictly forbade him from writing with his left hand, so he had to learn to write with his right hand. Therefore he eventually became ambidextrous, even though his "right-handedness" was only learned, the result of his education. I know this to be true, for he had proved it to me on many occasions. He could write just as well with his left hand as with his right. So well that whenever he had to write long texts by hand and became tired, he would shift his pen or pencil over to the other hand and continue writing with that hand, with exactly the same handwriting as before, the same angle etc. And nobody could ever tell which part of the text was written with his left hand and which with his right, nor the place where he switched hands during writing!

As for me, I am obviously right-handed... basically. I mean, I can't write with my left hand, although there have been some surprising things that have popped up in my life related to this. For example, when I was in the military (not willingly—it was mandatory), I initially saluted almost instinctively with my left hand. I don't know why. Somehow it seemed natural for me to do it with that hand. Of course they soon had words with me, because the officers believed I was doing it out of mockery...

And on one occasion in my adulthood, when I was working as a welder in a factory, I had extreme difficulty welding a seam. It was a vertical seam, and needed to be welded from the bottom up. I was tired too. Then an idea suddenly came to me, and I switched the welding gun to my left hand... It is important to note that I had NEVER practiced welding with my left hand before!

Well, you can probably guess what happened—I produced such a perfect and beautiful seam on the first try, that I could hardly believe it myself! It is true however, that for some reason I didn't feel I could repeat this miracle immediately, because it tired me out so much mentally. Yes, MENTALLY. It was not my hand that was tired.

In any case, I felt as if the ghost of my father had materialized behind me and was guiding my hand... which is impossible, not only because ghosts don't exist (at least I don't believe they do), but because my father was still alive at that time, albeit half paralyzed by a stroke. So even if ghosts existed, he could not have been a ghost at that moment.

However I cannot write with my left hand, even though I've tried to learn this skill numerous times. My failure at this is not surprising, considering that even using my right hand, my handwriting is so messy that I'm often the only one who can decipher it... But I will leave this topic for the next chapter

about school. It is quite enough to mention here that my handwriting is very messy, in sharp contrast with my father, who wrote beautifully no matter which hand he used.

So to summarize, I am right-handed, but I also have some minor "glitches" suggesting that this trait of mine is not "optimal". But I'm pretty sure I inherited that from my father. It certainly didn't come from my mother, since she was clearly totally right-handed.

That covers my genetic background. As for my upbringing, I practically *didn't have one* until I went to school, that is, until I was about six years old. Of course, one may be inclined to think this an exaggeration, after all, I had to receive some kind of upbringing, otherwise I would starve to death! But I will explain. First of all, by "upbringing" I don't mean "nourishment", but rather some sort of basic education.

To start with, I wasn't taken to a nursery, nor did I attend kindergarten. I don't know why they didn't enroll me in either of these places. Perhaps there weren't enough placements available? I don't know. The reason doesn't really matter in terms of the result. One thing is certain, and that's that they failed to give me the opportunity at my most receptive age for socialization, to get used to the company of other children my own age, to at least tolerate them as much as was possible for me.

So I was "brought up" at home during those years. Although it is not only the term "brought up" that should be enclosed in quotation marks, but also "at home". If by the word "home", we mean the place a child's parents are, then I was never at home until the age of six. I was living in the house of my grandparents. There were only two women living there—my grandmother and my great-grandmother. That is, my mother's mother and grandmother, because my paternal grandparents were no longer alive at that time. My maternal great-grandfather had long since died. My maternal grandfather may have still been alive, but even if he was, it didn't matter because my grandmother had divorced him long before I was born. I've certainly never met him.

Much later I learned only one thing about him from one of my grandmother's stories—she allegedly divorced him because he was regularly unfaithful to her. Apparently my grandfather was a physical education teacher (which I find really strange even now, considering how desperately I hated physical education classes... as I'll describe in a later chapter), and it was said that he was caught lying naked in the locker room, with teenage schoolgirls fanning his erect manhood with a large peacock feather. I don't know whether or not this story is true, but it's what my grandmother told me.

Let's just say I don't think it's impossible, because it nicely explains my ability I mentioned earlier, of at a young age being able to "perform" six times per day without any difficulties. Even now that I'm over 50, three or four times a day is still quite achievable. In fact, I remember one occasion as a newlywed when I did it sixteen times on that particular day! Okay, I have to admit that I've never been able to repeat this record, it was just a one-time success. Even so, I do think it's a pretty respectable achievement! If my grandmother's story is true, then at least I know who I inherited this ability from—my grandfather! The old man must have been the "parish bull", a real "cock of the walk". I must confess that sometimes I envy him when I think of this scene with the peacock feather... This guy knew how to live, that's for sure!

Speaking of inheritance—I deeply believe that I inherited my writing talent from my paternal grandmother. She also began writing a novel long ago, however died before she could finish it. My paternal grandfather also died before I was born, therefore I didn't have a chance to become acquainted

with either of them. They both died of cancer, despite not being smokers. The manuscript of this unfinished novel is in the possession of my paternal uncle, Daniel Viola.

But I have strayed a little off topic. I was saying that in my early years I grew up in my grandmother's house, where there were only two adults living, both of them female—my grandmother and great-grandmother. And I was the only child... One of these two women—my grandmother—was still working at the time as a council secretary, however please don't ask me what this profession entails, dear Readers, because I had no idea when I was a child, and I don't know now either. Most likely some kind of relatively high-ranking administrative bureaucrat of the local shire. All I knew as a child was that she was required to go to the Bureau every day to take care of Very Important Matters. That was enough for me. So I barely saw my grandmother, only for short periods of time.

I note here, just for the sake of completeness, that in my very early childhood I used to call my grandmother "Babi mama". Other people who knew her well—the adults—generally called her "Babika". I still don't know what the nickname "Babi" means, but it could well be a deformation of the English word "Babe", said with bad (Hungarian) pronunciation. Although no one in our family knew a word of English at all...

My great-grandmother, whom I called "Dédi" (pronounced 'Deydee') until her death, was already quite old. I don't remember her age exactly, but she was about seventy. Therefore the age difference between us was considerable, to put it mildly. She already had some difficulties getting about, but she was still able to take care of me. So besides her I didn't really have any other company, and I must note that she wasn't exactly a chatterbox. For example, I don't remember even one occasion where she told me a fairy tale. Or sang me a song. Or played with me at all in any way.

Based on this information, you probably believe that like kids today, my main form of entertainment was the TV. That is not correct. Television did exist in those days, although not everybody had one, since it was a terribly expensive luxury. And even then, it was just black and white... My grandmother, being a council secretary, had plenty of worldly goods in that economic system and thus did own a TV, however I very rarely watched it. Firstly, at that time there was a broadcast break every Monday for the entire day. And in addition, every day in the early afternoon there was usually a break of several hours. Secondly, today's kids can't even imagine how incredibly limited the programs were, not to mention BORING for children. There was barely anything available except for various political programs, which were naturally incomprehensible and uninteresting to me, being under the age of six. It was almost refreshing when some kind of classical music concert was presented!

There was pretty much only one program designed for children—the "Evening Tale", which was on once a day, and it ran for no more than ten minutes. That's all there was! And this evening tale was merely some primitive cartoon or puppet film—nothing like the quality of children's programs today. And don't forget, it was all in black and white! Color televisions did not exist yet back then. Not even for the very rich. Or if they did, it would have only been in the more developed countries. It was the period between 1965 and 1970, and I can at least be certain that nobody had heard of its existence in my country.

So I didn't watch TV much, because I had no interest in the programs being presented. There was nothing on there that appealed to me. I think it's safe to say that I grew up in a distinctly stimulus-free

environment until I started school. It was so isolated and lacking in stimulation, that as I think about it now in retrospect, I find myself genuinely wondering how and from whom I learned to speak at all!

Of course in a certain respect, having a low-stimulus childhood was ideal for me, since Aspies tend to prefer being left alone, undisturbed. Perhaps a more stimulus-rich environment would have worsened my mental state. I agree that there's a lot of truth in this argument, but I still feel that a slightly more stimulus-rich environment would have been better for me. After all, it is not only extremes that exist, although I am deeply convinced that my childhood environment being devoid of any stimulus was exceptionally extreme. Naturally I survived it and did learn how to speak, so in retrospect I can't say that I was unhappy at that time. In fact, those early years may have been the happiest years of my childhood. Yes, they were the halcyon days of my youth.

Even so, the isolation of these first (almost) six years of my life meant that when I had to leave this protected and peaceful environment and was suddenly thrown into the "deep waters" of social life at school, it instantly caused a slew of problems. I had absolutely no chance to gradually become accustomed to the new situation, and was snowed under by a plethora of external stimuli and irritations all at once. This led to serious consequences, as I will describe in the next chapter. However we have not yet reached my school years.

I was pondering over how I managed to learn to speak at all in such circumstances... Well, naturally it was from the adults! Although by adults I don't mean my parents. I was entrusted to the care of my grandmother and "Dédi", because my parents were busy building their own house at the other end of the village. I don't know how they could have lived in a half-built house back then, but they must have thought the circumstances were not suitable for a small child. Perhaps their decision was also influenced by wanting to enjoy the irresponsible pleasures of childless youth for a while longer.

In any case, they didn't live in the same place that I did. In the six years I lived with Dédi and my grandmother, I remember my parents visiting me at least three times... Assuming that I cannot remember every occasion, it may have been more like a dozen times, that is, two or three visits a year. Well, I wouldn't say this was showing terribly much interest... So I'm pretty sure I didn't learn to speak from them. Not from my mother, for example... Therefore I technically have no "mother" tongue, only a native tongue...

In all probability I learned my native language from the visitors that came to our house. Grandma and Dédi were not as solitary and reserved as my father, so they had guests over from time to time. Perhaps twice a week, three or four people would come around and sit at the table in the living room, holding lively conversations... They were all adults, of course. I never saw a child among them, not once! And even most of these adults seemed quite old. Naturally they didn't care about me, in fact they didn't even like me hanging about the place. But neither did they like me going into any other room, because they were afraid that if I was there on my own I would harm myself or some valuable object. Consequently I was expected to "behave well", which in this case meant sitting down quietly in the corner or in an armchair. It didn't matter where, as long as it was somewhere out of the way, yet in a place they could still see me, and then I had to pretend as though I didn't exist.

I am convinced that they were very lucky with me in this regard, after all, an Aspie is by far a much quieter child than a neurotypical, and is much better at handling solitude. It must have been conspicuous to them that although I had some toys—I remember a plush little donkey and a large turtle made of metal—I never played with them, just watched the adults intently, following all their

movements and words. Wordlessly of course, since they expected me to be silent. Okay, I may not have been *completely* wordless... Every now and then I would chime in with silly remarks, trying to join in the conversation uninvitedly, for I was a child after all and therefore highly curious. But basically I was an extremely quiet and well-behaved boy for them. I mostly just sat there and watched what was going on.

I'm entirely certain that it was on these occasions that I learned my native language. Or at least gained an ability to understand it. However, learning to speak it was a completely different matter. Naturally I did learn to eventually, but since I rarely had the opportunity to practice the speech I heard from adults, I had serious shortcomings in the reproduction of speech sounds. Namely, until the age of about ten, I couldn't pronounce the (Hungarian) "J" sound (which is equivalent to the "y" sound in the English word "yes"). I always pronounced it as "L", and in addition, I wasn't even aware of this flaw—I believed I was saying it right. I could hear the difference between these two sounds perfectly well in the speech of others, but when I spoke, not only did I always say "L" in place of "J" (the English "Y"), but I was totally convinced that my pronunciation was correct. I was unable to distinguish between the two in my own speech. I will return to this problem in more detail later.

Therefore I learned language and speech from adults exclusively, and as a result my "language course" consisted only of ADULT topics (by this I mean 'mature' or 'serious', not 'sexual').

I can remember it clearly—on one occasion they were talking about what a bad decision it was to close the old cemetery, when it could have accommodated up to six more tombs next to one of the walls on the very edge of the burial ground. Everybody was outraged by this. One can imagine that this was an extremely boring topic for me, a small child! I wouldn't even find this topic interesting as an adult, not in the least.

In spite of this, I can't say I was bored. It's true that I had no interest in the topic itself, but since these conversations were the only stimulus-rich events in my life, I considered them a form of entertainment. I may not have understood what they were talking about, or if I did it probably bored me, however I was fascinated by the spectacle of all these adults communicating and being able to see how they behaved towards each other. Some of them carried little objects that I had never seen before—a diary, a letter case, a wallet, and once one of them showed me a four-color ballpoint pen... It was an interesting personal experience for me, almost a small adventure!

So it was from my grandmother's guests that I learned to speak, although naturally none of them were intentionally trying to teach me. This situation obviously resulted in my vocabulary adapting to theirs. I must emphasize this, because it means that my speech was not only non-childlike, but sounded rather strange to even the majority of adults. The reason for the latter lies in the fact that every one of those people who visited my grandmother for conversation were members of the "elite" in some obscure sense. They were certainly not "average" men and women. Above all, they were intellectuals. Engineers, teachers, doctors and the like. There were some who had less reputable professions, but only because they had been discredited by the socialist system for some reason, however they were intellectuals before the war. Furthermore, every one of them was OLD—at least above the age of forty, although not infrequently in their sixties or older—and thus all had plenty of life experience and education... in a word, culture.

Consequently, not only did I learn the speaking style of adults, but the specific phrasings of a very narrow subset of adults—the archaic language of *senior highly educated intellectuals*! Well, it sure didn't sound anything like a child's manner of speaking. And it wasn't only young children that found this strange, but also younger adults, because I would use certain grammatical structures such as "passive verbs" with complete naturalness. Verb forms like: "it has been said", "it was announced", "it was sought after", "it had been asked" etc.

These verb forms can still easily be understood by Hungarians today, however they would consider it quite an archaic style of speech, one that is virtually nonexistent in the spoken language and rarely even used in present-day writing. Traditionally it is only used when writing a serious scientific publication, especially if the subject is philosophical in nature, or in some official bureaucratic text such as a political communication or legal document... although it is already becoming less common in even these styles of writing. On the other hand, these grammar structures can be found in relative abundance in old literary works, which are often esteemed and have considerable prestige, especially among snobs.

When I was practicing my first sentences, these expressions were used more frequently than they are today (there you go—"were used" is precisely one of these verb forms...), however even in those days their use in the Hungarian language was rapidly in decline. Older people still used them fairly often, but the younger generation almost never. In fact, the style of language used made it easy to recognize which generation someone was from. Those who were adults before the end of World War Two—that is, were at least thirty years old by 1945—used these verb forms rather frequently. Anyone younger barely ever did.

Since the period I'm writing about now is between 1965 and 1970, I hope it is understandable that when I moved out of my grandmother's house and it was time for me to start going to school, my speech was rather strange. From the mouth of a small child came sentences whose subject matter was not only adult-like most of the time, but the entire language—the choice of words and idioms, the syntax and conjugation structure—sounded as if it came from a good half century ago. In addition, to increase the difficulty of my communication, even fifty years ago only the most elite intellectuals spoke in this way. My English readers may be surprised by this, since the usage of passive verb tenses is quite common in their native language even nowadays. So I ask them to imagine the situation as if it were a six-year-old school boy today speaking like some eloquent protagonist in the stories of Shakespeare (of course I mean the ORIGINAL works of Shakespeare, not the editions revised for young children...).

And alongside this there was the childishness of not being able to pronounce the "L" and "J" (English "y") sounds differently. I must have truly made a bizarre impression... To be fair, until I went to school nobody had warned me of this pronunciation error. Not a single person! I don't know why... perhaps they assumed I'd just grow out of it on my own?! They kept the reality a secret, although they couldn't even protect me from being mocked before my school years. It's true that I couldn't be mocked by other kids, for I had no child company, however there was an "uncle", a barber who visited us regularly, specifically to cut my hair from time to time. (So I wasn't even taken to a hairdressing salon, meaning I couldn't at least interact with "human society" this way...)

Now, this "barber uncle"—who was quite an old man himself—always asked the "Young Gentleman"—as he referred to me—how short I wanted my hair cut. Even at such a young age I was already a typical Aspie, in the sense that I had absolutely no interest in my appearance. In fact, I

positively HATED any occasion where I was required to "dress up" in fine clothes, for then my "elders" expected me to take extra special care of this damned clothing. (I especially hated suits, and still do as an adult, but above all else neckties!) My hairstyle was just another aspect of my "appearance", therefore I had no interest in it.

Of course, nobody ever taught me how to comb my hair, but that was even worse, because they wouldn't tolerate my hair being tousled, so Grandma or Dédi would comb it for me every day. Sometimes even more than once a day. I loathed this, detested it, because they almost always pulled my hair in the process—perhaps not deliberately, but I didn't like it at all.

Despite my young age, I had enough sense to know that the longer my hair was, the greater the risk of it being pulled. Therefore whenever the barber asked me how I wanted my hair cut, I always replied, "*Jó rövidre!*"—which has the approximate English meaning of, "Very short, please!" The only problem here was that I had *wanted* to say this, but instead ended up saying, "*Ló rövidre!*"—which in English equates to, "As short as a horse!".

Naturally I *believed* I was saying it right. And the barber always repeated it back to me, exactly as I had (wrongly) pronounced it: "Short as a horse, I understand."

To which I retorted, "*Nem ló rövidre hanem ló rövidre!*" ("Not 'horse-short', but 'horse-short'!") Although what I was trying to say was, "*Nem ló rövidre hanem jó rövidre!*" ("Not horse-short, but very short!") And it still didn't occur to me that I was saying "L" instead of "J".

The barber obviously found the situation very amusing, and continued to mock me by pretending he didn't understand what I meant. "Horse-short, I completely understand. It will be short, like the mane of a horse!".

At that point I began fuming with rage, and shouting, "I DON'T WISH FOR IT TO BE HORSE-SHORT BUT HORSE-SHORT! WHAT IS SO INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO YOU ABOUT THIS, SIR?!"

I remember Dédi struggling to console me on the first occasion, telling me that of course my hair would be very short, and asking me not to be angry at uncle for being stupid enough to not understand me. After all, he was old and had difficulty hearing, his ears were no good... She probably winked at the barber as she said this, although I didn't see it.

So she pretended it was the barber who had the problem, most likely because she misguidedly wanted to protect me from the "shock" of knowing that I mispronounced certain sounds. Although it would have been far better if she had just honestly told me the truth.

And this barber came to our place over and over again, always playing this damn little charade! I'm still furious with him even now for being so nasty to me. He could have at least told me what was going on with my speech. But he didn't. Apparently he found it very amusing that he, an old man, was able to make fun of a small defenseless child until he became hysterical. The bastard!

I don't understand either, why Grandma or Dédi didn't tell him after the first few times to stop doing it. I have no idea why. Perhaps they considered it bad manners to intervene? Was it better to allow me to be an innocent victim of his verbal aggression?! I don't know, and I still have trouble understanding it.

So how did I eventually grow out of this speech impediment? It was literally technological advancement that helped me, when some years later my father could purchase a cassette recorder, along with a microphone. Naturally it was a huge novelty for us, and everybody in the family wanted to try it

out so they could hear what their voice sounded like when played back. And as is often the case, at first my own voice seemed very strange to me. I could hardly believe it was really my voice; then I suspected the machine must be faulty. But I realized it couldn't be faulty, because I easily recognized everyone else's voice on the tape recorder. It was only mine that sounded strange... And that was the moment I became aware that there was something wrong with my pronunciation of the "J" sound...

I brought this to my father's attention. He told me that yes, I did pronounce this sound inaccurately. I asked him why he hadn't told me before. He said he didn't think it was important, and assumed that I already knew about it anyway.

"How was I supposed to know about it if you or nobody else ever told me?!" I asked.

"Well," my father replied, "I was certain that there were probably plenty of others who would have pointed it out to you, at least in school, so it seemed unnecessary to repeat it again. I didn't want to tease you about it."

And then the conversation between us went something like this:

"But no one told me at school. They just made fun of me."

"There you are, they did tell you!"

"No, they didn't, not at all!"

"But didn't you just say they made fun of you?"

"Yes, but that isn't 'telling' me. It's just mockery."

"I don't understand what you're saying, Zoli (this is what my father called me most of the time—a common nickname for 'Zoltán' in Hungary). How on earth could they mock your speech without telling you that your pronunciation was wrong?!"

"There's a big difference between mocking and telling. 'Telling' is just informing me of a fact, whereas mocking is not done to give me information, but for the express purpose of hurting me."

"Okay, you may be right about that aspect, but surely you were still able to grasp this information from what they were saying, right?"

"No."

"How is that possible?!"

"Well, it's simply that they mocked me in vain, for I didn't believe them."

"Why not?"

"Because anyone who mocks me is evil, and if someone is evil then they mean me harm. Why should I believe anyone who wants to hurt me?"

So although I had been mocked by my classmates about my speech impediment for a long time, I simply refused to believe them. I didn't believe any of it because not only could I not hear it in my own speech, I also had the principle that if you're all rotten enough to mock me, then I don't trust you, and if I don't trust someone then I don't give credence to anything they say!

Naturally after I heard the sad "fact" from the tape recording, which was confirmed by my father, there was no longer any room for doubt, and I asked my father how I could fix this problem. He suggested that I practice saying word pairs that differed only in this one letter, for example "**maJom**—**maLom**" (majom = monkey, malom = mill), and meanwhile pay close attention to my speech and pronunciation.

So I did. And because I was too lazy to sacrifice my free time on this practice, I did it every day on the way to and from the school, of course only when my classmates didn't want to beat me up... although this rarely happened on the way to school in the morning. Coming home from school, however, was almost always akin to a war mission for me. But I'll go into more detail about that later...

So that was how I practiced, with the incredible diligence and determination that is the surest hallmark of every Aspie, when they set their mind to something and want to achieve it.

And after perhaps a week or so, this diligence yielded results. I can still clearly remember the moment when I knew with absolute certainty—in fact I even heard it—that I finally pronounced the word 'MAJOM' correctly. It happened on the way home from school, and I remember quite vividly at which exact point along the way it happened, in front of which fence! It was a delightful experience. It meant far more to me than just getting rid of this speech impediment. I understood its long-term significance—that any area of life in which I seem inferior to others is a difficulty that may be real, yet it is SURMOUNTABLE, if I want it badly enough and I'm not discouraged in my efforts!

I now know, of course, that this is not literally true. There are indeed millions of things that are impossible for an Aspie to learn, even if they sweat blood attempting to do them. But these "impossible" things all fall into the category of 'social relations', therefore when I got the above idea that I could overcome anything, I was basically right, because at the time I was thinking strictly of "technical" or "practical" deficiencies such as speech, or the mastery of some scientific discipline.

Naturally my newly acquired talent of being able to pronounce the "J" sound, did not eliminate all my speech abnormalities. After all, I did learn it from older, highly-educated adults. Whenever someone took me somewhere on rare occasions, people always said things like, "Well isn't he a little professor!", "Oh, what a serious-minded boy he is!", "What a grown-up young man!" and so on.

Well, they were right! Apart from my usage of "archaic" passive tenses, my speech was strangely mannered. Even at the age of barely six, I was using such phrasings as:

"If you consider this action appropriate, Sir..."

"Assuming that the information received is correct..."

"I cannot state that I'm entirely certain about it, but I am of the opinion that..."

"Would Sir allow me to take a seat beside him?"

"The data at my disposal leads me to conclude..."

"I would be eternally grateful, Madam, if you could move this large bag out of my way, so I can gain access to the train lavatory. You must admit that my small size makes me quite incapable of moving this heavy luggage myself!"

"If I may draw your attention to..."

"I would be incredibly delighted if the fulfillment of my minor request didn't suffer any further postponement."

"I have no objection to it."

"This has not yet been sufficiently proven."

"This could be attributed to a number of reasons."

"It could be due to a variety of factors."

"In order to solve the given problem, a natural starting point is essential."

"Given that it is apparent from my previous statement that..."

"This approach obviously serves security very well."

Once I heard the following wise saying from somebody, and I immediately memorized it and repeated it to whoever I could: "The beauty of life is that everyone can spoil it as he pleases." I don't think any of my Readers would disagree that it's almost grotesque to hear such things coming from the mouth of a six-year-old boy!

Anyhow, this was how I spoke at that time, and I must add that this did not stand out to my parents... nor my Grandmother or Dédi! My parents simply didn't care, or perhaps they weren't aware of it; and as for Grandma and Dédi, they definitely noticed it, however they were downright proud of this attribute of mine, since it was an obvious sign of my cleverness, which was surely down to them raising me so well!

For these reasons, I sincerely warn all my Readers that if anyone starts telling your children or young relatives that they are a "real professor", a "young scientist", how "mature and well thought-out" their speech is and so on, then don't be filled with pride; on the contrary, you should immediately start suspecting—in fact "suspecting" is not the right word here, for you can be **ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN**—that the child has a major problem! (If we consider Asperger Syndrome a "problem".) As an Aspie myself, I can declare categorically that the surest sign of Aspergers is probably the adult-like speech of a child.

Naturally not every Aspie speaks in an adult-like fashion during their childhood. It isn't always the case. They could quite conceivably still be an Aspie even without this trait. But if they *do* speak in this way, then it is almost certain that they are an Aspie, at least in my opinion there is very little chance such a child could be anything else... Whether we like it or not, the sad reality is that a child is only "normal" if they behave like a child, and therefore also speak in a child-like manner. If this is not the case, then you need not delude yourself, dear Reader, and hope for miracles—the child is clearly an Aspie! That is the harsh reality, the naked truth.

I will emphasize it again for the umpteenth time, because it is so important—if a child's speech is adult-like, then it is **DEAD CERTAIN** that something is very, very wrong! A parent's duty is not "to be proud" of this attribute, but to seek a competent professional as soon as possible, in order to have the child examined. Then together with this expert—and ideally the child's involvement, depending on their age—decide what kind of special environment and education would be most suitable for the young boy or girl.

So I was actually a "little adult" long before my school age, as I was often told at the time, and I was very proud of this title... But unfortunately this had serious consequences the moment I began going to school.

Just imagine the situation... I am sitting among the other children, and the least of my problems is getting the "L" and "J" sounds mixed up. Or more precisely, always saying "L" in place of "J". They could still understand my speech, in spite of this issue. Or I should say, they could *have* understood it. This has to be written in the conditional tense. In other words, I was *not* understood most of the time. After all, what "ordinary" six-year-old child can understand such long and complicated sentence structures as the examples I listed earlier?! Especially when they were full of passive verb tenses. The majority of my classmates (perhaps even all of them) had probably never heard a single one in their lives!

It is not much of a stretch to imagine that my pre-school upbringing was essentially that of a sheltered, unsocialized young nobleman. A "Young Gentleman", as I was always called by the barber who made fun of me. A young aristocrat, who was not allowed to play or converse with the other children, the "peasants" and "lower classes", lest he be harmed in some way. Given this start in life, it is entirely natural that his speech is also going to be completely different from that of the "riff raff".

This analogy is all the more accurate, since in a certain sense I really can consider myself some sort of "noble descendant". Namely, my maternal grandmother was in fact the daughter of an aristocratic family, even if it was just the minor gentry. This can be proven by there being a "-y" suffix on the end of her family name (which when pronounced by Hungarians in this position sounds like the letter "i" in the English word "kiss"). This family name is "**Becskeházy**".

Even in Hungary today, the fact of a name having this suffix is the surest sign that at least one of the family's ancestors was once a noble. However I couldn't say which of the formerly-existing Hungarian noble titles is my legal due—most likely none of them, given that such titles are usually inherited on the paternal line, and I came from the maternal line of that family. Although there is still a small chance, because it is conceivable that if the paternal line dies out, then the title is transferred to one of the surviving members of the maternal line. There were quite possibly complicated rules about this at the time. "Were", in the past tense, since noble titles were officially abolished in Hungary many decades before I was born. In any case, I have not looked into whether such a rule existed.

The point is that my grandmother has this "-y" suffix at the end of her name, which goes some way to explaining why she raised me in such isolated circumstances. She was obviously accustomed to it, and took it for granted because compared to the "common people", she herself may have been brought up in an aristocratic environment.

Update: I did look into this a few weeks after typing the above lines—not that I'm particularly interested in noble titles, but just for the sake of accuracy. Well, according to the national database (the largest of its kind in Hungary) the male line of this family *has* died out. However this fact does not significantly increase the chances of me being entitled to any noble rank (or that I *would have been* if they had not been abolished in Hungary), because even if there was a law or tradition that in this situation the title is to be passed on to a female member of the family, there is no guarantee that it would specifically be my grandmother. But even if it were, that wouldn't "help" me much, because in this scenario, after my grandmother's death the title would be passed on to her *male* child, that is, not my mother but my uncle. But even after my uncle's death I have no hope of inheriting the title, because he has male children, in fact, three of them... (not that I wish him dead—my relationship with my uncle was always quite good; not necessarily close, but at least amiable). My only faint chance would be if the law said that my grandmother's title would go to her eldest child, regardless of that child's gender. Because as far as I know—although I wouldn't dare swear to it—my mother was the eldest and not my uncle... at least, my mother always referred to my uncle as "öcsi", which in Hungarian essentially means "younger brother". This implies that my mother was the eldest child.

But I admit that all this is mere fantasy, because it is incredibly unlikely that after the extinction of the male line the title would fall on any woman. That would be incongruous with the medieval male chauvinist mentality. And anyhow, as I already mentioned, the era of noble titles and ranks is long gone in Hungary. I really only rambled on about it a little for the sake of completeness, and again, I have very little interest in noble ranks personally. Unless of course the title came with a considerable

fortune... However the fact is that I came from a family that could be considered "aristocratic", and at least my grandmother still preserved some of the traditions of nobility, which is part of the reason she brought me up the way she did, and this explains a lot, even my behavior.

Just to be thorough, I would like to include the following information about the family crest: Becskeházy—The first mentioning of this family was in 1430, according to a document from the village Torna. The comb of the helmet is decorated with a bent, armored arm gripping a sword. Here is an image of the coat of arms:



For the sake of genealogists, I will summarize what I have been able to find out about my ancestors:

My maternal grandmother's name is Becskeházy Adél. Her father was Becskeházy Ignác, who—despite his nobility—was a master blacksmith in the town Cinkota, and was born in the village Csenyété. His wife, Müller Adél, was my great-grandmother, whom I always called Dédi.

Just as an aside, Dédi also had another daughter, "Aunt Ida". And a previous husband, Lencz Rezső, who died a "heroic death", however I don't know the details.

I cannot boast of any noble lineage on my paternal side (at least none that I know of), but according to family tradition, my father was a direct descendant of the famous "Viola Outlaw".

I should also note that my talent as a writer was most likely inherited from the paternal line—my father's mother (who I never knew personally because she died prematurely) began writing a novel, but died before completing it.

Okay, let's get back to the matter at hand, which is my grandmother raising me in extreme isolation. Now just imagine how this affected me on my very first day of school!

I remember the scene clearly. Shortly after I was left alone there, that is without my parents (I don't remember if it was my father or mother who took me to school on the first day, but they left very quickly), I had a sudden need to relieve myself before the first class had even started. I didn't set out in search of the toilet in the building, even though it wasn't at all large or elaborate (however I will point out that it would have been a futile endeavor, since the incredibly dirty and smelly toilet "dedicated" to the students was in a separate shack at the edge of the schoolyard...), but instead asked the first adult I came across—a schoolmistress—for assistance in the following manner:

"Excuse me, my Lady, forgive me for intruding, but would you be so kind as to enlighten me on the location of the nearest lavatory?"

Naturally she had never heard such speech before, especially not from the mouth of a small child just starting first grade! Perhaps not even from an adult. I immediately "detected" that something was wrong (although I didn't know exactly *what*) because she didn't give me the answer straight away, but instead responded with, "What?!"

Seeing that there were some communication difficulties, I explained the situation to her: "To be more specific, it is my very first day here at this prestigious institution, and consequently, being uninformed, it cannot be expected of me to be familiar with every minor detail of the building's layout that may be considered insignificant to others. Therefore may I please ask you, my Lady, to kindly provide me with the appropriate... orientation?"

I even remember hesitating a little before saying the last word, because I was trying so hard to be a "good boy"; I had such respect for the school where I believed I would gain Great Knowledge (I will admit that in those days I had many delusions in regards to school and education...) that I strove to speak as precisely and refinedly as possible to the teachers I truly respected at the time (although later that changed), and I wavered for a moment between whether "orientation" or "information" was the most suitable word in this sentence.² In the end I decided to use the word "orientation", as I described above, because in my mind the word "information" meant something far more abstract than the location of a toilet. On the other hand, it seemed likely that the word "orientation" was a derivative of the word "orient", and therefore its meaning was closer to words like "direction" or "location". Taking these things into consideration, I felt this word was the better choice in the given situation.

Well, she just stared at me for a long time, and eventually showed me where it was... without a single word. She must have been totally perplexed. Of course my speech was unusual to her, since an ordinary neurotypical child would have at most asked, "Miss, where is the toilet?", but more likely they would simply run up to her and say, "I have to pee!"

Whenever I recall those old days, I always wonder if it wasn't my misfortune to be an Aspie, or even to have had a largely aristocratic upbringing. I was probably the last child in Hungary to grow up in such an environment. The real tragedy was that I wasn't born in England, into some noble family! Just think about it—I was the family's first-born child, and in addition a boy. Therefore I would have inherited the fortune and the title... everything. Most importantly, however, until I was "inducted" into my inheritance, I wouldn't have been forced to "descend" to the masses, to speak to anyone who belonged to the "lower classes".

If this type of situation had somehow occurred, then nobody would have expected me to speak like them. After all, in England they take it for granted that there are a whole host of dialects, and it's precisely the dialect of the aristocracy that is most divergent from "common" English. And if some of my eccentricities were still conspicuous, it wouldn't have mattered much, since it is common knowledge—or at least a widespread opinion—that aristocrats are all a bit nutty. And the British aristocracy are notorious for being impassive and reserved. In this respect, there are indeed certain similarities between them and Aspies...

² In Hungarian there is a word that can have either of these meanings.

So I don't think I would have had much trouble fitting in, if I had been born there. But unfortunately I wasn't...

But let's not get ahead of ourselves—this chapter is not yet about my school years. I have only included the above story as a kind of "preliminary tidbit", to illustrate the manner in which I spoke at that time. And I wanted to convey this so it could be observed how I addressed the teacher; not as "Miss" or "Teacher". In my eyes she was a Lady... "My Lady".

Until I started school—in fact, even for a good while later—I addressed every female being of the Homo Sapiens species who was obviously older than me as "Lady" or "Madam". That's right, not even as "auntie" (a slightly less formal address in Hungary). And every man as "Sir".

In addition, although I previously emphasized that I wasn't ever permitted any child company, and neither had contact with many adults, I would occasionally catch a glimpse from a distance of a "human specimen" who appeared to be a teenager. I was soon taught that males of this age were to be addressed as "mister", and females as "miss". But it wasn't until I was at school that I ever had the opportunity to talk to any of these young men or women. This wasn't such a big problem.

The real trouble—which became the root of much of my later difficulties—began with the visits of relatives and acquaintances, who although weren't teenagers and therefore belonged to the group of people to be addressed as "Sir" or "Lady", did not like being referred to by me in this way. It must have felt cold to them, not friendly enough. They taught me—or rather, tried to teach me—that there were other forms of address too, such as "uncle" and "auntie". The only problem with that was that I was an Aspie...

This fact was enough for me not to have much success in this area of Life. Because everything had been fine while there was a single and sufficiently clear rule for addressing people—that anyone considerably older than me was to be addressed as "Sir" if he was a man, or "Lady" or "Madam" if she was a woman. As I mentioned earlier, there could have also been some confusion in regards to addressing teenagers, but fortunately this danger did not end up manifesting, because I never came into contact with them. Therefore, initially the area involving forms of address was clear to me.

But the moment "auntie" and "uncle" entered the picture, there was a serious disturbance in "the Force". And I'm sorry to have to say—because I insist on being candid, even if I embarrass myself with this confession—that this disturbance has not subsided since then, but only intensified.

It soon emerged that I couldn't call everybody "auntie" or "uncle". However the reason for this restriction was not based on the gender difference. It was perfectly clear that the women were the aunties and the men the uncles; I never mixed that up.

Fortunately for me, there were no widespread transgender movements in Hungary at that time, and if anyone was unsure of their gender identity they tried to hide it, they didn't advertise it. At least their manner of dress made it clear what their gender was (or what they wanted to portray to others), so I could always easily recognize who was male and female. There were no "mixed" genders back then; gender boundaries were sharp. But unfortunately it wasn't clear-cut, because there were some who objected to being called "auntie". Some of my female relatives and acquaintances believed they "weren't old enough" to be considered an "auntie". (The males generally didn't mind if I called them "uncle", even if they were of a younger age). But what was I supposed to say, if I couldn't call them "auntie"?!

Well, it turned out that they expected me to simply call them by their names. On familiar terms of course (or a first-name basis). Because that was friendlier. (Note for my English readers: In Hungary there are informal and formal personal pronouns for the word 'you', the latter having rather complex rules). And I absolutely agree that the informal style is far more friendly. I could never understand why the hell the other style, "magázás", even existed in the Hungarian language! *(I note on the side that theoretically this damned "magázás" formal style is the equivalent of the English "you" in translations, although Hungarians use the informal style far more frequently, pretty much all the time in private life, among friends and family etc. But not without exceptions, and that's exactly what causes such tremendous difficulties...)*

If it were up to me, I would only keep the informal style in the (Hungarian) language, and ruthlessly eradicate everything else. It's completely mind-boggling in my eyes to address somebody—using such verb forms—as if you were talking to a third person who is not present! It truly surpasses all conceivable grammar idiocies, for it can only lead to misunderstandings in the interpersonal communication process, without having the slightest benefit.

If English had been my native language, I would probably be just as bothered and annoyed by the fact that in English the word "you" means both the singular and plural "second person", and that "they" is sometimes used as a gender-neutral singular third person pronoun! This still bothers me a lot, even without English being my native language. Because I'm learning it!

So I had no objection to being asked to use the informal style. The trouble was that I didn't know who I should do this with, and who I shouldn't; who expected this from me and who would become offended when a small boy addressed them familiarly. Because there were indeed such hellhags...

I should have kept all this in mind about the numerous adults (by numerous I mean no more than two dozen, yet it was enough to exceed my "capacity"...), who incidentally visited us over a long period of time—not everyday, and some not even every month. Yet they still expected me to remember how they requested to be addressed. And on top of this, to remember their names as well.

I just want to note, hoping my Reader will forgive this small digression, that memorizing names—that is, *personal names*—and associating them with a given person, is terribly difficult for me. (Even now as an adult!) This task was so difficult that it took me until the end of the third year of grammar school to learn the names of my classmates. And even then, in many cases I only knew one of their names. Today I can't remember ANY OF THEM, or to be precise, just the name of one. It was a girl, whose name I won't write down in case I get sued for "violation of personal rights" or something. But her name always evoked ridiculous associations whenever I heard it, and that's why I remember her. Nobody else though... What's more, I can remember no more than ten of the names of my classmates in elementary school, even though the class size was 44, including me...

Yet adults expected me to learn their first and last names, as well as whether to address them simply by their name, with "auntie", or either "My Lady/Madam". And as for grammar, whether to use formal or informal personal pronouns.

Naturally I failed to meet this requirement, and as I got older the problem only got worse, especially when I entered adolescence. For I was barely ten years old, and as the years passed there were more and more people who wanted me to change the way I was addressing them, even though I still had trouble remembering their former requests. In addition, those I hadn't struggled much with because they had tolerated me calling them "auntie", suddenly expected me to call them something else, telling

me that I was "grown-up now", or at least an adolescent, therefore it was no longer appropriate. Those who had insisted on me using the formal style earlier wanted me to switch to being on familiar terms. But then there were some who said the opposite—that I was no longer some immature child who could be forgiven for such familiar chatter, and so if he honored me with the formal address, "man to man", then I was also obligated to switch to this style.

I hasten to add that I don't feel honored *at all* if somebody addresses me formally, in fact I still find this style rather cold, as I did back in my childhood. Besides, I don't believe respect is primarily based on words.

And then there were women who suddenly preferred me to switch to the formal address, in order to not fall under suspicion for a young man being overly familiar towards them. So I had to relearn the whole fucking jungle of rules of address, that is, I *should have*, since I didn't have much success doing so...

There was also an occasion where a lady, who had not yet given me any trouble in this area, one day asked me, her face flushed red in anger, how I dared to address her in such a familiar way! In bewilderment, I stammered that this had always been the case. Even so, she still almost hit the ceiling in her rage, and furiously shouted that I should have known she had remarried, so it was inappropriate for me to talk to her "as though there were something between us" (!!!), and I had embarrassed her in front of everybody...

I could never grasp how she could have seriously thought that anyone might suspect there being "something between us". Of course there *was*—at least thirty years! Such a significant age difference is very uncommon, even if the man is older, but especially if the woman is!

Okay, I won't go on about it.

The truth is that this subsystem of the Hungarian language or society—I don't know which of these two concepts is to blame—is so unfathomably confusing that I have often found it to cause difficulties for even the most "normal" neurotypical children and teenagers. How could *I* have met the "requirements"?! They expected me to complete an impossible mission. Not only was I supposed to learn an already terribly complicated social code, based on vague rules about how old people "look", to what extent they are related etc., but the whole system was full of exceptions, with certain people wanting me to address them in ways that seemed totally illogical to me based on the "rules". Plus I had to relearn this whole set of rules a few years later. Moreover, they expected me to know it instinctively. To just discover it out of thin air!

I swear that I did my utmost. I remember when I was first told to say "auntie" instead of "my lady" because it was friendlier, and then asking who I specifically had to say this word to. They told me to use it with women who seemed old. But to me they all seemed "old"... So I asked them precisely how old the woman should look. I was told by my parents (they were visiting me at Grandma's house at the time) that if the woman looked to be over fifty years old, then I could call her "auntie". I made a mental note of this new rule, although I was worried, because how could I be sure that the woman was over fifty? I followed the strategy that if her face was wrinkled, then she was probably an "auntie". This method helped me a lot, but unfortunately not in every situation. There were plenty who to me seemed on the "border line". And needless to say, very soon I made a mistake.

It so happened that a few guests came to visit us again, and one of them was a woman. Well there were several actually, but I had no problems with the others. However this particular woman was unknown to me, since she had never visited us before, or if she had, it was so long ago that I couldn't remember her. And her face was not wrinkled... I wanted to be a polite child with good manners, who didn't accidentally offend her by using the wrong form of address, so as soon as I saw her I went up to her and asked, "Could you please tell me how old you are?"

Everyone who heard me immediately froze. All conversation stopped, and all eyes were directed towards me. The woman herself was silent for a few seconds, before replying, "What has that got to do with you?!"

At that moment I knew I had made some serious mistake, but I had no idea what it was. All I could do was tell the truth. After all, I was a child who didn't like to lie, although I didn't even know what kind of lie could help me anyway. What should I have said in the given situation?! So I answered honestly: "I would like to know this information because it is necessary in order for me to make a decision about the most adequate form of address." (Please note, dear Reader, that I deliberately phrased it in such a way as to avoid any specific address!) "Since I was taught," I continued, "that if a woman is old, that is, over fifty, then I have to call her 'auntie', and if she is younger, then..."

I couldn't even finish my sentence, for I was immediately reprimanded by the others, being told what an impertinent, obscene child I was (they didn't call me a "little adult" or "professor" this time...), and that it was bad manners to inquire about a woman's age, and that a woman in her fifties is not old, and so on.

I wouldn't have had a problem with all this if they had also given me some simple rules about how to address a particular person. But they didn't. And who the hell was curious about a woman's age anyway?! I certainly wasn't. I didn't want to be impertinent, in fact it was my foremost intention to behave like a "good boy" who didn't even unwittingly contravene any rule! I was willing to use any form of address, as long as I was told EXACTLY what to say, when to say it, and to whom. It wouldn't have even mattered if the appropriate address depended on very complicated rules— provided that those rules were CLEAR and had NO EXCEPTIONS! In practical terms, if the set of rules was consistent. Unfortunately the rules weren't clear at all, and even these ambiguous rules were almost always overridden by exceptions...

I would like to note here, by the way, that I *still don't understand* why it is considered indecent behavior to inquire about a woman's age! What is there to be ashamed of?! Age is not something we have any control over. It is not dependent on our desires or behavior! It is not like, say, whether someone has a criminal record. I really can't see what one can possibly be ashamed of about their age! On what grounds?! Even today, this still baffles me! I will indeed admit that now, as I type these words, I am 54 years old, so you could say a whole lifetime has flown by, and yet despite this I still can't grasp why I or anybody else should be ashamed of their AGE of all things!

And if there *is* some reason to be ashamed, why is it only the case with women, and not with men?! And what is worse, women are loudly demanding equal rights. I also support emancipation, so I agree with all that... but then why do they claim such strange (and ridiculous...) privileges, expecting everybody to treat them as ageless beings, as if they were some kind of immortal superhumans?! What's more, if they are afraid that men will find them less appealing once their age becomes known, then they are incredibly stupid, because as a man myself, I can firmly state that men are not in the least

interested in the age of a woman, but what they look like! A woman could be 1600 years old, and if she still looks decent then she'd have no trouble attracting men. But if she looks like some deformed gnome, then it makes no difference if the poor thing is only 16 years old, for her youth won't help her at all! So I understand why it's indecent to say that a woman is ugly. But I don't understand why it's insulting to ask about her age. Therefore it is utterly absurd to me that women are ashamed of their age, and that they consider it bad manners to inquire after.

I will now tell yet another story in connection to this, which did not happen in my childhood but about two years ago—that is, two years before writing these words—however it fits well here, as it's related to a woman's age. This story clearly proves how even now as an adult, I am unable to comprehend this issue...

So, what happened was that a lady contacted me by email because she had enjoyed reading some of my books, and wanted to get access to the others that weren't yet available. I sent her the rest of the stories from my series. We developed a kind of virtual relationship, nothing intimate, but she enjoyed being able to read good books, and I liked the fact that I had a "fan".

In the beginning there was only a minor problem. Namely, that we corresponded with each other via Gmail, and she had previously uploaded a profile picture of herself that was woefully inadequate, since it only showed half of her face. This bothered me terribly, although I cannot say why. Anyhow, I asked her if she could change it to a better one. Eventually she did, although her response to my request gave me the vague feeling that she was offended because I didn't like how she looked in the photo... even though I emphasized that my only problem was that I couldn't see the lower half of her face. So she uploaded another photo of herself, and it remained there for many months. I had no problem with this picture, however one day I saw that she had replaced it with yet another photo. And in this latest photo she looked far older. Well, that definitely bothered me. Of course it bothered me—we Aspies like things that are familiar, because any change is stressful for us. Therefore we don't even really like pleasant surprises, let alone unpleasant ones! Okay, I admit that her photo being replaced with a much older-looking image can't literally be called an "unpleasant" surprise, especially since I never considered having any kind of intimate relationship with this lady. Yet I still felt that if this was her real appearance and age, then I had been deceived up until now (along with everyone else corresponding with her who had seen her previous photo...).

I asked her what had happened, and why she had changed it. It turned out that she didn't have a recent photo of herself at the time, so she had uploaded one in which she was younger... Well, I don't like being taken for a fool... Nowadays, in the age of the camera phones, it's not such a big deal to quickly snap a photo of ourselves facing our phone or standing in front of a mirror, or ask a friend to take a photo of us... But even disregarding that—it had been about two years since she had uploaded the previous photo. Was she truly unable to replace that FALSE photo in the TWO WHOLE YEARS between then and now?!

So I was very unhappy about the whole thing. I felt it was a lie, an absolutely unjustified lie, but I had enough sense in the area of human relationships to not express these feelings to her, because I knew she would immediately take offense. And I didn't want to quarrel.

"Okay," I thought to myself, "She's just one of those vain oversensitive beings who consider their appearance their core value, but at least this silly goose likes my books, and seeing as I can't change her anyway, there's no point getting into an argument over it, it would be a waste of breath..."

So I acknowledged what she had done, and that this was her true image at the present time (allegedly... for how could I be certain about anything she said about herself from now on?!), and in order to drop the matter, as well as an attempt to be kind, I wrote to her that she actually looks like my great-grandmother as she lives in my memories, whom I loved very much. Now that really caused her to fly off the handle! I won't write down all the things she called me, but rest assured, dear Reader, it would be hard to think of an accusation, insult, or angry outburst that was omitted from the list the lady hurled at me... that she had misjudged my character, that I was deliberately trying to humiliate her etc... And she severed all contact with me.

Of course, AFTER THE FACT it occurred to me that, oops... that idiotic female attitude from the woman's behavioral repertoire was manifesting again, and she clearly assumed that I think she looks old because I made mention of my great-grandmother, and being old is so shameful... However there are two issues with this. One is that I repeatedly warned her during our friendship that I was an Aspie, and what that entailed. Namely, *she couldn't expect me to show the same refined courtesy as that of neurotypical individuals!* And she promised many times to take this into account. Well, there you go, so much for her promise...

The other issue is that I wasn't actually implying she was old when I mentioned my great-grandmother. I would have liked to tell her this, but that was no longer possible because she had blocked me from emailing her. It doesn't matter, I will describe what was going through my mind at the time, in case she happens to come across this book in the future, and anyhow, it may be an interesting story for others...

Back in the days of my childhood, when Dédi was still alive and I was in elementary school, not only were there no laptops, but no VCRs either. Anyone who wanted something more than the slim repertoire of movies on TV, had to go to the cinema. I myself rarely went to the cinema, because it was expensive and too far away. However I did once go to see a movie (I can't remember its title), and it's important to say that in those days film screenings began with a "newsreel" being shown, a kind of commercial. It was something like the advertising at the beginning of Youtube videos or DVD movies today. So I had to watch this newsreel first, and although I no longer remember the movie, nor the contents of the newsreel, I *do* remember that there was a scene in the newsreel showing some prestigious company, and I could have sworn that one of the women there was none other than my Dédi, only a much younger "edition"! After this it may not seem surprising that I didn't remember which film I was watching, because the only thing going through my mind was, "Wow, this is amazing! What a famous great-grandmother I have, she's even appeared on the big screen!"

As soon as the movie was over, I hurried home in a frenzy and told Grandma and Dédi what I had seen. They were very surprised, and Dédi told me that it was impossible, because she had never been featured in a movie in her life. I disagreed, saying that this wasn't as a character in a "real" movie, just something like when reporters film some notable "party" or "reception", and even if there are no such events in socialism nowadays, she lived in the bygone regime between the two World Wars, so it was entirely possible that she happened to be at a few of these social gatherings, and she could have been filmed without noticing it!

Now she became a little hesitant, and said that although she hadn't been to many of these sorts of events, she did attend a few of them... so she supposed it was possible, even though she didn't think it was likely... But I could see that she liked the idea of being on the screen.

Then we pulled out all of Dédi's old photos, and although I didn't find any of her wearing the exact same dress as the lady in the newsreel, there were some photos in which she looked very similar, both her face and style of clothes. Naturally I can't be totally certain even now, whether or not it actually was her in that old newsreel. I am more inclined to share her opinion that the probability of this was quite slim, and that I must have mistaken her for someone very similar. As a child, however, I was firmly convinced that I had a famous great-grandmother, who had managed to make it onto the big screen (albeit "involuntarily"). And because we had looked through those old photographs of Dédi back then, finding several among them in which she looked very much like the "newsreel lady", and of course looking far younger than she did in reality (approaching her eighties), she now lives on in my memory as actually being that young. Consequently, if I tell someone they look like my great-grandmother, it doesn't necessarily mean that I think of her as some decrepit old frump!

Incidentally, apart from the last few months of her life, Dédi was quite an attractive lady even in her old age. Her movements may have been slow, but her face wasn't ugly at all. She looked good in fact, considering her age. She certainly didn't have to be ashamed of her appearance in any way. Of course, even in those photos she didn't look like a young lady, nor someone in her thirties. She looked like a mature adult woman, in her late middle age. Therefore not at all like a decrepit old woman. I suppose she could have been described as "a respectable mother", or "a dignified matron". In fact, "matron" may even be a bit of an exaggeration, because she wasn't that old, now that I think about it.

So these were basically the things going on in my mind when I likened my pen-pal to my great-grandmother, and I was prepared to explain all this to her in detail, but she became hysterical and broke contact with me. And even if I really had thought she looked just like my OLD great-grandmother—what would have been so shameful and offensive about that?! Everyone gets old at some point, but it's nobody's fault. If she is old *now*, it only means that she was born before me, or any other random person who happens to be younger than her. But eventually they will inevitably grow old too, and so will I, and then others will be young. This is the nature of Life! So there would have been nothing offensive about that either, in my opinion, but this wasn't even the issue, because I had a far younger image of "Dédi" in mind when I committed this "unforgivable offense" against her boundless vanity...

The lesson from the above story is that even as an adult, I still don't know why the hell women are so touchy about their *age*, and it's obvious that even an adult Aspie is not immune to the unintentional violation of these sorts of social rules, customs and expectations!

I think there is something else that must be mentioned in relation to the topic of this chapter. When I was a bit older, some of the adult men expected me to not only switch to the formal style of address, but also tried to habituate me to the handshake. Whenever possible, I avoided doing this.

There were two reasons. First of all, many of them thought it was good fun to squeeze my hand as hard as they could, in a "manly" fashion, which hurt me of course, and I felt humiliated because—being younger—I was not able to squeeze their hand back with the same strength. Secondly, I had an aversion towards the handshake in general, and still loathe it now, because how could I know how clean the other man's hand was?! He may have been on the toilet shortly before shaking hands, or masturbating,

or picking his nose and not washed his hands afterwards! Why should I even have to touch someone else's hand anyway?! What the hell for?! What has his hand, or any other of his body parts, got to do with me? I'm not his lover, nor his doctor! What benefit could this action possibly have for either him or me?! I don't even understand why this gesture is supposed to be "manly"! A sword duel might be considered manly, let's face it... But a HANDSHAKE?! It's disgusting and pointless, and I hate the whole thing!

The Covid-19 epidemic is currently raging as I type these words, and given the risk of infection, the handshake seems to be going out of fashion. I am VERY HAPPY about this, and I will openly admit that if this does happen and the handshake disappears in the sinkhole of History, and goes to the "cultural rubbish heap" where it belongs, then even if my opinion seems cruel, this pandemic was not such a huge price to pay for it. Yes, that really is how much I hate handshakes!

But let's return to my childhood, which is actually the theme of this chapter. I hope it is clear from the series of events mentioned before this digression, that even at such a young age I displayed one of the most important attributes of an Aspie: the endeavor to comply with the rules! Several other very striking features of Aspies were already apparent to me at that time too:

- the search for solitude
- an excellent imagination
- a high degree of righteousness and sense of justice that was essentially "genetically coded".

I can give concrete examples of all these, even from the time I was very young, which I will now describe. Let's begin with the search for solitude...

Although I explained earlier that my environment was very lacking in stimulation, it seems that in a certain sense even this small amount was too much for me back then. This is evident from the fact that from time to time I retreated into all sorts of dark places in order to be alone, away from everybody. It wasn't just solitude that I was seeking, however; it was essential for the space to be completely dark, so that the light didn't bother me.

One of my novels titled, "Kayam the Mistake", is a story about a wizard with Asperger-syndrome, and his name is "Kayam". Although the novel never mentions the term "Asperger-syndrome", nor "Aspie", there is no doubt that Kayam is an Aspie, because he was modeled on myself... except of course that I can't perform magic (at least, so far I haven't been able to...), and believe me, dear Readers, it is me who regrets this most! This novel takes place in an ancient or early medieval setting, so it's a kind of "fantasy". In the description of Kayam's childhood, I included the following (these are quotes from the novel, where any omissions have been marked with three dots):

...he developed a lot of strange habits. For example, not only was he not afraid of the dark like other children, he was especially fond of it. He sought it out. He had various hiding places and his favorite pastime was spending hours alone in complete darkness. His hideouts included places like the corners of the attic, the inside of the closet, which had a special latch installed by his father so he could hide in there without anyone being able to open it from the outside. Kayam had thrown a tantrum until his father gave in...

...From then on his new hiding place was under the bed. He hid there so often that his clothes were constantly covered in dirt and dust.

"Why do you climb into dark places all on your own?" asked his mother.

"So I can think more clearly without being disturbed," came the response.

Kayam stubbornly persisted with this habit until he grew so big he no longer fit into these tiny spaces. But even then he required absolute silence and darkness where he was sleeping.

This was the extent of the quote from my novel. Everything described in the above quotation was also true for me in my childhood. Even the fact that I had a latch installed on the inside of the big closet so I could lock it when I was inside... And then when I outgrew that, my next hiding place was under the bed...

I had other hiding places too. I didn't include this in the novel mentioned above, because they were big empty cardboard boxes, and in Kayam's medieval world cardboard boxes did not yet exist... But they did already exist in my childhood, as that was the time when washing machines were starting to become widespread in Hungary. Not the automatic washing machine, but the more primitive, tall, reel washing machine that is operated manually. Grandma purchased one of these, and as soon as they had unpacked the machine, I immediately laid the box in the corner of the room and "occupied" it. That is, I climbed inside and closed the opening behind me. It felt wonderful being in there! Later, when my parents "deported" me to their own house, I threw a tantrum until they procured me another of these boxes from an acquaintance. This box soon became damaged (I don't remember how,) but then my parents also decided to buy a washing machine, so I had a replacement.

By the way, Grandma, Dédi and my parents especially liked it when I "boxed myself in", because on the one hand they knew exactly where I was, but at the same time I was not visible, so I wasn't disturbing them. And in addition, they could be absolutely sure that I wasn't doing anything wrong, after all, I couldn't really break anything in the box, so it was like I didn't even exist for a while...

While I still managed to fit into those boxes, I spent several hours a day in them. It was a real mental struggle for me to admit that I was simply too big now, and that this wonderful era was over forever! Then I had to make do with lying under the bed, until I outgrew that as well.

I remember my father once getting angry at me for some reason, and wanting to punish me. I don't recall exactly what kind of punishment he had planned, perhaps a slap or something, but it was some kind of mild physical retribution. I didn't want to endure it, of course, so I quickly climbed under the bed. As close to the wall as possible too. The only way my father could have got me out of there was if he forced a significant portion of his body under the bed, or perhaps scraped me out with some kind of hook-tipped tool... Naturally he did neither of these things. Instead he put some chairs in front of the bed, sat on the middle one, and told me that until I apologized I had to stay under the bed. I wouldn't be able to get out, for I was too big to climb out between the chair legs, and I couldn't move them since he was sitting on the middle one.

I gave no reply, just grinned to myself. I knew my old man's efforts were completely hopeless—there was absolutely no way that he wouldn't get bored first! He didn't have the slightest chance of forcing me out with this. I had probably had more practice than anyone at crouching down alone in the dark. And I was right. Of course he got bored first...

In order to maintain his authority, after a short while—at least it didn't seem long to me—he said, "Okay, that was a long enough punishment, I'll allow you to come out now!"

I grinned again, because that was hardly much of a punishment. How could it be, since I voluntarily spent a far greater amount of time under there every day! Despite my Aspieness, I already had enough sense and insight into human nature to know that my father was fully aware of this too; he just didn't want to admit that he had lost this battle. And since I basically loved my father, I didn't rub his nose in it, pretending to feel as though I really had been punished. That didn't mean I cried or even put on a sad expression, but just that when I climbed out from under the bed, I didn't start boasting that I had won and that it wasn't even a real punishment for me etc. I was thinking all these things though... but I didn't say them.

As far back as I can remember, this was the very first occasion in my life where I made a conscious effort to be considerate of other people's feelings, at least in terms of not humiliating others.

As for the other important attribute of Aspies, an excellent imagination, I could write a whole separate book on the subject. So I will just mention a few snippets here.

When I saw a telephone for the first time—not in my grandmother's house, they didn't have one, but somewhere we went to in Budapest—I wondered why it needed to be wired. It seemed logical to me that if a television or radio didn't need to be wired in order to obtain reception of a broadcast (except for the power cable, of course), then a telephone shouldn't need one either. In fact, in those days there were already pocket radios and portable radios, and I guessed that a telephone wouldn't need much more power than these, since it only emitted sound, and therefore it should be able to be made without any cables at all. And I told everyone who was willing to listen that it was completely nonsensical to create telecommunication devices in the current way, that TV broadcasts were relayed via radio waves despite the fact that a TV was an enormous box and therefore always stayed in the same place, we didn't carry it with us, and so the programs would be better broadcasted via a wire (ie. cable), and then they would be of better quality because there would be no interference. On the other hand, it would be a good solution to make the telephone similar to pocket radios—powered by batteries, and the phone conversation transmitted by radio waves. Then we could always carry the telephone with us, after all, we're likely to need it far more often than the TV! But the present system is totally illogical, the exact reverse of what it should be! It's a faulty design!

My words were considered mere childish chatter. However if you look around at the world today, it turns out that although I was barely five years old at the time, I was able to predict the direction of technical development almost fifty years, HALF A CENTURY, in advance! I basically invented the concept of both cable television and the cell phone! As far as I'm concerned, this in itself is significant evidence of what I mentioned in the first chapter, that I am a genius...

Of course I'm a genius, it is entirely natural for me to be one, but not because I'm the great Zoltán Viola, the Genius; because I'm an Aspie, and ***all Aspies truly are geniuses!*** I just happen to be one of them. Every Aspie is a genius, without exception! Most of them just aren't noticed, their ingenious insights not valued. Nobody valued my idea about cable television and cell phones at the time either... Now just imagine what would have happened if they had taken me seriously on that particular day, and they began developing the cell phone in Hungary? Perhaps Hungary would now be the world's leading mobile phone manufacturer, with a bunch of patents, and even be a microelectronics giant in general,

because during the development of the mobile phone they would have discovered powerful microchips that would enable them to build fast computers...

They once showed a program on TV about the dangers that researchers undergo in order to film interesting natural phenomena: for example, encountering wild animals, or descending into the craters of volcanoes that are about to erupt. In amazement I asked my relatives why adults were so stupid, since all these dangers could easily have been avoided. All they had to do was make a tiny helicopter with a small camera attached that could be controlled from afar by radio waves, and the researchers could follow the small helicopter in a large helicopter or a hot-air balloon, for surely there would be less danger for them up in the sky! Therefore I also invented the principle of modern-day small camera drones. And this was before the age of six! Well, surely that makes me a genius, right?!

Of course on the flip side, we all know that genius often goes hand in hand with... well, certain "oddities", to put it mildly. I will give an example of this too, from me at the same age (after all, I did promise at the beginning of this book that I wouldn't hide my negative traits)...

I was about five years old, when I was watching a folk music contest (some kind of talent show competition) on my grandmother's television. I already had an affinity with music at that time, and I especially liked the 'cimbalom'.³ How quickly they could hit the strings with those two sticks... Well, I immediately wanted to try it too! Naturally my grandma didn't have a cimbalom, but she did have a big expensive piano that my uncle sometimes practiced on. I instantly grabbed two fireplace pokers and started pounding the piano keys with them, with all my might... I wasn't bothered that a piano didn't look anything like a cimbalom. To me the two instruments were very similar, since they were both very big "pieces of furniture" compared to my small size, and both of them produced sounds...

Of course they soon noticed what I was doing, and were not happy to say the least. Apparently it had cost quite a lot of money to get the piano repaired, despite my "blissful pursuit" being short-lived... It was explained to me that a piano was not a cimbalom, and that piano keys were designed to be struck with one's fingers; on the other hand, even a cimbalom shouldn't be thrashed with fire pokers!

So I said, "Okay, then buy me a real cimbalom!" But they replied that they couldn't, because not only were they very expensive, but there was no space in the room for it.

I then requested a zither, because I liked the look of these too, and surely a zither would fit in the room because it was much smaller. But they didn't buy me one of these either, saying that I was still too young. This did not stop me, however. As soon as I was left alone again for a while, I climbed on top of the piano (the lid was open) and crawled inside. I was small, so I could sit on the piano strings... and there I began to pluck the strings as if they were a zither. I didn't have a plectrum of course, but that did not cause me any despair—I just used my great-grandmother's shears instead...

I could not pursue this activity for long either, for they soon pulled me out of there... but not quite soon enough! That is, the piano tuner had to be called out again, at a great cost... I think they would have been better off buying me, if not a cimbalom, at least a zither as I had asked for. Anyhow, I was

3 Although this instrument is frequently called a 'dulcimer' in English, I as a native Hungarian assert that 'cimbalom' is a more accurate name for it (or 'cimbalon' as it is sometimes spelled), since it has no similarity to the West-European and medieval 'dulcimer'. Moreover, the word 'dulcimer' is often used as a translation for another Hungarian musical instrument as well—the 'citera' (in Hungarian). The correct translation, however, is 'Hungarian Zither'. The Hungarian zither has no similarity to either the cimbalom or the dulcimer. A zither and a cimbalom are two completely different musical instruments, and as I can see from pictures, the dulcimer is yet a third. I note on the side that the original medieval dulcimers were never widespread in Hungary either...

not at all too young for a zither. Maybe not even for a cimbalom. It is well known that all famous musicians start playing instruments at a very early age. As you can see, I had a natural interest in music, but they allowed my inclination for it to fade... It was the piano that I was too small for. I couldn't reach the two ends of the keyboard when I was sitting in the middle, and my feet couldn't reach the pedals... However the zither would have been just right.

Only now, many decades later at the age of 55, can I start to live out my passion—for a few days ago I ordered a (Hungarian) zither for myself, which will arrive soon... I ordered the most expensive, biggest and most superlative type... the very best... Now I can finally realize my old childhood dream...

One thing is certain however—ever since I tried to play the piano like a zither, the lid of the piano remained closed. They locked it and never opened it again...

As far as righteousness and a sense of justice are concerned—this doesn't mean that an Aspie always obeys all laws and rules. They will only abide by those that make sense to them and they consider just... But this presupposes that Aspies have some kind of ingrained instinctive sense of "justice" as a base of comparison.

Well, it came to light at a very young age that I did indeed have such a thing, at the time when I was still living at my grandmother's place. In order to understand the following story, I must say here that my grandmother was mildly misogynistic. I'm not sure why she didn't have a very high opinion of her own gender, but I know that she mostly referred to those who weren't born into the male gender as "bedwetting girls". Naturally she was very careful to teach me that this expression should NEVER be said to a girl's face, and that if I were to meet a girl or any other female, then I was to address her strictly as "miss" or "my lady". But for some reason whenever my grandmother spoke of younger females, she always called them "bedwetting girls".

Of course I didn't say anything about it for a while, but there came a point where I was unable to contain my dissonant feelings any longer, and I asked Grandma why she said that girls were bedwetters, when it was I—a boy—who regularly wet the bed at night?! She was awfully embarrassed by this, and quickly diverted the subject to something else (I can't remember what), but she certainly never labeled girls in such a way again. Not in front of me, anyway.

Yes, I did still sometimes wet the bed at night back then, although as far as I can remember this occurred less often once my parents transferred me to their house, after the age of six. But this is not the point. I told the above story because it shows that if I felt something was unjust—even if it was merely a disparaging label—I spoke up, even though I wasn't the one being hurt.

I deeply believe that *all* Aspies have this attribute, a bit like "elf children" (at least they are born this way—it's possible that later some of them become corrupted by the evil society of neurotypicals...), that is, Aspies have a **GENETICALLY CODED PRIMARY SENSE OF JUSTICE!**

I can tell you yet another story that gives an example of this sense of justice:

When I was a young child, from time to time my parents or grandmother would "sweeten" me by literally giving me sweets, which of course I accepted with great joy, not yet being aware of how harmful they were... Because these days—since June 2019—I don't consume any carbohydrates at all, except for a small amount of fresh fruit on rare occasions. Namely, I follow the "Paleo Diet", although it is more correct to say that I follow the *Paleo Lifestyle*. And even within the Paleo "diet" I follow a

very meat-rich and even fattier variant, so I'm essentially combining the Ketogenic diet with the Paleo. No carbohydrates, no dairy products, no legumes, no bread, cereals, corn or potatoes, but lots of fat... I even consume very few vegetables, and only rarely fruit, except for one or two lemons a day. My preferred meat is pork, however recently I have started eating certain bugs and larvae as well. Fried mealworms, for example, are delicious! But I generally eat pork most of the time. It's nice and fatty... My favorite is to cook a whole pig's head, then put the steaming head on a huge wooden tray in front of me, and sprinkle it with rosemary. It makes me feel like I'm at a medieval royal feast... I should note for the sake of completeness (those with very delicate stomachs may want to skip this paragraph...) that I also eat RAW insects! Mainly grasshoppers and locusts. Before I put them in my mouth, I crush their heads so they can't bite me, and tear off their two big jumping legs because they have big claws on them that could hurt my throat if swallowed. But anyway, I eat them raw like this, fresh... and they are delicious! Much tastier and healthier than candy...

However as an ignorant child I did indeed like sweets, although I think I probably liked them less than most other children (or adults). This opinion of mine was proven by the fact that when I switched to a ketogenic lifestyle, I had no difficulty at all eliminating sweet foods from my diet. I have no cravings for them. The biggest temptation for me is cheese...

But the point right now is that out of all the sweet products that existed, my absolute favorite was fruit yogurt, yet in those days it was so expensive and almost impossible to get. My second favorite was chocolate. Not cookies, not candy, but chocolate. I received plenty of chocolate too, so the moment inevitably came when the chocolate I got wasn't in the form of a bar or a block, but in the shape of an Easter bunny or an egg. The only problem with this was that as soon as I saw it I got incredibly excited, because it was such a HUGE piece of chocolate! Unfortunately this joy only lasted until I unpacked the chocolate and bit into it. Because at that moment it came to light that this allegedly "huge" piece of chocolate was no more than half a mouthful, since it was almost nothing but AIR! It was totally empty inside! A paper-thin layer of chocolate, surrounding a huge portion of NOTHINGNESS!

I remember the first time I discovered this, and I cried and swore, even though it wasn't a habit of mine back then (yet...) to use bad language. I don't recall the words I used on that particular occasion, but my parents didn't like it at all, that's for sure. They scolded me, telling me that I should be happy about getting such a large and beautiful present. But I totally disagreed, saying that it was all a LIE, just a DECEPTION, because they had pretended to give me an enormous amount of chocolate, and then it turned out to be even less than a tenth of what a child would expect! It was a bad practical joke, and a LIE!

I hasten to add that I have the same opinion today, that this is indeed lying, deception, and injustice, and that the manufacturer is giving the customer a false representation of their product! Even if they do state in microscopic print how many grams it weighs. Young children generally can't read yet, but even if they can, they are unlikely to understand the concept of "net weight", and even then they would judge it based on the physical size of the product. This is probably true for most adults as well. To me the whole thing is simply MISLEADING ADVERTISING! They sell the **nothing** at a great profit. This practice should be prohibited in my opinion, because it's outrageous!

This was pretty much the same opinion I had back then as a kid, which I candidly told my parents; obviously not as precisely and eloquently, but that was the gist of it. Of course, my mother then countered with that empty phrase—and this is a literal quote—"People in other countries are dying

from starvation, while you get chocolate and you're not even happy about it?! Starving children in Africa would love to have this to eat!"

This stupid phrase that "elsewhere people are dying from starvation, while you..." was always my mother's favorite argument when it came to food, but more on that later. The point here is that I could not understand, and still don't, what other people dying of starvation or any other cause has to do with the fact that it's a LIE to simulate the APPEARANCE of a product to contain much more consumable content than it actually does!

I tried explaining to my mother and everyone else that it wasn't about the small quantity of chocolate I had received. If I had gotten the exact same amount of chocolate but in a small SOLID bar, then I would have been happy. However in this case I had been cheated by the visual illusion, because I initially thought I was going to get a lot more, and then it turned out that this wasn't the reality, so I was disappointed. But it was in vain, for she simply didn't understand my argument, or pretended not to. Anyhow, I think this is an instructive story that is appropriate here because it shows that an Aspie's sense of justice can easily produce a moral judgment that runs counter to business policies, commercial practices, or whatever else the neurotypical majority deems permissible.

I later had the same opinion about the "Kinder egg". It was a profound disappointment to me. It's true that in this case there was not air inside but a so-called "toy", however it was my opinion (both then and now) that if I want to buy sweets then what I bought should be a confection in its entirety, not something where most of the weight and volume is inedible plastic! (incidentally, the chocolate shell of a Kinder egg is also just a microscopical thin membrane). I'd ban those too if I could. Because why the hell are they stuffing foods with PLASTIC unnecessarily?! The accumulation of plastic waste is currently one of the most pressing environmental pollution problems!

I also consider it a similar deception when a bag of food, a box of dietary supplements or a drug container is twice as big as it needs to be, and the excess space is just air or perhaps cotton wool. And all this just to deceive the customer into thinking he is getting more for his money!

And now to conclude this section, a short story related to this theme from my adulthood:

At one time I was working in the lamp factory, EGLO, in the industrial zone of the Hungarian city, Pásztó. It was only for a short time... because they fired me. What happened was that I was assigned to work in the scrap yard. My job was to destroy the lamps, using a large hammer, that were found to be defective after production—that is, those that had some minor flaw, such as the enamel flaking off from a tiny area (the size of a match head), or a slight chip in the glass shade—so that when they were taken to the landfill, some poor wretch couldn't just pick them up and use them for himself... According to the owners of the company, this would mean a loss of revenue for them, and it would also damage their business reputation if there were too many defective lamps of their brand out there.

I admit with shame that I was willing to do this job for two days... Unemployment was very high at that time, I was in a very tight financial situation, and it wasn't a difficult job... But after that I couldn't take it anymore! I became so very depressed... It was simply incompatible with my values and everything I considered right that I was not creating something useful, but destroying it!

I finally dared to tell my boss that this was not okay. That I disagreed with it. That the whole concept was inherently ridiculous. Anyone who was pathetic enough to go scavenging at the rubbish dump would not go out and buy an expensive "good" lamp if they couldn't find a usable product on the

rubbish heap. He would just go without a lamp, or make his own out of a tin, some grease and string. But he's certainly not going to buy an EGLO lamp at full price, because he can't afford it. So if they don't want to throw these lamps away without breaking them, then why not sell them at a discount?

He said it would damage the brand's reputation. My response was that the present practice was not the solution, and they needed to find a way to recycle these products. This would be far more profitable and environmentally friendly, plus it would mean that the lamps didn't have to be smashed, since the defective ones weren't being thrown in the municipal landfill!

He reprimanded me, saying that I was not to dispute the matter, I was an insignificant nobody in the company and should just get on with my job. I replied that my work was to produce, not destroy. That he had to give me a different job, because I refused to do this anymore, it was against my moral principles.

He gave me another job. But a few days later I was dismissed. This didn't surprise me at all, I was expecting it. In fact, I would have been more surprised if I'd gotten away with it and not been fired. But I had no choice. I have been convinced ever since that I did the right thing.

The Aspie and the school designed for neurotypicals

Then the time came when I had to go to school. It must be mentioned right away that I had NO negative prejudice against school at the very beginning. Not the least! I know that many children don't want to go to school at first, and sometimes even throw tantrums and cry etc. Not only was this not the case for me, but I clearly remember looking forward to starting school with great joy. My parents told me I would learn a lot of interesting things there, and since I had great respect for scientists even at that age and wanted to become one myself, I knew that to make this happen I would first have to learn a great deal. Therefore I was eagerly awaiting the first day of school, for at that time I was still under the misconception that school was a place to acquire useful knowledge, and that I would be taught it. After all, that's what school was for, wasn't it?

Well it soon became clear that this ideal image only existed in my fantasies. The real situation was far from it, because for me school was not at all an institute for obtaining knowledge, but rather a combination of prison, military training camp and earthly Hell. But let's not get ahead of ourselves...

I remember my parents telling me that "school starts tomorrow", and I could barely fall asleep that night, I was so excited about the Big Day...

The next morning I was awoken by my parent's scarcely audible voices. I was wide awake, without any trace of sleepiness, and as soon as my mother entered the room, I shouted, "So I'm going to school today?!"

They said yes, but that today was only going to be the "opening convocation". I didn't know what this term meant, but I became rather disappointed because I suspected that whatever it was, it wasn't going to involve any "real" learning. It was also immediately apparent that being an Aspie, I was inclined to take everything literally—I wondered how they could open the year in September, when the year began in January?!

Of course, I soon discovered what an "opening convocation" was—an hour or so of intense boredom, where the children are obligated to line up in the courtyard, while far in front of us the headmaster says a bunch of boring nonsense that nobody cares about; not even the adults, as was clear by the looks on many of their faces.

Anyway, that day was over and I managed to survive it somehow. I wasn't even bullied by the other kids, because on the one hand I was there with my parents and didn't speak to anyone, and on the other hand the kids were probably still a bit wary and frightened of their new surroundings...

Even on that very first day all my hopes for school had not collapsed yet, since I was very confident that after the boring opening day, the following days would involve actually learning something interesting and useful.

Now I would like to emphatically emphasize here that we Aspies have the irrevocable opinion that a school is—or rather, **SHOULD BE**—an institute designed for the *acquisition of knowledge*. Exclusively for this purpose. And to clarify this opinion—by "knowledge" I mean *scientific knowledge*, and, of course, everything that is necessary to acquire this scientific knowledge, such as writing, reading etc.

Unfortunately, however, the neurotypical majority seems to have a very different opinion. In their eyes, a school's purpose is partly to provide "childcare"—so that parents can forget about their damned kids while they're at work—as well as offering children some kind of "social life". In my time this included things such as the "drummer boy" and "pioneer" movement, various excursions, holiday parades, sports days, school year openings and endings, carnival, and countless other special occasions. The other children obviously liked these events because it meant they weren't obligated to learn anything, but for me these occasions only caused a considerable amount of extra stress, and not the slightest bit of enjoyment.

And don't think, dear Reader, that this was only the case in the era of socialism! Naturally there are no "drummer boys" and "pioneers" in today's schools, but the situation is no better. Now there are things like "boy scouts", and based on what I see in movies about schools in Western Europe or the USA, there seems to be everything but learning going on! In those institutes, a young man's main concern is to become a big star player on the baseball team, and the girls' minds are filled with how well they can wave their arms about as cheerleaders in sports matches for all those muscle-brain human beasts that stink of testosterone... I seriously can't understand what goes on in their heads. Don't they realize that being condemned to such a role, they are nothing more than DECORATIONS, or sex symbols for the boys' sports team, to satisfy their libidos?! Doesn't this hurt their female self-esteem?! Isn't it contrary to women's aspirations for equality?! Well, I won't go on about it further, since this isn't the chapter's main topic...

The point is that the situation is by and large exactly the same everywhere, regardless of the social and political system. Only the garnish is different, the glaze they use to coat the essential core that is the same for each of them. And this core is a truly bitter pill to swallow for us Aspies...

We Aspies would like to learn at school, learn something useful, but at least 80 percent of the time spent there is wasted on things we consider utter nonsense and don't even care about. We find these times unpleasant, and are unable to even fulfill the expectations made of us. Nevertheless, it is almost

impossible to get out of participating in these events, no matter how much we would like to. In fact, when I think back on this time now, I can remember only one discipline that I learned in school which I considered useful, and that was reading.

Before anyone contests this opinion, I want to say that it's no coincidence that I didn't include mathematics (arithmetic and geometry in the lower grades). I can firmly state that school was not the place I learned math, which I'll be covering in great detail later. But it's an undeniable fact that school was where I learned how to read.

There are many young children who can already read before school age, although there were none in my class. But it's not particularly uncommon for a child to have this ability. I can honestly admit, however, that I was not one of them. This is by no means proof that "You're not a genius after all, just a conceited little ass!", because the explanation is simply that it didn't occur to anyone to teach me this at home.

On the other hand, I started first grade in September like everyone else, but by Christmas—when the winter break had begun—I was already reading everything fluently. And with a remarkably expressive, emotional tone (aside from my aforementioned L-J speech impediment). I didn't have to struggle to read the written words with spasmodic effort, since my eyes were already four or five words ahead of what I had just said, which meant that my brain had plenty of time to interpret the text. So I knew the meaning of the sentence, or at least a long section of it, and was thereby able to assign the appropriate emphasis when reading it. In comparison, the majority of children in my age group—even in the fifth grade—had serious deficits with reading comprehension...

But it wasn't only reading aloud that I was competent at. In fact, most of the time I read to myself... and even in the period described above, at the end of my very first semester at school, I was reading the novels of Jules Verne, books by Karl May, and some of the sci-fi works of H.G. Wells... I was totally immersed in reading these books. And while I myself admit that these stories aren't exactly the paragon of psychological novels, hopefully my Readers will not dispute that they are in any case of a far higher standard than what is generally offered to an average neurotypical child of six or seven years old.

Already at that age I considered reading to be one of my favorite pastimes. I devoured books and had no difficulty understanding them at all. Moreover, I had such an exceptional imagination that I would often become unaware that I was flipping through the pages of the book. I was doing it automatically, while not seeing the text in front of me but the plot of the story itself... I could imagine the location, the characters, the whole scene with absolute clarity. And it all came naturally to me, without any conscious effort.

However it was from this that something interesting developed. The moment I arrived at ANY illustration in a book, I lost the "rhythm". The picture interrupted my thoughts. But I could deal with that. The main problem was that the pictures in the books made me incredibly annoyed and angry. Because I would be reading a novel and really enjoying it, imagining the whole story perfectly in my mind, until I turned to a page that was completely filled with an otherwise quite beautiful black and white or colored illustration. And then I would be astonished to see that nothing in it was as I had imagined! What I imagined to be on the left was on the right in the picture (although I was allowed to imagine it on the left, because the author didn't mention it being on the right), the characters wore different clothes, they held their guns differently, the trees and the houses looked different, the protagonist and the woman looked different... the natives dressed differently...

Can you imagine, dear Reader, what a terrible disappointment this was for me?! What an annoyance?! No, I'm sure you can't imagine it. It's impossible. If you're a neurotypical, then you cannot comprehend how enraging and frustrating this was for me as an Aspie! After the first time this happened, for me it was the death of illustrations—that is, from that day on I deliberately tried to procure books that didn't have any illustrations at all, which fortunately cost even less.

So that's what I was like, at a time when most of my classmates had difficulty with even comics if they had more text than "Aaaah!" and "Brrrr!".

However I cannot boast any similar success in the discipline of writing... Although I obviously learned how to write at school—at the same time I learned to read—and could write fluently by Christmas, it just meant that I could write anything down that I wanted relatively quickly and without any major spelling mistakes... and I could read it back to MYSELF. *I* could read it, but I'm not so sure about others... Most of the time they managed to, but not easily. And the reason was simply that I wrote so sloppily. I could do it quickly, confidently, and as I said before, relatively free of spelling mistakes (at least, I had far less trouble with spelling than the vast majority of my classmates at the time), but unfortunately my handwriting was incredibly sloppy. In fact, not just sloppy but downright hideous! The truth is that even now as an adult it's not much better...

In those days teachers didn't grade us in the first grade, they just gave us various small pictures printed on paper. I no longer remember exactly what they were, or which was supposed to be better than the other—except for two of them. One was an elf, and I would have really liked to get an elf; not because it signified anything good in an abstract sense, but just because the elf girl in the picture was so pretty... although I never got one, not even once. Instead they always gave me a pig... Okay, to be "politically correct"—a piglet.

Now, looking back to those times, I try to find satisfaction in the thought that I have taken noble revenge on my teachers and classmates—because now I have my own elf, in fact many of them, far more than they had. For I am a novelist, and in my fairy tale world there exist millions of elves, and I can create even more at any time, it's entirely up to me! I am the almighty God of that universe!

But back then I had to make do with piglets. The teacher was firmly convinced that I was lazy, lacked effort, and always had other things on my mind. However this was far from the truth. What I lacked was not diligence, but at most patience—I hated the tediousness of drawing in all the tiny details of the letters; but it was more that I realized that no matter how much time and energy I put into this task, I would never get my handwriting to look as neat as I wanted it to. And that's because I didn't really have the dexterity for it. (I remember when I was learning how to write the letters of the alphabet, the one that scared me most was "g", because it seemed so complicated).

I remember how I gazed with admiration at my father once, who—being an engineer—had brought home some work, and was constructing a technical drawing. I really wanted to try out the compass and the bow pen... but by that time he knew that I was hopeless in terms of manual dexterity, and said it was useless to let me try it, since what could I possibly do with it when I wasn't even able to draw a straight line! Naturally I refused to accept this nasty insinuation, and replied that I was indeed capable of it. But my father didn't back down either, one word led to another... and finally I ran out to the kitchen in a huff.

A little later, however, I returned to the room holding a page from a notebook under my dad's nose. In roughly the center of the page there was a tiny black mark, no more than half a centimeter long.

"Here you go! Just look at that!" I showed him proudly.

"Look at what?" asked my old man in bewilderment.

"At this, here! I did it!" I boasted.

"I don't understand. What is it that you've done?"

"This right here! Surely you can see it, papi!" (This is what I always called my father, and I called my mother "mami").

"Why, what is it?"

"It's a straight line! You said I wasn't able to draw one, but as you can see, I can. This here is a straight line, and I didn't even use a ruler!"

My father burst out laughing, and told me this was far from what he meant by the term "straight line", although he admitted that from a rigorous mathematical aspect I was actually right, since there was no definition that said "straight lines" couldn't include objects under a certain length. And the fact is that my line really did turn out to be straight when we verified it with a ruler. But unfortunately my father was ultimately right, because being able to draw a line half a centimeter in length does not imply enough dexterity for technical drawing, or even to produce lovely neat handwriting...

So while I was unarguably top of my class in reading, I was pretty much at the bottom when it came to writing. In fact, most definitely at the very bottom, except in spelling. However, the moment anybody saw the abomination my clumsy little hand produced, no one cared about my spelling... None of the teachers were interested in anything other than the appearance of handwriting, because in general my school placed great emphasis on *externalities* and formalities. Basically all the trivial things that us Aspies find inconsequential, simply because they serve no practical purpose. Moreover, we are convinced that these things lack any theoretical benefit either, except of course to help develop a barracks mentality, and are a great way of killing the budding imagination in the young...

This became clear on the very first day after the opening ceremony. For when all the pupils had gathered in the classroom, the teacher told us that because we were unable to read yet, we each had to choose a symbol that our parents would have to sew onto our gym bag, school uniforms, and other necessary items—for identification purposes. I had no objection to the concept of identification, in fact I was very much in favor of it. After all, I didn't want any of my belongings being exchanged accidentally (or out of deliberate malice). Even so, I had a dissenting opinion on that very first day, and I told the teacher that although I hadn't gone to kindergarten, I knew that they used symbols there to identify children—but we were now in school, we had more brains, so why couldn't we use our initials as our symbols? At least then everyone would learn the two letters that make up the initials!

The teacher was shocked, and asked me if I could perhaps read already. I replied that I couldn't, but that I would very much like to acquire this noble knowledge as soon as possible, and that this was the best way to do it because I would immediately memorize those two letters, and perhaps more, from the initials of the others.

"How do you even know what initials are?" she asked.

"I don't remember where I got this information from, but I don't think it matters, because the point is that it's still a good method to..."

"Don't argue, you're far too young for that! Here it is customary for everyone to have a symbol, so I'm going to hang this chart up here, and when I point to you, you are to choose one of these symbols."

Okay, I held my tongue, at least until it was my turn... then I said I wanted my symbol to be a spaceship.

"That won't be possible, there is no such picture on the chart."

"I'm sure it wouldn't be any more difficult to embroider onto..."

She didn't even let me finish what I was saying, and snapped at me: "Didn't you hear that you can only choose from among these?! Are you going to obey me, or not?!"

Her sharp tone frightened me, so I gave in. "Okay, then I'll have this!" I said, pointing to the sailing ship. For lack of anything better...

I would like to point out, however, that even though I had adapted to a constraint that seemed illogical to me, I still insisted that there be logic in my choice. First of all, I had enough knowledge about writing—or at least speaking—to know that the word for "sailing ship" in Hungarian, "vitorlás", and my surname, "Viola", began with the same sound or syllable. Secondly, a sailing ship was also a ship, just like a spaceSHIP, which I wasn't allowed to choose. And thirdly, a sailing ship's upright triangular sail was somewhat reminiscent of the pointed nose of a space rocket. So there were three points of connection between the symbol I finally chose and what I originally wanted... Well, us Aspies do love logic, and look for connections and correlations in everything...

But the main reason I mentioned all this was to show how authoritarian the education system was in the school. This manifested itself in many other areas as well. For example, in the teaching of math. I wrote earlier on that I didn't learn math in school. Although this statement of mine is basically true—at least ninety percent so—it is also true that I originally started learning the most basic foundations of mathematics there. I specifically mean the operations involving integers (whole numbers), although of the four basic operations, only addition, subtraction and multiplication.

Because at the beginning of my life, at home, reading was not the only thing I wasn't taught, for they didn't teach me how to count either. Okay, I won't deny that like most children, I was also taught how to count to ten. That's easy, because a child has ten fingers. They may even teach a child all the numbers up to twenty... which I knew too by the time I started school. In fact I even had a vague concept of addition as well, because I'd figured it out on my own. I could calculate the sum of small numbers using my fingers. But that was all I knew.

Then in school they began teaching me the basic operations, starting of course with the easiest, which is addition, followed by subtraction. I had no difficulties with these. (Unlike the other kids... I don't recall my classmates displaying any genius or at least focused concentration when it came to mastering these disciplines...). Then came multiplication, which was a more complicated task, because the whole thing starts with needing to memorize the multiplication table... Of course, I didn't know the multiplication table back then either, but my ignorance could not be discovered, since after the first few lessons I missed quite a lot of school. I developed very bad pneumonia, and it was so serious that in retrospect I was lucky it didn't kill me.

There have been few occasions in my entire life where I have been ill with anything at all, except for the common cold and other flu-like illnesses. I don't seem to have much resistance to those... I actually had pneumonia three times in total during my childhood. The one I'm talking about here, the first time, was the most serious.

In any case, during that time of my childhood there was plenty of "good" that came out of it. I was in hospital for a very long time, but even after I was released I had to convalesce at home for a good

while. I don't really remember much about the days of my illness, and that surprises me, although it's quite possible this is simply because I had a constant high fever. I only know this from my parents' stories, but I was told that my fever was above 40 degrees (Celsius) for days, and even reached 41 degrees... As I now know, this is extremely life-threatening.

The only thing that has stayed with me clearly from that time is the VOICES... I was lying on the bed in a semi-conscious state, and there was a deep silence all around me in the room. But I kept hearing a soft whisper in my ear, as if somebody—perhaps a sprite—was murmuring to me in some foreign language. There were no meaningful words, just this strange whispering... It was like when you hold a large empty seashell to your ears, and through it—so people say—you can hear the faint roar of the ocean, as though echoing its past environment. Naturally not a word of this romantic statement is true, for what we're hearing is just the external ambient noise being amplified and distorted through the shell. In my situation there was hardly any ambient noise, since I had no shell beside my ear and the room was silent, yet I could still hear these murmurs.

But it didn't scare me, for even as a young child I had enough sense to know that this hallucination was only happening because I was sick, and I was probably just hearing the blood flowing violently through my veins as a result of my fever. However it was very interesting and... mystical!

I even had a strange and interesting dream during this time, which I can still remember. I dreamed (or had a vision) that I was in a very dark, empty place, but all around me there were lots of tiny little sparks glowing. It was almost as if I were floating in outer space and seeing the distant stars, but in my vision I knew that each of these sparks was in some sense a person, or a "sentient being", and I was aware that I myself was one of them. I couldn't see or feel my body at all, but I actually felt good. It wasn't a feeling of ecstasy, yet I experienced no unpleasantness, and I wasn't afraid. I just "hovered" there, then suddenly—even surprising myself—I said to one of the sparks nearby, "Hey, let's be born!"

"Why?" it asked.

"Because it'll be fun. The two of us will do great things down there together!"

"Okay, let's go!" came the reply.

That's when I "woke up", that is, I was "in my body" again, feeling sick... But please don't think, dear Reader, that from that moment on I was "converted" to any faith... I didn't start believing in God or reincarnation. I considered the whole thing as just a nice dream, although I would have liked to dream it again because I enjoyed it so much... but I never did.

However it had such an impact on my life, that from then on I went through a period of time where I consciously strove to become like the professors I envied in the science fiction books I was frequently reading. I also instinctively emulated the method expressed in the following maxim, which I only heard much later on: "If you would like to join a society, then act as though you've already been a member for a long time!"

For instance, I endeavored to take every opportunity to learn, but primarily the disciplines that were not part of the "official" school curriculum, and especially if it was something the other kids hated, (who I deeply despised because they obviously had no goals in life), like math. I knew that I absolutely HAD TO create something GREAT, although I had no idea WHAT exactly. It gradually became clear much later that, given the unfortunate fact that I was not a billionaire, the only field open to me was writing...

So I really was very sick. The truth is that I simply couldn't attend school for almost half the school year because I was so unwell. There was talk among the teaching staff that so many absences should not be tolerated, and that I would have to repeat a class, but eventually this idea was rejected. They didn't like to fail children in those days. It would have been unfair in a sense, since nobody can be blamed for getting the flu. And I suppose it also had something to do with the fact that my teachers knew by then that I wasn't a "normal" kid, to put it mildly, and they didn't want to put up with me for an extra year... Furthermore, it seemed they didn't have to worry, because apart from the appearance of my handwriting I was one of the most outstanding students, so they rightly expected that I would catch up. And I didn't have any trouble with reading—I could read far better than any fifth grader—but as for arithmetic... Well, fortunately my father came to my aid here.

When I was more or less recovering from the illness (I had been discharged from hospital, yet it was obvious I was still very weak and had to be careful to avoid a relapse) he would come home from work in the evenings and give me a bit of tutoring. He could see that I had no problem with addition and subtraction, but it was clear that I wasn't able to avoid memorizing the multiplication table. I remember this, and can honestly admit that I felt just as much aversion to memorizing this table as any other child...

But then my father came up with a great idea, for which I am still grateful to him. He began by telling me that I didn't need to learn every single one of the 100 multiplications. Because I wasn't stupid, and was sure to already know that if I multiplied something by one, then the result would be the same as the number that was multiplied by this one. So straight away there were ten fewer multiplications that had to be memorized. He crossed these off the multiplication table, since I already knew them. Then he told me that it wasn't necessary to separately learn how to multiply by ten, because I only had to imagine the multiplication number with a zero added to it, and I could see the result immediately. And he crossed these off the table as well. Well, there was already much less left on there to learn, and the multiplication table now looked far less daunting...

Then he said that I only had to learn half of what remained, because multiplication has the interesting property of INTERCHANGEABILITY, which meant for example, that 3×7 is exactly the same as 7×3 . Therefore he crossed out half of what was leftover, and said that if I memorized the rest and came across a multiplication problem that wasn't among them and I didn't know it, then I just needed to swap the two numbers in my mind, and whatever the result was would be the right answer.

This gave me great pleasure. Wow, math had RULES! This idea really appealed to me, because I had finally found some truths that were PERMANENT, so if I learned these rules ONCE, then I could ALWAYS use them. And it was possible to do tricks with numbers, to outsmart them by finding easier ways to solve a problem that was too difficult...

Even so, having to memorize the approximately 40 remaining multiplications was still a great challenge for me as a young child, or rather, BORING. I complained to my father that even if I did learn this, I was afraid that I would soon forget it. He just replied that I had to practice. If I wrote down a few hundred multiplications, then I wouldn't forget the knowledge because it would be "ingrained in my blood". And he taught me how to multiply whole numbers in writing. He suggested that I come up with various random numbers and multiply them, then check the result with the pocket calculator. With my father's calculator, that is, because naturally I didn't have one myself at that time. Such gadgets were incredibly expensive in Hungary back then.

I was enjoying the fact that I was able to operate such a serious, scientific machine, and my father had allowed it because I was so clever and intelligent... Soon I was multiplying such large numbers that they couldn't even fit onto the display of the small 8-digit calculator. These numbers were so long that they took up the entire width of a page in my exercise book! I didn't feel bored at all while I practiced this. I enjoyed being the master of Infinity, because I could manage numbers so large that they were almost impossible to name.

When my father saw that I was serious about my studies, he taught me decimal fractions, and even ordinary fractions, none of which were yet part of the curriculum in my class. And naturally he taught me division as well.

When I returned to school (after my illness had passed), it turned out once again that I didn't receive praise for gaining all this extra knowledge, but just got in trouble for it... Because in spite of being absent from school for such a long time, the others were still learning multiplication (of a sort...), and by this I mean only with single-digit numbers. It's true that they all knew the numbers up to at least 100, but they were only able to multiply small numbers together.

And just as I had come back to join them, the teacher began teaching the kids how to divide, at a very basic level... But this operation—which I had LONG KNOWN ABOUT (I emphasize this because, thanks to my father, I already knew negative numbers, decimal and common fractions, and even compound fractions)—was not called DIVISION by the teachers, but given the strange name "SHARING"! I didn't even understand what the teacher was talking about, what the hell this was! Okay, it didn't matter that I didn't understand, after all, it was new material and nobody in the class understood it yet either...

But naturally it all became clear to me very quickly, when she explained this operation with the example of if there are ten children and she shared twenty candies among them, then how many candies would each of them receive? Or if we arrange twenty walnuts into groups of four, then how many groups would there be? And other similar examples.

I had no difficulties with these examples, and solved them all in my head in no time. My trouble began when the teacher gave the example of if we have nine candies and share them among four children, then how many candies would each child get? She didn't ask *me* this question but some other child, who immediately told her the answer was 2. But of course I couldn't help myself, and blurted out that this answer was incorrect.

"No it isn't, that *is* the right answer!" replied the teacher in defense.

"It isn't, because the correct answer is 2.25 and not two!" I countered.

This started a huge argument between us, which I don't remember the details of, but one thing is sure—the teacher was very angry with me, and not because I had blurted out my comment without being called upon. We had a much more serious disagreement, not based on disciplinary factors but a difference of principle. Because, knowing I was right, I insisted that my answer was correct, since if we divided nine by four, the result would be 2.25. I felt that if I did not uphold this view I would be dishonoring the noble concept of science, and especially the king of the sciences—mathematics!

However the teacher was a stubborn shrew, and maintained that my answer was in fact wrong, because this was not division but "sharing". That nine objects could only be "shared" into four groups if each group contained just two objects.

"Oh yeah, then what happens to the one that's left over?!" I asked her.

"Nothing, that's the remainder, we don't worry about it."

I just shook my head, saying that I could not accept her statement; her method produced an inaccurate result, and in mathematics accuracy was a fundamental requirement!

She quickly retorted that this was not real math yet, only the most basic arithmetic. To which I replied that this variation in the name of the subject only meant that it had a lower level of difficulty, but that didn't allow it to be inaccurate, and I couldn't see why children should be forced to memorize a wrong answer!

She tried to claim her authority by saying that she knew better, and that I was too young. I admitted that it was true that I was young, so she might know many things far better than I did, but not when it came to division, because I hadn't come up with this on my own—my father had taught me, and he obviously understood math far better than a school teacher, after all, he was an engineer, with not just one but two university degrees, and he made a living from his knowledge of precisely these things...

I also expressed my view that this thing called "sharing" could not be a very important operation, since there was no button on a pocket calculator with this label, but there *was* a button for the division function, which gave the same result as the one I gave. If she didn't believe me, she could try it out herself!

So we had a terrible quarrel, but at least it had the benefit of her never calling on me after that to solve a problem that involved "sharing". She must have understood from that discussion that I was already very familiar with the basic numeric operations.

I must note that even now as an adult, I still fail to understand the point of teachers stuffing such idiotic nonsense as "sharing" into the heads of young schoolchildren. And with such tremendous effort! It's perfectly clear to me that this strange label is actually the same operation that is known mathematically as "integer division" or "division with remainders". Okay, so I acknowledge that it is a "valid" mathematical operation. Nevertheless, I don't think it makes much sense to start teaching division with this operation, and only then teaching "real" division. For as we all know, after these initial few weeks, this operation will NEVER occur in math lessons ever again! We won't use it for anything, so why on earth are we learning it at all?!

It did me no harm learning division in its entirety from my father, without this "introduction". If I was able to understand this, then it was very likely that other kids would also be able to. Or could a neurotypical kid really be that stupid that they couldn't grasp it otherwise, and I was just the exception, being an unparalleled genius?! But I don't believe the latter. I may be arrogant, but not so much as to think that. Not that I deny considering myself a genius, but it's not based on this specific situation. Or it may be more pertinent to say that despite my genius, I don't believe the other children could have been *that* stupid compared to me, that they couldn't understand "real" division without the insertion of these senseless roundabout methods into the learning procedure.

But this wasn't my only problem with math at school. When we started learning decimal fractions (obviously not in first grade), as a matter of course I used a decimal *point* in order to separate the integers and the fractions from each other, and not a decimal *comma*. My English readers probably won't understand this, therefore I must explain it: According to the Hungarian standard, where the English speaking countries use a decimal point in the number, Hungarians use a *comma*. For example, the value of *pi* in English is written as 3.14, whereas in the Hungarian form it is 3,14.

This caused trouble for me because by the time we started learning decimal fractions in school, I was already well versed in them (since I had learned them from my father at home), however not using a decimal *comma* but with a decimal *point*, exactly the way they are written in the English-speaking world. We could say with a little exaggeration that in this sense I was born English...

It's not as if my father was English. But I did mention earlier that he had a pocket calculator, which was manufactured in one of the Anglo-Saxon countries and had been imported into Hungary. Therefore naturally the calculator had a decimal *point* button, since it used the English standard. So I too learned it this way, because I had used this calculator to check my own multiplication and division results when I was practicing math.

Well, the first lesson in decimal fractions had barely begun, when the teacher looked over my solutions and crossed them all out in red, even though there wasn't a single mistake—at least as far as the digits were concerned. But she didn't like the fact that I was not using a decimal *comma*... It is hardly surprising that yet another huge argument broke out between us, because I stubbornly stuck to my view that I knew better; that a *point* should be used in that particular place, simply because that's what a calculator used for this function, and it was totally impossible that such a smart machine was made by idiots!

The teacher tried in vain to explain to me that obviously the pocket calculator wasn't made by idiots, however I was still required to use a comma because this was the Hungarian *tradition*. Tradition?! Ew! In my mind, this awful word is to this day still synonymous with "backwardness" or "stagnation", at least for the most part...

I asked the teacher that if we Hungarians were lagging behind in the calculator industry—since the machines we bought and used were made by other countries—then why didn't we adapt ourselves to their notation system, to their "traditions", which incidentally seemed more logical to me, since the comma was more of an enumeration symbol in my eyes, and so it's confusing to list several numbers in a row separated by commas, because you can easily confuse which sequence of numbers is the integer part of one number, and which is the fraction part of another.

"Try to comprehend that we're HUNGARIANS, and we don't mimic the declining West!" snapped the teacher angrily.

"Then perhaps we shouldn't be using their calculators either. For the time being, however, we seem to be in dire need of the West and their products!" I said impudently.

"That's not the point. This is how our ancestors wrote decimals, and we honor them by continuing the tradition they created!"

"But those ancestors were dumber than us, after all, it would be a disgrace if we only had as much knowledge today as we did centuries ago. Besides, they've been dead for a long time. There is nothing to be gained from 'honoring' them now. And anyhow, a person should be respected while they're alive, not after they're dead, shouldn't they?"

Naturally neither of us managed to convince the other, and I stubbornly continued using the decimal *point*. When she threatened to fail me because of this, I said she could try, but I would go to the county school commissioner to be tested in math, and then we would see who was right... Even if he too believed I had no respect for "traditions", I don't think he would find this reason enough to fail me!

"It certainly would be a good enough reason!"

"Great, so you would be happy, miss, to have to teach me for an extra year then?!"

Upon hearing this, she got so red in the face that it was a miracle she didn't have a stroke, and she said nothing in response. Of course she didn't fail me, nor did she dare to give me a bad grade in math. After a while she even stopped crossing out my decimal points in red, obviously realizing that it was useless because I was completely incorrigible.

I note here that to this day I still use decimal *points* and HATE the decimal *comma*! The usage of the decimal comma is in my view a repulsive obstinacy of the Hungarians, and I see no sensible reason for them to persist with this primitive, atavistic cultural vestige, while all standard software expects a decimal point.

I hasten to point out to my Hungarian readers, as some consolation, that this doesn't mean I agree with all Anglo-Saxon traditions. For instance, as far as dates are concerned, I think it's the Hungarian order that is most logical. What I mean by this is when a date is written with the year, month and day, then it is written in this order, for example: 1965.03.26; or if we are only writing the year with two digits, then: 65.03.26.

To my mind this is perfectly logical, because we're moving from the larger time-unit to the smallest one. It would also be logical the other way round, going from the smallest to the largest: 26.03.1965; although I like this a little less, because for some reason the former version (the "Hungarian" order) seems even more logical to me. Not by much, but a little. I could state the reasons why, but I won't, because I think it's irrelevant here. The point is that the Hungarian "standard" for date notation seems absolutely perfect to me.

In sharp contrast, however, the style used in the USA is total lunacy (in my view): they write the "medium" sized time-unit (the month) at the start, then the day, and then the year! That is: 03.26.1965; or: 03.26.65. If anything, this really is the ultimate illogicality! I would be happy if the Hungarians adopted the decimal *point* from the Anglo-Saxon countries, and the Anglo-Saxon countries adopted the Hungarian date order! This "Hungarian" date order would not even be that unusual for them, because as far as I know—at least in the USA—it already exists and is called "military date format". Well, I don't see why this shouldn't be made mandatory everywhere!

My readers may be wondering how I dared to argue with my teacher about "sharing" and decimal points in such a manner, when I began my description of my school years by saying that I had so much respect for school and teachers...

Well yes, it was true... at the *beginning*! But it didn't last long, because I realized very quickly that I couldn't get much help from them, in the form of *physical protection*. In other words, they did not protect me from THE OTHER KIDS. From that juvenile barbarian rabble... Because as I have already alluded to several times, my relationship with my fellow classmates was not without conflict, to put it very mildly... And by this I clearly mean SERIOUS PHYSICAL ATROCITIES; specifically violent brawls, which sometimes even resulted in bloody injuries.

I hasten to add that it was never me who started them. I would have happily avoided these fights. But it was impossible to avoid them, unless I could somehow manage to run away in time. Unfortunately I had little hope of doing that, because not only was I weaker than them, but also slower. Besides, most of the fights took place in the schoolyard, during the breaks. And there weren't really many places far enough away to run to.

But let's proceed methodically, first looking at why they were bullying me at all. It is appropriate to go into detail here, because I suspect that my neurotypical Readers are inclined to inculcate the victim and say that there must have been some reason for the others to be provoked, surely it was my fault... Of course, I'm not saying that they hurt me without any reason, so I won't deny that it was something about me that triggered their hostility; but the reason was beyond my control—the fact that I was simply an Aspie. I was born like that, and nobody can be blamed for the way they were born!

I even tried to "fit in" as far as I could, at least initially. Yes, if I'm honest—and I promised at the beginning of this book that I would be—then I have to admit that although I had strong intentions to "fit in", they evaporated rather quickly. I will elaborate on this further in a little while, but for now I'll just say that I tried to "fit in" until I realized that it was wasted effort; because it didn't matter what I did, nothing would stop them from hurting me. Something always happened that I couldn't avoid, even if I tried my hardest, and then they would attack me. And they beat me just as often whether I tried to fit in or not; pretty much in every break, as well as on my way home from school. Although over time I managed to find some detours, which I alternated randomly, so my journey home became safer because I could avoid more than half of my usual daily beatings. But not all of them...

Based on all this, it is easy to infer that to put it politely, I did not like my classmates. In fact I HATED THEM ALL, and still do! Well okay, this is a minor exaggeration. There was one exception. I didn't "like" him either, but I was indifferent towards him. The guy's name was Gáborfi Attila, and although I vowed not to mention any specific names in this biography (to avoid litigation), as you can see, I have now made an exception. The reason for this is because in the slim chance he were to read this document, then he wouldn't feel any unnecessary remorse. Since I don't remember a single instance where he beat me. Or even made fun of me. In fact, we would occasionally even have the odd pleasant conversation.

The reason I only have neutral feelings towards him is that unfortunately I have no memory either of any occasion where he defended me against the others. Although he could have easily done it, because he was the one of the strongest kids in the class. But he never did... Anyhow, I'm not angry at him for that. In the end, even though it would have been a noble gesture to have defended me, I don't believe it was his duty. At least, not at such a young age (as an adult, the moral judgment of the situation would naturally be different). So at least he never hurt me, and I would have been very happy if everyone in my class had behaved towards me like he did. Therefore I am not angry with him, and if he is reading this, I would like to tell him that all the bad things I say about my classmates in this book do not apply to him—he is the "exception".

I know that my Readers must now be totally perplexed, thinking that the author of this book is completely CRAZY and a danger to the public, since he's supposedly over 50 years old, and despite the passing of so many decades he is still unable to forgive his former classmates! After all, they were just children, they were too young to know what they were doing... Surely they wouldn't be inclined to commit such evil acts now, and besides, forgiveness is a noble virtue and I would do myself good if I forgave them, because then I wouldn't have to suffer the torment of all that emotional pain, and it would raise me to some "higher moral level"...

I'm sure there is plenty more of this psychological bullshit running through the minds of my readers. Pardon my use of this term, but surely my readers will forgive me, right?!

Well, my reply to this is that I could easily forgive them for one or two violent fights. Maybe even a dozen. However please understand, my neurotypical readers, that it's quite another thing to spend EVERY SINGLE DAY, for EIGHT WHOLE FUCKING YEARS, not learning (or even remotely "enjoying life") but having to rack your brain during classes about how to get through the next break without getting beaten up... Which corner of the schoolyard would be better to run to... or should you hide in the toilet? But that's no good either, because some bully might come in after you and it will be even worse... And which way should I go home today? Which route would be the least dangerous for me?!

Well I can tell you that in this situation, if someone is obligated to spend pretty much their ENTIRE CHILDHOOD in what you might call abject terror, there is *no room for forgiveness*! They may say they've forgiven their enemies, but it'll be a PACK OF LIES! There can be no forgiveness in such circumstances. None, because they deprived me of my entire childhood! And they did this by saturating it with fear and dread! Besides, forgiveness is only the due of those who ASK for it. Actually, asking is not enough—they also need to make some gesture to prove that they have changed.

Well, my classmates never did anything like this. However to be honest, I don't think they would be able to come up with anything of consequence that would make me believe they had really changed. Moreover, my requirements wouldn't even end at this point, because it would be proper to also offer me COMPENSATION for the torment I suffered! But what could they give me? A few million forints? (The forint is the currency of Hungary—1 USD is approx. 300 forints). I doubt that they have that much money. And even if they did, I'm sure they wouldn't be willing to give it to me. And then it would still be just a symbolic reparation, because even that wouldn't make up for eight years of suffering! So THIS IS WHAT IT IS. I hate them even now, because they did everything they could to deserve my hatred, contempt and loathing...

But apart from hatred, I have to say that I don't feel any connection to them. It so happened that one of my former classmates somehow tracked down my address, and notified me by email that there was a 30-year class reunion planned... I thought about going, but very quickly decided not to. After all, I have never had a good time at any gathering, because the only thing I knew for certain was that I had to "behave" there, and I didn't know how to do that. Besides, what would happen at a class reunion? Obviously the others would recall old memories, tell stories... Some of these I wouldn't remember because I wasn't involved, and I have no interest in hearing about things that happened to other people—it's meaningless. The rest of the memories would be funny or amusing to them, but unpleasant, sad or humiliating for me. Why should I go there to be the target of their laughter?!

Another thing that might happen is that everyone will tell each other "what they have become", in other words, what their profession is, how much money they make etc. And obviously everybody will try to show off in front of everyone else, because nobody wants to present themselves as a poor man who has nothing. And if it turns out that somebody there "makes more" than me or is wealthier and more successful, I'm bound to feel uncomfortable and I don't want to experience that. However if it turns out that I have achieved more than someone else—especially if it is more than most of them—then they will undoubtedly try to prove that what I have achieved is not such a big deal, ie. try to denigrate my achievements. I've been involved in similar things before. That's another reason why it's pointless for me to attend.

I can imagine how it would all go... Let's say I tell them that I've written more than fifty major novels and dozens of short stories and novellas. You can bet that none of my former classmates became novelists, and even if any of them did, they wouldn't have written that many. So as soon as I tell them this, I would be instantly vilified. And they'd say that it didn't really count, because I wasn't a "real" writer, since a writer didn't just write lots of books, they made a living from it. And the fact that I've written so many is just proof that I'm a bad writer, because it's sure to be that quantity is at the expense of quality! "A real writer spends their entire life on one masterpiece, so they can make it as perfect as possible!"

My response to this would be that writing so prolifically is proof that I am diligent and imaginative, and that anyone who writes only a single book lacks diligence and/or doesn't have enough ideas for further books. And then we'd be in a situation where we would both stick to our own opinion, and neither of us could convince the other. I would obviously never admit that my life's work is worthless, but neither would he acknowledge the value of my work because it would damage his self-image. He wouldn't want to admit that I, the former despised classmate, had beaten him at something... and it would be good if it stayed that way, because the argument could easily turn into a big fight if it got out of hand.

It would be completely pointless for me to go there for something like that. So I didn't end up going to the reunion. Why not? I feel no camaraderie with any of them. But I digress. Let's instead throw light on the question of why they bullied me...

Well, first of all I can refer to my speech defect—my difficulties with the pronunciation of L and J. Believe me, this alone is quite enough among a group of children to ostracize a kid! Although I can claim that this was the least of my problems. I would have been grateful if this had been the only problem I had to deal with... but there were many. There was the fact that I spoke a more or less "archaic" Hungarian language, which they only half understood at best due to the grammatical differences, although my choice of words was also a factor. Not that I used that many old-fashioned words, but I still had a "problem" with my vocabulary, because even if I was using words that were perfectly common in the Hungarian language at the time, my speech sounded strange since it was not *childlike* but in the style *adults* used. Therefore this made me conspicuous among my classmates.

They noticed it of course, and explained it to themselves—totally incorrectly—by saying that I was pretentious, conceited and arrogant, and that I looked down on them. Well, at least this last expression had some truth—I did look down on them. But not at the very beginning! It was when I realized that no matter what I did they would beat me anyway, and this made me start thinking that I was more valuable than them, more dignified and noble-minded, because they weren't just "common" nobodies but barbaric, feral children, practically subhuman... However this wasn't the case initially, because in the first weeks and even months I was rather desperate to find at least one friend among them... but my efforts were in vain.

Of course, my problem with "conversational style" was not one-sided. It was definitely mutual... What I mean is that often they not only failed to understand me, but neither could I understand them. Okay, I had no problems as far as the grammar was concerned, but plenty with the vocabulary. Their speech was full of slang words that were completely foreign to me at first, even though they were quite common at the time in both the idiom of adults and children. But it made no difference to me, because until that day I had never been in the company of children, and adults never used these words around

me. Not that they didn't know them, but these adults were all intellectuals and so they spoke "properly", especially in the presence of children. It wasn't only particularly obscene words that they avoided using when I was nearby, but also those that weren't sufficiently sophisticated.

The point is that the speech of my classmates was heavy-laden with these sorts of words and phrases. And especially with the decidedly vulgar variants, most of which are still in use in the Hungarian language, at least in the vocabulary of the UNEDUCATED RIFFRAFF (yes, I'm bold enough to admit that I hold this opinion of them!). Many of these words actually originated from the gypsy language. Although it's not as if I had numerous gypsy classmates. There weren't many at all. In fact, there were so few that I can't remember a single one, which means that there were probably none in my class. But even in the whole school there might have been half a dozen gypsies at most, as far as I can remember. And I only ever saw a few of them from a distance. Therefore the conflict that existed between me and my classmates was most definitely not based on nationality or racist motives!

Indeed, it was not the gypsies who beat me regularly, but my dear, sweet, beloved (?) Hungarians, with whom I was "of one blood", to quote the well-known phrase from the story of Mowgli. In other words, I think they were not only Hungarian in citizenship, but in nationality as well. It was my COMPATRIOTS who committed atrocities against me! My aim here is not to defend gypsies. I have no doubt that if I had been in a class of gypsies, I would have suffered the same fate. I just want to emphasize that in this respect, Hungarians are no better than the gypsies they so despise. Besides, if they are so contemptuous of gypsies, then why do they adopt so many of their words, especially those related to crime and prostitution?! Are these such respectable activities?!

So just imagine my situation, dear Reader—not only did they not understand me, but neither did I them! They would say the words "knob, prick and dick" for example, and I didn't know what they meant. Because I had never heard them before then. I knew three other words for that body part, but not those ones. The ones I knew at the time were:

- willy (but I knew this was only said to describe the genitals of very young toddlers)
- male member
- penis

These expressions were familiar to me, and I used them when necessary. They didn't ever. For them it was simply "dick" or "knob" (usually the former). Whenever they said these words, I didn't have the faintest idea of what they were talking about. On the other hand, if I ever had to name this body part and I said, "male member", then they would still understand, but to them it sounded as if a teacher were saying it, that is, my style seemed too pedantic and priggish. And if I said "penis", then they wouldn't understand it at all, since this word was completely unknown to them back then.

The situation was similar with the Hungarian word "csaj", which approximately translates to "moll" in English. I didn't understand that then either, because to me this being was called a "girl", or even a "young lady". My classmates laughed when I used the latter term—it sounded to them as if I had just stepped out of a historical costume movie, because they only knew this term from movies. They certainly never used it, and neither did their parents.

I could go on and on, but I don't think any further explanation is necessary, because the problem in this area should be quite obvious by now. So I was already very much out of place in terms of my speech, since for a good while I didn't understand them and they didn't understand me. And well, the sad truth is that children are CRUEL!

No, I do not agree with the widespread LIE that a young child is "innocent"—not in a sexual sense but in a "blameless" sense, that they are incapable of evil and are only corrupted by adult society, and other such nonsense... Children are not INNOCENT, they are one of the most evil, loathsome creatures in the world! They can't be any other way—they already have all the evil tendencies of an adult, but without the slightest bit of inhibition and restraint that an adult MAY have been educated with over their lifetime—EMPATHY, that is, the ability to imagine themselves in the situation of the person being hurt... In my experience, this ability is very often lacking in even adults, but in children there doesn't seem to be a scrap of it!

So as soon as my classmates realized how different I was from all of them, they immediately started teasing me, as well as beating me up... Naturally it began with the mockery. When it turned out that I didn't understand some words they were using, they called me an idiot. "Idiot" was their favorite word. At first I didn't understand this word either—I mean, I was aware of the meaning of the word itself, I just didn't understand why they were saying this about me. It was clear that it was because I didn't understand many of their strange words, but that didn't seem to me sufficient reason for using this label. After all, they couldn't understand a lot of what I was saying, and I didn't call them idiots. So why did they say it?! Perhaps if they had called me "stupid", I would have understood the logic of it, although I still would have considered that an exaggeration. But "idiot"?! To my mind, an idiot was roughly synonymous with "dribbling cretin", in other words an unfortunate imbecile who has such limited mental capacity that he almost requires a straitjacket, and probably can't even count to five. In those days I hadn't yet contemplated whether or not I was a genius, but it was clear to me that I was a long way from the "dribbling cretin" level I just described. Then why did they call me this?!

I tried explaining this fact to them, but most of the time they failed to hear me out. And when they kept insisting that I was an idiot, I retorted that based on this same argument I could also say that *they* were idiots, because I could list dozens of words off the top of my head that none of them had even heard of. And I had done so, using words like "slide rule", "calculator", "coefficient", "welding technology", "Tungsten Inert Gas welding", "radical-side gas shielding", "austenitic steel", "case hardening" etc.

Before my readers frown and suspect me of telling a fib, I hasten to inform you that I did indeed know the meaning of these terms, including the slide rule, although I didn't know how to use one at the time. But my father had several of them, and later I did learn how to use this device, which I will elaborate on shortly. And yes, I even knew back then what austenitic steel and so on was, because I had been talking to my father about how a sword could be made that was able to sever another sword. And so he taught me the basics of metallurgy, crystal structures, and the most important tempering methods. I actually used this knowledge decades later in some of my adventure novels... And I truly did know what "radical-side gas shielding" was, when and why it was necessary during welding!

It isn't very surprising that I knew this stuff. After all, my father was a welding engineer; sometimes he would talk about his work, and I would memorize some of it. It's no different to a kid having a father who is a mason. He probably learns early on from conversations at home what proportion of cement to gravel is needed in concrete for one purpose or another.

So I knew these concepts, and I was pretty sure that the kid I was speaking to would not understand them. And it was true, he didn't... but instead of admitting that each of us may have words that the other

doesn't know, and it was unfair to mock the other person for that, one of two scenarios always followed—he would retort with something like, "You're still an idiot!", or he would start a fight with me.

Both of these seemed incredibly illogical to me, after all, "You're still an idiot!" is simply not a counterargument. But fighting is not a counterargument either. The only thing he can prove with a fight is that he's stronger than me. However just because he wins a fight, it doesn't mean he won the debate!

I would also like to note in relation to this "idiot" label, that in the past it wasn't used as an insult, but was simply a medical diagnosis. It was taken from medical science and psychiatry and has since entered the vernacular. It is interesting how my dear, neurotypical fellow human beings feel such an irresistible inner urge to insult each other (and especially us Aspies, when the opportunity arises) specifically with psychiatric terms! I cannot grasp why this is. Why use precisely these words? Don't they have even the slightest bit of imagination to come up with something more appropriate, or more unique?! Because "idiot" has become such a commonplace word these days. And when one such neurological label becomes widespread, then they'll look for another from the same field.

I've noticed that these days the term "idiot" has started falling out of usage. People don't feel it's offensive enough. So what do they use instead? Well, their new favorite is "autistic". It's true! If you don't believe me, just search for this word on an internet forum. Anyone there who they want to insult will be labeled "autistic" in no time. It doesn't matter whether or not this label has any real basis, even remotely. This is truly pathetic human behavior... it's deplorable, and evil!

But let's move on. Because even with all the things I've listed above, my problems didn't end there. It was compounded by the fact that I shared no common interests with my classmates. Since the other kids didn't seem to be interested in pretty much anything other than soccer and fighting. Yes, the latter was seen by them simply as a form of entertainment. NOT TO ME, of course...but I wasn't even entertained by soccer! In fact, it was so completely outside my field of interest that not only did I not like playing soccer, I had never even watched a match on TV (I sat down to watch one once, but stopped within a few minutes because I found it incredibly boring), and furthermore, I didn't understand it. I mean, I wasn't even aware of the rules of soccer.

For the record, I don't know much more about it today, other than there being two "goals" on the playing field, and lots of people running after the ball and trying to kick it into the opponent's goal. I also know that it's forbidden to touch the ball with one's hands, except when it is thrown into the playing field from the sidelines for some reason. But I have no idea when it is thrown in, and to whom. I know that there is something called a "corner kick", when the ball is kicked from the corner of the playing field, but I don't know when they do this or why etc. I don't even know what the hell a "free kick" is, a "down", or being "offside", so the whole game is a bit confusing to me, although I don't doubt that I could learn the rules if I really wanted to. But I have NO INTEREST in doing so! And neither did I back then.

I was sick to death of having to play soccer in one of the teams in gym class, and I couldn't wait for it to be over. What I didn't understand (and still don't) is that even if there are some perverted creatures who find pleasure in playing soccer, how could there be people who delight in merely sitting in front of a screen and staring wide-eyed at *others* playing soccer?! Because I could somehow comprehend how a person might enjoy the physical act of playing soccer. I never enjoyed it myself, but it wasn't impossible that others might find some satisfaction in being able to run faster than their opponent, or being more skilled at taking the ball away from others etc. It was rather strange to me that somebody

could gain so much enjoyment from this, but at least it had some well-defined physical BASIS. But just staring at a screen while OTHERS run around...?! No, that I will never be able to understand!

In my opinion, "sport" is something that somebody does THEMSELVES. It is not "sport" when twenty odd people (I'm not sure precisely how many members make up a soccer team) are kicking a ball around, and at the same time several million are raving in front of their screens about what a terrible tragedy it is that "their" team didn't manage to kick the ball into the goal one more time! This is only "sport" for the players on the field, not for the spectators. As far as I'm concerned. After all, who the hell cares?! Will the world become a better place if this or that team kicks more goals?! In a year's time, no one will remember which team won. They won't give a shit! I sure as hell don't give a shit about any sporting event!

I was however very much alone with this opinion in the class. When they saw that I didn't like soccer, they immediately started making fun of me. I tried explaining to them what a pointless waste of time soccer was, and that not liking it did not imply that I was an "inferior being", but I soon discovered it was a hopeless endeavor. They would not be persuaded. Arguing with these fanatics is like wrestling with a pig in mud—you can't win, and after a while you realize the pig is enjoying it!

So I was very much alone in this. Even those who displayed little more talent for soccer than I did would have at least known *how* to play soccer better. Unlike me, they understood the rules of the game, showed an interest in the matches, knew the names of the famous soccer teams at the time, and even the names of the star players, how old they were, etc. Of course, my ignorance of this led to my classmates' further devaluation of me as an idiot. And this wasn't the only problem. Because at that time in Hungary there were two main famous soccer clubs (in addition to the many smaller ones): the "Újpesti Dózsa" or simply "Dózsa", and another whose abbreviation was "FTC", but for some reason it was known as "Fradi".

Well, the boys in my class were very quickly divided into two big parties, according to which club they supported—being either "Dózsa fans" or "Fradi fans". The two parties hated each other bitterly, and on many occasions they would get into brawls just because the other group wasn't cheering for "their" soccer team. For this reason I feel justified in calling these groups not simply "parties" but "tribes", and the fights they got into "tribal feuds".

Perhaps it is needless to say—since my readers will be a hundred percent certain by now—that these sports clubs and the whole "lifestyle" of being a fan left me totally cold. I didn't support either team, and as far as I was concerned, both these teams (as well as all the others that existed...) could go to hell along with their fans, for all I cared. I never had any idea which team had won when they were playing a match against each other or with another team. I had enough sense to wisely stay out of it if the two fan "tribes" in my class were at each other's throats. I didn't even try to separate them, because as long as they were bashing each other, they weren't bothering me...

But unfortunately these demented cretins would not tolerate me being the only sane one among them. These numskulls simply couldn't stand the fact that somebody could NOT be a fan of ANY club. It was unheard of! It wasn't right! (according to their pathological thinking...) They couldn't believe that I wasn't (secretly) rooting for any of them. Each "tribe" believed that I was actually supporting the other team, I just wouldn't dare to admit it because I was a COWARD! And that's when they started

beating me, because they thought cowardice should be punished... It was perfectly acceptable to beat a coward... in fact it was a noble act, since it might make him braver in times to come...

They finally achieved their goal. After the umpteenth beating I "confessed" that although I didn't really care about soccer, the "Fradi" team was probably closer to my heart than the "Dózsa" team... Of course, not a single word of this statement was true, but with my mathematical mindset I reasoned that I'd be better off if only half of my classmates beat me up about it from now on, and not the whole class... And the reason I chose the Fradi team was because I had noticed that the biggest assholes in the class were Dózsa fans. Although in the long run I would have been better off declaring myself a Dózsa fan—since now being in the opposite "tribe" I had to fear the stronger boys—I still chose Fradi, because the kids I hated most were among the Dózsa fans, and it seemed I wasn't as much of a coward as they thought I was. I had enough allegiance to principle, or let's say "human decency", not to join a team out of fear of those I hated most. I wasn't going to help those people, not for a stinking second! Not even symbolically!

Of course this didn't mean that from then on I participated in the "tribal feuds". But at least symbolically, I was no longer an "outsider" who belonged nowhere in relation to the extremely important question of which of these fucking soccer teams was better. As if it depended on who exactly our class was rooting for! I was totally mystified even back then, that some people (some? EVERYBODY!) attached such great importance to what was in my opinion absolute meaningless nonsense. Soccer was ultimately a worthless triviality, no more than a long and tedious cultivation of nothing, since there was nothing to gain from it! Anyhow, if someone had an interest in it, then fine, let them play soccer, I didn't care, but AT HOME, in their spare time! Why bring this "pastime" into school?! Wasn't school supposed to be a place of LEARNING?! Of course in reality this isn't true, not in schools that are designed *for* and *by* neurotypicals. A "neurotypical school" is definitely not a place of learning, at least not primarily.

Even our gym teacher took these two crazy gangs, the "Dózsas" and "Fradis", somewhat seriously, and often in gym class he would explicitly order us to play soccer, and the two teams competing against each other would be the Dózsa fans and the Fradi fans. That is, he legitimized this lunacy with his decision... the blockhead! I don't have a more polite word for him...

If anyone is interested, I can disclose that in such matches the "Dózsa tribe" almost always won. It was hardly surprising, since all the stronger boys were in that "tribe". The only joy I got from them winning was that I had less fear of being beaten for something afterwards, because their sick vanity was satisfied by their victory during gym class being seen by the gym teacher, and thus their superiority was officially recognized. So they were very happy about it all, while I was now starting to utterly hate them, in fact detest them, and not only because of the beatings they gave me. It was also for being forced to say that I was a "Fradi fan", when I knew very well that this wasn't true, that I was lying. And I have never liked telling lies. In my eyes lying is a filthy, reprehensible act, almost "ritually impure" in a sense, something a decent, respectable person would never do. And yet I did it, because I was forced into it. They corrupted me! They depraved me! They dragged me down to their own rotten, vile level of morality! The bastards!

The view had begun to take root in me that if we were going to persist with using the label "idiot", then it would be far more suited to them rather than me. Especially since I had a feeling they actually knew that I wasn't a Fradi fan at all, yet they insisted I pretend to be one. But what was the point of

that?! I tried explaining to them countless times how senseless it was to hate each other and fight and argue over something as utterly worthless and factitious as SOCCER! Unfortunately my efforts were in vain, they couldn't grasp it. Not only did they not stop bickering among themselves, but they wouldn't leave me alone either.

Decades later I summarized my unpleasant experiences and debates with them on this theme in one of my novels titled "Kayam, the Mistake":

Even in the gym classes where they just played he couldn't enjoy himself, unlike most children. They could hardly wait for the teacher to tell them they were going to play some kind of ball game. Kayam did not like this either, as he was required to move with this activity too. In addition he found it pointless for two dozen children to be running around mindlessly after a ball. He even told them in the first class that if they wanted to play with a ball, why didn't they give everybody their own ball and then they would not have to fight over a single ball, struggling to retrieve it from the others. Of course they told him he was stupid. But Kayam did not give up; he loudly insisted that it made no sense for somebody who has the ball to be chased by the others in order to snatch it from him.

"This is exactly the same way a chicken behaves," he said, "when it is chasing another one who has found a worm. The worm is hanging out of its beak and the miserable chicken can't swallow it because if it stops the others will take it away from her. Yes, you are all like hens! It doesn't even make sense to play with a ball. I don't see any purpose in kicking a ball just so that it can be mine again after a significant amount of running. But if I feel like doing it in some kind of insane mood, I should at least not be hindered by others. Why not give everybody a separate ball?"

"You're the insane one!" said the other kids, and when the teacher was not looking they kicked him in the buttocks, despite the protests of poor Kayam that he was not the ball and should not be kicked...

These are quotes from my novel. In that novel I modeled Kayam on myself, without much exaggeration, but I would like to emphasize here that I did not put the above opinion in his mouth in jest. This is my actual view of soccer, and the specific reflection about hens and worms was a remark I made to my classmates back then. I also really did suggest that it would be more sensible to give everyone their own ball to play with, if we insisted on playing with a ball at all. And this opinion about soccer was not only present in my childhood, because I feel exactly the same way about it now, as an adult.

Well, I think I've said enough about this, as it's probably clear by now what sort of problems I had regarding soccer. This was the "trend", the "craze" (or whatever you want to call it) among my classmates at the time, and since I was reluctant to follow it, I was "out of line" here too, and it wasn't tolerated.

Perhaps I should add that the gym teacher tried to make me a goalkeeper, since in that position I would rarely have to move, and very little... but to no avail! Namely, my "beloved" classmates always deliberately kicked the ball as hard as they could—or "bulled" it, as they said—and I would have been foolish to stand in front of such "cannon balls"! "They may think I'm an idiot," I thought, "but I'd be a true idiot if I put my physical integrity at risk for the sake of a stupid game!"

They kicked so hard that sometimes it hurt to even catch the ball with my palm, let alone when it hit me in the stomach. After the first few unpleasant experiences, I immediately realized that this was not something that was made for me. I also refused to head the ball, telling anyone who questioned me about it that my head was not designed for this purpose, and that I wasn't willing to risk getting a concussion for such a senseless and ridiculous activity!

After this it wasn't only the kids that didn't like me, but the gym teacher either... I ended up being left out of soccer whenever possible, and while the others were playing I had to run around the field or do other exercises. On the rare occasions that I was required to be in the team, because there weren't enough children present (due to illness or some other reason), they put me in as fullback. Since most of the running about and jostling was done in the center of the field, I had to run considerably less, so that was good. And when somebody approached the goal with the ball, I knew that my job was to run towards him in an attempt to obstruct him, at least with my presence, so he would have to go around me. I was capable of doing this, even though I didn't like it and found it utterly pointless. It must have been quite obvious from the look on my face how uninterested I was in the whole thing.

My "outsider" status, however, soon intensified in their eyes. Because it wasn't just concerning sport. I have already mentioned that I learned to read well very quickly. Books became my passion, even at the time my classmates were still finding reading words syllable by syllable a slow and torturous ordeal. Naturally all this reading I did meant that I acquired many words and expressions that, although being entirely common in the Hungarian language, were not yet known by the others, simply because they were too "serious" for such young children and they hadn't encountered them before.

I also picked up a lot of science knowledge from these books—there is much of it to be gained from the books of Jules Verne—which separated me further from my classmates. I became even more grown-up in their eyes.

And at this point the teacher herself began to worsen the situation as well. When she asked a question, she quickly made it clear that the answer was not to just be shouted out, but that we had to raise our hand, and whoever she called on would be allowed to give the answer. Obviously only those who knew the answer, or at least thought they did... And since I was a diligent student, I almost always put my hand up. I didn't see why not if I knew the answer, and besides, I enjoyed the sense of achievement. It felt good after all the humiliation during the breaks.

So the other kids saw me raising my hand frequently and answering correctly, and they didn't like it at all, because I hope it's no secret when I say that in every school the good students are often despised by those with less talent or diligence... However my real problem was that it turned out that doing this not only lowered my classmates' opinion of me, but also the teacher's. There were numerous occasions where she asked me to put up my hand *less frequently!* Can you understand, dear Reader—not MORE but LESS frequently! The teacher herself wanted this! I simply couldn't fathom why it was a sin for me to put up my hand. I could understand and accept that she wasn't going to call on me every time, but what was wrong with putting up my hand if I knew the answer?! After all, she was the one who had instructed us to do this. I was only doing exactly what she wanted and expected.

She explained to me that I should raise my hand less often because if the other children see how well I know the material, that I know the answer to every question, then it will make them feel bad, and it isn't right to upset others...

I was totally dumbfounded. What the hell did this have to do with me?! And I told the teacher that it wasn't my fault if this upset them—they only had themselves to blame, because they weren't putting enough effort into learning! My only duty was to take care of my own learning progress, not theirs. And I didn't think it was good pedagogy to encourage me to act dumber than I actually was. Instead she should be trying to encourage the others to learn better.

I hasten to add that the teacher was not some extraordinary phenomenon in this respect. I've had many other teachers in my life, of course, and although this wasn't the case with every single one, the majority of them have given me the same kind of advice—to raise my hand less often because it makes people feel bad. It really is astonishing! It even happened to me later in high school. I just can't comprehend it, even now. I mean, naturally I understand that this spectacular display of my excellence—by frequently knowing the correct answer—may indeed cause an inferiority complex in others, but I don't believe this is sufficient justification to hold myself back! My job was to learn, and school should be a place where I (and others of course) am encouraged to learn more diligently, not a place where they attempt to crush my enthusiasm!

I still think that if me KNOWING something bothers others, then it's their fault, because they should be putting more effort into learning. It has nothing to do with me! Obviously I would be expected not to mock them for their stupidity, but I never did that. Why shouldn't I, however, display my knowledge to the *teachers*? Isn't it their JOB DUTY to value a student's diligence?! The world would be a beautiful place if everyone in it did their duty. The duty of children is to learn, and it was mine too. I considered learning my primary duty, and definitely not pretending that I knew less than I actually did. That would be lying! The way I summed it all up was that instead of being praised for my cleverness and diligence, I was expected to adapt to the lazy and stupid kids.

This wasn't at all what I had envisioned about school before I began there—that school was an institution in which to acquire KNOWLEDGE. It was a **huge** disappointment for me!

Naturally I did not comply with the teacher's request, and I still raised my hand most of the time when I knew the material. It was rarely the case that I didn't know the answer. Usually I didn't bother putting up my hand when the exercise was so pathetically simple that I deemed it unworthy of my attention, since it was beneath me to waste myself on such petty, easy questions. I let somebody else "take the credit" by giving the right answer... but secretly I deeply despised them, because this was the meager extent of their ability. All the same, I did generally raise my hand. And even the times I didn't, I would lean back in my chair, theatrically cross my arms over my chest, and smile smugly at the teacher, as if to say, "See, I'm not putting up my hand because you asked me not to, but you know that I know the answer, and so does everyone else in the class who looks at me..."

I think I might have even been willing to obey the teacher and put up my hand less frequently—that is, complied with her wishes against my better judgment—if the other kids hadn't mocked me. But they did... as well as beat me! Regularly! So the fact that I raised my hand very often was, I admit, a kind of revenge on my part.

I fear that by now my Reader might be having the (completely unfounded) opinion that my classmates were probably right about me being a coward, because otherwise how did I always end up getting the short end of the stick during these fights? After all, on average I should have won half the time, right? Or did I not have average physical strength, perhaps being some short, skinny weakling?!

Well, the explanation is something else entirely. It's true that I wasn't a particularly strong kid, and I was by no means bigger than the average child of my age. But that wasn't the issue. In fact I'm sure there *were* children in the class who were weaker than me, albeit not many. Yet despite this, it was still impossible for me to win half the fights. You mustn't imagine these fights being like the pistol duels you see in western movies, with one child challenging me to a duel, and the better one winning. That's not how it happened. The common "procedure" was that somebody in the class figured that I deserved to be beaten for some reason, and then EVERYBODY would attack me at once. A whole gang of them, or at least five or six. And that really was the minimum...

What chance did I have against so many aggressors—I wasn't a karate champion! I wouldn't have stood much of a chance against that many even if I was the strongest in the class. There were a few occasions where a kid would start a fight with me on his own, one-on-one, and sometimes it really did seem that I was winning. However, before I could take advantage of my good situation, someone else in the class (or usually several people) would always intervene and help out my opponent. Therefore I was always the loser without exception. At least initially...

Because as you can imagine, I did not like this state of affairs at all! After a while, when I realized that I couldn't handle the situation on my own and needed help, I... Well yes, I did also complain to the teachers, but I'll report on that and the outcome a little later. It is suffice to say here that this did not lead to any successful results. So since I had no choice, I also told my parents about being beaten at school. I was hoping that Papi would come up with a way to solve this serious issue. I didn't know *how*, but surely he would somehow be able to, after all, he was incredibly smart...

Well, he didn't solve the situation, and moreover told me he wasn't able to solve it for me. But then what was I to do?! He asked me what I had been doing up until now. How had I tried to defend myself?

My reply was that I pretty much did nothing. Naturally I tried to run away if I could, and I shielded my face with my arms, and on rare occasions I even dared to hit back...

"How come?!" he asked. "Were you afraid you'd get beaten up more if you fought back? I mean, if there's a fight going on anyway, and it has escalated to you being attacked by several people at once, then it wouldn't make any difference!"

"No, it's not that. I've just always been afraid of what would happen if I hit one of them so hard that it gave him serious injuries, like blinding him or something... and then everybody would say it was my fault, and even the teachers would punish me..."

That is, even in such desperate situations I had tried to be at least somewhat considerate of *others*, of my adversaries. This of course put me at a huge disadvantage. It also shows that it is not an exaggeration to portray Aspies as "elf children". Because I don't think that this mentality is solely my prerogative. I deeply believe that all Aspies are built this way. I will admit that Aspies (myself included) aren't so good as to be totally devoid of all wrongdoing. We shouldn't be idealized as being 100 percent real elf children, who are not capable of any malice, anger or selfishness etc. I certainly don't want to imply this! We are also HUMAN BEINGS, and therefore possess all "human" qualities, including the bad traits unfortunately. Yes, we are not exempt from those either! I only wanted to stress that we are not as prone to these as neurotypical individuals. This is perfectly natural, however, it cannot be otherwise.

I will remind you, dear Reader, of the part of this book in which I speculated that Aspie-ness is caused by the fact that our brain resources are distributed differently (than that of neurotypicals). It is completely logical that this difference has an impact not only on so-called "talents", but on "inclinations" too. There are indeed certain things—let's call them "evildoings"—that an Aspie has very little inclination for. In fact, you might say none at all, unless some incredibly serious situation forces him to (such as his life being in danger).

Of course, there are still some "evildoings" that us Aspies are more prone to, although it is questionable whether or not these deeds can truly be labeled as such—however there is no doubt that the victim would have this opinion. Even so, I think the term "evil" is debatable in these cases, because although we Aspies really do have the inclination to commit such deeds, if we accept the premise that an act is "evil" only if done out of deliberate malice, then they aren't really evildoings. I'm thinking of things like when we accidentally insult somebody and upset them, just because we're untrained in how certain actions or words affect neurotypical people.

A prime example is the case I described earlier, when I wrote to a lady that she looked like my great-grandmother. She certainly thought I was being terribly mean, that I was deliberately trying to insult her, although that was my furthest intention. Moreover, I meant it as a compliment, or at least a courtesy!

So the point is that even during the most violent fights, my mind was running through how I could avoid causing my enemies serious injury. Of course this emotional inhibition was a tremendous handicap, and would still have been even if they hadn't significantly outnumbered me. My father was naturally aware of all this too, and he explained to me that this method of dealing with things would not work. That if I continued in this manner I would have no chance of getting the upper hand, and therefore receive numerous further beatings. He said it was very commendable of me not to want to cause permanent injuries to my attackers, and he was extremely proud of me for thinking in such a chivalrous way, especially without even being brought up to do so. However the world wasn't black-and-white, it wasn't just made up of extremes, so there was an intermediate state here, between the two extremes of either letting myself be beaten to a pulp in the name of the Goodness because I wanted to be a good child, or figuring out some magic fighting trick and sending everybody to the morgue or at least the intensive care unit within half a minute! And this intermediate solution was to beat up the other person really badly, so that he never dares to attack me again for fear of the consequences, but not badly enough to cause permanent injury. That is, I had to learn the sorts of "fighting tricks" that avoided significant harm to anyone in the long-term, but were at the same time terribly painful.

This had actually been dawning on me myself for a long time, I was just afraid to act on it... It was good to now have my father confirm these inner thoughts. And he immediately gave me some tips. First of all he told me that if I have a number of assailants coming at me at once, then it was useless to flail my hands about, since I wouldn't be able to stop them from beating me anyway—I'd be unable to watch them from every direction. In order to not get beaten up in such a situation, I'd first have to go to one of those martial arts schools that are seen in movies, but there were none in our area, in fact it was questionable whether there were even any in the whole of Hungary (don't forget, dear Reader, that this was in the era of socialism, between 1971-1979). However, even if there was one near us, it's not like I could just enroll and become a master fighter within a week... It would take many years of diligent

practice before I could defeat several attackers at once, but unfortunately my difficulties with them were happening RIGHT NOW, not years later!

"Then what should I do?" I asked him.

"You have to treat them like a difficult math exercise—step by step! In other words, you have to come to terms with the fact that you're going to get beaten up again. You can't avoid this, unfortunately, but you can ensure that the next time you're attacked there will be one less of them. And the way you can achieve this noble goal is by not trying to defend yourself against everyone when they come at you, because that will only make them laugh at you, but picking out just ONE of them—the strongest brute or the one you hate the most—and go after him. Ignore everyone else but him, and put all your effort into beating this particular boy black and blue, whatever it costs you. Don't even worry about trying to avoid his punches, just do your utmost to thump him as often and as painfully as possible. It's also advisable to jump into his arms as soon as you can, because once you're there then the others can't really get to you. They can only hit you on your back or your buttocks, and that's not as painful. The person you're fighting with can't really get at you either, other than trying to hit you in the back or side, therefore your most vulnerable body part—your face—is fairly well protected. And once you're in this position, I'd suggest that you try to grab his manhood between his legs. If you manage to grab it with even just one hand and squeeze it firmly, then whatever the outcome of the fight, I would be surprised if he dared to attack you again, because even if he's quite certain that he can defeat you, he will know that this victory will cost him terrible pain. For the penis is a very sensitive organ for every man, and especially the testicles! Just try squeezing one of them carefully, just gently... Now imagine that you were squeezing the balls of your opponent with all your strength, and not only for a brief moment but a good while... Even by the end of the break, he'll only be able to limp back to class... Then next time they come after you, you do the same thing with the second kid... then the third... and so on! Eventually nobody will dare to attack you, because they'll know that although they can easily defeat you collectively, *they* might be the one you choose to jump on again, and naturally they'd want to avoid having their precious balls crushed..."

My father gave me other specific ideas too. Like trying to headbutt the other person in the nose. It wasn't as brutal as poking his eyes out, and he'd be sure to survive it, but it would be extremely painful. I could use my teeth too, to bite into a bare part of his body, or a spot that was only covered by thin clothing. They wouldn't be expecting that, and it was again something that would heal without a trace, yet still hurt like hell!

Naturally, I heeded my father's advice... and it wasn't long before I had an opportunity to try out its effectiveness.

This "adventure" of mine started when the subject of dinosaurs was brought up in class for some reason. It was in the break between lessons, before the teacher arrived. Dinosaurs were of great interest to most young children back then, including myself. I knew the Latin names of several dozen dinosaurs by heart. And it was on that particular day that somebody broached the almost mysterious topic of how such colossal, powerful and fearsome animals had become extinct. At this point I didn't have the sense to keep quiet, and blurted out that they never had in fact become extinct!

Everybody looked at me in shock, then several of them started laughing. What a ridiculous thing to say, after all, EVERYBODY knew that dinosaurs were extinct, they were only unclear about what had

caused it—although there were all sorts of theories, for instance a huge solar flare, or a meteor impact... There were newspaper articles about it, serious scientists claiming that dinosaurs were extinct... How could I be arrogant enough to go against the official opinion?! Saying that they weren't extinct, when it was *obvious* they were, since nobody has ever seen a living dinosaur!

"Well, I ate roast dinosaur just last night!" I replied.

Then everyone started shouting, calling me a dirty liar and other such things... Many of them were ready to jump on me, but somebody interjected: "Can you prove it? Where are the bones of this alleged dinosaur that you ate?"

"Where do you think? In the trash, of course... But before you demand that I bring them to school as evidence, I'll tell you that there's no need, because I'm sure that you've already eaten roast dinosaur yourself! And since I can see that you still don't understand, I'll explain—roast dinosaur is none other than roast chicken! Chickens are actually the direct descendants of dinosaurs, therefore they're also genuine dinosaurs. Just like all other birds. Birds are nothing more than dinosaurs that have learned to fly, that's all. So dinosaurs aren't extinct! Or at least not all of them. There are still plenty in existence, for you know well how many kinds of birds exist even here in Hungary, let alone in the tropics!"

"That's bullshit, birds aren't dinosaurs!"

"Yes they are!" I stubbornly stuck to my view, even though I was quite aware that there would be another beating at the end of this argument. Yet I held onto my inner conviction, which I firmly believed in. It was one thing to be prepared to lie about supporting the Fradi soccer team in order to get less beatings, but it was quite another to lie about SCIENTIFIC FACTS! After all, soccer didn't matter to me at all, not in the slightest, but science certainly did, so to me there was a huge difference. Science was "sacred" in a sense. There was no room for compromise or opportunism, not on my life!

"But birds can't be dinosaurs," a girl cut in, "because birds are such nice, gentle, harmless little animals, while dinosaurs are big, horrible, bloodthirsty predators!"

"Well, I think if you went to Africa and were chased by an ostrich, you would no longer have the opinion that birds are all that gentle and harmless, not to mention that they aren't necessarily small either..." I retorted.

"That still doesn't make birds dinosaurs—they're not as bloodthirsty," one of the boys protested.

"Okay, then what do you think their origin is?!" I asked him.

"They may have had a common ancestor with dinosaurs at some point in the distant past, but they aren't dinosaurs."

"Well I think they are. Think about it—both birds and dinosaurs reproduce by laying eggs. Most dinosaurs—at least those that are most well-known—were bipedal, just like birds are today. And even the dinosaurs that didn't walk on two legs had their legs positioned *under* their body, not *on the side* like other reptiles. Therefore it's pretty obvious that birds are far more similar to dinosaurs than to other reptiles..."

"What about the fact that birds have no teeth?!"

"They don't generally have any these days, but they *used to* have them. Paleontologists have found ancient bird fossils that prove this... And anyhow, as far as I know there are even rare occurrences today where a hen or a rooster, or some other fowl, is born with a few tiny teeth. These are mutants of course, or rather atavisms, which—because you probably don't know this word—essentially means 'a throwback to an ancestral state', and the reason this can occur is because the ancestors of birds had

teeth! So as far as I'm concerned, birds are real dinosaurs... a group of dinosaurs that have learned to fly. Anyhow, this also explains why they survived—whatever caused the extinction of the other dinosaurs must have been a huge disaster, and in such a big disaster it would be very advantageous for an animal to have the ability to fly. This would make it easier to escape danger, or at least fly to other areas where there is still food to be found."

"You're a hopeless idiot," came the highly scientific counterargument, against which there was no room for any rebuttal.

"Well, I wouldn't want to be as 'smart' as you are, not being able to acknowledge factual evidence..." I reassured him.

Then he attacked me, of course, along with the others... that is, I was now being beaten up not because of soccer, but because I had a dissenting view on a SCIENTIFIC issue! This was a pure medieval debating style, and I remember thinking that these hooligans were born in the wrong era—800 years ago they would have made great inquisitors...

Before I continue the narration of this affair, I would like to dwell for a moment on the particular detail of birds basically being dinosaurs. This was not something I had read in a book—I came up with it *myself*! At that time this theory was not yet widespread (at least, not in Hungary), however I had discovered it by my own reasoning. Yet more proof of my creative genius, because I hope that my Reader is aware that TODAY this is a widely held view among zoologists, paleontologists and other scientists.

But now let's revert to the subject at hand—the brawl. This was the first time I got to use all the tricks my father had taught me. Interestingly, I can't remember precisely which kid I decided to focus my attention on while I ignored the others. But one thing is certain—I started by grabbing him by his shirt, and pulling him towards me, meanwhile pushing myself off the ground with my legs with all my might, and headbutting into his nose as hard as I could... I'm serious when I say that this action caused my own head considerable pain, so I can't imagine how much it had hurt him!

However this was just the beginning, in fact, just a humble prelude to the beginning, the "first step", since after he fell to the ground I firmly grabbed his testicles with my right hand, while I bit him through his clothes wherever I could reach... Well, he certainly shouted out in pain, I can tell you!

Eventually I stopped, when I decided he'd had enough. Then I jumped up and turned around to choose another opponent... but they all sped off to get away from me. Wow, it felt wonderful for them to be scared of me for the first time in my life! I didn't go after them, partly because I didn't really like fighting, and partly because the door had opened and the teacher came in...

Naturally this didn't put an end to all the fighting. They sought me out on many more occasions, and beat me up every time. But I also beat them thoroughly in whatever ways I could. So in the end my father had given me good advice, because they were increasingly less inclined to attack me, and when they did, there were fewer and fewer of them. However, up until the end of elementary school, they couldn't help themselves once in a while...

What's particularly interesting is that they still had the audacity to put me in the wrong, accusing me of being a low dastard because "I don't understand the concept of a fair fight", that I am "not allowed to fight that way", "it isn't fair", etc. What I was doing wasn't "chivalrous", not worthy of a "gentleman"... It was illegal and forbidden!

"What the *hell*?!" I retaliated. "You've got a lot of nerve to reproach me for merely defending myself! As if it's 'chivalrous' for a whole group to attack a single person! Do you really think that can be called a 'fair fight'?!"

"Okay," said the strongest boy, "then I challenge you to fight against me, me alone... but it has to be fair, which means no headbutting or biting, and no..."

"There's no need to go on, because what you're proposing is not a 'chivalrous' fight, it's just hypocrisy! What the hell is 'fair' about someone who is obviously much stronger wanting to fight someone weaker than himself?! Besides, this whole concept of a 'chivalrous' and 'fair' fight is nothing but bullshit! I don't believe it's ever happened in the History of mankind, not anywhere, in the history of any nation! It may have often appeared that way, I admit, but in reality it was all just hypocrisy, because the so-called 'chivalrous' opponent—whether it be a whole nation or a single hero—always took care to attack someone weaker than himself, and always gave up just enough advantage for the sake of appearing chivalrous and 'fair' to still ensure victory. He took great care to do that! So it was all hypocrisy. Sure, he may have miscalculated sometimes... but in most cases he didn't!"

Then my "beloved" classmates spread rumors around the school that I was gay, probably to justify why I grabbed my opponents between the legs during our fights... Naturally not a word of this was true. I am completely heterosexual, as I was back then. But this smear campaign was still more favorable for me than the previous situation, because I had to fight them less. They really were afraid for their genitals, so now it wasn't as fun and risk-free for them to attack me...

So it could be said that although the method proposed by my father wasn't perfect, since it didn't eliminate all the fights, it did still help me a lot because it reduced the number of them and therefore my situation was noticeably improved. What was even more important to me was that whenever a fight did occur from then on, it ended with a different result than before. Because despite still getting beaten up, now one of them (or sometimes more) was paying for it severely! That is, I still hated the fights, yet I no longer felt them to be a total failure and cause for humiliation, since I could gain some sense of achievement. This greatly boosted my self-confidence.

My readers may be inclined (as is usual among neurotypicals) to believe all the bad things I write about myself, but none of the good things... In this case you may think it impossible for me as a young child to have come up with such a serious scientific discovery or theory (I don't know what the most correct term for it would be) as birds merely being the dinosaurs of the present era. So I would like to deal with this, before I get into what is actually a far more important issue.

Let's start with the fact that although I do consider myself a genius, as I've already mentioned several times (and I'm sure it won't be the last time I refer to it), as far as this dinosaur theory of mine is concerned, I admit that it required *some* creative genius, but not really that much. I am far more proud of my many other discoveries/theories. In fact, this dinosaur theory is so self-evident that I am surprised even today that somebody hadn't thought of it FAR, FAR EARLIER! Okay, sure, I wasn't born with this theory instantly in my mind... It took me a few years to figure it out, because at the very least I needed to have some idea about dinosaurs. But it came to me fairly quickly, simply because dinosaurs were already quite well-known in those days. Although they were not as famed as they are today, but only because TV was black and white, there were fewer movies, no VCRs, and the Internet did not exist. Thus information spread more slowly back then, but dinosaurs were such striking

creatures to look at, so spectacular, that they were still quite well known even among children, in fact, *especially* among children. Because, as is the case these days, it was children who admired them the most. Perhaps to a lesser degree than they admired the pointless and ridiculous game of soccer... but I can safely say that after soccer, it was probably dinosaurs that drew their interest most. If someone got hold of a newspaper with a picture of a dinosaur in it and brought it to school to show off, they were sure to be the "star" of break time, as if they had displayed some picture from a pornographic magazine that had been smuggled in from the West...

So the fact that I was interested in dinosaurs wasn't even attributable to my Aspergers, for in this respect I was exactly the same as the neurotypical children. But then why hadn't *they* realized that birds were basically dinosaurs? Presumably because it required not only the "adoration" of dinosaurs, but also the ability to observe certain DETAILS on a bird, as well as an excellent imagination. I had both—attention to detail, and imagination. Both are very typical of Aspies. Imagination perhaps due to an Aspie's preference to be alone as a result of the way they are treated by neurotypicals, but also because they need to amuse themselves, and lacking companionship they have to rely solely on their own imagination...

I even remember how I came up with the idea that birds were like dinosaurs... It happened at my grandmother's place. I don't know which year exactly, but I must have been in the lower grade. She was plucking a chicken because she wanted to roast it. And she was going to use the legs for making chicken soup. Anyone who has cooked a chicken knows that it is advisable to cut the claws off the toes before cooking, since they are dirty, and we can't eat them anyway. Being a child, I was permanently underfoot during the process of plucking and gutting the chicken, because I was curious about what was inside such an animal, what kind of internal organs it had... In fact, I would have liked to cut it up myself, but of course my grandmother wouldn't let me, fearing that I would injure myself if she gave me a knife, or perhaps cut the chicken in a way that wouldn't be suitable for cooking the meal.

In the end, however, I became so hysterical that she allowed me to at least cut the claws off the legs that had already been removed. I was happy with this task, but before I started I took a good look at the chicken leg. I raised it closer to my eyes, and examined it... "Wow, it's SCALY!" I thought. I had thought scales were only found on reptiles, like crocodiles for example, or snakes... What a remarkable fact it was that hens had feathers on top, but scales underneath! And its foot had toes that stretched forward, but not all of them... JUST LIKE those of a dinosaur! Hmm...

And as I shook the leg in front me, looking at it up close, I imagined how such a hen would look if it were the size of a human, or even bigger... And if it were to reach out toward me with equally large claws... That would be truly horrifying! And look, its claws are sickle-shaped like those of predators... Well, it's not that surprising really, since chickens are predators in a certain sense; they aren't above meat-eating, for they'll eat a mouse if they can catch one entering the chicken coop... Anyhow, if a hen was at least the size of a human, and in place of wings had some sort of arm-like limbs, then it would be the spitting image of a dinosaur! After all, they are bipedal, reproduce by laying eggs, their legs have scales...

So that's how the "Great Idea" was born in my mind. In the end it's all just a matter of imagination, and I have no shortage of that. The evidence of this is in my series of novels, which I have written more than fifty of. A great number of ideas are needed to write this many novels, and I hope nobody will dispute that. Compared to this, the single theory I had in childhood about dinosaurs and birds isn't

really such a big deal...Of course my classmates didn't think so, and they were very angry with me, probably feeling as if I had desecrated their "idols", the dinosaurs, when I dared to claim that these animals had degenerated into such harmless little creatures as birds... Although they aren't really that harmless at all!

There was a time when my mother bred poultry. And she had a rooster in the chicken coop that was so big and aggressive that she didn't dare go in there, because it would always immediately attack her and peck at her wildly. Obviously it wasn't as if she feared for her *life*, but she knew she had better avoid the rooster if she wanted to avoid suffering considerable bloody wounds.

But now let's turn to the "more important issue" I mentioned earlier. I was talking about the fact that before I told my father about the atrocities that happened to me at school, I naturally informed the teachers of my unpleasant situation... BUT NONE OF THEM DID ANYTHING! Moreover, as if it was the most obvious thing in the world, they practically made me—the victim—the culprit! They started from the assumption that if *everybody* was picking on me, then it was most certainly *my* fault and not *theirs*, therefore it was me who needed to change. That is, their solution was that I had to try to FIT IN!

The teachers were right about that, and I don't deny that I was the cause—it may not have been my "fault", but I was the one who was "different" and stood out from the others. This was absolutely self-evident, and they could easily see it. I don't dispute this, and nor did I back then, although I obviously didn't see the whole situation as clearly as I do now. So in this respect they were right. The only question is that if I'm different from the vast majority, but in a way that doesn't hurt others, does this authorize others to BEAT me for it?!

I posed the above question to one of my teachers at the time, although I didn't put it in such a refined manner. What I asked was roughly, "Are you saying that it's a sin for me not to be interested in soccer, for me to enjoy reading books, and to understand math far better than the others?! And if it is a sin, then they're allowed to *beat* me for it?!"

Her response was something like, "Of course it's not a sin, but there must be some other reason why the others get so angry at you, even though they shouldn't really be beating you for it. But I can't be constantly standing by your side to protect you, so the only real solution is to try to fit in!"

FIT IN! Ugh! I swear that there are few words in existence that I detest more than these! The reason I hate this expression so much is because it's what anyone would feel if they wanted to be able to do something, but couldn't, no matter how many times they tried. I also tried... many times... to fit in... but it never worked. The reason for this failure was most certainly the simple fact that nobody can succeed at anything they have no idea how to do, let alone how in the world to even begin!

By the time this conversation had taken place between me and the teacher, I pretty much already knew which of my attributes were most disliked by my classmates. It wasn't difficult to acquire this knowledge, for I only had to remember the reasons they had beat me. The main ones were those that I also listed for the teacher, namely:

—I have no interest in soccer. And if "fitting in" means I have to like this activity, then I am definitely unable to do that! I am just as incapable of this as the others are of liking math, or preferring to read books as a pastime over playing soccer. People either like things or they don't, it's rarely up to them. They don't like reading books, I don't like playing soccer, and I don't know why it's *me* who's

expected to change my preferred pastime! Who the hell am I hurting anyway by not liking soccer?! It doesn't mean they can't play soccer all they want, I'm not forbidding them! And if their favorite team doesn't win the cup match, that's not my fault either—I can't do anything about it!

—Another problem they have with me is that I'm a good student, especially in math. Well, how am I supposed to "fit in" here?! Should I forget everything I know about numbers?! Well, I'm not able to do that. I don't want to forget it, and even if I did, I couldn't. Or should I deliberately give the wrong answer when I'm asked, so that I get bad grades?! Is that really what the teachers expect me to do to try to "fit in"?!

—They also think my speech-style is strange. That may be the case, but I think *their* speech-style is strange too! Okay, by now I understand most of their slang words, but they still don't always understand me. So what would be the equivalent of fitting in here? Should I start using their (bawdy) expressions too? It is the teachers themselves who would be the most angry if I did that. They would immediately say that not only am I not "fitting in", but that I have become foul-mouthed because I use swear words and indecent language! SO WHAT IS THIS MYSTERIOUS "FITTING IN"?! What do you want from me IN PRACTICE?!

I was completely at a loss. Only one thing was clear to me—I didn't know what was expected of me, but there was no point asking because they would just throw general pomposity at me, without saying anything specific. They didn't know what they really wanted, except for me to stop being a burden and solve my problems on my own. But I was unable to...

Yet another thing became clear to me after a little reflection. And that's that even if some breath-taking miracle were to happen and I did manage to "fit in", I wouldn't get anywhere. Because despite "fitting in", it wouldn't solve my main problem, which was being beaten regularly. I could already clearly see that there was some sort of "hierarchy" in the class. As is evident in every community... And this hierarchy was predominantly based on PHYSICAL STRENGTH. On how muscular the boy was. Whenever an opportunity arose, the stronger kids would terrorize those weaker than themselves, simply because they enjoyed showing off their power. And the weaker somebody was, the more they were terrorized. In fact, they didn't even have to be considerably weaker to be bullied, as long as they didn't like fighting and preferred to avoid the stronger kids.

Now, I was in the "weaker group", although I wasn't the weakest one. But I certainly didn't like fighting. Not even with those who were weaker than me. So even if I had managed to "fit in", I would still be at the bottom of this hierarchy, or at best, not the very last but two or three rungs up, which wouldn't help much because I'd still be beaten up frequently. Perhaps not *as* frequently, but there would essentially be little change in the situation. The potential result certainly wasn't worth the effort I would have to put in, especially since I didn't know how to get started even if I wanted to.

So I didn't get much help from the teachers, none really, therefore I finally had to complain to my father, as I described earlier. Considering this, it is not surprising that my respect towards the teaching staff dropped significantly, almost to nothing, because I felt that it was actually their duty to protect me from the violence of the other kids, yet they didn't!

I wanted to take revenge on them too, not only on my classmates. Sometimes I had the opportunity to do so, obviously not in such an uncouth manner as secretly destroying some educational material or tripping up the teacher—that sort of behavior is not in my nature, as I believe is the case with all

Aspies. However, simply voicing a dissenting opinion on a complex scientific issue proved to be an excellent method of revenge. I would throw it at her like an "intellectual spear", then just sit back and watch as she hemmed and hawed, unable to utter a single coherent sentence... And of course all this was done in public, in front of the whole class!

By doing this I temporarily became a "star" to even my hated fellow classmates, or at least until the end of the school day, because they didn't like the teachers either and therefore enjoyed seeing them humiliated, that is, when a teacher was proven to be far less clever than they were supposed to be. I will give an example to help my reader understand this method. And I apologize in advance, as it will be yet more proof of my genius... I can't help it, it's just how it was...

So... the situation occurred in grammar class. It was an incredibly simple part of the curriculum—the conjugation of verbs, via the use of "tenses". The teacher specifically called on me to answer the question, to her great misfortune, when she should have realized that no good would come of interrupting my peaceful daydreaming at my desk. She was better off pretending as if I didn't exist, since she could hardly be said to care about me if she refused to protect me... But she called on me nevertheless. Well, she very quickly regretted it!

She asked me how many "tenses" there are in the Hungarian language. And I answered, "Now I should say *three* if I want a good grade, but since I don't like lying I will give you the true answer, which is *two*!"

"*What... what do you mean?!*"

"The past tense and the present tense. In fact, I should say the past tense and the non-past tense."

"Right, so you think there's no future tense in our language? What an interesting view!" replied the teacher, grinning at me almost like a tiger. My classmates howled with laughter. What an idiot I was!

"Naturally we can refer to actions in the future without any difficulties," I answered, "but you specifically asked me how many TENSES there are in our language. And grammatically speaking there are just two. In the physical sense there are three time dimensions, of course, although strictly speaking even in this sense there are only two—the past and the future, separated by an infinitesimally small moment of the 'present', therefore physically the past and the future can be represented as a half line, and the 'present' as a single point... Yet in physical terms we MAY still speak about three time dimensions. But in grammatical terms there are only two, because verbs only have two forms—the dictionary form, which has no special ending, and the past tense form, which has the '-t' ending (or 'd' in English), sometimes preceded by a connecting vowel... However the alleged 'future tense' has no suffix, and is exactly the same as the present tense form, with at most a separate word before or after it. But that's not always the case."

"Why does it bother you that the future tense is expressed with a separate word?!"

"I'm not bothered at all, but it's still not a separate *tense*! And there are many cases where we don't even use separate words to express the future tense. For example: 'I buy it next time'. Here the word 'buy' is entirely in the present tense. (Note: this is the Hungarian equivalent of the English 'I'll buy it next time'). Just by using the expression 'next time' doesn't make it a 'future tense', since it's a simple time-adverb. We could just as easily replace it with 'then' or 'tomorrow'. Therefore in this case the PHYSICAL dimension of future tense is expressed by a present tense grammatical form. The other option is to say, for example, 'Steve will eat'..." (Hungarian does have a word equivalent to 'will').

"There you go, that is indeed a future tense!"

"Not at all. Because as far as I'm concerned, the real verb here is 'will', which is in ordinary present tense. And the verb 'eat' is also in present tense..."

"It's precisely *this* that is the form of the future tense—the word 'will' along with the given verb in present tense!"

"That's a misconception," I said, grinning at her, "because following this line of argument we could consider all other cases where the main verb is combined with another auxiliary verb as separate grammatical categories—for example 'want to eat', 'would like to eat', 'can eat', 'may eat', 'can't eat', and a whole slew of other possibilities... 'Will eat' is no different to any of these, and there's no sensible reason to separate it, just so that we can boast that our language has a future tense! Because it DOESN'T. We only have two tenses, the past and the non-past, the latter of which we might generously call the 'present', for simplicity's sake."

The teacher became very angry, and sat me down, saying something like, "You shouldn't fancy yourself to be smarter than linguistics professors, you're just a sniveling brat..."

Well, to me that seemed anything but a calm, objective counterargument (not to mention professionalism)... Moreover, it turned out that I was right in this dispute, and I have since discovered brilliant evidence to support it, albeit some 40 years later. Because I started learning English, and it immediately became apparent that, contrary to what is said about the language—that it allegedly has twelve tenses, as opposed to the three in Hungarian—English verbs have only two forms, and what a pleasant surprise... they expressed the same two categories as in Hungarian—the past and non-past!

Yet for a short while I struggled with my vanity, thinking that if so many people say that English has twelve tenses, then surely they must be right... But then I came across a book written in English, which was about the English language, and it totally agreed with my view of this topic. And ultimately it is native English speakers who know their own language best!

The book's title is: **The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language**

Author: **David Crystal**

The following article is on page 196 of this book (wherever I have omitted something, I have indicated it with an ellipsis):

HOW MANY TENSES?

How many tenses of the verb are there in English? If your automatic reaction is to say "three, at least" - past, present and future - you are showing the influence of the Latinate grammatical tradition. If you go for a larger number, adding such labels as perfect and pluperfect, the tradition is even more deep-rooted within you. Twenty or more tense forms are set up in some traditional grammars.... To see the extent to which this is a distortion of the way English works, we must be sure of how the word *tense* was used in traditional grammar. Tense was thought of as the grammatical expression of time, and identified by a particular set of endings on the verb.... English.... has only one inflectional form to express time: the past tense marker (typically *-ed*),.... There is therefore a two-way tense contrast in English: *I walk* vs. *I walked* - present tense vs past tense. English has no future tense ending, but uses a wide range of other techniques to express future time.... The linguistic facts are uncontroversial. However, people find it extremely difficult to drop the notion of 'future tense' (and related notions, such as imperfect, future perfect, and pluperfect tenses) from their mental vocabulary, and to look for other ways of talking about the grammatical realities of the English verb.

Therefore even as a young child I was already taking the MOST MODERN linguistic position, just instinctively, on my own! (Maybe I do have a flair for language...?) Naturally I didn't get any praise for it at the time. But at least I managed to annoy the teacher, which is better than nothing. It's all about the little pleasures, right?

Going back to my "beloved" classmates, there were numerous occasions where I would ask one of them what exactly their problem was with me? Virtually without exception I was told repeatedly, "It's that you're an idiot!"

However this made no sense to me. It was so OBVIOUS to me that I WASN'T an idiot! How could I be, when it was quite clear that I had far more knowledge in a wide range of scientific fields than those who were shouting me down?! There were even times when I asked them why they always beat me up, or at least why they were so determined to do so... The answer to this was generally the same:

"Because you're an idiot!"

Well, even if I really was an idiot—I don't know of any law that states that idiots are allowed to be beaten by others... especially if the idiot isn't hurting anybody with his idiocy...

Sometimes I got a different answer, which was: "Just because!"

Well, this answer was easier for me to understand than "Because you're an idiot". "Just because" had at least some level of honesty, since anyone who says this is admitting that he is EVIL! Yes, evil. Because this short phrase is really just a brief summation of the following longer answer: **"I beat you up simply because I CAN! Because I'm stronger than you, and because I just feel like beating someone up. Somebody who is weaker than me, of course, and therefore not dangerous, but is good fun to thrash! So I do it for the fun, JUST BECAUSE!"**

Now if anything is deserving of the label "evil", then it's this. In my eyes it is, anyway. How could anyone seriously expect me to LIKE such a person?! Surely that's too high an expectation, huh?!

At school it was precisely me of whom the teachers expected this mysterious thing called "fitting in", because they started from the assumption that it was easier for one child to adapt to the majority than for the majority to adapt to one particular child.

I can't deny that this position sounds absolutely logical at first reading. Nevertheless, although it may be *absolute*, it is not *logical*, and it's only absolute in the sense of being absolutely FALSE! False, because this one particular child—me—was unable to "fit in", even when he tried his hardest. And furthermore, it wouldn't have been necessary at all for the majority to "adapt" to me. Nothing special would have been required of them. Nothing like having to love math or reading, or study more diligently. There really was no need for any of this. All it would have taken was simply to LEAVE ME IN PEACE! To not bother me. That's it. I would have been satisfied with that little. To leave me alone, forget about me, and pretend that I don't even exist! It wouldn't have even mattered if they had expressed their deep contempt for me and their (imagined...) superiority by ostracizing me, but without it manifesting itself in a fight. For instance, if they were to not say a word to me, not answer if I asked a question, but instead turn away arrogantly, that sort of thing...

I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have liked that either, but I could have easily tolerated it, because basically—like all Aspies—I was perfectly happy being on my own, without any company. But there was no chance of that happening, for they felt they had the right to engage in physical aggression...

Unfortunately the teachers did not act as moderators in these conflicts. They preferred children to be some kind of "homogeneous mass", a conglomerate of specimens without individuality, and I soon realized that if someone stood out from this "gray mass" somehow, then they would be made to suffer for it, even if they stood out in a positive way. In fact, teachers were generally far more tolerant of those who were failing because they were stupid than those who were smarter than average, at least in certain subjects. In such circumstances—as I have experienced myself—even teachers become the enemy of the aspiring student.

I already mentioned that this school was a rather authoritarian institute. For example, they insisted on the wearing of school uniforms (an ugly, dark blue cloak), arguing that if uniforms were not compulsory then all students would soon start wearing the most fashionable clothes, which would make the poorer students—whose parents could not afford such expensive luxuries—feel bad.

Oh, how logical that sounded! How decent of the teachers to not want to shame the poorer students! What good souls the teaching staff were, I'm just melting with emotion...

What a load of BULLSHIT! First of all, the majority of boys have absolutely no interest in clothes, neither today, nor in the past. And furthermore, don't think that children (and their parents...) didn't have the ingenuity back then to flaunt their wealth in a way that didn't violate school regulations. If the ugly cloak was compulsory, then the kid wouldn't be showing off his clothes, but using a four-colored ball point pen instead of the ordinary one... These were still very expensive at the time. So expensive (and frequently unavailable) that I didn't own one either. The first time I got one was at the end of elementary school, when my uncle gave it to me as a graduation gift, saying that I was now "growing up"... Needless to say, it didn't have any particular significance for me at the time. I mean, school was over now and I couldn't prove to anyone that I owned it, that I was just as worthy of such a possession as the others.

Another such important status symbol was the "kneaded eraser", because it was so neat to be able to erase with it, as well as model it like plasticine. These were also expensive, of course, and difficult to obtain. The situation was similar with scented erasers too.

Then there were what we called "dimensional calendars", which showed a different picture if you tilted it a little. The ones we liked best were those depicting women, who upon tilting became naked... But even more impressive than this was a kid who could afford to wear Adidas sneakers. These were worth a fortune compared to the average income of a Hungarian family. And anyone who could afford it was allowed to wear them, because shoes were not considered part of the school uniform, and therefore it did not violate the regulations. The kid would still wear the cloak, but underneath were a pair of shoes on his feet that would have easily cost an average monthly salary...

It wasn't forbidden for a child to have a wristwatch either. These varied in price, of course, especially the digital watches. For a long time it was a big deal if someone had a watch that could play music, and had four buttons rather than two... There was one case where a child came to school sporting not one, but six digital watches—three glittering on each forearm!

I haven't mentioned that it was not forbidden to ride a bicycle to school. Bicycles were not cheap then either, yet kids didn't just ride "ordinary" bicycles—their parents usually bought them "racing

bikes", with gears. Not that there was any use for one of these other than bragging, because the village I lived in was almost completely flat. Even still, they competed with each other over whose bike had the most gear speeds. Of course I couldn't even afford an ordinary bike (for a good while), so I had to use my legs to get to school... And that wasn't all, for in the higher grades there were a few occasions where someone arrived on a scooter.

Although I, as an Aspie, was fairly resistant to such status symbolism, I was not able to COMPLETELY extricate myself from it. Almost, but not entirely. I could clearly see that owning this kind of stuff didn't really have much practical use—for example, even if I did have an expensive racing bike, I wouldn't dare ride it to school for fear of someone stealing or breaking it. But if I didn't use it, then what was the point of owning it?!

So I was at least 80% immune from these sorts of things, which meant that their absence didn't bother me as much as it would have bothered an ordinary neurotypical kid. I can't say that I didn't envy the richer kids, because I certainly wanted these things. I won't deny it. But nowhere near as much as I could see the other poor kids longed for them. Even so, I would have liked to own something that nobody else had, but desperately wanted... And one day this actually happened. Moreover, I can say without the least exaggeration that I deserved it!

Naturally this soon caused another conflict between me and the teachers... But before I get ahead of myself, I'll first describe what kind of gadget it was, and how I managed to obtain it.

I mentioned earlier that I learned division from my father. In fact, not only division but a good many other things as well, and for a long time there was no need for me to pay attention in arithmetic and geometry classes, since I already knew everything being taught. But this advantage of mine pretty much evaporated by about fifth grade, that is, in the final years of elementary school. There was no doubt that even then I was the best math student in the class, and I could effortlessly get top marks at any time. But by then I was beginning to see that things were gradually getting more complicated, and sometimes the lessons included problems where even *I* had to use my brain a bit. I wondered what would come later...

Still, I made it through fifth grade, however I was becoming worried. I told my father what was going on, that I really didn't want to wait until my current small advantage was completely lost, because how would it look if the other bastards in my class caught up to me?! My father could not deny that he was very happy with my desire to excel, and so between the fifth and sixth grade—during the summer break—he started to work with me seriously in the field of mathematics. Far more seriously than when he had taught me division. Whenever he came home from work, we would spend an hour or two in the evenings "playing math", as I called this activity. This was not some order or parental pressure. I was the one who wanted it, demanded it, in fact. So much so that sometimes my father had no real desire to do it (for instance, when he was tired), but he had to because I threw such a terrible tantrum whenever he was reluctant!

There were many occasions where I remember being so eager to learn something new that as soon as the front door opened and I saw him, I didn't wait for him to greet us, take off his coat, or even for the poor man to have time to put down his briefcase, but instantly ran to him with my arms around his neck, gave him a kiss, and in place of a greeting I shouted at ear-splitting volume, "Are we playing math again today?! When can we start?!"

The poor guy could barely persuade me to be patient long enough for him to finish his dinner... In fact, sometimes he was totally incapable of dampening my enthusiasm even this much, so after realizing I was becoming intolerable, he wisely prepared for his arrival home in advance. That is, as soon as I jumped around his neck, he told me had a tricky problem that he was going to give me to think about, and that I was unlikely to solve it, but he would tell me the solution after dinner. This way he was left undisturbed by me for a while. And although there were indeed cases where I was unable to figure out the solution on my own, most of the time my father had to try very hard to shovel his dinner down, because generally his plate was barely half empty before I was already shouting triumphantly in the kitchen doorway, "Look how clever I am, I solved it all by myself!"

To my father's credit, he took all this pretty well, I guess because he was so proud of how smart his son was...

The point is that during that single summer break—which was about three months long—I learned so much math knowledge from him (and partly on my own with the help of various textbooks) that I had no need to learn anything from the official math textbooks at school, not only for the remainder of elementary school, but neither throughout high school! I knew everything already, despite being in a specialist math class, which had much higher requirements than the regular math class.

So in that one summer, of which I began knowing little more than the four basic operations, I got to the point where I knew the basics of differential and integral calculus; analytic geometry and coordinate-systems had become my favorite area of mathematics; I knew plenty about matrix algebra, became well-acquainted with the trigonometric functions; and systems of equations with multiple unknown variables were so easy for me to solve that I barely considered them "appetizers"...

I know, I know, dear Reader, you're probably getting tired of me constantly telling you what a genius I am... So okay, as you wish, I won't write it again, but it's clear that this is what I'm implying...

So to continue the story, when this summer break was almost over, I really wanted to yet again "play math", however my father was busy. Although it was the weekend, he still didn't have time for me, because he had brought home some extra work and told me he had to get it done by Monday, so I was to leave him in peace. Of course I had the sense to know that his intention wasn't to hurt me, and if a job was important then that's the way it was... I could understand. He didn't have time for me now, that was just life, unfortunately...

I wasn't happy about it though, and I made no secret of my disappointment. Then he told me that he really didn't have time to teach me now, but if I wanted he had a big book of math exercises, and he could give me some exercises to do from that. When I had completed them, he would check the solutions, since that wouldn't take him very long.

Even though it was obvious to me that he only wanted to get me off his hands, it made me happy and I agreed. I knew in advance that he would give me the most difficult exercises, but I didn't mind, I was sure I could handle those too. He wanted to get down to his own work as soon as possible, so he opened the book at random and said, "Hm, this is a proportion exercise... It will do for starters..." and he pushed it over to me and turned to his own work.

I left his room and began solving the problem. Unfortunately I can't remember the exact details of this problem, and I really regret that, but I know it was something to do with calculating the sides of a few triangles. And now I have to admit that I DID NOT SUCCEED. Even though I had such an

incredible amount of mathematical knowledge, this problem stumped me. I sat there for a good half hour, but I could not for the life of me figure out how to solve it!

Eventually my father suspected that something wasn't quite right, since he had initially been afraid that I'd be running to him every five minutes... He poked his head out of the room, and asked me if I was done yet. I just sat there in despair, very close to sobbing, since how could I not be able to solve a math problem, especially considering I was the one who had proudly demanded this test... But there was nothing else I could do except acknowledge that I was unable to solve it.

My father could not believe his ears. "What do you mean, you're unable to?! Are you kidding me? This is quite a simple exercise, in fact... Damn it, that's not actually the exercise I intended to give you! I meant to circle this one here below it—I marked the wrong one. That wouldn't have been particularly difficult either, but this one I marked by mistake... that really is incredibly simple. You've solved problems that are a hundred times more difficult than this in no time... what's wrong with you?!"

"I don't know, but I can't do it..." I stammered, completely ashen.

"Come on, Zoli, I know you're capable of solving this problem! Look, I'll help you a bit—as you can see, every exercise in this chapter is about proportions. So all you need to do is set up a nice little proportion, and then you're done! It'll take less than a minute. There is no way you can fail to solve such a simple problem!" He patted me on the head and went back to his room.

Another good half hour passed. I cautiously opened my father's door. "Papi... the exercise..."

"You've done it? There you go, it wasn't that difficult, was it?"

"No, I haven't done it yet... Because you told me that it had to be solved with proportions... And I really can't solve it that way... I tried, but I can't... it isn't working... But I can solve it with trigonometric functions... that is, with trigonometric equations..."

"Hold on... with *what*?!"

"With trigonometric..."

"Don't play the fool with me! How on earth can you solve this with trigonometric equations when there isn't a single angle given in the entire exercise?!" my father interjected. He was getting angry.

"But I could indeed solve it that way, because..."

"Eh, don't give me that nonsense! I really don't have time for your foolishness right now, I told you I have an important job to finish by Monday! If you don't want to solve this problem, then don't do it, that's your business, but don't bother me with such ridiculousness!"

"But I *do* want to solve it, I really do! It's just that I can only do it with trigonometric functions!"

"I've had enough of this now! I told you that this problem can be solved with proportions—the entire exercise was designed for this purpose, so leave me in peace!" and he closed the door.

It was a long time before I dared to disturb him again. I didn't even knock at his door, just opened it cautiously. I cried, and not just a little. I was sobbing, with snot hanging from my nose, the front of my shirt wet with tears... "Bubububuut..." I blubbered, "I really can't solve this with proportions... But I can solve it with trigonometric equations. May I please explain it to you, Papi?!"

My father almost hit the ceiling he was so angry. I think he was very close to hitting me when he turned around, even though he wasn't generally an aggressive man. I think the only reason he refrained from boxing my ears was probably because he could see that I was still crying uncontrollably.

But even if he didn't hit me, he started shouting: "You can't possibly be stupid enough to try to use angles to solve a problem in which there isn't a single angle given! If that's what you've got in mind, then you're completely out of touch with reality!"

"But what I meant was..."

"I'm not interested! I've looked at it, and it's a proportion exercise—it contains NO ANGLES!"

"But if I do it in such a way that..."

"Just bugger off and leave me the hell alone! Listen, if you can truly solve this problem with trigonometric equations, then I'll give you my pocket calculator. But if you're unable to, then you'd better keep out of my sight today, because I swear that the next time I see you, there'll be hell to pay!"

Well, you can guess what happened next... My sobbing instantly evaporated. In fact, I had never been happier in my life! I didn't even waste time giving my father a reply, I just turned around and ran out... Within five minutes I had already solved the problem. Although I don't remember all the details of it, as I mentioned early, I do remember that my father was right in the sense that there were no angles provided. But this isn't necessarily a serious obstacle to solving a problem with trigonometric equations. Since one of the triangles was a right triangle. And a right triangle does indeed have a given angle—the right-angle itself! Once you have that, then you can figure out the two other angles, because the quotient of the two perpendicular sides is the tangent of that angle... and so on.

So basically I solved the problem, and did it with TRIGONOMETRIC EQUATIONS! In hindsight, I think it's likely that I actually did exactly what I would have done if I had used proportions, only I didn't use proportions directly—I set up the corresponding angles as "temporary symbols/variables". But no matter how I did it, the point is that my solution had all the correct angles, their trigonometric functions and numeric values—and above all, the correct result!

I didn't even verify the result, I was so sure of myself. This time I didn't knock, I just barged in and shoved the piece of paper in front of my father's face. "Here you go! I did it! With trigonometric equations!"

My father could hardly believe his eyes. He thoroughly scrutinized my deduction, checking it several times, and finally he had the decency to say, "I have to admit, I wouldn't have believed it! Well, it turns out you were right, Zoli, I apologize..." And he really did give me his pocket calculator.

To be fair, I suspect my father was able to make this promise so easily because he would have given it to me soon anyhow, as he had purchased a new calculator a few days earlier that had more features. Still, it was quite a big deal for me. Back then these machines were really expensive, at least in Hungary. And furthermore, this wasn't simply a gift—I had DESERVED it!

This was the type of calculator, the first pocket calculator I ever owned:



The calculator above was powered by a 9V battery, but later an external power source was made so that it could operate from a wall socket.

For the benefit of any brain biologists who might be reading this book, I would like to mention that my favorite trigonometric function is the tangent. Not that I have a problem with the sine, cosine or any of the others. However, those I just *know*, but the tangent I *love*. I don't know why... but I almost have intimate feelings for the tangent, a deep affection... so deep that I even wrote a book in my series in which the tangent is of particular importance. The story is set in a medieval-like society (which is modeled in many respects on medieval Japan), and there is a young woman who discovers tangents. She wants to become a scientist, and not live the life that is expected of women in that culture. Well, this causes her serious problems...

But the point is that although there is a lot more to the novel than tangents, making it an exciting adventure novel rather than a boring math lesson, the significance of the trigonometric function is central, and I originally came up with the whole idea to create a book that "glorifies" this wonderful trigonometric function. I believe I am probably the only novelist in the world who has written a book in honor of a trigonometric function...

So now I had my very own pocket calculator... it even had memory! Naturally I brought it to school (as soon as the new school year began) so I could show it off. The other kids were totally dumbfounded... a digital watch with four buttons seemed like nothing compared to my gadget, which had loads more buttons... No, dear Reader, this was not yet the time of watches with built-in calculators, that didn't happen until many years later!

I was so proud of my machine, my "Precious", that I deliberately left it on my desk in math class, so the teacher could see that I had one. I was hoping he would ask me how I got it, and then I would tell him about my glory... He certainly did notice. However he never thought to ask me how I got it. Instead he immediately informed me that the usage of calculators in school was forbidden.

"For what reason?!" I said, surprised.

He explained that if someone uses a calculator, they won't learn how to do mental arithmetic well, such as adding or multiplying. I retorted insolently that although I could see he was right in theory, this argument was not applicable in my case, since EVERYBODY knew that I was the best math student in the class, in fact in the whole school. I even knew more than the graduates, so I clearly KNEW the

material, but if the teacher doubted this then I'd be more than happy to take an exam on the spot. I'd have no trouble at all!

However all my arguments were in vain. He just said that even if I did know everything, using a calculator would still give me an unfair advantage over the others, and besides, he wouldn't tolerate anyone bragging about their wealth in school.

I flew into a rage. "What kind of unfair advantage could this possibly give me?!" I shouted. "I can't see how it would make any difference whether I use a calculator or not, because I'll get an A either way! Having an 'unfair advantage' would be a valid accusation if I could only get a B without it, yet by using a calculator I could get an A."

But the teacher knew that this wasn't the case, because I always got an A, even without a calculator. "And what's all this 'bragging about wealth' nonsense?!" I continued. "That has nothing to do with the issue, but if it offends the school staff that much, then they had better ban students from riding racing bikes to school, because that's true bragging! Anyway, I'm sure my calculator doesn't cost anywhere near as much as a racing bike, not to mention a scooter! Aren't racing bikes and scooters an 'unfair advantage'?! After all, it enables a person to arrive at school earlier, giving them more time to study! The fact that they don't use that spare time to study is another matter, but that's not my fault!"

I was furious, which in turn made me very insolent. But it was to no avail. The teacher was of the opinion that how a student travels to school is a private matter, because it's not done *within* the school, only *on the way* to school.

I can honestly admit that I still believe I was right in that debate, and that I was treated unfairly. In any case, I no longer brought my calculator to school with me, although not because of the teacher. It was more because on the one hand I had already achieved my goal by showing it to the others and inciting envy in them, and on the other hand I didn't want it to be stolen or broken in a fight. I didn't really care that I wasn't allowed to use it in math class, because I didn't actually need it. It just would have felt good to have had the *theoretical* possibility of being allowed to use it, as an acknowledgment for being such an outstanding student, who no longer had any need to gain advantages. But the teachers did not give me any such acknowledgment...

Of course, as you can guess, I didn't leave it at that... that is, I took revenge here too... in two different ways! The first method—which I put to use the very next day—was simply to "circumvent the prohibition". This doesn't mean that I secretly smuggled the calculator into school—partly because I was far too respectful of the rules for that (this is deeply typical of all Aspies!), and partly because I feared for the safety of my precious calculator, as I mentioned above. I had every right to be afraid, since I was quite aware that if it got lost, stolen or broken, I had less than zero chance of getting a new one from my parents.

However, the point wasn't about me being able to use the calculator during class anyway. I really had no need for any help that it could possibly give me. To me it was only important so that I could finally boast about owning something that my other classmates didn't have, to enjoy the fact that it wasn't only them who had things that I didn't... And of course I wanted to show off my knowledge too, proving that I was much smarter than them. Because at least I had more brains, even if I wasn't stronger...

Now a calculator was not the only tool suitable for achieving these goals, and may not have even been the most effective one. That is, it's true that I no longer brought the calculator to school, but the next day I already had something else in its place—a SLIDE RULE! Naturally my father had a slide rule, being an engineer... And not just one, but several! Of course, after he got a calculator he didn't use slide rules anymore, because obviously a calculator is far more convenient and accurate. There is no denying that the proliferation of pocket calculators instantly made slide rules obsolete all over the world. But this happened precisely in that brief period of history, in the half a dozen years or so that I was in elementary school...

So the point is that as soon as I got home from school that day, I abruptly sprang the following question on my father: "You no longer have any need for the slide rules, do you?"

"What do you need them for? You already have a calculator!" he replied, guessing what I was thinking.

"But you've got one too, so you don't need them either!" I retorted. "And besides, I'd like to learn how to use one."

"Okay..." my father shrugged, and gave me his smallest slide rule, which could fit into a large pocket.

I didn't mind getting the smallest one, in fact, it served my purposes even better due to its ease of transport, plus it looked nicer since it was made of plastic and had a lovely shine. Of course, my father taught me how to use it as well—I can tell you that it's not rocket science, it only takes ten minutes... Yes, that's how little time it took for me to get my head around it, but not because I'm such a genius—it really is an easy thing to learn, and anybody else could learn it just as quickly. It is quite another matter that most people aren't interested enough to learn it...

So I had a slide rule, and I knew how to use it. I brought it to school the next morning, and laid it on my desk. The teacher spotted it right away, of course... which is exactly what I was expecting.

"What's this...?!" he asked in amazement.

"It's a slide rule. And I know how to use it. It's mine!"

"Hmm..."

"And I doubt if there's a regulation here that prohibits the use of slide rules, as is the case with calculators, but if there is, then I'd like you to show it to me!"

"There is no such regulation."

"Good, then I can use it."

"In principle... but you do know that slide rules are only accurate to two, or at most three decimal places?"

"Of course I do, and that's exactly why I'm not sure I'm even going to use it. But the point is that I'm allowed to use it *in principle*!"

"Yes, you're right," replied the teacher, so everything was fine.

Especially because not only did my classmates not have anything like it, and not know how to use it, but most of them didn't even have the slightest idea what it was for! And if one of them asked, I would dive into a complicated explanation of the mysteries of logarithms, which naturally wasn't at all part of our curriculum at the time. The obvious consequence of this was that the boy who had asked me left with a pounding head, feeling deeply humiliated at being unable to grasp the meaning of my words, and I was pleased to have proven how much more I knew than anyone else... It really was a pleasant

feeling, incredibly satisfying, and it definitely helped to keep my confidence from melting to zero despite all the beatings I'd taken.

My second form of revenge was far more cunning... and complicated. And the opportunity was provided by the fact that in those days of elementary school there wasn't simply a "math class"—it was called "arithmetic and geometry". It received this title because what was taught in these classes was crammed into two, more or less heterogeneous disciplines—arithmetic *and* geometry. Both disciplines were taught by the same teacher, yet the two subjects differed drastically. One or the other was taught during these classes, and I must say there wasn't much "crossover" between the two. There was no explanation of why these two disciplines were lumped into one class when they were different, or what one had to do with the other etc.

Now, I must admit here that although I was still top of the class in Geometry, I didn't like it as much as the rest of mathematics, and was only "barely" top of the class. This is not to say that I couldn't easily obtain an A at any time, because I certainly could, but that I had no advantage over my classmates in this subject in terms of being able to "learn ahead". I undoubtedly knew the required material, since I learned it as needed, when it was taught in class, but I didn't learn anything in advance. I just wasn't that interested. The fact that my manual dexterity was anything but average certainly played a lion's share in my disinterest of geometry—and by that I don't mean better than the average, but far worse unfortunately.

I mentioned this earlier in relation to handwriting. Clearly geometric drawing requires less fine motor skill than forming beautiful handwriting, yet it was still the case that my geometric constructions were often inaccurate. For example, if there were three lines that had to intersect each other at a single point, I could never manage to do it, and there were times where I would be as much as half a centimeter off. Anything I attempted with a compass, ruler or set-square—the intersecting points never came out right. Of course I knew the geometry curriculum *theoretically*, therefore I knew exactly where the lines *should* intersect. It just didn't come out that way when I drew it... For this reason, I often bitterly complained that: "Theoretically there ought to be no difference between theory and practice. However, in practice there is."

So although I knew that the inaccuracy of my drawings was ultimately the result of my own clumsiness and therefore my fault, I still had the view that it simply wasn't acceptable to discover the solution to a problem with the aid of these sorts of manual constructions. Nor was it acceptable to use these drawings just to gain inspiration for finding the path to the solution! After all, surely I'm not the only ham-fisted person in the world, and it can be seen how much individual dexterity affects a drawing's outcome. Therefore the whole thing is awfully subjective, and hence not worthy of the spirit of mathematics, because mathematics should be the world of the Absolute, of Eternal Truth and Accuracy!

However our math teacher definitely preferred geometry out of the "arithmetic and geometry duo". He would often mention that this was the discipline that teaches us to think; that geometry is the most wonderful example of being able to see from a system of axioms how much higher levels are constructed from the ground up, truths that are not self-evident or obvious at first sight, etc.

I soon had quite a different opinion about this, but I held my tongue for a good while. But after the day he had stamped on my pride by not letting me have my fully deserved badge of honor, the pocket

calculator, I decided not to keep my contrary opinion to myself any longer. That is, I wanted to prove to him that geometry is ultimately a redundant field of science—at least in its current form.

I didn't go into this with the intention of provoking an argument. I simply decided that as far as I was concerned, from now on I wouldn't give a flying shit about geometry, meaning that whenever I was given a problem that involved geometry, I was going to solve it not via regular geometric methods, but reduce it to algebra. This approach was all the more useful to me because I had no significant advantage in geometry, but I had plenty in algebra and the like, since by that time—despite only being in elementary school—I had learned not only the high school math curriculum, but probably the equivalent of the first year at university as well. Perhaps even a little more. Okay, maybe not the curriculum designed specifically for prospective mathematicians, but at least that of engineering students. After all, my father was an engineer, and the majority of my math knowledge was taught to me by him... Although there were some fields in which I knew even more than my father, certainly those involving things like "set theory" or "group theory".

So after being "deprived" of the company of my calculator (during school hours) I simply did the following: When the teacher gave us a written geometry task, I drew a suitably chosen coordinate system in the figure, then set up the necessary equations of those lines that fit the segments on the drawing (generally the sides of triangles and squares). Sometimes there were even circles in the drawing, but I didn't despair, for although this sometimes required the use of quadratic equations and even systems of equations, it was no problem for me... I had sufficient knowledge. Then I could easily calculate the coordinates of the intersection points, which meant I knew everything I needed to know about the task and its solution. Because even if the question wasn't about the specific coordinates, just something like "Prove that line AB intersects side DC at point K", the above method still worked. All I had to do here was simply calculate the coordinates (x_k, y_k) of point K, and then I only have to prove that if I substitute the value x_k for x in the equation for line AB, I get the value y_k .

There may have been other types of questions in geometry too, but one way or another, they could all be traced back to such algebraic reasoning and methods of proof. And I was very happy about that, because it meant I could solve the problems much faster than before. This method definitely worked, and it was very expedient!

The teacher didn't say anything for the first few tasks, but eventually blurted out that what I was doing was NOT GEOMETRY! I agreed that it may not be geometry, but it was still mathematics. And besides, the task was given to us so that we could solve it. I solved it. So what was the problem?!

The teacher replied that it wasn't that it was *wrong*, but it may cause a problem in that I wouldn't learn the specific logic, arguments and methods of geometry... And that's when I expressed my view that I had no need to learn it, and neither did anyone else! That geometry is in fact a largely redundant discipline, since it is entirely reducible to algebra, as I had proven. After all, this was all I'd been using to solve these problems! Moreover, geometry in its original form is not only unnecessary, but also misleading and deceptive, because its definitions are extremely vague. They aren't specific enough, which makes them inaccurate. They are too subjective!

"For example," I argued, "what is the meaning of the statement: a point is something that has a location but no size?! That doesn't tell us what a point actually is! And what about a straight line having only length but no width? That doesn't say anything at all about what a straight line is! By the same token, I could say that the circumference of a circle is a straight line, since it too has length but no

width. But that sounds rather silly, doesn't it? So tell me, can we really call it an 'accurate definition' when the result is such stupendous madness?! However, when I reduce the geometric task to algebraic equations, then I already know with absolute certainty what a 'point' is—it is nothing more than a coordinate, that is, a pair of numbers (x,y) in a given coordinate system!" (Or if the geometric task is spatial in nature, then the point is naturally not a pair of numbers but a triplet of numbers, because it's a triple coordinate that defines the point.)

"Using my method, it's also possible to know what a 'line' is—it's a set of points that fit the following equation: $y=mx+b$, where 'm' and 'b' are the characteristic values for the given line. All this is far more precise and accurate than the vague—almost mystical—definitions of geometry, therefore it's *this* that is truly worthy of the spirit of mathematics! So there is no need for geometry; it may have been useful in ancient times, but its time has passed. Now it is obsolete, unnecessary. These days, the clever way to solve such problems is to set up a suitable coordinate system, and reduce the essential data of the question to be solved to algebraic theorems. That is, to reduce geometry as a whole to algebra, which we have all the tools to do, thanks to analytic geometry!"

The teacher retorted that surely I must be wrong, because people who were smarter than me had determined that geometry was useful, and should therefore be taught to schoolchildren. But I didn't have the slightest respect for authority, so I replied that being taught geometry might be useful for *some* children, but only those who aren't smart enough to tackle algebra and equation systems... Those numskulls with a negative IQ who are mentally handicapped may benefit from geometry, just like a crutch for the physically handicapped, because geometry can help make the essence of the problem more visually comprehensible. I can acknowledge this, but first of all, I have no need for such mental crutches, and secondly, even those who do need them have to be careful, because such visual aids can easily deceive those who rely on them, since it's a well-known fact that our visual intuition is deceptive!

The teacher was angry, but he couldn't think of a good counterargument, because surely he would have given it if he had. Instead he deflected the subject by warning me that I shouldn't insult others by calling them "mentally handicapped", that I had no right to say that, it wasn't nice, and so on.

I retorted that I did indeed have the right to do so, because on the one hand I knew the curriculum far better than them, and on the other hand, why shouldn't I say that about them when they're constantly calling me an idiot?! Is that nice?! Is that permissible?!

"No, that's not nice either, but you don't have to follow their example!" the teacher replied.

"But how many times have I been told to try to fit in? Doesn't that mean that I'm supposed to follow their example?!"

"Not in that way, and stop being insolent! Sit down!" he snapped at me.

He certainly never questioned me again after that for solving problems with a different method to the one he favored...

My beloved classmates were of course absolutely furious with me for daring to ridicule them, especially in front of the teacher, and that I wasn't even punished for it! They believed it was their exclusive privilege to call other people names—they were allowed to do it to me, but not the other way round! They were so upset by this that as soon as the teacher had told me to sit down, one of my classmates shouted out that it wasn't they who were stupid, but me, because why had I written the equation in the form: $y=mx+b$ when the logical form would be: $y=ax+b$?!

He was no doubt hoping for the teacher's support. He got it in the sense that he wasn't told off by the teacher for loudly interrupting. And so the kid continued his accusation, saying that this equation was a typical example of why I was the idiot, since I had used the letter "m", when I could have used the letter "a", as there was no "a" symbol in the formula and so it was still available.

But his argument didn't make me despair. I had used these precise symbols because they were the ones my father had taught me, and fortunately for me, my father was a thorough man because he also explained the meanings of each letter in the formula to me. And so I explained to the boy (and to the teacher who was listening...) that naturally I could also use any other letter in place of "m", since alternative notation wouldn't change the result of the equation. Yet I still thought it was useful to choose the letter "m" for the symbol of this coefficient, because it affected the character of the line in a completely different way than the "b" symbol. The "m" determines the *slope* of the line, since its value is the so-called "directional tangent" of the line.

Then I went to the blackboard, drew a diagram, and demonstrated what is meant by a "directional tangent", what this "m" value has to do with the slope and the individual coordinates, the concept of the "tangent" etc. Naturally none of this was in the class curriculum at the time...

Then I asked the kid what he thought the first letter of the Hungarian word for "slope" was (*meredekség*). Was it an "m" or an "a"? Well, which notation was more logical?! Which one was more helpful in reminding us of the line image? From which could we more easily deduce the function of the symbol? Which was the easiest to memorize?

The poor ignoramus tried to retaliate by saying that I should not use Hungarian words as an argument if I was an "Englishman", since I used the decimal point in place of the decimal comma. But I had an answer to that too, namely, that "m" was just as suitable notation for English-speaking people, because for them it's the first letter of the expression: "*modulus of slope*". No, dear Reader, I didn't know the English language at all at that time... However, sometimes I picked up a few expressions I liked the sound of (from books I had read), because I enjoyed knowing something that the others presumably didn't, and the word "modulus" sounded very scientific and serious, therefore it stuck in my head...

Of course the guy now regretted getting into an argument with me because he had no counterargument, and that made him feel humiliated, so he got very angry at me. I doubt that he would have understood my explanation, but he must have gathered that what I'd said was correct, since the teacher did not tell me that I had wrongly explained these strange words, such as "directional tangent"... Wow, what a burn... How awful of me to dare know math better than him...

I must point out, however, that this time I didn't only arouse antipathy in my classmates for my "performance" in math class. For although they were certainly uncomfortable with the fact that I had proved how much better I was at math than them, they must have been ambivalent, because they were undeniably pleased that I had proved the redundancy of geometry. Since they didn't like it either. And I guess it's no secret that the easiest way for an adolescent to gain recognition among other adolescents is to dare to question the authority of an adult, or the prestige/intelligence of any idea that is generally respected by adults, or at least the community of adults who have authority over these teenagers.

I soon became aware of how interesting it was that many of my classmates, who had until now been nasty to me, were APPLAUDING me for how well I had made my point to that awful math teacher... The only problem with this was that I didn't find the math teacher particularly awful myself. Okay, I

will admit that I had some "aversion" to him as a result of the "banishment" of my calculator... But at the same time, I can't deny that it was his class that I enjoyed most; primarily because I never had to worry about not knowing the material, and also because I took great pleasure in watching how much my other hated classmates struggled when they were called upon, and most of the time ended up with bad grades.

After this debate over geometry, several of my classmates asked me to provoke further arguments with the teacher in our math classes, so it could eat into our class time and they wouldn't have to answer as many questions... but I refused. I didn't want to do them any favors, or sacrifice myself for their sake—firstly because I hated them too much, and on the other hand, I wasn't sure it would be particularly useful for them if the time in math class was "eaten into". After all, the purpose of school is supposed to be for kids to learn, right?! If they're not learning, then it can only be to their detriment...

Therefore I avoided giving a direct answer, saying that if I happened to have a different view from the teacher in the future, I would definitely bring it up. However I did not deliberately seek conflict. But what I learned from this incident was that in order to gain the admiration of my classmates, I had to demonstrate how much I defied adult norms. And suddenly I understood—yes, only *then*, when I was already in the final years of elementary school—why my classmates had such a foul mouth, why they searched so resolutely for the nastiest words they could find. For this precise reason. They didn't use these words just because they were nasty, or because they didn't know their more refined equivalents. They *intentionally* used them to prove their autonomy, that they weren't going to be the adult's puppets... When of course they actually *were* in reality... but they wanted to keep up the appearance of it, and show off in front of the other kids...

I wondered whether I should try to adapt to them in this area, "to fit in"? It's true that if I did adopt their bad habits and nasty expressions, then I wouldn't win any popularity contest with the adults. But it seemed that the adults—the teachers—did not value me much more than the other kids anyway... so why not?

In the end I didn't succumb to the "customary manners" of my classmates, however for a while I was undeniably tempted by the idea, so much so that I deliberately paid attention to which topics of conversation they endeavored to use this nasty language in. Well, the range of topics was rather poor, and consisted of:

- sex
- bodily functions, mainly related to defecation
- mental state
- money
- crime and death

They were particularly fixated on death. People say that teenagers don't think that much about death because it's such a long way off for them... But this isn't quite true. They often speak of death, but in such a way that *they will be the cause* of another's death, as it shows how strong and powerful they are. Of course, only in their fantasies... In any case, they find death-related topics very exciting.

So in relation to this topic, there was a time when I became the hero of the day. I once put together a little joke, a short literary creation, with the title: "How do people die?". Although I no longer have the original piece of writing, I can still remember a lot of it, so I will try to reproduce it as best I can.

However this sort of thing, which is full of Hungarianisms, is extremely difficult to translate into another language—in this case English. But I will try...

How do people die?

The water carrier—Kicks the bucket.

The member of the opposition—Joins the majority.

The forester—Hops the twig.

The cleaner—Licks the dust.

The lunger—Breathes his last.

The lamplighter—The eternal light shines upon him.

The priest—The devil comes to take him away.

The wanderer—Finds his last refuge.

The migrant—Finds his last repose.

The candlemaker—The flame of his life is blown out.

The baker—Eats his last piece of bread.

The florist—Pushes up daisies.

The watchmaker—His hour has come.

The Redskin Indian—Reaches the Eternal Hunting Ground.

The soldier—Is assigned to Afterlife service.

There were a few more in my original list, but these are the only ones I remember. I admit that not all of these are particularly brilliant, yet it was a HUGE SUCCESS among my classmates! Many of them copied it down; mostly the boys, but a few girls too. I can't deny that I took great pleasure in this...

So I suppose for all the bad things, there were also a few tiny moments of joy in my childhood. Not many, but to say there were "none" would be an exaggeration. However the main reason I mentioned this "collection of sayings" here (if you can call it that) is that it already showed my literary orientation (in addition to mathematics or natural science in a broad sense), and on the other hand, it is undeniable that this small list I created is a *collection* of sorts. And it is very typical of Aspies to create and analyze all kinds of systems, the lowest level of this simply being a *collection*. I find it hard to imagine an Aspie who hasn't gone through at least one period of their life where they have been passionate about *collecting* something. Sometimes an Aspie will have several of these "collecting periods", and this passion may even continue for the rest of their life. For me it started with stamp collecting.

It was my grandmother who introduced me to philately. She was a member of the MABÉOSZ for many years, the Hungarian abbreviation of **Magyar Bélyeggyűjtők Országos Szövetsége**, which translated into English is the **National Association of Hungarian Stamp Collectors**. When I first saw her stamp collection, I was fascinated by the beautiful images, especially the "stamp blocks" and the fact that it was a kind of "system". Since there were the different "series" that were sorted by year of issue, although this was just the most common aspect of its organization; there were plenty of other ways they could be sorted.

I immediately started collecting stamps myself. I pestered everyone I knew for stamps, and spent a significant portion of my pocket money on them. I soon discovered that my father had also collected

stamps when he was young, and his collection was still more or less intact. I looked through them, seeing that they were primarily pre-war stamps, but that didn't matter, it just meant they were even more valuable! It could clearly be seen that these stamps were old, since they were made in a completely different style to the newer ones. They were generally less colorful, the images were simpler, yet despite this they were still beautiful in their own way—in fact, I soon found that I liked these old stamps even better. The newer stamps were too "fancy" and over-decorated for my taste.

But that was the least of the problems with the new stamps. Because once I had picked up some knowledge about the artfulness of philately, due to acquiring a stamp catalog, I knew the different kinds of cogging that were possible, what a watermark was etc. And eventually I began thinking more and more about the various aspects of this hobby, which led me to feel increasingly disconcerted. For example, it turned out (at first just from hearsay) that modern stamps were completely *worthless*! Okay, strictly speaking that isn't true—"unstamped" stamps (or "uncanceled" to use the exact technical term, which I'm not fond of) do have some value... the price that is printed on them! That is their only value, to cover the cost of postage when we stick it onto an envelope. Although the "stamp blocks" I liked so much were useless for this purpose, because they were too big. How could it even be possible to use this sort of stamp in that way, when they are generally bigger than the size of a postcard?!

It soon became clear to me that there really wasn't any practical purpose for producing them, and the only reason they were printed was to be sold to suckers like me—stamp collectors who were stupid enough to buy them for huge sums of money! And if someone decides to sell their stamp collection at some point, they'll be lucky to get back the same amount of money they originally invested in it, if that much at all. Don't even think about interest or profit—they'd have been better off depositing their money into a bank account, even at a low interest rate... Although I obviously didn't start collecting stamps in the hope of making a profit, I still felt that this deception was unfair of the Post Office.

Another issue I had was that all the stamp series, even those that were allegedly made for practical purposes (namely, to be affixed to envelopes) inevitably included a few denominations whose face value was so high that it was clearly impossible to use them for anything. That is, they were made solely for the purpose of being purchased by all the idiotic stamp collectors, who would buy them in order to complete their stamp series! Now, you might say that it's true that I was very clever to have seen through the game of Philately, but then why didn't I start collecting the "used" or "canceled" stamps? Sure, they are worth very little financially, but that doesn't matter, they could afford me the enjoyment of collecting and sorting, and—at least in the case of modern stamps—I could get them for free! This may sound logical... but unfortunately the last point of this argument is wrong. Because it's obvious that I can easily and freely obtain the denominations that people commonly use in their correspondence. However, this is certainly not the case with the high value denominations I mentioned earlier. Just think about it—back then, when a typical letter generally required a stamp with a value of about 2 forints (the "forint" is the name of Hungarian currency), it wasn't an easy mission to obtain the 10 forint stamp of that stamp series, let alone those with a 50 forint value! (I admit that I can no longer remember the exact values off the top of my head, but I'm sure it was something of this order of magnitude). In other words, my collection could never have been complete if I had used this method.

So my problem wasn't that these "canceled" stamps were uglier due to being stamped, but that by collecting them I would have to give up the possibility of "completeness" and having a "perfect" collection. It seemed I had only two options—either I joined the ranks of the sheep and became the

dairy cow of the Post Office and Philately Association, purchasing all the denominations for enormous sums of money that were invented solely to fleece me, or to resign myself to the fact that my collection would never be complete. And I haven't even mentioned the problem with "stamp blocks". These were impossible to obtain via correspondence. I could only get them in an "uncanceled" condition, at a very high price.

I soon discovered other dirty tricks that they used. It turned out that the Hungarian Post even produced certain "first issue" stamps under fictitious pretexts, just so that those who already had the stamp would buy it again, now glued to some fancy postcard and stamped with a special postmark! They also introduced "numbered" stamps, which were also steeply priced. This made it theoretically impossible for my collection to ever be complete, even if I reconciled myself to buying its unused stamps at a ridiculous price, since it was clearly impossible to buy ALL the stamps of the numbered series in order to have every number!

And that wasn't the end of it either, because what really outraged me—enough to finally give up my stamp-collecting hobby—was that I learned that the Post Office was deliberately creating "defective" series of certain stamps, in limited quantities of course, in order to flog them off to gullible suckers for an astronomical price. Even if I'd been able to forgive all the Post Office's other dirty tricks, I couldn't forgive this last one! Because it might be argued from a certain perspective that "business is business", it's trade, and the Post Office has the right to produce whatever they want if they can find buyers for its products—but what right do they have to claim certain stamps as being *defective*, when they DELIBERATELY made them that way?! These stamps were designed to be the way they were. There was no error. Therefore if the Post Office asserts that they are "defective", then they are *lying*! And if there is one thing a true Aspie positively hates and can't forgive, it's LYING! Some might say that this is capitalism, and they may be right. Even so, the whole thing of artificially generating a shortage of their own products in order to drive up demand was something I found obscene. I considered it a very unfair practice (I still do), and decided that for me this was the *end*!

And so one day I told my grandmother not to renew my Philately membership; that I would no longer be collecting stamps, at least not the "unstamped" ones, and basically that I would not be spending any more money on this hobby. Grandma was very surprised by my decision, since I already had a beautiful stamp collection, in fact, it was nicer than hers. I told her my arguments, of course, and she nodded in sympathy, but I could see that although she *understood* my arguments and perhaps even agreed with them in some "abstract sense", she didn't consider them serious enough to warrant such a level of outrage. And even though grandma did later give up stamp collecting too, it was many years after I did.

I kept my stamp collection for a while—that is, everything I'd collected until that day—but not for very long, because I sold it a few months later. This happened when I really needed the money, because I was desperate to get a much more serious pocket calculator—one that was considered "hi-tech" at the time, because it was *programmable*! It was the TI-58 type... However this will be discussed later in the book.

Now, the reason I mentioned this thing about the stamps is because I wanted to make it clear that an Aspie is almost one hundred percent likely to go through (at least) one "collecting period", and in my case this ended due to the fact that as a true Aspie, I am basically an honest, upright person, meaning that I do not tolerate dishonesty from others, especially if I am considered a sucker... And I regarded the

business practice of the Hungarian Post Office and the Philatelic Society as blatantly sneaky and dishonest!

Of course, I am still a collector in a certain sense now—I just don't collect stamps, I collect books. The books I write myself for my series, that is, I "collect" my novels. And what a joy it is when a new work is added to my series! It's all really MY OWN, no one else in the world has it, so I'm truly unique...

Dear Reader, we are slowly approaching the moment when this chapter comes to an end—not the whole book of course, but the subject of my school years, at least as far as the relationships between my classmates and I are concerned. There is essentially only one aspect that has been left out until now, and that's the relationship between me and my FEMALE classmates... In other words, what my opinion was about the "molls", and what their opinion was about me. I'll go into that here, but at the end of this topic there will be a brief sub-section on how I felt about sports in general. It won't be long because I've already covered significant parts of this subject, although not everything. And the reason it will be included here is because it had a lot to do with the "molls".

What does sport have to do with schoolgirls? Well, the sad truth is that the girls—at least school-aged girls, although I've observed that this attitude doesn't change much even as adults—usually fall for burly, muscular "studs". And if they can't find a guy in their class that looks like a wardrobe and can single-handedly overturn an oversized truck loaded with concrete, then they will choose someone who has at least a bit more muscle than the average guy, and who also has an aggressive, domineering, loud-mouthed personality that he uses to terrorize his peers. So basically an "alpha male".

Every girl in the class is always drawn towards these sorts of guys, EVEN IF SHE DENIES IT! She will only refuse to admit it (if she denies it at all) because she feels she would never have a chance of gaining the admiration of the "horde leader", therefore she gives up on trying to get him from the outset, and to reduce any mockery from other girls she explains that he's not really her "type". Or to put it elegantly, she "tries to capitalize on her inadequacy". But she still secretly longs for such a guy, and envies her more successful rivals...

Of course there are some girls who realize that they can't all gain entry into the desired harem of alpha males, and so instead settle for the "beta" or "gamma" males. But in no way do they lower their standards yet at such a young age. Even the hopelessly ugly ones. They would rather wait to see if they have a better chance after leaving school. And not just the end of elementary school, but of high school. And it's not only sex that they delay, but also love (I don't believe the feeling of love even exists at elementary school age, for either gender—what they call "love" at that age is at most "attraction" or "interest"). They are wary of being humiliated by their peers, even if unfairly, for having a romantic relationship with a male lower down the pecking order. They usually refuse to even engage in conversation with such boys.

Naturally I have concrete proof of all this, from my own years at school. This comes predominantly from my personal experiences—partly from what happened (or didn't happen) between me and my female classmates, and partly from what I saw happen between them and my male classmates. Of course, my Reader may ask the legitimate question of how I dare to so confidently assert that even those schoolgirls who deny it still secretly desire the alpha male (or at least the muscular guys reeking of testosterone)? After all, I can't see into other people's minds even now, let alone when I was a child!

My answer to that is that I could *indeed* read the girls' minds in a sense, because the situation was quite obvious by their behavior. Because I'm not deaf, so I often heard what was being discussed by the various groups of "young women" around me, and I can't remember a single occasion when the topic of conversation was learning, except for frequently confessing how bad they were at math. More often than not they talked about boys... So there was no denying that they were interested in the opposite sex. Now, I think it's fair to say that if I often see or hear a girl chatting with her female companions about the subject of boys, yet I never see her around any boys, except when she's trying to display herself in the vicinity of the most aggressive, domineering, testosterone-rich males—well, what else could I think but that she really *is* interested in boys, and these specific types of boys, no matter what she says on the subject?!

On no account can I deny that I felt deeply unhappy that I didn't happen to fall into the group of boys who the girls found attractive, or at least adequate. It was completely futile being the best in my class in math, physics and chemistry. This fact didn't interest the girls in the slightest. I will admit that I then tried to impress them with something more obvious, that is, I wanted to prove to them the brilliance of my mind in a more dramatic way. Yes, I still believed back then that women could appreciate a sharp mind. Not so much anymore...

So what I did was attempt to speak in a far more refined manner than I ever had before, in effect, more "grandiloquently". My sentences were crammed with long, complicated and mostly meaningless filler, and I tried to speak in a way that no one else in the class was capable of, and preferably couldn't understand either, despite my sentences being perfectly grammatically correct. At the time I didn't have enough sense to know that although I could certainly gain a certain degree of attention with this strategy, it didn't make anyone think I was clever or a scientist—at best just a pedantic egghead...

Many decades later I parodied this style of speech in one of my novels, titled: "Daughter of the Light". Allow me to quote a passage from it here, in order to illustrate this style:

Now the senator spoke.

"The honorable President Zidunyee has raised in his opening speech a problem that is not only noteworthy, but which can and should be addressed by every Senator, and indeed by every loyal citizen who loves our nation, if he has the opportunity and the means to do so, thus helping to resolve the issues that arise in his own work as well as those that are strongly linked to the issues raised, thus contributing greatly to alleviating our problems."

"Well, it's unlikely that anybody would have understood that," thought Zadag. "After all, I didn't. Perhaps Senator Menah himself didn't even understand what he was saying..."

But it seemed that Menah did indeed understand, and looking round at the puzzled faces, he added with great benevolence, "That is to say, whether we agree or disagree with the proposal put forward by Defense Minister Trosp, I believe that his concept is a good starting point, not only because it was inspired by patriotic spirit, but also because it drew our attention to an opportunity that may not seem obvious to some, and is therefore a good starting point for solving problems, as such, but on the other hand, as far as my personal opinion is concerned, the substantive details of the solution, as evidenced by the obvious and well-known facts, can and must be raised by us in such a way that our aim is not empty revenge, but the maximization of the success we can achieve as a consequence of our efforts in defending our interests... our legitimate interests! The enthusiasm and zeal of the Minister is absolutely

proper, and we can only praise him for proposing a means of solving our problems that is appropriate to his task, but in the course of the measure we must not forget that the support for the proposals made must be in proportion to the amount of effort involved in the complexity of the problem under consideration, and the extent of the expected gains; taking into account, of course, the relevant international implications and the reputation of our country. I presently don't feel that I have the right to take up the time of this honorable Parliament unnecessarily by further dissecting this serious problem, but at the moment it seems imperative to discuss the very difficult, very complex problem that is the most important and most crucial of all, namely that the final conclusion of our decision must culminate in the fact that in the context of the procedures to be followed and our expectations of others in relation to the deplorable state of affairs that has been demonstrated in relation to the subject under discussion, it is only by taking all this into account and by consulting our conscience, as well as by taking into account what has just been said, that we can connect with what has been said before us in the interests of the need to implement the objectives of our Parliament, in a manner commensurate with the facts!"

Thus ends the quotation.

So the point is that the girls did not value me very much, in fact, not at all, and this hurt my feelings. To this day it remains a painful thorn in my flesh... It hurt, despite already having enough sense to know that at least half the boasting spread among my male classmates about their "success" with girls wasn't true, in fact, it was more likely that only a tenth of it was true. I would say that it's highly questionable whether even a single genuine act of sexual intercourse took place during the time of elementary school.

Allegedly, in the eighth grade of elementary school, some boys were caught by a teacher after school in a classroom with the most fully-developed "moll" of the class, who incidentally also happened to be one of the best students... and apparently both the boys and the girl were naked. It is open to question, however, whether or not any real coitus occurred, or whether they were prematurely busted. As soon as the scandal broke, it was "buried under the carpet". Presumably the teaching staff felt it wasn't in their interest to increase the scandal with expulsions, when it was only a matter of weeks before the whole class was discharged.

Although it's also quite possible that the whole thing never happened, or at least wasn't as serious as some made it out to be. I for one am rather skeptical about it. It is true that I don't like my former male classmates, and that I consider them barbaric, rude and stupid for the most part, and it's also true that as far as the intellect of my female classmates is concerned, I don't think they are significantly above the level of a promising Australopithecus. In all honesty, I consider every one of them to not only be so stupid but also so absent-minded that in any given moment or situation I believe they could easily "lose their minds". Yet despite having such a low opinion of the whole gang, I am very suspicious of this story, simply because it allegedly happened IN SCHOOL, in a classroom! Okay, supposedly after classes had finished. But even so, every Homo Sapiens should be smart enough by the final year of elementary school to not engage in these sorts of activities in a place where they are highly likely to be exposed! Even if they are absolutely certain that all the teachers have left for the day, the doorman would still be there, and he can go into any classroom at any time. Especially if he hears voices coming

from there. And anyhow, why would either the boys or girls stay at school longer than they had to? They hated learning. There must have been a special tutoring class or something, but that can't be done without the presence of a teacher, and even if the teacher arrives late, he could pop in unexpectedly at any moment... They couldn't have been idiotic enough to start doing such things under those circumstances! As stupid as I think they are, I still can't believe it. Even a white lab mouse would have more sense than that! Something must have occurred, otherwise there would have been no scandal. However I strongly doubt that it happened exactly the way it was rumored at the time. Besides, this sort of news is always destined to be exaggerated by its narrators in order to make it more interesting.

So the point is that I didn't envy these more attractive boys for having so much sex. In fact, I don't believe any of them were less of a virgin than I was at the time. And as for myself, I had no intention of charming girls for the purpose of trying to sleep with them. I know that this statement may elicit incredulity from my Reader, but it's the truth, despite the fact that I was already becoming quite randy back then, and would have been capable of numerous sexual encounters a day. Most certainly! Yet I maintain that it was not my libido that attracted me to the girls. Don't get me wrong, I mean, of course I would have been happy if I could have acted on my urges in that area... There's no doubt about that... But the thing is, I knew very well that even if the most beautiful girl offered to sleep with me, and willingly stripped naked in front of me to prove it—well, I wouldn't have dreamed of fucking her, I'd more likely run away in terror. This results from the fact that I am an Aspie—even if I didn't know it at the time—and as such, I still basically respected social conventions, at least, those that I could understand. And it was drummed into my head by my parents (as well as my teachers and the whole of society) that although it may be argued whether or not premarital sex was a sin, there was certainly no room for doubt that it should not be engaged in at such a young age! Therefore I was essentially convinced that I was still too immature to be doing this, if not biologically, then socially and psychologically, and the same was true of my female classmates. I don't think anybody would dispute that I was right in this opinion. And apart from this, I was obviously also worried about the possible punishment it would incur. Not so much that I was going to be beaten up for it—I think I would have been willing to take that risk, since I'd had plenty of practice in enduring that sort of thing thanks to my "beloved" classmates—but what I was really afraid of was what would happen if I got the girl pregnant, and then I would have to pay child support... Or they might accuse me of rape... I wouldn't dream of taking such risks!

So I had no intention of sleeping with the "molls", even if they had offered themselves to me. But the social exclusion itself did hurt. The disdain. That to them I didn't even exist. And I couldn't understand why they liked these other boys so much, because they may have been more muscular than me and could run faster, but I'm sure that I could outdo every one of them in a knowledge contest, even if I had half my brain removed! What was so appealing about these boys?! Did girls really value INTELLECT so little?! I could not escape the conclusion that this was indeed the sad truth—they had no respect for intelligence. And it seemed that this faculty was not appreciated by girls in general.

After realizing this, I began to think that perhaps my male classmates were right about one thing when they derided me. Namely, that these female beings in the class by no means deserved the honorary title of "Miss"! After all, to me the term "Miss" meant someone who was not only a young female, but also in some sense "noble"—not in origin, but in the sense that there was something to respect about her. Yet how could I respect such beings who did not reciprocate by respecting ME?!

Their stupidity was written all over them, for how was it possible that it never entered their minds that a loud-mouthed, aggressive bully would not shed these habits after marriage, and without having classmates to fight with anymore will beat his wife instead! If the "molls" like the fact that a guy is a hooligan because he dares to drink alcohol at such a young age, then they had better realize that he will probably also become an alcoholic after he's married... If he likes going out to places of entertainment, he'll continue this habit after marriage too, and will squander all the family's money there, proving that he is still a daredevil. And so on... Any woman should really have the sense to know that no man marries in order to give up his former attitudes, in fact, he usually marries for the express purpose of getting away from his parents and all the restrictions, and to be able to live the life he's always wanted. But these women—my female classmates—did not take this into consideration, that's how little sense they had. So it wasn't long before I started thinking that these females really were just "molls", and were in no way worthy of the title "Miss". Unfortunately it seems my male classmates were right in this respect.

Once I tried explaining to one of the girls that she would be better off with a guy who was not the most handsome or muscular, that it would be an advantage for her, because boys who have a lot of girls chasing after them now will be much desired by women later on, so there's an enormous risk that he will cheat on his wife... But it was all in vain. I don't even know whether my explanation reached her consciousness, because all I got from her was the same brief answer I usually got from the boys: "You're an idiot!"

I don't know what happened to this girl later on, but I hope that if she ended up divorced (or didn't dare divorce her violent husband for fear of him killing her) then she remembers this conversation between us... I know, the chances that she'll remember it are fairly small. Yet how good would it be if she did remember, and asked herself who the real idiot was! Not because it would give me some belated satisfaction (I wouldn't know about it anyway), but because if she had a child in the meantime and the child was a girl, then she could pass on this advice to her daughter so that she wouldn't make the same mistake...

So the point is that the girls didn't even notice me—at least not in any positive way—however that's not the end of it, because in addition to not liking me, they wanted to avoid even giving the impression of there being "something" between me and them. That would have been so awkward... and they wanted to keep their reputation.

It was in eighth grade, if I remember correctly, that a girl sat next to me in school. The seat next to me was empty most of the time, which didn't bother me anymore, in fact, I preferred it that way. In the lower grades, teachers were quite strict about who could sit where, but then the rigidity eased in this area, and later—around the start of the upper grades—everyone could pretty much sit wherever they wanted. I generally sat at the front, in the first or second row, because the back benches were all occupied anyway. Everyone preferred sitting at the back, with the obvious intention of being able to cheat more easily. However, this wasn't important to me, for I did perfectly well without cheating. I will admit that on occasion I wrote myself a cheat sheet, but I never used it, because by the time I had written it I realized that I already knew the material.

The only time I really cheated was in high school, but even then it was very rarely, solely in history class, and only to remember the years of important historical events. I always struggled to remember those damned numbers, although I admit that laziness may have played a role here too, since I found it

totally unnecessary to learn all those stupid dates by heart. It would be fine if I wanted to become a historian, but I knew with certainty that I didn't.

But right now I'm not writing about my high school years, so the point is that the seat next to me was empty, and one day a girl sat down there. And what is more, she happened to be the girl I liked most! It's true that the majority of boys in the class didn't consider her to be the most beautiful, but I always liked her the best. And now she was sitting beside me! She immediately told me that she wanted to make it clear that she wasn't sitting next to me because she was in love with me, but just hoped that I could prompt her in math class, and place my notebook in a position where she could see what I was writing. I happily promised her these things. I assured her that I didn't have the faintest notion that she might be in love with me, nor that I believed anybody our age could truly be in love. And of course that I would prompt her and so on...

I will confess that I had some scruples about helping her cheat. After all, it was a violation of the rules... I excused myself by saying that the teachers deserved it, since they didn't protect me from the others. And also that it was clear this girl didn't want to become a mathematician, therefore it would be useless to torture herself with the great effort of learning math. As soon as school was over she would forget it all within a month anyway, or even sooner. Nevertheless, I still had my reservations about it, but a man will sometimes do surprising things for the sake of a beautiful girl, if she asks him sweetly enough... So I promised to do it and she sat there. Admittedly, I can't remember whether or not I even gave her a single prompt... For this beautiful idyll soon came to an end.

She had only been sitting next to me for maybe a week or less, when she abruptly told me that she was going to sit somewhere else, because the other girls were making fun of her for BEING IN LOVE WITH ME! It made no difference that she denied it was true, and that she told them I didn't believe it was the case either, they still mocked her. She even told them to ask me directly, hoping that I would be honest enough to acknowledge that there really wasn't anything going on between us, because that's what we'd agreed on in the beginning. But the other girls still made fun of her, and she didn't like being mocked, so she ended up sitting somewhere else. Therefore she SURRENDERED to *peer pressure*! To "public taste"!

If you ask, dear Reader, whether I was angry, then the answer is YES, and more than just a little. But not at this girl... that didn't even occur to me. I truly wasn't! I would admit it if I was, after all, I've written so many bad things about my classmates already, I could just as easily admit this too... Yet it really wasn't the case, not in the slightest. Okay, I may have thought she was an idiot, and a cowardly one at that. But I felt no anger towards her. I was of the opinion that she was also a victim in this situation. My anger was directed at the OTHER GIRLS! What business is it of theirs where someone other than themselves is sitting, be it next to me or otherwise?! I was so happy that this girl had sat next to me, thereby acknowledging my merit in at least one area—math! And now I was being DEPRIVED of this feeling by the CONTEMPTUOUSNESS of these other girls! They stole something from me, when it did them no harm for one of them to be seated beside me; they made things worse for the girl too, since now she had nobody to help her with the answers, and above all, none of it gave *them* any benefit whatsoever! I could understand if they were doing it to get someone else to sit next to me, that is, if the motivation was jealousy because another girl had eyes for me, or also wanted my help in math. But that was clearly not the case. *Why* did they do it then?! As far as I'm concerned, it was nothing but another manifestation of pure EVIL for no good reason. I still hold this opinion today.

There was never any question of the girls beating me up. They didn't even try. I had no need to be afraid of them in that sense, because obviously in such a case it wouldn't be me but them who burst into tears first. I was definitely stronger than the girls, so I had nothing to fear. Even so, I still maintain that in their own way the girls were just as evil, barbaric and stupid as my male classmates.

And now let's return to the subject of sport. Because I began with the statement that girls were attracted to boys who were loud and aggressive. And practically all those who were good at sport in some sense, especially at that damned soccer, although not exclusively. I couldn't say the same about myself. I absolutely hated the occasions when I was obligated to play sports...

The official Hungarian name of these classes was "testnevelés", which in English translates literally to "Body education", although in the English speaking world these classes are often called "Gym class" (as well as the more formal "Physical education".) The English name is far more logical, which I didn't know at the time, but the illogicality of the Hungarian name immediately struck me, and so I always stubbornly wrote this class into my time-table as "tornaóra", which means "gym class" in English. The teachers disapproved... So I explained to them that the official name for this class was a logical impossibility, since all children did during these classes was play sports, or maybe games. However there was no education being done. I believe the term "physical education" is just a facade that obscures and beautifies the essence of the subject, but it's completely deceptive and false, since education is an activity that should influence one's reason, and is therefore a process of conscious persuasion, whereas a process that doesn't involve the comprehension of other party is at best habituation or training! Therefore etymologically the term "body education" means that we—or the educator leading the class—want to teach the body something, although this is impossible because people generally use the concept of "body" to mean the opposite of "mind" ie. reason or intellect, and only that which has the capacity of reason can be taught, hence it is not possible in the case of the body. The body can only be trained for sport, exercised to build muscle and so on, which can all be rather useful and healthy—but it's impossible to *educate* it!

I absolutely loathed these classes. They always made me hot and sweaty, and there wasn't even an opportunity to take a shower after gym class, so my skin was constantly itching. The changing room was a small, overcrowded stinky hole as well. But the main reason, of course, was that I had no interest in sport. No, no interest whatsoever. But my Readers may be curious about WHY I had no interest in sport... Perhaps I can explain the reason I had such a divergent range of interests.

Well, I have thought a lot about this already. I'm afraid that I am not able to explain it completely, but maybe I can demonstrate with an example of how differently I thought about sport even as a very young child, especially with regards to soccer. Because I have to say that although I never really learned the rules of soccer (in fact I still don't know them, apart from what the game is about "in broad terms"), it wasn't at school that I first became acquainted with this "game" on a very basic level.

The event happened a few days after I moved from my grandmother's house into my parents' house, at the other end of the village, since I was about to start school. So I was barely six years old at the time. And of course I didn't have the faintest idea of what soccer was. However there was another boy who lived across the street, just opposite our house, and he was at least a year older than me. Somehow we got to know each other a little. This was probably made easier by the fact that our house didn't yet have a fence at the front.

One day he invited me to play soccer in a nearby meadow. I had no objection to going to the meadow at all, since it wasn't very far from where we lived, less than fifty meters away. There were only two other houses in between, and a small creek, which was so narrow that it could easily be crossed with a single jump. But I had no idea what the hell soccer even was! Plus I didn't have a ball either. That didn't matter though, because the boy had one. So we went over there, and he brought his ball along. Then he said that since there were only two of us and not a full soccer team, it would be best if we just did some "goal kicking".

At this point of the story, I have to inform my English readers that this part of my recollection is extremely difficult to translate from my native language into English, because soccer terminology in English and Hungarian is completely different. However, as you will see in the continuation of this story, these technical terms have great importance. So I must clarify the literal translations of some of these, in order for the story to make sense. The first one is when he said "goal kicking". This is not confusing in English, although the term for it in Hungarian is "kapura rúgás", which literally translates to "kicking at the gate". It is true that the word "kapu" also means "goal" in Hungarian, but generally speaking it means "gate".

Naturally I couldn't figure out what he was talking about, and I looked around in bewilderment. I couldn't see any gate, or even a door anywhere... I said that if we needed a gate to play soccer, then why did we go to the meadow? Surely it would be easier to find a gate if we stayed in the street. Although I wouldn't recommend it, because I don't think the adults would like it at all if we kicked their gates, with or without a ball!

I must say that he looked at me very strangely when I mentioned this to him, and was equally confused as I was. Because it was obvious that neither one of us knew what the other was talking about. This time the problem wasn't that I was using "archaic" Hungarian language. I had simply never really encountered a ball until then, and he had never met a kid who didn't have the slightest idea of what soccer was, or any other ball game for that matter. Even if I had come from Mars, or the sixth ice moon of the seventh planet of an extragalactic star, the cultural difference between us couldn't have been greater. So one might say we had a very difficult time understanding each other. To be fair, in some ways he was the smarter one of us—since he certainly didn't have Asperger's, and therefore was definitely more adept in the "social" and "cultural" fields of life—so he was the first to figure out what the problem was... that I truly didn't know anything about soccer at all!

Well, when he finally "got it", he had a good laugh... But he didn't leave, because there were no other kids around to play with at that moment. So he continued struggling with me, and began explaining that the word "gate" in this case doesn't refer to the sort of gate I was thinking of.

"Then what does it refer to?" I asked.

"We'll make one right now, and you'll see! In fact, we'll make two!"

"I have my doubts about that," I said politely, "after all, neither of us are masons, we don't have any tools, and we're just kids!"

By this time he was rolling on the ground in laughter, barely managing to whimper, "Leave it to me, I'll have a gate set up in no time..." And from behind a small nearby hill he brought out four half-bricks, which had probably been used as a "gate" by the boys of the neighborhood for a long time. He placed the bricks on the ground in the appropriate positions, and told me that *this* was my gate, and *that* was his.

I just stood there in amazement... *WHAAAT?! This construction did not resemble anything that I felt even remotely deserved the label "gate"! And I started explaining to him that a gate was something you can go in and out of, and that using it was the only way you could get through to somewhere. But this thing didn't make any sense, because we could go around these bricks at any time; and besides, a gate should have some sort of locking mechanism, after all, a gate is really just a door only bigger... However there was nothing on these so-called "gates" that would enable them to be closed—neither handle nor keyhole...*

So it is evident that I had a very difficult time understanding the concept of "gate" in soccer. In fact, I still don't understand why they call it a "gate" in the Hungarian language; the English name "goal" seems far more logical to me.

Well, eventually I at least managed to grasp that the object of this game was to kick the ball into this "gate". Then my next issue was why this game was called "goal kicking" (or "gate kicking" to my mind), when it wasn't the "gate" that was being kicked but the ball. Surely it would be more logical to call it "ball kicking". He said it was because we kick the ball at the goal.

"Didn't you just tell me before that the ball has to be kicked into the goal?" I asked him.

"Yes."

"Then why are you saying that we kick the ball *at* the goal, when we have to kick it *into* the goal?!"

The guy started to become exasperated. "Are you here to play or to argue?!"

"How can I play until I understand the quintessence of the game?"

"The what?"

"What do you mean *what*?"

"What the heck is 'quintessence'?"

"Well, it's... it just means that I want to know the rules."

"Then you have to accept that *this* here is the goal, and you have to kick the ball between the two goalposts!"

"Between which posts?!"

"Well, here and here... these two bricks!"

"But you mentioned *posts*".

"Yes, these are the two goalposts. If the ball hits either of them then it isn't valid—it's just 'hitting the goalpost'."

"Hitting the goalpost?! But these are bricks, not posts. Why don't you just say goal-bricks?"

"Stop arguing—these are the *rules*, do you understand?!"

I didn't understand, but I was also getting tired of the argument, so I just shrugged my shoulders and said, "Okay, if two half-bricks are a post to you, then that's your business, but why should I keep on kicking the ball?"

"Because that's the game!"

"But listen, what if all the kicking ruins the ball? Wouldn't it be better protected if we just carefully threw it to each other with our hands?"

"Sure, but then it wouldn't be soccer. In soccer the ball has to be kicked."

"But it would be more convenient for me if I could use my hands instead of my feet."

"You're not allowed to use your hands."

"Why not?"

"It's simply not allowed, and that's that."

"Who forbade it?"

"I don't know, dammit, it's the RULE! Can't you understand?!"

"Oh, I understand, I just don't understand the point of such a stupid rule! Why should we pretend to be handless cripples, when we obviously *have* hands?!"

"There is another game called handball where you can use your hands, and that has different rules," he explained. "But that's not *this* game. This is soccer, and so we play with our feet!"

"With our feet? Not with the ball?"

"With both! So, are you going to play soccer or not?!"

Now, looking back after all these years, I admire the patience of that poor guy next door. I must have been an exceptional slowcoach! Actually, I was fortunate that it was *he* who happened to be the neighbor on the other side of the street, because interestingly he was one of the few boys who never bullied me. It's true that he never became my friend either, but it was a big enough deal to me if someone at least wasn't teasing me all the time.

But what could I have done, since I really did look at things from a completely different perspective than he did! The poor kid tried to make me understand in his childish and instinctive way, and with the vocabulary at his disposal, that there were certain activities—primarily games—that could not exist if we didn't agree prior to starting the activity on certain rules, which were created precisely so that the game could exist. These rules are based on some sort of "common conventions" and are therefore largely arbitrary. And if they're arbitrary, one should not search for logic in them, because the effort will obviously be fruitless. Therefore they are DEFINITIVE rules. They define what we call a "goal" in this case, what a "goal post" is, when a goal is scored and when it is not, whether or not the ball is allowed to be touched with the hands etc.

Clearly it's absolutely impossible to play a game of soccer unless these rules are agreed upon. But that's precisely what I couldn't comprehend at the time, probably because our "species"—Aspies—tend to search for LOGIC in everything. For example, I understood and accepted that there needed to be rules for traffic, in order to avoid chaos on the roads. This made sense to me. But traffic rules—like so many others—are REGULATORY rules. They put limits on an *already existing* activity. After all, everybody drives cars anyway. And they would still all be driving around even if there weren't any traffic regulations. Traffic doesn't exist because it is regulated—it would exist without being regulated too. But it's better for everyone if traffic is regulated, and so the road rules were created.

Of course, in a sense these rules are also arbitrary, after all, there is no particular logic in driving on the right side of the road. It could just as easily be the other way round, as it is in countries like England for example, where they drive on the opposite side. Nevertheless, I was able to see the sense of this sort of regulation, despite its arbitrariness. But to create a complicated set of rules, just to carry out a series of activities without any rational purpose that is based on these rules, which we call a "game"—well, I just couldn't grasp why anyone would do that, and what possible benefit it could have!

I hasten to add here that my radical opinion of this softened considerably as I grew up, even if not in relation to soccer. However, at the time its brutality still dominated me, therefore I found it very difficult to grasp the essence of the game.

So finally, after a lengthy shrug, I agreed to give it another try, but asked him if he could bring along a second ball.

"What for?!" he said, glaring at me.

"Well, there's two of us!"

"Don't worry, one ball will be quite enough, you'll see!" the poor kid replied, who must have understood by now that I was yet again ignorant of something quite basic, however he didn't bother trying to explain it to me this time. Most likely in an attempt to cheer me up, he tossed me the ball and said, "You can start!"

Okay, so I started nudging the ball with the toe of my shoe in order to roll it towards his "goal", but then suddenly I saw him standing between the two bricks. I stopped. "Hey, how am I supposed to kick the ball into the goal if you're standing there?" I asked.

"I'm standing here specifically so you can't kick it in!"

"But isn't the aim to kick the ball in there?"

"Yes."

"Then why are you obstructing me?"

"Well, that's the POINT OF THE GAME!" he cried in exasperation.

I shook my head in bewilderment. None of this made any sense to me. Although in my short life until then I had played with this and that, there were very few occasions where I wasn't alone, and for this reason nobody bothered me while I was playing (as long as I wasn't doing anything dangerous, like poking something into a wall socket). Very rarely, of course, I would play with someone else, usually my grandma, or even my dad on one occasion (at least, I can only remember one occasion while I was living at my grandma's house), but it wasn't like anyone was trying to *obstruct* me from doing something. They were games like building a house of cards, or making something out of dominoes, or carving figures of people and animals from horse chestnuts and matchsticks (I cut myself badly during the latter, but with the stubbornness typical of an Aspie, I continued carving chestnuts as soon as my hand had been bandaged). So to discover that there were games that involved multiple players, yet the aim wasn't to *help* each other but to play *against* each other—well, that was something completely new for me, and I can't say I liked the concept either. In fact, I found it quite illogical and repulsive!

"How am I supposed to kick the ball in if you're standing there?"

"You have to aim at the gap between me and one of the goalposts."

"But what if I aim badly, and hit you with the ball?"

"Then you failed, and that's that."

"What I mean is that if the ball hits you, it might hurt you."

He gawped at me. "So what?! Why do you care?!"

"Even if I didn't care, it should matter to you because you're the one who'll be hurt... But I actually do care, because I don't want to hurt anyone."

He must have been a really patient kid; any of my future classmates would have told me I was an idiot. But he still hadn't given up. "Don't worry, I can take it if that happens—just kick it!"

"All right, fine," I sighed, and kicked the ball... My aim was actually quite good, however it didn't shoot into the "goal" because the guy stretched out his hand and the ball bounced off it. I just stood there. Even though I didn't say a word, the kid was astute, and could tell just by looking at me that I didn't understand (yet again).

"I defended your kick!" he explained triumphantly.

"But why defend yourself? Because if you hadn't reached out, the ball wouldn't have hit you, in fact, the only reason it hit your hand was because you specifically reached for it!"

"I wasn't defending myself, I was defending the *goal*! I prevented you from kicking the ball in! Do you understand?!"

"But why obstruct me? Isn't the aim to kick the ball in?" I asked him, for I was back at the beginning again, and unable to grasp the whole concept.

"THAT'S THE POINT OF THE GAME!" he shouted. But at least he wasn't starting a fight...

"Okay, well, if you say so, then sure..." I said, trying to calm him down. "So how do we proceed now?"

"Now I'll bring the ball back, and then I'm next."

"The next what?"

"I'll try to kick a goal now."

"You want to kick the ball into that so-called 'gate'?"

"Of course!"

"But if you want the ball to be kicked in, then why did you stop me from kicking it in before? If you didn't want it to go in then, why bother doing it now?!"

"This is getting tiring," he sighed.

Now, I'm assuming that he didn't mean he was becoming physically exhausted when he said this, but rather that he was "sick and tired" of my ignorance, and wanted to end the argument so we could just play the game. He must have still had some hope that this was possible with me...

He retrieved the ball, and then I asked him, "So now am I supposed to stand between the 'goalposts'?"

"Yes. But not *here*! This is my goal. Stand over there, that's yours!"

"They're both yours, because they're made from *your* bricks."

"Well, right *now* it's yours, understand?! Stand over there and defend it!"

"But I don't feel like standing there, because what if the ball hits me in the face?"

"Then don't just stand there—feint!"

"What's that?"

"Run towards me, and try to take the ball away from me!"

"But just a few minutes ago you told me that it's forbidden to use our hands."

"I know, but you can try to kick the ball away from me with your foot. Then when you have the ball, you can kick it into my goal."

Well, I gave it a try... not that I saw any sense in it, but primarily because I could see that he wanted me to so badly. So I tried. But of course I wasn't able to "feint" him, which is unlikely to surprise my readers, and he kicked the ball into my "goal" within moments.

"Goal!" he shouted. I just stood there like a stunned pig.

He could see that I still didn't understand. "You got a goal!" he explained. (In English, you would say "I got a goal", however then the rest of the story wouldn't make sense).

"Great!" I exclaimed with a smile.

"Why is that great?!" he asked, searching for signs of madness on my face.

"It's great that I got a goal. Where is it?"

"Where is *what*?!"

"The goal... I'd like to take a look at it!"

"But you just saw it!"

"Where? When?"

"I kicked the ball into your goal! Don't you remember?!"

"Yes, so what?!"

"Well, that was the goal."

"Wasn't it a ball that you kicked in?"

"Yes."

"Then it was a ball, not a 'goal'."

"No, I kicked a *goal*."

"Stop kidding around, after all, I *saw* you kick a *ball*."

"Just listen to me and try to understand... When a ball is kicked into a goal, then we say 'goal'! That's its name! So you got a goal."

"Okay, if you say so..."

"Do you finally understand then?"

"Yes, of course—I got a goal, it's clear... Well, thank you very much!"

"What do you mean?!"

"I'm thanking you."

"For what?!"

"Because I was taught that if we get something, then it's polite to say thank you. Isn't that what you do?"

"Yeah, sure, but why should you thank me for a *goal*?!"

"Well, you did say that I got a goal, and getting something is a good thing, so it seems appropriate to thank you for it. Although I don't yet know what a 'goal' is used for, I'm sure you'll tell me soon enough, right?"

The kid just stared at me for a long time without making a sound, then massaged his forehead with his palm, and after that his eyes. He sighed heavily, picked up his ball and headed out of the meadow toward the creek.

I ran after him. "Aren't you going to tell me what a goal is used for?"

"Listen, I'm just a little kid, like you. Ask your parents about it, they're probably much smarter than me, and they'll tell you," he replied, still with considerable patience in his tone, and he walked off home. He obviously realized that I was utterly hopeless, and that it was useless to waste any more time on me. He was right. If only all neurotypical kids were like him! How happy my childhood would have been if all my classmates had been so patient with me, and finally conceded that I was utterly hopeless at soccer, as well as the many other activities they attached so much importance to.

Naturally I asked my father what the hell a "goal" was and what it was used for, and he summed it up by simply explaining in the most logical, concise way possible that there were games people played in order to determine who was the most skilled, the strongest, fastest etc. And that this was only possible if they played AGAINST each other. They then count how many times each defeats the other in a given time period, even if this defeat doesn't necessarily mean a physical fight. The important thing is how many times a person succeeds in doing something that has been agreed upon in advance, while the other player tries to obstruct him. Such an action might be called a "point", or some other term; in

soccer, for some reason, it is called a "goal". So if I got a "goal", that's not something I should be happy about in this case... But that didn't mean I should be sad about it, because it was clear from what I'd told him that I wasn't interested in soccer, and I didn't have to be. It was okay for me to be interested in different things, for there are plenty of other forms of entertainment out there...

So that's how I got some vague idea of what soccer is. Even so, I can firmly state to this day that I still don't have the slightest interest in it.

As my Reader will have gathered from the above story, the reason for my indifference to soccer was not due to being inept at it—although I certainly was. My lack of talent couldn't even come to light, because this wasn't the main issue. It simply didn't interest me, since it belonged to a group of activities that I was inclined to more or less question the justification for existence of. In my opinion, the world would be a better place if the people in it would HELP rather than HINDER each other, and any game that is based on defeating rather than helping the other side is fundamentally opposed to this concept.

As I mentioned earlier, this radical opinion of mine really has softened considerably since that time. Even so, it has always been one of the fundamental organizing principles in my way of thinking, and a fairly strong one at that. I'm not saying that this principle can never be subdued in certain circumstances, but it certainly manifests itself very prominently in my personality. Of course, I also have proof of this—just read my novels about the "Chisee" society (my favorite fictional society of humans in my series), or those about the elves...

Therefore this view is not as prominent in me as it was in my early childhood, but still strong enough for such "games" to not give me any real pleasure. I will write more about this in another chapter, when I describe the family board games I used to play with my parents and younger sister. My Reader will then get to know the meaning of "Totoya" for example... No, this is not a Japanese word at all...

The only other thing I'm going to mention here about sports is that one may think that even if I didn't like soccer, surely that isn't reason enough for the "molls" not to like me, since why didn't I excel at any other sport? Well, I wasn't able to, because in our school soccer was pretty much the only sport there was. Obviously because it was a cheap sport—all you needed was a ball. The school didn't really have much other equipment, only some wall bars and ropes in the gym. The wall bars generally weren't used, as the teacher was afraid a child would fall off and hurt themselves—well, that wasn't exactly an impossible scenario! The ropes were sometimes used, the task being to climb up them. And it's here that I must again admit my clumsiness. Because not only could the strong boys manage to climb up it, but even many of the weakest girls. And not just once either! However, for quite a while I couldn't even do it once.

It wasn't as if I was weaker than the girls. Because by the end of roughly the eighth grade, I finally got to the point where I could climb up that damned rope, twice in rapid succession—that is, I climbed up, then down, then up and down again. And solely using my HANDS! Yes, that's right. Without using my legs. Since the reason for my previous failure was that I wasn't able to coordinate my legs during the climb. No matter how many times I tried to hold the rope with my legs, as soon as I pulled myself up the rope, it always slipped out from between my legs. And I could never figure out how to push myself up with my legs. It simply didn't work. (I still can't do it...) This is probably due to the fact that we Aspies can only pay attention to one thing at a time, at least effectively. When I climb up with my

hands, I'm paying attention to my hands. So the rope slips out from between my legs, because I can no longer pay attention to my legs, especially not both at the same time. Not enough to keep them squeezing the rope, let alone also push my body upwards. It just wasn't going to happen. Therefore my failure wasn't caused by the weakness of my muscles. In fact, many of the boys couldn't even do what I did *once*, climbing the rope using only their hands. Yet I was able to do it twice.

But this wasn't enough to impress the gym teacher, let alone the girls, especially since other boys could climb the rope at least five or six times, quickly... even though they used their legs to assist them. In fact, the girls could do it too. I was never able to do a cartwheel either, nor a handstand, although neither of these things require much strength. There is no doubt that I was strong enough to do them, but it didn't matter, because I was too clumsy. My classmates ridiculed me for this on numerous occasions, telling me I was more useless than the girls... Well, if by this they meant I was unskilled and clumsy, then perhaps they were right. I can admit that. But even so, it still wasn't a nice thing to do.

Now, as I write these lines as an adult, I wonder what sport would have been suitable for me in my childhood. And I have come to the conclusion that it is probably bodybuilding, or at least weightlifting. These sports don't involve directly competing against another person, and I would have been able to see—because it's logical—that it had the benefit of increasing the size of my muscles. Unfortunately none of these sports were even mentioned in gym class, let alone practiced.

As for the mockery, the girls would sometimes tease me as well, although less often than the boys. Probably due to a fear of me retaliating and beating them up. But I never fought with girls. However there were times when I teased them back... For instance, once, when one of the girls was taunting me about not liking "masculine" sports because I was a coward, I started looking quizzically at a spot just over her right shoulder while she was talking to me.

After a while she noticed my strange facial expression, and asked me what I was looking at. To which I replied, "Tell me, what is purple, has six eyes, and green saliva dripping from its jaw?"

"I have no idea."

"Well, if you don't even know what it is, then why on earth are you carrying it around on your shoulder?!" I asked her, with a look of astonishment on my face.

The "young lady" suddenly turned deathly pale and began screaming in terror, almost fainting in fright. And I laughed at her along with the other boys. Then I asked her what right she had to criticize my courage after that?!

If anybody believes that this constant bullying and verbal abuse turned me into a withdrawn child with no confidence and self-esteem, who freezes in situations that require assertiveness and suffers from a chronic inferiority complex, then they are mistaken! What happened was just the opposite—I learned that the only person I could rely on in life (at least, with any certainty) was MYSELF. There is a well-known saying that goes, "That which does not kill us makes us stronger". This was absolutely true for me. Indeed, if I felt that it was really necessary, I could simulate such a haughty confidence that even an unscrupulous schizophrenic liar would have envied. The best example of this is perhaps what happened in my final history exam...

I was soon due to graduate high school. So by then I had been studying History for four years (not counting the eight years in elementary school). Now I have to say here that I did basically like history, I just never liked the parts of it that we were supposed to learn. I preferred historical novels. But when it

came to learning the seemingly trivial events of some era, I hated it with a passion. Who gives a damn about that?! I particularly struggled to memorize all the dates. And unfortunately I was stupid enough to try to cure this deep hatred of mine by simply throwing away my history textbook at the end of each year, since I no longer needed it. Besides, there was little space in the house for my personal items, as I wasn't lucky enough as a child to have my own room. And it never occurred to me that I would ever need these books again.

Then it was time for our final exams. It hit me like a thunderbolt out of the blue when I discovered that there were thirty possible topics we would have to write about, and in order to do this we would need our old textbooks. Naturally I still had the fourth history textbook, and with great difficulty I managed to track down the textbooks from the second and third years. But I couldn't get hold of the one from the first year. Fortunately the teacher informed us that there would only be one possible topic from that first book, either the Ancient Greeks or the Roman Empire, and that based on inside information he knew it would be the Greeks. He didn't say how he knew that, but I didn't care. I was just happy that from the thirty topics there would only be one that came from the missing book!

Everybody now began diligently studying the necessary topics. As did I. And because I was a conscientious person, I asked my other classmates for the section on the Greeks, but there was a long queue for it and I never managed to get hold of it. Everybody was too lazy to copy it out by hand, and at that time photocopiers or other duplicating machines were a rarity and expensive to use. So I couldn't obtain any information on the Greeks to study—I didn't even have a book about it. But for the first time in my life I started to study the history curriculum seriously, and memorized all of the other twenty-nine topics thoroughly, certain that I would at least get a solid B grade, if not an A.

Then came the day of the final history exam. I lived in the countryside, but the high school was in the city, so due to the train connection I was already in the school corridor an hour before the scheduled time, along with eight to ten of my other classmates. For some reason all the teachers arrived early too, along with the exam supervisors and officials, and when they saw that we were already there, they asked us whether we wanted to begin early or exercise our right to start at the scheduled time, in order to look back over the material beforehand.

Since I was rather sure of myself—after all, I did know twenty-nine of the thirty topics very well, which was almost everything, 96.67% of the curriculum—I wanted to finish as quickly as possible, so I immediately jumped up and said that it was a very good idea and we should get started right away. Many of the others were worried and hesitant, but in the end three other kids went in with me, agreeing that it was better to get it over with...

Then we had to go over to the desk and take a slip of paper from the top of the pile to receive our exam topic. I was the first one to do this (even though my name is at the end of the alphabet...), and my effort to be ahead of everyone else was not without ulterior motives. Because I knew that the Ancient Greeks was the first topic in chronological order. It was likely that the slips of paper containing the topics were initially stacked chronologically, with the Ancient Greeks topic being either at the very top or the very bottom. But they were sure to have shuffled them before we went in. So it would no longer be at the top or the bottom when I drew my topic. If I ended up drawing one from somewhere in between, then there was a chance I would get that single topic that I hadn't learned. But if I'm the first to draw and I take the topic on the very top, then first of all I'm displaying my confidence because I'm not rummaging through the pile, demonstrating that it makes no difference to me since I know all the

topics; and secondly, the very top one couldn't possibly be the Ancient Greeks because it is the first in order, however the pile was shuffled...

I think everyone would have guessed by now that, in a complete mockery of logical reasoning, the topic I drew happened to be precisely the Ancient Greeks. Either they didn't shuffle the pile at all, or they shuffled it so much that that topic ended up back on top again. I don't know how it happened, and I didn't really care. I was thinking about something else entirely. Namely, what the hell was I going to do?! I still had another ten minutes or so, because everybody was sitting down writing notes for their oral presentation. I had paper and a pen on the desk before me. But I couldn't even cheat, because on the one hand there were only four of us and twice as many teachers, who were all watching us, and on the other hand I didn't have a cheat sheet since I had nothing to create it from. If I had had a book to make a cheat sheet, then I would have just memorized the material instead, after all, what difference did it make whether I memorized twenty-nine or thirty topics?!

I desperately searched my memory for some crumbs of knowledge. But I knew nothing! There was a map hanging on the wall displaying the Mediterranean Sea, but it wasn't a historical map, it was geographical. And I had to produce something if I didn't want to fail! Although we were told that if anyone asked for a different topic, they would only receive at best a D grade, and that was only if they knew the topic very well. Our history teacher himself had told us that the exam moderator the school had hired was extremely strict, and had a habit of downgrading the marks of the examinees. So for example, if the teacher in charge of the exam suggested a B grade, then he would tell him that it was barely worth a C. Therefore I was in a completely losing position. I knew absolutely nothing...

Nothing?! Well, not exactly... It certainly wasn't much, but a few words came to the surface of my mind from four years earlier, in my first year of high school, as well as from some historical novels I had read in the past. There were the Peloponnesian wars, although unfortunately I had no idea when they had occurred, nor whether they had been fought between the Greeks and Persians or between the Greeks themselves. Because I knew they had fought the Persians several times... There was some king, named Darius... He was supposedly very rich... And someone called Miltiades... but was he Greek or Persian? I didn't know! And there were the two great cities, Athens and Sparta, who were constantly fighting each other... In Athens there was some famous guy called Pericles, but who the hell knows if he was a king or just some kind of president... Maybe the latter, because Athens was supposed to be the cradle of democracy, but if he was a king, then I'm screwed if I say otherwise... And they had all sorts of famous philosophers... Oh, and hetaerae too... But I had better not mention them, after all, this isn't a biology class where we're supposed to be discussing the reproduction methods of the human race... They kept slaves, and traded them, which occurred frequently since they lived in city states...

That's pretty much all that came to mind. Then one of the teachers asked if there was anyone who wanted to start. I immediately raised my hand, without the slightest hesitation. Because it made no difference to me anyway. I knew that even if I sat there until evening, nothing else would spring to mind, but at least being first would show confidence. Naturally I had to hand in the piece of paper with the outline. Although it wasn't much of an outline, for I hadn't even written a single sentence.

The exam moderator asked me why I hadn't written anything down. I replied that everything I needed to know was in my head, and that the map on the wall would provide a sufficient outline for me. I went over to the wall. I wasn't lying either. Everything I knew *was* in my head... the fact that it

was very little was another matter altogether... Of course, he took my behavior as extraordinary confidence.

Now, the only thing I was relying on here was to not be interrupted by anyone with additional questions, because I really did have very little knowledge on this topic, and if anyone asked me about the material in depth, my profound ignorance would be immediately revealed. From what I had remembered during the preparation time, there were only two points that I could be absolutely sure of—that the Greeks lived in city states, and that Athens was called the cradle of democracy. This last point sounded very fancy, and I knew I would include it in my answer. My answer had to be interwoven around these two points! And I had to speak continuously, this was extremely important, because if I stopped then I was sure to be questioned by one of the teachers... and that wouldn't be the beginning of the end for me, but the end itself! Even if the teacher tried to help me, and benevolently asked a very easy question... Because I wouldn't know that either!

So I stepped up to the map and started to speak. Of course I don't remember my presentation verbatim, but I do recall the gist of it, which went something like this: "To understand the driving forces behind the amazing achievements of Ancient Greek Civilization, we need to know their history. However, their history can only be understood if we know the external environmental conditions in which this history has evolved, since it is well known that the environment is the basis of every culture, since it cannot use anything other than what surrounds it, what is given to it. As it is said, 'Consciousness is determined by existence, and existence is limited by the environment'. Now first of all, let's take a look at the map and find Greece. We can see that it's quite a mountainous region. This area, which is still difficult to navigate even today, was in ancient times an even more insurmountable task for the inhabitants due to the primitive transport conditions. In such a terrain, arable land is scarce and any good soil is precious, therefore agriculture—along with culture—was forced into the valleys, which could not support a large population. This is how the system of independent city states, the polis, which forms the basis of Greek society, was formed. It is well known that these cities were constantly at war with each other, and this is a defining feature of the whole of Greek history, which—by the way—can be examined via the warfare of the two largest and most important Greek cities, Sparta and Athens, because every other city resembled either Athens or Sparta in its social structure." (Here I pointed at where Athens and Sparta were located on the map.)

"Athens is the cradle of democracy, but the same could not be said of Sparta. So we can now clearly see how an essentially geographical feature determines the history of the people who live there. Moreover, it even determines their way of thinking, because the independent city-states understandably did their utmost to defend their independence from each other, they wanted to remain free, therefore freedom itself was one of the core values in their consciousness very early on, as well as independence, and this may have been the basis of their attraction to democracy, which after all is essentially the idea that nobody is allowed to tyrannize anyone else. The desire for independence was true for even those poleis whose culture was undemocratic. Scarce livelihood possibilities gave rise early on to trade as an important profession, to supply goods that could not be produced locally or only in small quantities. As a result, they quickly became acquainted with the culture and ideas of other nations, which also fed their own culture and philosophy, especially in coastal Athens, which was very suitable for trade. The merchants were cosmopolitan people due to their profession, therefore were more educated than the

average citizen, and usually wealthier, which is why they sought to gain ascendancy over time. And it all came about because Greece was founded where it was, in the mountainous countryside!"

This was how far I had roughly gotten when the presiding examiner said, "Okay, that's enough, thank you!"

I hastily added, "But I haven't even mentioned the Greco-Persian wars and Miltiades...", and he said that was fine, I could leave that for someone else. Needless to say, I knew in advance that he would not allow me to speak about these topics, which was just as well, because for the reasons I stated earlier, all I knew was that there was some guy called Miltiades, and that there had been a lot of chaos between the Greeks and the Persians.

But the examiner told me that he hadn't heard such a beautiful history exam presentation in years. And of course, I got an A. I strongly believe that if I had drawn any other topic that I actually knew, then I may have only received a B, since I would not have ventured to be so audacious, and would have focused on answering in the traditional way by talking about the things I knew well... and then the teachers may have questioned me about it. However, you can note that in this scenario my answer didn't actually come from history, but from geography, and that was pretty easy because the map was right in front of me.

I think this example clearly shows how to answer a given question when one has little knowledge of the material. You need to focus on what you do know, rather than what you don't know, and even the dumbest student is sure to have picked up SOMETHING other than dirt during their years at school! You have to make the teachers believe that you *are* actually speaking about the subject, just not in the usual way—with a unique approach, an original point of view... If this was a successful strategy in my final exam, then it is bound to work in less intense situations as well.

I had no remorse about doing this. Because, although strictly speaking I may have unfairly gotten an A, on the other hand it was entirely just, since I really did know all the other twenty-nine topics, and I don't think that was the case for many of the other students.

Well, that pretty much concludes my years at school.

Home "Sweet" Home

Now let's take a look at what life was like for me at home with my family...

Well, it was certainly much more pleasant than in school, but it was far from being "great", and could not even be called "average" either. Before I go into the details, I will briefly sum up the essence of it here, at least as I see it. The unpleasantness of my family life may have been largely due to the fact that no real connection or relationship developed between me and my mother. There were at least three good reasons as to why this didn't occur. The very first obviously being that she wasn't the one who raised me during the first six years of my life, at the critical time when such a relationship should be developing between a mother and her child. The second reason is that only a few weeks after I moved

into my mother's house, my mother became pregnant again, and later gave birth to my younger sister. (Although technically she didn't "give birth" to her; she was born by cesarean section, as I myself was). Naturally, at that time it wouldn't have been possible for her to pay much attention to me, even if she had wanted to, since all her "attention resources" were being devoted primarily to her second and much younger child, that is, my sister. Which is totally understandable.

Although I will be writing a lot of very nasty things about my mother in the upcoming pages of this book, even I myself have to admit that as I look back on that period of my life, during the first few months of living in her house before my sister was born, my mother was SIGNIFICANTLY nicer to me than she ever was in later years.

The third reason is simply that I'm an Aspie. I was an Aspie, but my parents were not—however, as I mentioned previously, my father did more or less have certain Aspie traits. It was no coincidence that I got on far better with him... Even so, he was still basically a neurotypical person. Not completely, but for the most part. However my mother was entirely neurotypical, without a doubt...

If I had to add a fourth reason—although the previous three should really suffice—there was also the fact that my mother never kept it a secret that she always wanted a girl, and was not happy that I had turned out to be a boy. I don't even think she would have bothered having a second child if I had been a girl. But I was a boy... So she tried again, and luckily for her—though I think unluckily for me—this time she had a girl. And after that she no longer cared for me at all. At least, she never showed me any love. I truly can't remember even a single occasion where she hugged me, kissed me, or stroked my head. Nor told me a story. Fortunately I didn't need her assistance with the latter, since I learned to read very quickly.

Anyhow, I think I am right in saying that I never really had a mother, because the woman who I could legally call my "mother" did not behave like a mother towards me, and even in her best moments was more like a dutiful housekeeper, who merely served me my food and washed my clothes. It wasn't even her that cared about my academic performance, but my father. Although only on rare occasions. Most of the time he didn't either. But there were times when he inquired about it. Let's just say he could allow himself to be "negligent" in this area, because I generally didn't have much trouble academically. My mother, on the other hand, never took the slightest interest in me, not even in how I was doing at school. In fact, this lack of interest began not only from the time my sister was born, but from the very moment she learned that the first fetus she was carrying (me...) was a BOY.

The question may arise in my Reader's mind of how I could possibly know that. Well, it's very simple. When I was a fair bit older, there was a short period in my life when I too showed a heightened curiosity towards all sorts of pseudosciences—even though I never really believed in any of it. However, sometimes I found that some of them could be amusing for a short while, at least if you didn't take it too seriously—and astrology was one of these pseudosciences. I would like to uphold my reputation in front of my readers, therefore I want to emphasize here that I NEVER BELIEVED IN IT, not for a minute! Even so, I wanted to become acquainted with my own horoscope. After all, why not?! But in order to have my horoscope cast, it was essential to know when I was born. And by that I mean not only the day (which I obviously knew), but also the exact hour of my birth, even the minute if possible. Naturally I asked my mother about this. But she DIDN'T KNOW...

Well, this truly shocked me, and not just a little. The birth of a child, especially if it's a woman's first child, must be an extremely significant experience in her life, so how could she not remember

when it happened?! Even if it wasn't a "normal" birth but a cesarean section... To be fair, I can understand her not bothering to memorize the exact minute it occurred, after all, she was bound to be dealing with the pain and worrying about any complications that might arise. But to not even know which HOUR it took place?! All she could tell me about it was that it happened "sometime in the morning, before noon, possibly at dawn". I asked her what she meant by "dawn", to which she replied, "Sometime after three in the morning".

So I was born sometime between 3 am and noon, which could hardly be called precise accuracy... This lack of data upset my plans, making it impossible to cast my horoscope. Okay, it wasn't a matter of life and death... besides, I already mentioned that I didn't believe in that sort of thing, I just thought it would have been fun to see what it was. However, I was shocked that my mother considered my birth—her FIRST CHILD—so unimportant that she couldn't remember WHEN it happened! Sorry, but I have to conclude from this that from the moment she learned that she was pregnant with a boy, and not a girl, she had no interest in me. All she cared about was getting through the birth process, then forgetting about it and having as little to do with me as possible. The fact that she immediately left me to the care of my grandmother fits perfectly into this picture too.

It often occurred to me that I would actually have been better off—at least, emotionally—if my mother had died during childbirth and I had never met her. Obviously growing up without a mother wouldn't have been that great either, but it would have been better than what I had to deal with, because then I could have held onto my ILLUSION. What I mean is that I could have at least imagined what it *would have been like* if she were alive, and imagined that she *loved* me. It never would have occurred to me that she might not love me. I would have assumed that it was only an unfortunate twist of fate that deprived me of a loving mother, and that *naturally* my mother loved me, since all mothers love their children... Well, technically she wouldn't have because she was dead, but that wasn't her fault. However this was not the case. My mother was very much alive back then (she died the year I wrote this book, in May 2019), so she had ample opportunity to demonstrate what it is like for a mother to clearly *not* love her child.

There were several occasions when I felt her dislike so strongly that I was brave enough to say, for example, "But Mommy, it seems like you don't even love me!" (I always called her this, or "mami" in my native language).

And every time she would look at me with a strange sarcastic smile, and respond in exactly the same way: "Of course I love you... after all, you must know that a mother loves her child even if he's an idiot!" Naturally this response did not reassure me of her love. In fact, it made me even more convinced that she didn't love me. If she loved me, then she wouldn't call me an "idiot", would she?! Not even if this was her true opinion of me, or if I really *was* an idiot. At least, she wouldn't have said it to my face. And not repeatedly! She would also frequently give me the same look and say, "Oh, what a sad fate it is for a mother to bear an idiotic child!" Well, this didn't sound anything like love to me...

Anyhow, she must have known that I was a far cry from being an idiot. If I really was an idiot, then my father would think this too. But he didn't. So why would my mother label me with the exact same word my brutish classmates called me on a regular basis?! Could it be possible that MY OWN MOTHER was no better than any of my loathsome classmates?! If she had insulted me with a different word, it wouldn't have been so hurtful. But it had to be this one, which was constantly being reinforced at school... especially considering it was my mind I was most proud of! She could have called me

clumsy, awkward, lazy, anything... but no. She specifically and deliberately called into question the very quality of which I could be rightfully proud—my intellect!

There were also numerous occasions where she beat me. And as she was slapping my face, I would sometimes bring up the question of whether she even loved me. On these occasions she wouldn't answer in her usual way, but with the following: "Be glad that I'm still beating you, because if I stop, it means that I don't care about you anymore!" Holy shit, I would rather she didn't "care" about me at all, if that was what "care" meant to her...

Another thing she did very often when she didn't like something I did or said was to begin her criticism with, "You little idiot!" Well, this was hardly a good way to make me love her, and don't anyone bother trying to tell me that she loved me profoundly. You don't speak to people you love in such a manner, especially not on a regular basis!

I would like to mention here that I passed an advanced level graduating exam in mathematics, and as far as I can remember, I solved the written questions in about a third of the time allotted. After that I walked out of the room and went home, much to the dismay of the other candidates and the exam supervisor, who encouraged me to stay on since I had plenty of time left. But I didn't even check my solutions, I was so sure they were all correct. And I was right—it turned out to be completely flawless. I would have been ashamed if I had made mistakes, because the tasks were so easy (for me) that it didn't seem like a challenge at all. And the reason I'm telling you this, dear Reader, is to prove that I could not have been an idiot, in any shape or form!

Naturally there were many occasions when I questioned her about why she said such things to me, even though I knew I was risking being slapped. She just replied, "See, you really are an idiot, because you're upset that I'm telling you this, and people tend to be offended when they're told the truth!"

This was the sort of behavior that strongly reinforced my hatred towards my mother. Because it was essentially TROLLING—using modern day language—and on top of that, VICTIM BLAMING! Since her assertion was merely a nasty lie. People generally aren't offended by the truth, but by lies! I certainly am, anyway! However, my mother wanted to use this "argument" to deprive me of my right to defend myself against her criticism. Of course I hated her after that. I can't help it. She did everything she could to provoke this feeling in me. Yes, I know, my Readers are now probably thinking that I would be better off "forgiving" my mother, and that sort of thing... It's a big fucking trend these days among psychologists to recommend "forgiveness" as a cure for everything. Seriously, they act as if forgiveness is some kind of magic amulet. And okay, I'm willing to accept that it could be a wonderful magical potion. The only problem is that believing this doesn't solve anything, because these Wise All-knowing People won't give me the most important information—that is, where can I find the pharmacy or shopping center from which to purchase this miracle cure?! In other words, to switch from the language of metaphors to the concrete language of the Real World—it's not that I'm making a convulsive effort NOT to forgive my mother, that I don't "want" to, that I'm "resisting" or anything like that. It would be me who was happiest if I could manage to successfully do this. However it is futile, since forgiveness is not a voluntary act, but a FEELING. And feelings don't arise just because we *want* them, just as they can't disappear because we *don't want* them. Feelings are either there or they aren't. It's like love—just try falling in love of your own free will with a random stranger whom you've never noticed before... It won't work. It is equally difficult to fall out of love with someone you're *already* in

love with. Yes, it's true that love fades with time, that's common knowledge. But the love disappears on its own, not because the person in love wants it to. It is the same with forgiveness. I am unable to forgive, but it's not up to me. These things are beyond our control.

Now my Reader might say that if that's the case, then based on this logic my mother isn't guilty for not loving me either, because it wasn't up to her whether or not this emotion existed in her mind. It is true, of course, I won't deny it. Even so, she could have behaved more nicely towards me. It wasn't some mystical, theoretical love from her that I expected, but concrete actions that she failed to perform, or for her to refrain from certain actions that she did carry out—for instance, she could have easily avoided making the spiteful comments I mentioned above. Whether or not she loved me may not have depended on her will, however the manner she spoke to me certainly did. And many other things as well.

So the conflict between my younger sister and I was not the usual sort of sibling rivalry that my Reader may be thinking of. It wasn't just a case of ordinary jealousy. My mother simply didn't love me, nor even like me, and that was that! It wasn't a matter of my sister getting more chocolate than me, or a bigger slice of cake or whatever. This was about far more serious things.

Now that my mother has died, my sister contacted me for the first time in many years, with regards to the inheritance. And she mentioned that our mother apparently didn't love her either, and also treated her coldly. Naturally I can't know how my sister felt at the time, how she experienced things. It's possible that she also felt our mother didn't show her enough warmth. I'm a little doubtful that the situation was quite as she portrayed it, but I won't go so far as to accuse her of outright lying. There may have been some basis for this, even if it sounds unbelievable to me. However, it doesn't matter whether it was true or not, because it is certain that whatever degree of warmth she received was light-years more than what I got, since I received precisely NONE!

Now, I feel that after this "introduction" it is very important to clarify something. I mean here that my Reader is likely to think that my mother's lack of love towards me made me terribly angry with my sister. Well, I have to admit that we never had a good sibling relationship, not only in childhood, but neither later in adulthood. However this poor relationship between us had nothing to do with the fact that she was Mummy's "favorite". Okay, it may have had something to do with it, which I'll write about in a moment. But although it did trigger my anger, this feeling was directed at my mother, not my sister. I'm afraid this sounds a little incomprehensible, so let me put it in concrete terms...

The thing that generated the most conflict between my sister and I was the fact that I didn't have my own bedroom. That is, I had no room—however small—that was EXCLUSIVELY mine, where I could retreat to and not be bothered by anybody. Although I really should have had one. A good master will even provide his DOG with his own kennel, where the poor animal can hide and not be disturbed... I had a HUGE need for such a room, simply because I'm an Aspie, therefore my brain-capacity to handle social interactions very quickly "maxed out", just like when a computer gives us the "out of memory" error message when overloaded, and I needed to "rest" that part of my brain from time to time. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to remove all undesired external stimuli. But how was that possible when I was confined to a single small room with my sister, who was constantly giggling, dancing, singing (mostly out of tune...), telling stories to her doll, or wanting to watch TV when I just wanted SILENCE?! It was even worse when it wasn't just my sister in the room, but my mother as well. Or my father. Although my father didn't generally cause me much disturbance, since he was a fairly quiet man,

and if he was present he was usually reading or working on some industrial design etc. Plus my father had his own room, so he was rarely present in the room containing my bed in one of its corners, and my sister's in the other.

Unfortunately, as soon as my sister was old enough to know how to speak, all my peace was gone. When she wasn't in the backyard, life was pure hell for me, because not only was I unable to recollect my thoughts or relax (that is, rest my "nerves"), I even struggled to study and do my homework. Even reading a plain sci-fi or adventure novel was difficult in such circumstances. She totally disrupted my thoughts. My sister was permanently monopolizing the entire air-space of our room, depriving me of even the slightest bit of tranquility. I hope my Reader will be convinced without any further proof of how excruciating this situation was for me. There is no reason to doubt this, since I have already mentioned—in fact emphasized—in previous chapters that even before my sister was born I often hid in dark places, simply to temporarily escape the disturbing stimuli of the world. Because that was already too much for me, even then. And now my sister had come into this world, a "perpetual motion biological machine", who was a relentless source of stimuli...

So my father had his own separate (albeit small) room. My mother had one too, because out in the backyard there was a separate outbuilding, which was in excellent condition and of a decent size. This was used by her exclusively, and she regularly slept there, very often only entering the main house to cook meals. So both my father and mother had the opportunity for peace and quiet whenever they wanted it, but NOT ME, even though I was the one who needed it most...

The only advantage of the whole situation for me was that since my sister was my mother's favorite, she was frequently entertained in my mother's "territory", which I don't recall ever having been invited into once. Not that I ever tried to get in. In my eyes it was akin to the cave of the seven-headed dragon, and I didn't have the slightest intention of going in there. I considered it a dangerous place—naturally due to the presence of the dragon, which was my mother... But she never invited me to come, anyway.

I have no idea what my mother and sister did during these occasions. I didn't really care. She may have been playing with my sister, or secretly giving her treats. All I knew was that my sister was receiving some sort of preferential treatment, but it didn't bother me. On the contrary! I was thrilled by these occasions, because I could finally get some PEACE and not be disturbed. Oh, those blissful moments...!

So yes, it did bother me and make me sad that my mother didn't love me, but I didn't care that she loved my sister (at least to some extent). The issue wasn't that my sister got MORE love than me, but that I got NONE at all, not even the minimum that I rightfully deserved!

Once, as an adult, I candidly reproached my mother for never caressing or hugging me. All she did was shrug and say, "You don't do that sort of thing with boys." Oh, yeah... so boys don't need love?! And then parents wonder why their neglected sons grow up to become emotionless dummies, human beasts, and suffer from all sorts of psychological damage for the rest of their lives! I deeply believe that if I had received at least a minimal amount of love from my mother, I wouldn't have minded that my sister got so much more. I could have understood the reason for it—after all, she was younger and also a girl. Fine. But for me to receive NOTHING, as well as my mother constantly calling me an "idiot"...?! Add to that the fact that I was locked in a room with my sister every day, without a moment's peace. Obviously my sister couldn't help that she had a much livelier temperament than me, but nor was it my fault that I needed a calm environment.

I am convinced that despite never getting any love from my mother, my sister and I could have had a great sibling relationship, if only I had received MY OWN SEPARATE ROOM. That's all it would have taken to solve most of my problems. But unfortunately I wasn't given one... Of course, one could say that my parents were simply too poor to have a house big enough to allow me my own room. But even if this were true, it was of no help to me. I NEEDED to have my own private space! It was essential, due to my "mental state", to put it bluntly. In addition, the above argument was no excuse, since the problem could have easily been solved. In more than one way. For example:

1. I could have gotten the "outhouse", which was the dragon's (my mother's...) cave, and my mother could move into my space in the big room, where she would live with my sister. Why not? After all, she did love her so much, she was her favorite...

2. Or, I could have moved into the small room where my father was, and he could move into the big room, next to my sister.

3. Another solution could have been for my mother to remain in her "cave", but for my sister to move into my father's small room, and my father to move into the big room, so that the big room would be shared by me and him. Although it is obvious that this would have been the worst option for me, because then I wouldn't have my own separate room. Yet it still would have been an *appropriate* solution, since I didn't have much trouble with my father, him being a quiet man. This solution could have had other advantages for me as well—I could have talked to him more often, which I really needed sometimes, because my father was also my best friend. Throughout elementary school I would regularly walk to the station, which was a fair distance away, just to wait for the train he was coming home on, so I could enjoy meaningful conversations with him while I accompanied him home. That way I had more time to talk to him.

So there were a number of ways my problem could have been solved. But unfortunately it wasn't taken seriously enough to warrant finding any solution... Of course, when my nervous system was already overwhelmed by "social interactions", and I really yearned for some rest (not necessarily to sleep, but at least read a book undisturbed or something), I would tell my sister to calm down and keep quiet... but she never took any notice. She piped up over and over again, not able to sit still on her buttocks for five minutes, and not only was she constantly fidgeting, but also polluting my environment acoustically, that is, she wouldn't shut up! She simply was unable to keep quiet. It's obvious she wasn't an Aspie! My sister was such a garrulous chatterbox and restless hen, that believe it or not, she couldn't even keep quiet on the toilet while doing her "number two"... The whole time she was sitting on the toilet seat, her tongue would be wagging, talking for talking's sake, and telling her doll (or who knows who, since she never took a doll in with her) some story she'd made up. I know all this because she used to talk so loudly in the toilet that she could clearly be heard in the corridor... there was no need to eavesdrop, for you could easily understand every word she said.

I will admit—even if this causes my Reader to have a poor opinion of me—that there were occasions where I was driven to the point of hitting her. It was futile, of course. She didn't learn anything from it. Because naturally she started crying, running out to our mother complaining that "Zoli is hurting me again!", and then my mother would rush in and beat me... It never occurred to her that I might have good reason for hitting her. She believed that my sister was invariably right, simply because she was younger. I tried to explain to my mother more than once that I couldn't tolerate having someone perpetually bustling around me, depriving me of even a moment's peace. Moreover, my sister

was obviously abusing my patience, knowing in advance that our mother would always defend her. She was constantly "pushing the boundaries", that is, when she saw that I was getting annoyed, she would deliberately start doing all the things she knew I couldn't stand. Meanwhile she would watch my face maliciously to see when I would "explode"... And of course, I eventually did...

I reported all these things to my mother many times, but she *always* without exception retorted with the proverb: "Better bend than break!" I HATED, INDESCRIBABLY HATED this proverb! Just as much then as I do now. Because after having lived through the above experience, I know that this proverb is an absolute LIE! It is absolutely not "better" if I "bend", since if I didn't rebel it meant I would have to suffer forever. My nervous system would then never be able to relax, thanks to my damned sister! There is a remote possibility that she couldn't actually help doing the things she did, but neither could I. I was an Aspie, and the most important thing for an Aspie is to have peace and quiet when they need it, in order to relax.

Again, there would have been no problem if I had had my own small room where I could have retreated from my sister or anybody else. But I didn't have one... I even tried escaping up to the attic, among the odds and ends that were stored there. Unfortunately this was not an adequate solution, because it was scorching hot up there in the summertime, and bitterly cold in the winter...

I finally decided (in deep desperation) that from now on I would stop worrying about being scolded and beaten by my mother. As soon as my sister started getting on my nerves, going beyond the limits of what I could tolerate, I would first warn her—I always did this, because I felt it was the right and honest thing to do—and when she continued to tease me despite the warning, I hit her immediately. Then she would rush out crying to my mother, who quickly returned in a fury, like a mother tiger protecting her cub, and to the great delight of my sister thrashed me. BUT, at these times it was almost always the case that my mother would take my sister back with her to the outbuilding to give her a cuddle or comfort her in some way. AND THAT WAS JUST WHAT I NEEDED! It's true that I had to endure a beating from my mother, which was unpleasant, but at least I could be on my own for a while in silence, free of my sister... Unfortunately, I had no other way of providing myself with the moments of peace I so desperately needed. I had to undertake a beating every time I had the simple request of wanting to be LEFT ALONE!

Considering all this, it can be said without any exaggeration that my childhood was everything but rosy... I will say it again, all this could have been avoided by me having a separate room. It's quite obvious that even my sister would have been far better off. We just didn't get along—our characters were too different. Neither of us was to blame for this.

Now, one might say that I'm trying to turn the victim into a criminal, after all, if it was *me* doing the hitting, then *I* was the abuser and my sister the victim! Well, in physical terms this statement is undoubtedly true, I can't deny that. But don't forget that "psychological abuse" also exists, and that's exactly what I felt my sister did to me when she deprived me of my much-needed peace and quiet. She completely monopolized the "airspace" of the room, constantly fidgeting and bombarding my nervous system with acoustic stimuli. It didn't matter that it wasn't intentional maliciousness, I still experienced it that way. I practically felt like I was being subjected to the infamous Chinese "water torture", where the victim is tied up somewhere lying down, and is tortured by a drop of water falling onto their forehead every half a minute or so. One might think this is insignificant, that a single drop of water couldn't do any harm; however, even the most "normal" neurotypical person will go crazy over time,

because their thoughts are disturbed over and over again by the dripping water. Their thoughts become scattered, they no longer have any peace, their nervous system can't relax, and after a while they are unable to think of anything other than when the next drop of water will come... It breaks down even the most "normal", most resistant human being. And I wasn't even "normal", but an Aspie...

I needed peace and quiet. At all costs. At any cost. Even if it meant extricating my sister from my presence, because when she was there she refused to adapt to *me*, and I couldn't adapt to her any more than she could adapt to me. The only way for me to manage this was by doing something that makes me seem "abusive". My Reader is likely to be thinking that because I was beaten up at school, I reversed the roles at home and beat up my sister. How could I have sunk that low?! However, I believe this is a complete misinterpretation of the facts. As I see it, in this case my sister and I were *both* victims... Yet I seriously doubt that it was my sister who suffered more. In fact, I am absolutely convinced that I suffered far more. It is true that I was the one who beat her, not the other way around, but let's not forget that on every one of these occasions I was also beaten by my mother, therefore I got beaten just as often as my sister did. So physically I suffered just as much as my sister. On the other hand, I suffered psychologically as well, since I didn't hit her immediately—I tolerated her behavior as long as I could. What's more, after such incidents I also felt ASHAMED. I knew it wasn't a nice thing to hit my sister... And shame is obviously suffering too. So I clearly suffered far more than my sister!

There was nothing else I could do. I needed peace and quiet, no matter what it took. I knew that what I was doing wasn't praiseworthy, yet this was an essential need that I had. And if nobody else was going to provide it for me, I had to do it myself, with the limited means at my disposal. I had truly had enough with all the trouble and heartache I endured from my "social life" at school, and when I finally got home it was essential for me to get some REST. My nervous system sorely needed it.

So yes, of course I was angry with my sister, but not because my mother loved her more—it was because my sister wouldn't leave me in peace! Naturally the fact that my mother showered my sister with love and ignored me infuriated me, but my anger was directed at my mother, not my sister. I want to emphasize that these were two entirely separate emotions in me. Even at such a young age, I still had the ability—thanks to my logical thinking—to distinguish that my anger towards my sister wasn't because my mother didn't love me. In my eyes, this was my mother's fault, not my sister's. I could easily see that my sister had nothing to do with this. However, the fact that she ceaselessly disturbed me definitely *was* her fault. I mean, that's what I thought at the time, as a child, and this was the reason I was angry with her. Now, as an adult, I realize that my sister couldn't help it that she always got on my nerves, but I didn't see that at the time. Even if I had, it probably wouldn't have made much difference to the way I behaved. Because I wouldn't have been able to change it. I had an inherent need for quietude, on a regular basis, and it was extremely important to get it somehow. For an Aspie, having the opportunity to retreat to a calm place alone is just as important as water is for a fish, or sunshine for a plant.

I know, despite all the arguments I've listed so far, many of my Readers will think this is just an excuse, that the situation is very simple: If it was me who hit first, then I was the aggressor, the guilty one, and my sister was the victim, solely and exclusively, because she was both the youngest and a girl! As far as I'm concerned, anyone who thinks this way has the exact same shallow, facile mentality my mother had. The world is not merely black and white, not even shades of gray. No human being is purely, one hundred percent "good" or "bad" (I'm sure even my mother had a few positive qualities,

although she must have been clever at hiding them...). Indeed, it is possible to awaken the Inner Beast in anyone. Even in the most gentle person. Allegedly even Jesus himself initiated fights—just think about the story in the Bible where he drove the peddlers out of the temple with a whip... He was clearly enraged at that time. This can happen to anybody if they are harassed for long enough by something they are constitutionally unable to tolerate. For us Aspies, the opportunity for quiet is a PRIME NECESSITY. This fact cannot be overemphasized. Unfortunately, the world is overcrowded with people and stimuli to such an extent that we can barely tolerate it, and our nervous system is constantly on edge. And sometimes it needs rest, in fact rather frequently. If this isn't possible, then anything can happen... I will write another story about this a little later.

Nevertheless, I am perfectly aware that this part of my autobiography is very sad, and many of my readers may be disappointed because they expected some kind of heroic (or even romantic) story, in which I am an Absolute Positive Hero, full of captivating qualities... Well, that's not the case. That's not how Reality works. Everybody has a bad side too, weaknesses and unfavorable attributes... I know that what I've written doesn't give me an admirable character, despite all my explanations. Yet that's how things were, that's how it happened. I wrote at the very beginning of my book that this would be a very honest memoir. This is precisely why my Reader can believe all the positive qualities and abilities I have mentioned about myself, because I'm being very open about the negatives too.

In any case, I hope that my readers will at least take away from this story that if you have a child with Asperger's in your family, or someone even suspects it, then it is essential to provide them with their own separate room as soon as possible. It doesn't matter if the room is small, but it has to be their own private room. There is nothing in the world that would do more good for such a child, be a more wonderful gift, and immediately cause significant improvement in any behavioral problems they might have.

And now I shall share the other story I promised earlier. It's also the same story I alluded to at the beginning of the book, that is, the incident that ultimately provided me with a decisive reason—as an adult—to see a psychiatrist with the suspicion that I was likely to have Asperger's. The reason I'm including the story here is because it is yet another good example of how important peace and quiet is for Aspies. This was a particularly big problem for me at the time, because I needed my environment to be quiet for the same reason anyone does—simply to sleep!

Back then I was doing shift work, which was not ideal. In fact, I hated it with a passion. But unfortunately unemployment was high, so I was fortunate to have any job at all. While working in this job, I was far more "neurotic" than usual, since the constant shift changes were totally destroying my already overburdened nervous system, and I came close to having a complete mental breakdown. Just as I was getting used to one shift, which I managed by the end of the week, the following week I would have to get used to a completely different shift. Well, that really didn't work for me... Apparently some people can easily adapt to this, but I am certainly not one of them! I was always suffering from a lack of sleep. The night shift was especially exhausting—around 2 or 3 am my eyes were heavy with sleep, and I could barely stay awake without incredible effort. Unfortunately when I got on the bus at dawn I was wide awake, and when I got home I struggled to fall asleep. So even though I was at home, I couldn't fall asleep right away, in fact not for a good while. Sleep eluded me...

It was around 3 pm that I generally managed to doze off. If I was lucky I could get a little sleep, but only until 7 or 8 pm, because then I had to get ready for the next workday. Or I should say, *worknight*... Now, with that in mind, imagine how much it would have "pleased" me when people did not allow me to sleep in the afternoon, even the little bit that was possible! Because it so happened that there was a teenage boy living in my street, who was given a small motorbike, and he had started learning to ride it. On the exact street where I was living! This is perfectly understandable from his point of view, after all, it was a calm and quiet street (until the moment he ruined it with his acoustic pollution...), traffic was almost non-existent, therefore the risk of accidents was low. He must have considered it an ideal training ground. The only problem was the fact that I also lived there.

It would have been fine if he had driven past my house ONCE a day to go off somewhere, and then come back in an hour or so. But that's not what happened. Whenever I wanted to sleep and had almost managed to doze off, I would hear his fucking motorbike coming down the street... Then less than a minute later he would come past again, from the opposite direction... And then back again... Over and over again, repeatedly... It was UNBEARABLE! I tell you, it was like Chinese water torture, only it wasn't the physical stimulus of water droplets that kept breaking my calm, but the repetitive, intermittent noise.

Naturally I tried to explain to the kid on numerous occasions that he shouldn't be doing this, but he would just impertinently reply, "It's a public street—it belongs to everyone!" His parents had roughly the same opinion. I vainly argued that the street may well be for public use, however it was intended for TRAFFIC, not to be used as a TRAINING GROUND! And what their child was doing was DISTURBING THE PEACE! Which is prohibited by law! They just laughed at me, saying that I was free to report them to the police for this, but it wouldn't achieve much since they were not using the public space after 10 pm but in the afternoon, when it was still daylight, therefore it was ALLOWED. If I wanted to sleep at that time, that was my business—I should use earplugs!

I tried using earplugs, of course... but it was in vain. There simply wasn't any kind of earplug on the market that could provide complete silence. I could still hear the noise of the motorbike... It was quieter, but there nevertheless. I don't think it would have been a problem if the noise had been constant. The problem lay in the fact that the noise was repeated periodically—roughly once every minute. In other words, I could not become accustomed to either the noise or the silence, because just when I had managed to "adapt" to one, the other came—when I got used to the silence, the engine noise came, and when I got used to the engine noise, it would be silent again for a while...

Well, one day I got really pissed off about it. That damned fucking kid came past again with his accursed motorbike. He drove past my house... then came back... But I knew it wasn't over, that he'd come past again. Okay, this time I'LL ALSO BE THERE!—I decided. I was going to put an end to this, whatever it took! Sure enough, no sooner had he turned around to come back and was about fifty meters from my house, I stood there with a wide stance in the middle of the road, holding a huge axe with both hands like barbarian warriors do in movies—my right hand on the handle, while my left hand clasped my "weapon" directly below the axe head, and I started screaming at the top of my lungs, "Come on, you son of a bitch! I'll show you whose nerves you're messing with, you motherfucking asshole! You'll get what's coming to you, you filthy scum! Come on, try it again and I'll shatter your goddamn motorcycle to atoms, I'll reduce it to powder, and nobody will ever be able to repair it, I swear!"

I shouted many other such lovely, pleasant things that I can't remember, although I don't feel it is necessary to describe every part of my "battle song", as one can easily imagine what state I must have been in. I was screaming, my head purple with rage... The kid had the good sense not to accept my cordial invitation. He didn't approach me, in fact he jammed on the brakes so abruptly that you could see the tire marks on the asphalt afterwards.

All this caused a terrible scandal, of course. Everyone on the street went nuts. They were furious with me—I had wanted to kill that kid! I had murderous impulses! I was dangerous! Naturally none of this was true. Okay, I did have an axe in my hands... And yes, I was determined to use that axe if the opportunity arose. However I had no intention of hitting the damned kid with it. Only his motorbike. That's a very big difference! Obviously I won't dispute that—considering my mental state at the time—if he had been foolish enough to try to pass me at high speed, I would have certainly slammed the axe into his motorbike, and there would have been some risk of accidentally hitting him in the process. But ACCIDENTALLY, not intentionally! However I will admit that if it had come down to some sort of "one-on-one combat" between us, for instance if he had tried to protect his motorbike, then I probably would have been prepared to use that axe against him as well. It's true. If a situation escalates, then over time anything can happen as things gradually get rough. The whole thing started off rather innocently—first I politely gave him a verbal warning, then later again with harsher words, and finally I tried "negotiating" with his parents... Unfortunately to no avail! But the point is that my original intention was not to kill him; it wasn't *him* that I wanted to smash but his MOTORBIKE!

However, those witnessing the incident were unable to make such subtle distinctions, nor those who only heard about it by hearsay. As I said, it was a huge scandal. Everyone was talking about it for weeks. To be fair, it's not exactly an everyday occurrence in an otherwise quiet village that someone goes out into the street in broad daylight with a big axe in his hand, and starts screaming threats at a child! (Although he wasn't so much a "child", but a teenager. Surely he had enough sense to understand that it is inappropriate behavior to not allow a person to sleep when they have to work night shift. I told him several times that I was fine with him driving past my house ONCE in order to practice somewhere else where I can't hear him, and then come back say an hour later. That was okay. But not constantly driving up and down the road over and over again, because the street isn't a training ground... To this day I cannot admit to being at fault in this matter!)

So there was a bit of an uproar, but it eventually died down. There was talk of reporting me to the police, but nothing came of it. Presumably the kid's parents were afraid that their child's behavior did qualify as disturbance of the peace... And what if I was driven even more crazy by them reporting me, and I killed their child out of revenge... Naturally such a thing would never have entered my mind! I may possibly be capable of it if someone upset me to such a degree that I lashed out at them in my fury. But cold-blooded murder with premeditated intent is a very different matter! Even so, the kid's parents could well have been frightened of me doing that, because surely a guy who is prepared to stand in the middle of the street with an axe is so incredibly abnormal that he could be capable of anything!

This incident did set me thinking though, that perhaps the outraged villagers were right in a certain respect, because all things considered, my response to the child's behavior probably wasn't "normal". Was it possible that I had—as they say—"overreacted" a little? And it was this thought that finally led me to seeing a psychiatrist, especially because by then I had begun to seriously suspect that I might be an Aspie.

But let us revert to the original topic of this chapter, namely, my childhood... My Reader may now be inclined to ask why I didn't go out to the back of our garden when I wanted privacy. After all, surely I could have done that—at least in the summertime... I could have in theory, of course. But unfortunately in practice it was not an option for me, for a number of reasons, which I will describe in a moment. First of all, it was obviously impossible in the winter due to the intense cold. But it wasn't possible in the summer either. Since at this time of year it's generally very hot, and I am not able to tolerate hot weather very well. When it's hot, I sweat, and then my skin gets itchy.

However, that was the least of my problems. The greater problem was that there were always all sorts of bugs and insects buzzing and flying around me in the garden, and they DISTURBED me. Believe it or not, that was quite enough to stop me from being able to focus my attention on what I wanted to, whether it be just my own thoughts, or a book I was reading... And I certainly couldn't study under such circumstances. Often the neighbors would also be wandering around in their nearby gardens, chatting to each other or listening to the radio loudly. That in itself was enough to deprive me of any peace and quiet outside.

But the main reason I couldn't go out to the garden was my mother. I know this sounds rather strange, so I shall explain it. For some reason my mother was obsessed with "gardening". And although she really loved having a beautiful garden, she unfortunately preferred looking at it more than working in it. I don't want to imply here, however, that she never worked hard in the garden. Far be it from me to slander her over that! She truly put serious effort into gardening when she had to, and spared no energy for weeding, planting or any other gardening chore. I remember my father jokingly saying a few times about my mother that she must have been a mole-rat or an earthworm in a previous life, for her to be so obsessed with digging in the soil... Even now, I can't comprehend her fixation with gardening. After all, there was nobody she could have inherited this inclination from. Neither my grandmother nor great-grandmother were avid gardeners. There were a few bushes of white and red peonies growing near their house, which they tended conscientiously, and that was it.

I have loved peonies ever since, both their scent as well as the sight of them—to me they are the most beautiful flowers on Earth! I have even written a whole novel in which this flower plays an important role, a kind of symbol. This novel is titled "Y". Yes, a single Y character, because the "protagonist" is actually the Y chromosome... But this is now off-topic.

The point is that gardening was by no means a tradition in my mother's family. Anyone who knows about peonies will tell you that tending four or five bushes of these flowers does not involve any serious effort. But for my mother it almost became an obsession. She was certainly hard-working in this area, I can admit that without hesitation! Yet for some reason my mother thought it was appropriate for me to be involved in this work, in addition to my studies and all the OTHER work I had to do. Namely, from my very young age she insisted I help out with the "household chores", such as washing dishes, sweeping, mopping, vacuuming etc. I completely abhorred these tasks, for at least two obvious reasons. One was that I had never seen my *sister* being made to do the washing-up, or mop the hallway tiles, or any other such chore... not once in her life! Even though she was perfectly capable of doing it, it didn't matter. My mother had never made such demands of her. Of course, this made me feel like my sister was a pampered princess, while I was a slave in the home, or at best some kind of servant...

The other reason I hated these tasks so much was because, for all their apparent simplicity, they were too complex for me, requiring me to concentrate on many things at once. This meant I was unable to daydream or contemplate things. My brain couldn't "switch off" and relax... I never had any objection to tasks that were extremely *monotonous*—totally mindless activities, such as shelling peas or beans. These only required sitting in one place, and an absolute minimum of attention, therefore I was free to dream or ponder anything I wanted while doing it. I'm not saying that I particularly loved these jobs, because obviously I'd rather not be doing any chores at all. But these were the ones I didn't have much trouble with. The washing-up, on the other hand, well that was different. Especially the mopping. Even the sweeping and vacuuming. They don't repeat the same procedure over and over again, but require a constant refocusing of attention—for instance, making decisions about which parts of the room are dirty and need cleaning, or what specifically needs to be tidied and put away. I could go on and on... These sorts of tasks are very tiring for us Aspies, because our minds can't relax. It was exhausting for me, in any case.

Worse still was when I received a vague order from my mother, like "Tidy up!", which in Hungarian roughly equates to "Put things in order!" This was practically incomprehensible to me, and I usually didn't even know how to begin. I had no idea what the hell was expected of me! What was "order"?! (I must mention here for my English Readers that the Hungarian command for "Tidy up!" is "Rakj rendet!". This is important because the Hungarian word "rend" means "order" in English, which is the base word of "rendszer", meaning "system". So in Hungarian the concepts "order" and "system" are very closely related, and there is no command meaning "Tidy up" that doesn't contain the word "rend". It is necessary to keep this in mind in order to understand the next few paragraphs of the story).

My Reader may now be frowning, suspecting me of being a liar, because it's not possible that I didn't know the meaning of the word "order". I must have been aware of this concept as a child, I couldn't have been that stupid... But the truth is that even as an adult, I only have a vague idea of its meaning. All I've ever known is that the word "order" is very close to the word "system" (at least in Hungarian). I also had a rough idea of what a "system" was, associating it with concepts such as:

- Numerical system
- Methodology
- System of measurement
- Coordinate system
- Highway Code (after all, even traffic rules are a kind of system)

So to me, "system" meant (and still means) a set of rules or laws—whether those rules are made by humans or follow the "laws of nature"—which must be complied with, otherwise we may not, for instance, be able to get the correct result when solving a math equation, or we may be punished by the authorities. In my eyes, "order" was when people, or "things" in general, conformed to those rules. But unfortunately "order" in the general sense, at least as it was used by my mother, was something far more incomprehensible to me. Because it had no concrete RULES, whereas the very essence of a "system" is that it has precise rules that define it! So I wanted to know exactly what these rules were. Rules that were PRECISE and UNAMBIGUOUS! Without these a system simply can't exist, not even theoretically, since rules are the very skeleton of a system!

However, when I was told to "Tidy up" or "Put things in order", I wasn't told the set of rules that would allow me to create the "system" my mother wanted from the objects lying around me. I felt that I was left to figure out what set of rules she had in her mind that I was supposed to follow. And of course I never succeeded in doing that, even with my best effort. The only thing that was clear to me was that she wanted all the objects in the room to be in some kind of "order", or rather "position", so that their "spatial location" was "aesthetic" to her. But this didn't help me much, because for me the concept of "aestheticism" was just as confusing and undefined as the concept of "order". Pretty much all I knew was that shoes should be placed next to each other—that is, the left shoe beside the right shoe. I could understand the REASON for this rule—if you find one shoe, then you don't have to search for the other shoe because it will be found right beside it. This is obviously the fastest method for locating them. On the other hand, I saw no significance in whether the vase of flowers was in the middle of the table, or on the top of the cupboard or anywhere else. Nor in the chairs having to be pushed under the table. Why the hell should we create superfluous work, when we have to pull them out again to sit on them?!

I considered making the bed particularly nonsensical. What was the point, since you had to mess it up again when you went to bed at night. But my mother said that we're humans, we can't sleep in a "mare's nest". I disputed this, of course, saying that this wasn't an argument, because mares are not birds, therefore they don't have nests. She argued that this expression was meant "figuratively", but she didn't explain how. So I never discovered what was meant by "mare's nest". Anyhow, I told her that if you make the bed and cover it with a blanket, then the bed can't get any ventilation and will stink, at least it's more likely to... So I asked my mother what the SPECIFIC BENEFIT was of doing this.

"Because it looks nice that way," she replied. This answer was also incomprehensible to me. NICE?! What was so nice about something that is so obviously impractical and unnecessary?! It reminded me of when my grandmother took me with her to visit some relatives, and there was a display case full of interesting glass or porcelain figurines, but they weren't allowed to be played with, not even touched, because they might break, so I had to be very careful... Why have them at all if they aren't used for anything?! As far as I'm concerned, they're just useless dust collectors! (And they waste space in a small apartment). I have the same opinion about cut flowers. They're absolutely useless—they can't be eaten, and only create problems for us. Since they need to be kept in water, which causes the stems to rot after a while, and then the water in the vase starts to stink. Besides, it's not good for the flower either, because by cutting it we are ultimately KILLING the flower. I can openly admit that in my eyes, decorating a home with cut flowers is BARBARISM to a certain degree!

So my mother expected me to "tidy up" the apartment by "rearranging" all the stuff in it in a way that would make it look "nice" to her, to fit the image she had in her mind of "order", but I didn't know what she meant by that, and I still wouldn't be able to guess even now. The best I could do was realize that the books belonged on the shelves of the bookcase. Although I could never figure out what order they should be in. And I also knew to put the clothes in the wardrobe. However there were numerous shelves in the wardrobe, and my mother expected me to fold the clothes—naturally I had no idea which shelf to put what on, nor how to fold them. I usually ended up throwing all the clothes into the bottom of the wardrobe without folding them, and then shutting the wardrobe door. At least they were out of sight. It didn't matter anyway, since all my effort would be futile. There would always be some reason my mother was unsatisfied, she was never satisfied with anything I did. It made no difference what I was scolded for...

I should note here that as a young child I particularly hated it when guests came to visit us. Fortunately this was a rare occurrence in our house, but it did happen occasionally. And the reason I hated it was that the day before the visit—sometimes several days before—my mother began obsessively cleaning the house, doing her mysterious "tidying up" so that the guests would "not speak ill of her", and of course she expected me to help her. I never had a moment's peace, for if she didn't see me moving or if she thought I was being too slow in my efforts, she would immediately scold me for being a lazy pig and even threaten to beat me. Meanwhile I knew in advance that I wouldn't gain any benefit from the visit anyway, because the guest would either not bring me any gift, or it would be something I didn't like (such as clothes...). The guest wouldn't talk to me, and at the same time I wouldn't be able to talk to my father at all because he would be busy talking to the guest, which meant that the guest's presence would temporarily deprive me of my father, my only friend! They expected me to dress in "nice" clothes, which were of course fucking uncomfortable, plus I had to "take care" of them. They also wanted me to follow a lot of extra courtesy rules, to "behave well", although I hadn't the faintest idea what sort of rules I was supposed to follow. After all, as an Aspie I struggled to even follow the "ordinary" courtesy rules!

As far as this "order" thing is concerned, I have been told by many people in the course of my life (and not only enemies, my wife too...) that I have no "sense of order" or "methodical tidiness". There may be some truth in this accusation, because even now as an adult I think that those people who accused me of this didn't actually mean real "order", but confused this concept with "beauty". And THIS is the real problem, the root of why I'm unable to understand what people expect from me when they use the terms "tidy" or "order". In other words, their concept of "order" is based on the concept of "beauty", however my "sense of beauty" is different from theirs.

I hasten to note that I also use the term "beautiful" regularly, but in my case it is largely synonymous with concepts such as: "useful", "efficient", "durable", "robust", "reliable", "versatile", "well-functioning", "customizable", "easy to modify", "perfect", "precise", "scientific", "logical"... So whenever I use the word "beautiful", I always mean one of the above terms, or some combination or subset of them.

The aspect of beauty that is beyond my grasp is what we might call "beauty for its own sake". Not only can I not understand it, I generally can't appreciate it either. Most of the time it's downright annoying, simply because it almost always comes at the expense of the above-mentioned qualities. For example, when holes and slots are carved into the seat or back of some chairs in the shape of flowers, or when lace doilies have been put on the seat. Both of them result in the chair being extremely uncomfortable. I had this sort of experience in my childhood with such chairs...

As an aside, this is why the wonderful novel, "Voyage to Kazohinia" by "Sándor Szathmári" is such a favorite of mine. In this book, the author brilliantly satirizes how chairs are ruined by the "behins" in their passion for "kipu", rendering these objects useless by attaching thorns to them, or knotted cords—the latter obviously inspired by the author himself from lace doilies... And the concept of "kipu" is clearly intended as a parody of "art for art's sake". I really enjoyed that book, I must have read it fifty times from cover to cover! I found the "hin" society depicted in this work incredibly appealing. I would love to live there. Because using the terminology of that novel, although I am obviously not a "hin", just a mentally deranged "behin", I am so close to the mindset of the "hins" that I would have felt far more comfortable among them than among the "behins"... or using present day terms, the supposedly

"normal" people, the neurotypicals... That book is in my eyes the highest peak of world literature! And I am deeply convinced that the author himself was also an Aspie. I loved that novel so much that I did not rest until I had an audiobook made from the English version, purely for myself, and I swear that I've listened to the full recording of this audiobook at least two dozen times since then. That's how big a fan I am of it!

I will also make mention of how ridiculous I find it when churches are built so unnecessarily high, even the interior ceilings. I see no beauty in this. It makes absolutely no sense, and it doesn't impress me, because I immediately think of what a horrible waste of energy it would be to heat this pointlessly large and rather inhospitable room in the winter! And of course it isn't heated at all most of the time. So people have to sit there freezing to death. (Not me, because I don't go to church...) But what is the SENSE in it then?! If these incredibly high ceilings are considered "beautiful" to neurotypical people, then lo and behold, I am right—"beauty for its own sake" hinders usability, or at least detracts from the comfort we might otherwise feel while using any particular object.

Some may now accuse me of being a savage barbarian, who is unable to admire even Nature. But nothing could be further from the truth! In fact, I can honestly say with all sincerity and a deep conviction that it is precisely the "savages" (including myself...) who are so underestimated, whose sense of beauty is "original" and not yet corrupted by artificiality, decadence and selfish, worthless hedonism! What I mean is that ultimately all our emotions have evolved over the course of evolution to benefit us. Or more precisely, to benefit our genes. Unfortunately, this does not always coincide with a personal benefit to the individual... In the vast majority of cases, however, we can say that the emotions at work within us will, if we listen to them, serve our benefit. In principle, this is the case with our sense of beauty—we consider a landscape beautiful if it gives us the impression that there is a (yet...) undisturbed, or at least well-functioning ecosystem there. This is evident. Since if an ecosystem is functioning well, then our hunter-gatherer ancestor has a good chance of finding prey in that environment. Therefore he can survive there. Contrast this with, say, a sunburnt, barren desert—I don't think many would consider this "beautiful", and that's surely because we feel we would soon die of starvation in such a place.

One may, of course, wish to use the counterargument that Eskimos live in an inhospitable environment... Or that certain negro tribes reside in the desert... Yes, but this is just proof that the human race is very adaptable. It can survive in many different environments. However, I doubt that if, say, an Eskimo or a desert native were to die and his soul was asked by God where he wanted to be born next, that he would choose that specific landscape again, and not a more pleasant one... And anyhow, even deserts and ice fields are ultimately well-functioning ecosystems. And yes, for this reason they do have a certain beauty, even if I find a grassy plain or an open woodland with grazing herds more beautiful. I'm sure most of my readers would agree. But I don't think you can call a dilapidated, rusty factory a beautiful place, unless you can see it and think, "Well, at last these damn polluters have finally got the hell out of here, and now Nature will hopefully reclaim this area!".

So I am indeed able to enjoy the "beauty" of Nature, but it's true that even in this case, the emotion I feel is synonymous with the concepts of "well-functioning", "useful" etc. Therefore it is "beautiful" if it is a well-functioning ecosystem that would be useful for my survival (if I were living there). However I am unable to enjoy beauty for its own sake, to fully experience it, since I simply don't consider it beauty. The vast majority of avant-garde, non-figurative or Dadaist "works of art" fall into this

category, in my opinion. I find them not only *not beautiful*, but downright disturbing, embarrassing, and in many cases annoying and even repulsive.

I think many (if not all) of my readers will agree with my ideas so far. However, I must honestly admit that, for me, functionality dominates the concept of "beauty for its own sake" so much that... Actually, instead of any further explanation I will describe another story that happened to me, one that occurred in my adulthood. But it is very characteristic of me, I would say typical...

It happened shortly before I got married. I was "going out" with this girl (who later became my wife, unfortunately—since we both would have been better off if she had turned me down when I proposed...however this is off-topic). And at the time I was living in an old farmhouse with loam walls. (I couldn't afford anything better.) When I bought the house, I moved in some of my furniture, but first I wanted to "install" my stereo so I could listen to music while I was unpacking the rest of my things. However, I came up against a serious obstacle, as it was then that I realized that the house was so appallingly old that there weren't even any electrical outlets in the living room. The house did have electricity, but it consisted solely of a single wall socket in the kitchen, beside the light switch. But none in any of the other rooms. That's how old the house was. Naturally I berated myself for being so stupid as to not have discovered this defect before purchasing the house... But it was too late now, so I had to find a way to deal with it. Calling an electrician wasn't an option, since I was as poor as a church mouse. Never mind, I thought, I'll assemble it. After all, "if you don't have a servant, then do it yourself!" as the proverb goes. The kitchen wall socket was there... I just had to unscrew it, make a branch circuit from each pole, and wire the electricity into the living room from there!

Okay, but how? The loam wall was more than half a meter thick, and I had no desire to chisel into it... The wall was very old too, and therefore hard as concrete. So I drilled through the top of the wooden door frame, and passed the wires through the hole. Wires, plural, because I had no two-core cable, but fortunately plenty of single-core. That should be fine, I thought, I just have to twist two threads together and then I'll have a two-core cable... Oh, but wouldn't that look ugly?! Perhaps, but it's fit for purpose and it's cheap, because this way I don't have to spend extra money on more cables.

The next problem was how to route my "cable" to the necessary points on the living room wall. I had enough self-knowledge to know that if I began carving cable grooves into the walls of the room, I would completely destroy the house. Never mind, I'll figure out a better solution! So I hammered a couple of large nails into the wall, and simply hung the bundle of wires over them.

The third task to be solved was how to make the outlets. I had a wall socket, several of them, but they were all the "recessed" type, which was no good to me because it would require chiseling into the wall again. I wanted it to sit on the surface. No problem! I had some empty plastic containers that used to hold coffee or cocoa powder. I drilled a hole in the bottom of them, then slipped the wires through the hole. I joined the wires to the socket, inserted the socket as far as possible into the container, and just to make sure, I plastered up the inside. The end result was bloody heavy—you could easily kill a person by hitting them on the head with this masterpiece of mine—but IT WORKED! And I simply hung these "surface wall sockets" on some nails in the wall. I made several wall sockets in this way. You could say that I didn't even have to spend money on extension cables either, since they were home-made...

Then came the day when I managed to lure this girl to my cottage for the first time. What can I say, she almost had a heart attack when she saw what awaited her inside... It was only natural that the place

was a mess, because she had the sense to know that she couldn't expect much from a bachelor's living quarters. However, when she cast a casual glance at the wall and saw my idea of "electrical wiring"...

"What is THIS?!" she shrieked.

I told her proudly that initially there weren't any wall sockets in the room, but I had managed to solve the problem on my own. Wasn't I clever?!

"But this... this is so ugly, it's... why does it look like that?!"

"I don't know," I pondered, "but one thing is certain—it WORKS, and that's all I care about! And besides, it was very cheap to do... it didn't cost me a penny, because I made it purely out of materials I already owned. Oh, and one more thing, babe—it not only works, but it's guaranteed to be safe too. I checked, so you don't have to worry!"

"Even so, it's still ugly," she insisted.

"It may be, perhaps," I shrugged. "I don't really understand this strange concept of 'ugliness', but I will admit that *I* actually like it, because every time I look at it my heart fills with pride, knowing that I've successfully solved a problem! What's more, this solution also has a great advantage over the traditional 'in-wall' sockets—you can see exactly where the wires are, so if we want to expand our network with a new socket, it's easy to make a new branch without having to carve into the wall and guess where the cable runs!"

Eventually the girl gave up arguing, since she planned for us to move into a better house soon anyway... So much for my sense of "beauty" and "order".

If any lady might be considering marrying me after reading this book, please think twice about this silly idea, in fact, several times. And please re-read the above section thoroughly before you make your final decision to write to me...

Well, the situation with the garden was even worse than the "tidying up". It began with my mother wanting to entrust me with some garden-related job. And this was a task I was totally resistant to, since it was the exact opposite of everything that I, as an Aspie, was "created for". I obviously had to be in the garden to do this job, after all, it's hardly possible to do gardening without being outside in the garden... But as I mentioned above, this meant being out in the sun, which was hot, and made me sweat and my skin itch. Bugs and insects buzzed around my ears too, and I couldn't get a single moment's peace... The neighbors were usually chattering nearby, and there would often be a radio somewhere playing music I didn't like, or some program—news or a radio drama—which I had absolutely no interest in, yet was perfectly capable of distracting me from my thoughts... Gardening is tiring too, of course, and makes my back sore... I get dirty... It robs me of my time, since while I'm doing it I'm unable to study or enjoy my favorite pastime, which was reading books back then... And above all, this was NOT a mechanical task, I couldn't do it automatically, because with weeding—the most common task my mother required of me—I had to determine which plants were "weeds" and which were "cultivated". Therefore I had to pay conscious ATTENTION! I even had to be careful where I stepped, so that I didn't trample on the cultivated plants. And every weed is a different size, which was a problem because it took different levels of force to pull them out of the ground. That is, if I could pull them out at all, because often they would just break... All the extracted weeds had to be collected in a bucket or bag, and when it was full, I had to take it somewhere and empty it.

So essentially the work was too varied and complex, which meant I couldn't daydream or think about anything that would have been relaxing for me. And yet again, it was impossible not to notice that my mother expected these jobs to be done ONLY BY ME, never by my sister...

My mother soon realized, of course, that gardening—and especially weeding—was the job I hated most, and she took sadistic pleasure in torturing me with it. Whenever she could, she entrusted me with the job of weeding one of the "planting beds". In fact, she imposed it on me many times as a punishment—if she felt that I "deserved" it for "misbehaving", or any other reason, she would tell me that my punishment was to weed a particular area. So this way, when she didn't feel like doing it herself, she had an excuse for getting somebody else to do it. After all, an excuse can be found for anything at any time, it doesn't even require a particularly creative imagination. She could always decide that my behavior wasn't good enough, or that I was being untidy, lazy, careless, disrespectful or whatever else. There was always an excuse that could easily be found. And then gardening would be the punishment. Sometimes I even received this punishment for wetting the bed at night. Naturally it had no effect on preventing this problem of mine.

After all this, I don't think it would surprise anyone that I lost any slight amount of enthusiasm towards gardening that I might have otherwise had, if I had been introduced to this activity in a different way. Thanks to my "dear" mother, the two concepts of "gardening" and "punishment" are strongly intertwined in my mind to this day. Yes, even now at the age of 55, I can't help but think of it as: GARDENING (especially weeding) = PUNISHMENT!

And my mother would even escalate it. On numerous occasions she specifically ordered me to weed a planting bed one blade of grass at a time. That is, I wasn't allowed to grab a handful and pull them out all at once, but had to painstakingly pluck out each individual weed, one by one! In retrospect, the first time she ordered me to do this was probably the moment I truly began to hate my mother. Because I saw that it was all about depriving me of what little free time I had for myself. It wasn't about getting the work done efficiently and finishing as soon as possible, but wasting as much of my time as possible! No wonder I avoided the garden after such unpleasant experiences...

And also because I did walk to the end of the garden once to be alone, but unfortunately my mother saw me and asked me what I was doing there. Nothing, I told her, just relaxing and thinking... To which she replied, "Well if you're here, then you might as well do something useful! Weed this planting bed here—you can think while you're working!"

"No, I'm not able to think while I'm doing that. It's impossible," I said.

"Then get out of here! The only people who deserve to be in the garden are those that are willing to work in it!" So I clearly wasn't able to seek solitude out in the garden when I was fed up with my sister and everybody in the house.

Of course, there was a point when I rebelled... Once when I was again ordered by my mother to weed a planting bed as punishment—one by one of course—I well and truly weeded it, very thoroughly, one by one. It became so clean that not a single plant remained, neither weed nor cultivated! She was beside herself with rage. And I explained to her innocently that I thought everything in it was a weed. I didn't know these strange plants, and besides, the plants she didn't consider weeds were sometimes even smaller than the weeds themselves...

She beat me terribly, shouting that I was a rotten bastard. To which I said, "Oh mommy, I'm not a bastard, just an idiot! You should know this, after all, it was you who called me an idiot all those

times... Why are you so surprised that an idiot isn't able to recognize weeds? It's your fault for entrusting such a difficult task to an idiot child..."

Fortunately after that day there were far fewer occasions where she entrusted me with gardening jobs, so at least it benefited me in some way.

As for getting a little peace at home, that is from my mother's work demands as well as the regrettably noisy and disturbing "side-effects" of my sister's existence, I had a positive and very significant improvement in this area around the sixth grade (when I was about 12 years old). This was in 1977, and this "improved" state lasted until the end of my elementary school years. That's not to say I no longer had any problems with my sister or mother, but I had a little less than before. In addition, I often had the opportunity to take some sort of "revenge", or rather "get even" (primarily with my mother). The story is as follows:

I mentioned earlier that I had won my father's old calculator, and that he had bought himself a better one shortly before this "win". Soon afterwards, however, he sold that new calculator and bought himself an even more advanced model, which was programmable—a TI-59. It was incredibly high level computing in those days. As far as I know, it had just been released in the USA in 1977, so it was cutting-edge technology, and it was a big deal that my father had somehow managed to obtain it during the years of socialism in Hungary...

I was so envious of him! This calculator had loads more buttons than mine had, and not only numbers and the basic arithmetic operators, but all sorts of mysterious symbols, and on top of that it was PROGRAMMABLE! Wow! I had only read about programming in sci-fi novels until that day! I would have loved to have one of them, I even dreamed about it at night while I slept... But obviously I had less than zero chance of getting one, because I was just a little kid with no income, and it was a big expense even for my father, an engineer with a rather good salary. And again, it was cutting edge technology even in the USA... At least among "ordinary mortals". But I longed so much to own one! And if I couldn't have one, I at least wanted to know how to use it, how to program it... I was obsessed, I couldn't stop thinking about it, my "Precious"!

Naturally I was there when he unpacked his new machine. I stared in amazement, I would have given half my life to have it... But of course, not only was it not mine, he wouldn't even let me hold it. I mean, it was understandable that he was very protective of it, because it was extremely expensive. I don't know exactly how expensive, but I'm sure it cost a fortune! I don't think my father could have afforded another one if I'd broken it, but even if he did have the money, it would be a good while before he could have obtained a new one, because back then stuff like that was smuggled in piece by piece from the West behind the "Iron Curtain"...

Of course, I immediately started nagging my father to teach me how to use this wonderful device. However, there was a serious obstacle to this initially; not so much that he was afraid I would break it—although I'm sure that worried him slightly—but I don't believe he doubted for a moment that I would take care of it as best I could. The problem was that he didn't know how to program it himself yet. After all, there was nowhere he could have learned this from... It's true that the machine came with a very thick book titled, "Personal Programming", which showed in full detail how to program this small computer, along with examples. But it was written in English, and unfortunately my father didn't understand this language. Neither did anybody else in the family. Yet he refused to give up, and with

the help of a dictionary he diligently began translating each individual word of the text. Fortunately there were also many example programs, with their corresponding formulas and results in the book.

So thanks to my father's bulldog nature, within a few weeks he had at least become acquainted with the basics of how to program the machine. He could have started off by teaching me what he had learned so far, but he didn't want to yet, because he had been given a job at the company where he worked, for which the many capabilities of this calculator (although "pocket computer" would be a more accurate name) seemed especially useful, and he wanted to finish it as soon as possible. This would have been hampered if he had sacrificed a significant amount of his time teaching me. As far as I remember, the reason he considered it important to complete the job quickly was that he was promised a special bonus, and he really wanted to get it. Mainly to appease my mother, since I had heard her reproaching my father several times for spending such an enormous sum of money on this machine, that it was a complete waste of money because it would never pay for itself, and that the old machine had done a perfectly good job...

So I am certain that my father intended to teach me programming, he just wanted to do it at a later time. It so happened, however, that he had been working on that particular problem for a few days already, when I saw him rummaging through his various technical textbooks, humming and hawing, pondering, and rubbing his nose in confusion, even though he didn't have a cold...

I asked him what the problem was. He said there wasn't any problem, or at least he hoped there wasn't... actually, he was sure that it wouldn't be a problem, because in the worst case scenario he would go to the library to find a serious math book, since it seemed he couldn't find the solution here in his own books...

"The solution to what?" I asked.

"Well, I have this set of points here," he said, showing me some diagrams on graph paper, "and I'm supposed to write a program to... well, it's basically what's called a 'curve-fitting problem'. First of all, I want to determine the parameters of the Gaussian curve that best fit this set of points, then if I write the program for it, the machine could calculate the probability value that belongs to any other chosen data, even if that value is not a member of this set of original starting values. But there is no such program in the ROM of this computer. There is one for linear regression, but not for normal distribution," and he showed me the formula, which I still remember by heart:

$$P=e^{(-x^2/2R^2)}/SQR(2\pi), \text{ where: } x=(k-M)/R$$

As for the notation of the above formula, M is the "expected value" of the distribution, and R is the "standard deviation". SQR is an abbreviation of the square root. This is the same curve that is presented to schoolchildren (in the upper classes) as a "bell curve". So my father was essentially searching for the "bell curve", or "probability density function" that best approximated the given set of points. And he was scouring his small home library to find a method for how to calculate this.

That's when I came up with the following: "But Papi, why do you need a textbook for that? It's very simple!"

"How could it be?!"

"I'll tell you! You just told me that your computer knows how to analyze linear regression. I think that will be perfectly fine for solving your problem."

"Don't be ridiculous, this curve is anything but linear!"

"Don't worry, that's not a problem—I'll straighten it out! Trust me. I'll make it perfectly linear!" I replied impertinently.

"How?"

"I'll tell you, if you promise to teach me to program afterwards!"

"I seriously doubt that you can do it, but if you can, then it's a deal!"

Well, I then proved to him that I could—I linearized the Gaussian function! That is, after logarithmization and some elementary rearrangement, I got the following formula:

$$k=M+R*SQR(-2\ln(P*SQR(2\pi)))$$

Let's introduce a new variable, say F, and define it as follows:

$$F=SQR(-2\ln(P*SQR(2\pi)))$$

Then $k=F*R+M$ and it is not difficult to calculate the value of F from P using the previous formula. Thus, we can apply linear regression, also known as the "least square method", to k and F to determine the value of R and M , which will be the parameters of the best fitting Gaussian curve for the original set of points. *(I note that, similar to many other events in my life, I used this formula in one of my novels, titled: "Kayam's Daughter".)*

Well, what can I say, my father was almost speechless... I can't remember how long I had been in the sixth grade, but I certainly hadn't finished yet. I think this was a considerable achievement for such a young child! Barely half a year earlier my father was teaching me the basics of math, as well as some analytic geometry, and now I had just solved this problem in no time, a problem that had already caused him several sleepless nights, as he later admitted. After that, of course, there was no question that he was honor bound to teach me programming... whether he was afraid of letting me handle his machine or not! And naturally I never did any harm to that computer; I barely even dared to breathe when I sat in front of it...

It soon turned out that he didn't even need to sacrifice much of his time teaching me how to program. Within a single hour I had mastered everything he knew in this field, and in the next few days it seemed I was able to write ANY program much faster than he could. It wasn't as if I could press the buttons of the little machine quicker than he did, but if I just looked at the formula to be programmed, or read the general description of the task, I could immediately figure out how best to program it. After the first few tasks, I didn't even make a flowchart for the others. My father did though... I had no need for it, since I was able to grasp and complete the task without it. And it was far rarer for my programs to have bugs than those of my father, even though I was the one not creating flowcharts...

Typically it didn't just take me half as long as my father to create any kind of program, but often only a fifth of the time he took. Quite simply, my thinking was much faster than his in this area. He was very surprised by this, and asked me on numerous occasions why I didn't create a flowchart.

"What for?" I said. "I can have a flowchart any time I want."

"What do you mean? Where is it?"

"Well, if I squint a little and look up to the left with my eyes, I can see the flowchart there if I want to," I replied.

"What are you saying?!"

"I see it, up there on the left! I can imagine it, if you like, although that's not the best word for it because it doesn't take any effort. It just comes to me, pops in from nowhere... It's rather amusing, but I rarely use it because what I need to write is generally self-evident. It's just so *logical*!"

So my father very quickly realized that if he had some urgent work that needed programming, it would be far better if he didn't do it himself when he came home from work, but left it to me. Obviously I didn't have the faintest idea why he needed these formulas, sets of numbers and so on that the machine calculated. I didn't care. He wrote down the formulas and told me what the machine should know, what it should calculate if I pressed a particular button, and the rest was my responsibility. After he had given me the necessary instructions, he would generally go to have dinner, and by the time he had finished I would be done with the programming task (or if not, he never had to wait long). And this was also true of jobs that he admitted would have required him to work until midnight. I was very happy to have suddenly become such an important member of the family!

However, this efficiency came at a price, since I could *only* do it if nobody or nothing at all was disturbing me while I was writing the program. As I kept saying, "I need my concentration!". So my father gave me the task, then left the room to eat or do something else. I would close the door of the living room, tell everyone that I mustn't be disturbed, that nobody was allowed to come in, and then proceed with the programming task. But if anybody *still* entered the room... well, then what happened was what my mother called "throwing a tantrum", and I admit that she had some right to call my behavior that, because I would howl and roar at the top of my lungs, "I TOLD YOU NOT TO DISTURB ME! NOW YOU'VE RUINED EVERYTHING, AND I HAVE TO START ALL OVER AGAIN!".

My mother simply didn't understand the situation... probably because she had never done any serious intellectual work in her life (she was a shorthand typist by profession). But this was not an act on my part. At that moment, and I really mean *in the split second* someone broke my concentration, practically EVERYTHING was erased from my brain—I forgot where I was in the programming, which data had already been entered into the computer, which still needed to be entered, everything... And even if I had written down the parts of the program I had figured out earlier, after I'd been disturbed I would just look at it in confusion and wonder what the hell it meant—why had I written this, what was I planning to do with it, why was it so important to the task?! I never forgot the specification of the task that my father had explained to me, that is, *what* the problem was that had to be solved. But everything I figured out after that—*how* to solve the problem—was all gone! So after these disruptions I really did have to start all over again...

Therefore I wasn't lying when I was "throwing a tantrum", because there was a GENUINE REASON for it. However my mother didn't believe me, and thought I was just pretending. At first my father didn't understand the situation either, but he soon realized that even if he wasn't able to comprehend my behavior, there must be some underlying reason for it, because he couldn't deny that every time I was interrupted, the program he wanted took much longer to complete. So over time it was he who kept my mother (and sister) in check, not allowing them to enter the room for any reason, under any pretext, until I told him that the "great work" was done. This always made my mother terribly

angry, because how could she possibly be banned from the living room on these occasions, just for MY sake?! I could see the annoyance on her face, and I must admit that it filled me with great pleasure.

Furthermore, believe it or not, after such "programming marathons" I was not only *not* tired, but on the contrary—I felt rested, relaxed, and full of energy... because, although it undoubtedly required considerable "brain power" on my part to solve the problems, in the meantime I could finally BE ALONE with nobody disturbing me! And of course it gave me a sense of achievement too.

It was clear that I was far better at programming than my father. It's not that he wasn't able to program, because he *could*, of course. He just needed a lot more time to do it. On the other hand, he had no problem with being disturbed during the process... He could easily stop for whatever reason, then return to the task just two hours later and pick up where he left off. I was completely incapable of doing this. When I began these tasks I mobilized my entire "brain capacity" (not consciously, of course), and then it would do its job... as long as it remained undisturbed. But as soon as there was an interruption, it instantly erased everything.

Now, as an adult in my fifties, I have seen some improvement in this area. I still really hate being interrupted while programming, but it's generally not as much of a disaster as it was back then. Even so, if I want to solve a REALLY tricky and sophisticated programming task, I'm very careful to choose a time when nobody is likely to bother me... Because it is POSSIBLE that I'll have to start the whole task over again if I'm disrupted. Again, this is not always the case... only if the task is very complex and difficult.

So I was a "difficult child" in this respect, who wasn't easy to tolerate, but doing so could be advantageous... Because I remember that once my father got angry with me for some reason. He came home, and began writing a program. I told him that I'd do it, but he was angry and told me to leave him alone, that he would do it himself and I should go and do the dishes. He must have been very angry with me, since he never usually ordered me to do housework. So I did the dishes, then the time passed and I went to bed...

I awoke towards dawn (around 4 or 4.30am) to see a strip of light filtering out from under the door of my father's room, even though he was usually asleep at that time. I went in, blinking sleepily, and saw him sitting there in front of the machine with dark shadows under his eyes. It was quite obvious that he hadn't gotten a wink of sleep that night... I asked him what was wrong.

"Ah, the hell with it! I have the program ready, but it's no use because I'm sure it's giving the wrong result, and I'm unable to find the damned bug in it!" My father must have been incredibly upset, because he rarely ever swore. Not that he was religious, since he was a total atheist, but he didn't like bad language.

"Could I help?" I asked him.

"Oh, I can't imagine how you possibly could... It's a huge job, and it was supposed to be ready by this morning, so the company can... Or do you think you could still find the error?"

"I have no intention of searching for that," I replied, walking over to the machine and calmly turning it off.

"What have you done?!!! It wasn't even saved to the magnetic card...!" my father cried, paling.

"Don't worry, Papi, I turned it off because it's much easier for me to write the program from scratch using my method, than to search for the error and figure out your train of thought—which wasn't the right one anyway, since if it was, your program wouldn't have an error... This is the task written on this

piece of paper, right? Then lie down and get some rest, but please DON'T SAY A WORD! I'll have it done for you by the time you leave for the train..."

And I did indeed do it, perfectly... I managed to finish in less than an hour the problem he had been unsuccessfully tinkering with all night.

"Well, I wouldn't have believed it!" he said. "How did you manage to do that?!"

"Maybe because it wasn't as difficult as doing the washing up..." I replied impertinently, still resentful of him for the previous night's incident.

My poor father didn't say a word, because even if he had been sure twenty times over that he was right, it would not have been proper to scold me now, after I had helped him so much. In any case, from then on he was very wary of picking a fight with me at a time when he had been given an urgent programming task. He knew that if he punished me in such a circumstance, then *he* would be the one who was worse off. At least, there was a dangerously high risk...

So although I undoubtedly made myself very useful to the family in this manner, it did not in any way change my mother's attitude towards me in a positive way. Yet as far as I'm concerned, I did everything I could in order to coax some love and attention out of her. I'll provide some concrete examples in a moment, but first I have to touch upon a minor detail.

My mother often quoted all sorts of proverbs and adages, which I hated, because I always had the opinion that they were either not true at all, or at best they exaggerated some tiny kernel of reality so much that it became a lie, and so the proverb did more harm than good. But she loved using these figures of speech. Perhaps she thought quoting them made her look more intelligent. In all honesty, I didn't even really understand most of these proverbs, because I took them literally. I remember my mother once saying, "Ki korán kel, aranyat lel", which in English translates to: "He who rises early finds gold". (The English version of this proverb is: "The early bird gets the worm", which would have been far more logical to me.) I told her that this proverb was nonsense, because she had said it several times before, and I had tried it. I got up very early on many occasions, yet despite turning the room upside down, I never found a single piece of gold... So I was right. We Aspies tend to take everything literally... but as a general rule, proverbs are rarely meant to be taken literally! Unfortunately, however, there is no rule about how we are to understand them in any other sense. I hated every one of them, of course, and still do.

Before I continue, I must emphasize that what I call a "proverb" here is not the same as a "funny quip". It's not always the case, but I usually understand the latter, and sometimes even like them. I'll give you some examples of what I mean. I've been following the "Carnivore Diet" for over a year now, which means I *only* eat meat, no plant-based foods (except for coffee on very rare occasions, but without milk and sugar), nor any dairy products (although I do eat eggs, quite a lot of them in fact). (Update: Since finishing this book, I have stopped drinking coffee. I don't need it anymore.) A significant portion of the meat I eat is raw as well, such as raw liver, raw pork brains, and other raw offal. (However I don't ever eat processed foods, nor processed meat products. Only fresh or frozen meat). The reason I follow this diet is because it tastes good, makes my meal preparation simple, it's cheap, and it's healthy—since being on it I've successfully lost weight, my depression is gone, my back no longer hurts, my rashes have disappeared, and I'm full of energy... But the point here is that I have read many funny "sayings" on this subject, which I can indeed understand, and also like. Here are some examples:

"Save the forest, eat a vegan!"

"Plants aren't food, they're only DECORATIONS!"

"If you're in a famine, eat the vegans first, they're the closest to grass-fed animals."

"The word 'vegan' is an ancient 'politically correct' expression of the paleolithic language, which means: 'bad hunter'."

Even certain abstract ideas are easy for me to understand, and this was the case in my childhood too. For example: *The more parts of a killed animal that we eat, the more we honor the life we have taken. The more parts that are discarded as waste, the more we dishonor that animal posthumously.* I can understand the above wisdom because there is logic in it—that we should avoid waste. This is easy for an Aspie to grasp. I for one have never liked wasting anything.

So I generally understand HUMOR. Okay, not always... but most of the time. However, proverbs are much more complex, and I am not always able to grasp their (figurative...) meaning. Sometimes I can, but not in most cases.

There is another Hungarian proverb that goes: "A hazug embert előbb utolérlik mint a sánta kutyát". The English version is: "A lie has no legs", but in Hungarian the meaning is more complex: "A lying man is caught before a lame dog".

When my mother mentioned this proverb to me for some reason, I began arguing with her that this was not only untrue, but complete and utter nonsense. First of all, I have seen a lame dog run, and although it was certainly slower than a healthy dog, it could still run very fast, and would not have been easy to catch up with! And why on earth would a lying man be chased anyway?! And even if they were being chased, why do people think that a liar runs slower than someone who isn't a liar, and specifically slower than a lame dog? Because I'm pretty sure that lame dogs can run faster than even non-liars, not slower. And if I was mistaken, would my mother be so kind as to tell me which journal or book contained the scientific articles, serious and verifiable publications that support this astonishing claim? That is, where was the experimental evidence?

She called me an idiot, and explained that it was to be taken "figuratively", meaning that a liar is very quickly exposed. But I didn't agree with this either, saying that the proverb was still meaningless, because it has nothing to do with dogs. After all, a dog isn't capable of telling a lie, whether it is lame or not. Moreover, History teaches us that it is precisely the greatest liars who tend to get away with their lies, and in fact, many of them not only avoid punishment but are crowned, that is, they become kings or at least make great fortunes from their lies... And anyhow, the words "expose" and "catch" are not exactly synonymous terms.

But I digress. The point is that my mother continually spouted these nonsensical proverbs. One time she said, "It's not a crime to steal flowers". I was a little bewildered by this, because why wouldn't it be a crime? I know what a loathsome and difficult job gardening is, so when somebody grows their own flowers they are unlikely to be happy if someone else steals them... But if that's what my mother said, then she must be right... after all, she's the adult... Okay, so stealing flowers isn't a crime...

For a good while after that I used to wander around the neighborhood on my way home from school, and wherever there was a garden protected by a flimsy wire fence (the bottom of which was relatively easy to lift), I would stick my hand under it and tear off every flower I could reach, then take them home to my mother in the hope that it would make her happy... I figured she might love me in return... But she didn't. She put the flowers into a vase, and that was that. She was so uninterested in

my flowers that she never even asked me where I got them from, or how I managed to obtain them. Then she got the idea in her head that only wildflowers were "true" flowers, and that cultivated flowers were not "real" for some reason, not even beautiful... So I would often come home from school hours late, because I was again wandering around the neighborhood, this time in the fields and ditches in order to collect wild flowers, which I would make into bouquets to give to my mother. She accepted them... but that was all. Her behavior and attitude towards me, however, didn't change in the slightest.

I can truly state without any exaggeration that I tried "to break the ice of her heart", almost begging her for a tiny bit of love... Yet I never succeeded. Although I hadn't given up all hope of that completely, even as an adult.

To give just one example worth mentioning: I learned the Esperanto language specifically because my mother was an Esperantist, and I supposed—not entirely wrongly in my opinion—that perhaps the reason she didn't love me was because we had no common interests. It was true that one of her favorite hobbies was reading, as it was for me, but the books she preferred were totally different genres to the ones I did. So I learned Esperanto as an adult—or "young adult" to be precise, for I had barely finished high school (somewhere between the ages of 18 and 22). And I did quite well, successfully passing a language exam in it, in fact I knew the language so well that I even DREAMED in Esperanto a few times! I also created my own story in Esperanto; unfortunately it was lost "in the storms of history", but since I remembered it, I later reconstructed it (in Hungarian), and it is included in one of my novels as a fairy tale titled: "The King in the Barrel".

Now, I don't think it can be debated that if a person learns a foreign language, even one as easy as Esperanto, it can rightfully be called a "significant effort" in order to gain someone's attention or "get close" to them...

It was all in vain. My mother didn't give a shit about me. I could give you many examples of my mother's heartlessness towards me—and I will! For these are good examples of how a neurotypical parent treats their Aspie child.

For instance, once in a "practical class" in school we were given the task of carving something out of wood. There were several options we could choose from, and I can't remember exactly what they were, but because I had long since known that my manual dexterity was "severely challenged", I chose what seemed like the easiest task, which was to carve a flower stake. Everyone who had chosen this was given a square stick as raw material, on which we were to carve all sorts of regular patterns with knives, files and other tools. We were also provided with a vise to make the work easier.

Before I go on with the story, I hasten to add that in order to better understand the later parts, these "practical classes" were always separate for boys and girls—you could say that the school was "sexist" in this respect—and the girls were taught things like embroidery, sewing and dressmaking, while the boys were taught woodwork, tinsmithing and so on. I found these classes insufferable. I was so awkward and clumsy in these practical classes that I hated them almost as much as gym class. My only stroke of luck was that this class was taught by the same teacher as that of chemistry class. And I was not only an A student in math, but also in chemistry—that goes without saying, of course, since chemistry is also a THEORETICAL discipline, as well as a SCIENCE, involving logic... In addition, it was quite clear that I was also top of the class among the A students, and the teacher greatly appreciated this about me. In view of this, he had mercy on me in practical classes and always gave me a C, although, if I'm honest, I have to admit that I really only deserved a D, and that was being charitable...

Now, after this introduction, it may be appreciated that I received a B for that flower stake! And the teacher specifically emphasized that this wasn't a mercy grade, that I had totally deserved it because my project was exceptionally well done and truly beautiful. He said it was possible that I had a little more talent for woodwork than for metalwork. And I took home my handmade ornate flower stake, as proudly as if it were a spear, on top of which the severed head of a defeated and formidable opponent had been stuck as a trophy. Along the way I decided I would give it to my mother, who would surely be happy to have it, as she loved flowers, and how beautiful it would look stuck in a pot beside one of her beloved flowers...

So I gave it to her, saying that I had made it myself, that it was worthy of a B grade and the teacher had really liked it. She politely thanked me, stuck it in a pot next to one of the flowers, and that was that. For that day, anyway... Because the story isn't over yet. The crux of it is about to come (to my greatest regret...)! For barely two days later I saw my stake lying broken in the trash can. I went completely pale. What could have happened to my wonderful flower stake?! To my precious work of art?! I must confess that at first I suspected my sister, that she had broken it out of revenge... although that would have been quite strange, because for some reason—perhaps forgetfulness—I hadn't even boasted to her that I had made that flower stake. Of course, she could have found out somehow... But regardless of who I suspected the culprit was in the first few seconds, the point is that I immediately fished out the two pieces of my stake from the trash can, and ran to my mother to show her, saying that I didn't know who had done it, but it wasn't me...

She "reassured" me that she knew I hadn't broken it, since she had done it herself... although she hadn't done it on purpose. It was just that the soil in one of the flower pots was too hard, and she had tried to break it up with the stake... and well, it broke in two!

I just stood there listening to this horror story—which was how I perceived it at the time, since it was about the destruction of my CREATION—and I stammered that she **MUST HAVE KNOWN** that it was not designed for that purpose; it was a flimsy little stake made of soft wood, and was only meant for tying some small plant to, and it was even weaker than it could have been due to the engravings and decorations that covered it... Of course it broke when she started digging into the hard soil with it, it wasn't an iron tool...

My mother just shrugged and impatiently remarked, "What are you so upset about? It was only a worthless piece of wood, it didn't even look very nice with its tawdry colors! And you can't argue, since you told me yourself that you only got a B for it, so even your teacher didn't think it was perfect!"

Well, if you can call anything **INSENSITIVE**, then **THIS** was certainly it! The biggest issue I had wasn't that she broke it. But what she said afterwards... If she had afterwards given me a hug, caressed my head, and said something like, "I'm sorry, I was very careless, I shouldn't have used it to loosen the soil, but it was all that was at hand at the time... I'm really sorry, but I can't do anything about it now... Everyone makes mistakes sometimes, please forgive me!" If she had said anything remotely like that, then everything would have been fine, and I probably wouldn't even remember the whole story today. But she didn't, and instead tried to downplay her own mistake, making the thing I was proud of seem worthless. The present I had wanted to give her in order to please her a day or two earlier...

Generally speaking, my mother always had a tendency to be bossy, a desire to never admit any fault of her own, and always wanted to have the last word. There was no way to even bargain with her, or come to any kind of "mutual agreement". Countless times in my childhood (and even teenage years)

she said to me, "As long as you're living in my house, you must do as I command!", and, "If you don't like something here then you can leave!"

Now, my Reader may even feel upon first reading this that my mother was justified in wishing to have things happen the way she wanted in her own house, that she should be the adult in charge and not me, the child. (Although legally that house was only half hers, because the other half was my fathers property, but I merely note this for the sake of accuracy, since it doesn't change the point—that the house wasn't mine, and that I was still a child back then.) So initially this sounds quite logical and reasonable... UNTIL you find out what kinds of rules my mother wanted to impose on this premise, which may have otherwise been acceptable to me...

The one I found hardest to bear was the one related to eating. For a long time I thought it was purely my individual peculiarity that there were certain foods I just couldn't "get down", whereas I could eat my usual foods for months on end and still not find them boring. I have since learned—thanks to certain scientific publications about Asperger's syndrome—that this behavior is completely common for Aspies, because it simply follows that an Aspie likes familiarity in ALL aspects of life, and naturally this goes for flavors and foods too... So there were certain foods that I just didn't like. Of course I know that this isn't anything new, a child not liking certain foods, for almost every child has some foods they can't stand, for instance it's common knowledge that nearly every child hates spinach. This was true for me too. I didn't like spinach either, nor garden sorrel sauce. Nor cumin soup, or egg-drop soup... Squash marrow was also something I found inedible... If you think about it, I basically didn't like foods that were sour or bitter. It was interesting that I still enjoyed pickles, as a side dish. It was quite a different story, however, when the entire dish was sour, meaning that I had to continuously endure this sour flavor throughout the whole meal. So while I was unable to stomach sorrel sauce, I would sometimes willingly nibble on maybe half a handful of leaves from the sorrel plant growing in the garden. But as I said before, it was totally different when the ENTIRE DISH was such a sour abomination!

It was the same thing when my mother occasionally made lemon chicken. I couldn't eat it, even though fried chicken was one of my favorite foods. But it didn't matter, because it wasn't ordinary fried chicken, it was "spoiled" in my opinion by being completely smeared with lemon sauce, and so I could no longer eat it. Which is even more interesting, because I also loved lemon—but ON ITS OWN! I didn't even have to dip the lemon in sugar—I simply peeled a whole lemon and then popped it in my mouth, munching away happily... Yet despite liking both lemon and fried chicken SEPARATELY, putting the two together was horrific to me! A cacophony of flavors.

My mother couldn't grasp this, saying I was picky and over-squeamish, and vowed to disaccustom me of this even if I died of starvation, because as long as I lived in her house I had to do as she ordered...

I would like to point out here that it wasn't like my mother prepared the above-mentioned foods that I hated badly. Not at all, in fact I have to admit that not only did my mother know how to cook, she was an excellent cook! So much so that whenever I think about it, this joke comes to mind: There are two kids, and one asks the other, "Tell me, does your family pray before dinner?" "No, we don't need to. My mom's a good cook."

So the problem wasn't my mother's cooking, it was me—I simply didn't like the taste of certain foods, so much that I considered them completely inedible!

I will also quickly note that the other type of food I really hate is when salty and sweet flavors are mixed together. If I were God, I would allocate a separate purgatory in Hell (with particularly horrible circumstances...) for the depraved souls who invented these foul-tasting "foods".

The other problem I had "food-wise" was with soups. My mother loved soups and her favorite saying was: "Soup makes room in the stomach for the main course!". It has always been my opinion that this is BULLSHIT, because to me it's obvious that our stomach has a limited cubic capacity, and if we fill part of it with liquid (since most of soup is water), there will be less room in the stomach for the more valuable dish, the "main course"... What's more, I firmly believed that soup is not only useless but downright harmful, at least if eaten at the same time as the main course, because it dilutes our gastric acid, making it much harder for the stomach to break down the main course. However, apart from such physical or, if you like, philosophical discussions, I simply didn't like most of the soups my mother made, even though I have to admit once again that she was actually quite a talented cook. But unfortunately my tastes were different to hers...

Anyhow, in my experience I found that even if I did eat soup, it didn't really fill me up, and I would always still be hungry afterwards. This is perhaps understandable, since I was a "developing organism" as a child, and I needed protein for growth; that's what my body wanted, not soup that was practically devoid of nutrients... But my mother was of the opinion that for lunch and dinner, everybody should sit at the table, and she would serve the soup as the first course; and if I didn't eat it all, I wouldn't get any of the main course.

I protested, asking her why not, to which she replied that I didn't deserve it. I argued that I realized there wasn't enough of the second course to get an extra portion just because I preferred it and didn't eat the soup. But why couldn't I at least get my rightful share, in proportion to the number of people in the family? So for instance, when four of us are sitting at the table, I should be entitled to a quarter of the main course, even if I didn't eat any soup first. In the worst case scenario I will be less sated without the soup, but let me worry about that!

However my mother disagreed entirely, declaring again that, "As long as you're living in my house...", along with her other favorite saying, "People in other countries are dying of starvation, and you...!"

But I felt that it had nothing to do with me whether people thousands of kilometers away were starving to death or not, because I was sure that my failure to eat a bowl of soup in Central Europe wasn't going to cause anyone to starve to death in, say, the south of the Sahara! And I told my mother that if she seriously believes there is any connection between these two events, then go ahead and help the hungry by sending them the soup or whatever else I don't want to eat. Besides, if I eat that bowl of soup, will there really be less people in the world starving to death? Could she prove this strange statement to me?!

Before I continue with the story, allow me at this point to make a philosophical, or rather an ideological digression: This argument that "people in other countries are dying of starvation, and you...", is in my eyes nothing but mere DEMAGOGY! To me it's the same demagoguery as many of the arguments environmentalists use, for example, how much energy is being wasted just because a tiny LED lights up on the TV or computer to indicate that it's in standby mode. And they say that it will destroy the Earth, cause a climate catastrophe, and people elsewhere will starve to death while the West wallows in vast and unnecessary luxury... I don't deny the fact of global warming, and I would be

happy if something serious was done to achieve a cleaner and more livable environment. However, I am of the opinion that this will NOT be decided at the level of the INDIVIDUAL, so it is not up to me, or any ordinary citizen. The only people who could REALLY do something about it are the high-ranking politicians, and the very powerful billionaires with their vast wealth.

Let's see—this whole thing can be traced back to "game theory". If I start to live in a very environmentally conscious way, it is usually at great expense to me, and often with other inconveniences, while I get NO personal benefit, not only in the short term, but mostly not in the long term either. This puts me at a disadvantage compared to other people (who don't live environmentally consciously), which means that I am actually a DUPE, because I am making a lot of sacrifices for OTHERS, who are meanwhile not making them for ME. Well, I will openly admit that this doesn't appeal to me in the slightest! But anyhow, what would it matter if I thought otherwise?! Let's say I live my whole life in an absolutely environmentally conscious way, trying to follow the "zero waste" principles (a good part of which is naive humbug, sometimes even more harmful to the environment than useful) and thus save a certain amount of energy. However, this would be pointless because a single rocket launch—even if not nuclear—releases far more carbon dioxide and other gases into the atmosphere than I could save in a thousand years if I lived that long!

Therefore I hereby put in writing that I don't give a flying SHIT about all these environmental arguments! Would the environmentalists and others with their demagoguery please just leave me alone! I repeat, I ACCEPT that something should be done for the environment, but on a *societal level*, not at the level of the individual. I will be "green" and environmentally conscious on an "individual level" to the extent that it is PROFITABLE for me in some way. For example, if the less-polluting stuff or solution is CHEAPER, more durable, more convenient to use, is more powerful, has some new feature, or it's delivered to my door for free (saving me time because I don't have to go to the shop), if it's tax-free, fits into a smaller space, is portable, more attractive to look at, more "customizable", includes free installation, or I get some other benefit that hasn't yet occurred to me. Otherwise, I am only willing to be environmentally conscious to the extent that the effort and cost I put into it is, in my eyes, "completely insignificant".

So I'm fine with us doing something for the environment, as well as trying to prevent people from dying from starvation in other countries... but it's not ME in particular, nor YOU dear Reader who has to do anything, it's the GOVERNMENTS. The politicians... For example, it is quite obvious that the biggest environmental polluter is the military. For those who don't believe this, just look at the devastation and pollution that the Russian army is causing in Ukraine as I write this... So perhaps we should try to make less war and produce fewer weapons...

It is also unnecessary for bored beauties and old ladies in cities to keep so many pets. The animals don't belong in those surroundings, and besides, keeping pets has an enormous ecological footprint. It should be banned! (I have no pets, so I'm already very "green" in this area...). Decorating homes with cut flowers should also be banned, as well as giving completely unnecessary gifts at Christmas, Valentine's Day and so on, most of which are thrown out in the trash within days because they really aren't needed, not to mention the huge amount of packaging material... Yes, at Christmas time Mother Nature also gets a present, a big one—tons of TRASH...

I know, some of these principles are also included in many "zero waste" recommendations. Still, there is a big difference between those and the things I'm saying now. Those are only

RECOMMENDATIONS, which people can either accept or deny at their discretion. But I say, to hell with "discretion"! These things must all BE PROHIBITED by law! They must be MANDATORY! If it's FORBIDDEN, and therefore EVERYBODY lives by these principles, then I can live by them too. I'm not at a disadvantage to others, since they also have to live by them. That way I wouldn't become a SUCKER.

My two "favorite" zero waste principles that reek of naivety and incompetence are—one, the recommendation to use things made of aluminum rather than paper (such as cups), because aluminum is more durable. Well, I don't give a shit if it lasts longer, because aluminum is a dangerous cell poison, especially in the nervous system, and I don't want to die before my time, but I don't want to die as a martyr of environmental awareness either! (Don't worry, I have a non-disposable cup, it just isn't made of aluminum but stainless steel...)

The second such principle is: "Don't throw it away—repair it!". Well, this is a lovely idea... But how the hell are we supposed to do that?! The vast majority of gadgets, especially microelectronics, is so complicated that it would take years of study to at least determine if it can be repaired at all! But even in simpler cases, should everyone now have a complete workshop so they can weld or solder something?! And buy expensive measuring and diagnostic instruments in order to detect the fault? How big would the ecological footprint of such a workshop be?! And that's not all. Why should I bother when the whole of Western civilization can't even collectively persuade the phone manufacturers—led by Apple—to stop SOLDERING the fucking battery into their cellphones and make it replaceable! And now I'm supposed to worry about the far more insignificant details?! Stop taking me for a fool! There should simply be a law that phone manufacturers have one year to come up with a phone that has a replaceable battery, because if they don't, then all the company's executives will be imprisoned for life. Or maybe get parole after twenty years. Plus full asset forfeiture, of course. And the charge would be committing crimes against Humanity (and the whole of Planet Earth)! The same should be done with the company Intel. It is widely known that the only reason they keep changing the sockets of the processors slightly is so that you can't accidentally install the new processors in the old motherboards, but have to throw out the old motherboards and buy a new one... And there are NUMEROUS further examples of deliberate environmental pollution! That is where the really EFFECTIVE action would begin, not with me and other ordinary people...

The game of golf should also be banned. Just think about it—how much fuel (or energy in general) is consumed by keeping the grass of these enormous golf courses green, as well the regular mowing, plus the ball collection by people driving those strange little golf carts. And all of it is so damned SUPERFLUOUS, since this great fuss is merely providing entertainment for a small group of PRIVILEGED IDLERS from the "upper class"! Bottled water should also be banned—simply make tap water drinkable and that's that! The government should stipulate that from now on, new houses can only be built if the entire roof is covered with solar panels. If the government could provide such a roof free of charge, it would speed up the process and they could raise taxes to do so. Not that I want to pay taxes... but it could be done. For the environment. And I could go on and on. So protecting the environment and preventing starvation depends on *this*, not on whether I turn off the light in my room or my computer when I leave home, and certainly not on whether I eat soup or prefer meat or cheap pasta!

As an important side note—the "dark green" idiots are banging on these days about how polluting it is to eat meat. Well, they aren't going to turn me into a "vegan", that's for sure! I believe in the "carnivore" way of life, and that humans are not only omnivorous, but the VAST majority of their food must be animal-based. And I mean virtually ALL our food—plants should be eaten in very small quantities at most, as a spice or if we are threatened with starvation for some reason. As for me, I don't even use plants as spices; my only spice is salt. When I eat a lot of fatty food, I have lemon juice with it, but it's not some bottled and over-preserved crap, I squeeze it myself from fresh lemons. I don't use sugar... In fact, I could even give up lemon juice if I really wanted to. I have no withdrawal symptoms if I don't have access to any. The true, ancient, original nourishment of our species, to which we have been evolutionarily adapted for millions of years, is fat and meat. It is the most efficient fuel for our bodies. We may indeed not be able to produce enough meat for all eight billion or more of the Earth's inhabitants, but I don't give a damn about that either, because I don't see why *I* should have to suffer from deficiency diseases (like obesity, depression, diabetes, etc.) from not eating a meat-based diet, just so that more people can live on the other side of the world—people I don't even know and who may not even be sympathetic to me if I met them. If there were not enough meat for everyone on Earth, then the solution is not to make everyone vegan (which is a bad joke, for veganism is a pseudo-religion, unscientific in the extreme!), but to reduce the size of Humanity by population limitation. On the other hand, there is a lot of land on Earth that is totally unsuitable for agriculture, yet is quite good for animal husbandry... therefore eating meat may not even be disadvantageous ecologically!

I admit, I don't care how much my lifestyle translates into carbon dioxide load. And the reason I don't care is because I believe I have already done a lot to reduce my carbon footprint, simply by being a NON-SMOKER. It is quite obvious that smoking is not a NECESSITY. Smoking must be banned, and that's all there is to it! Yes, it should be **FORBIDDEN!** The DEATH PENALTY should be paid for the manufacture, advertising, sale and distribution of tobacco products... as well as marijuana products! Then there would immediately be many billions fewer cigarettes stinking up Mother Earth, and this will undoubtedly significantly reduce the greenhouse effect. Not to mention, fewer people will get sick, which means fewer hospitalizations, in turn saving energy and again reducing pollution.

Or there's sport. Which is a good thing... but only RECREATIONAL SPORT. I see NO reason whatsoever why such huge sums of money should be poured into professional sport. My opinion is that professional athletes are actually freeloaders, since they don't produce anything useful for the community, just take our money. My grandmother used to say that they should be sent out to the fields or factories to do something useful. I agree with this view. My mother had the same opinion, and that's about the only area of life where my mother and I agreed... Quite frankly, I don't give a damn which team wins in this or that sporting event, or which country wins more medals at the Olympics. It doesn't impress me at all. This isn't a NECESSITY either, but what a horrible waste of all those resources! Just look at the Olympic Games. Even if we don't ban them (although I think that would be the best thing to do!), the compromise could be that not every city build enormous facilities for the Olympics (which will go to ruin after the few weeks that it's running because they are unsuitable for any other purpose...) but declare that the Olympics were invented by the ancient Greeks, therefore it is the exclusive intellectual property of Greece, and so from now on the Olympic Games will ALWAYS be in Greece! I'm sure this would be gladly accepted by the Greeks... This way the sports grounds and all other necessary buildings would only need to be built ONCE (although I still think even this single occasion

is fucking superfluous, so it's just a compromise suggestion...), and then all it would require is maintenance. And in the meantime the buildings could be used for smaller sports events or whatever else. It would be a much cheaper solution than what we have now.

So this is the sort of thing that should be saved, energy and so forth, and it isn't a solution—just something to keep up appearances, a sham—to screw the Average John into being more environmentally conscious and waste less. Because anything they can do is just a drop in the ocean. Of course, the "dark green" environmentalists and members of similar groups will now give me a good scolding, calling me a rotten bastard and a selfish pig. But I don't give a shit if that's what some people think of me. I did begin by saying that this is a CANDID book... Am I selfish? Perhaps. I'll even admit to being envious... I mean, I see it day after day on the TV, in the newspapers, on the Internet, and sometimes even experience it personally, how much income inequality there is in the world—that some people are able to spend such ENORMOUS sums of money on completely unnecessary bullshit, sometimes on downright harmful things, to satisfy their momentary whims DAILY... yes, in a single day they can squander more than I could earn in my WHOLE LIFE doing diligent, strenuous work! And these people who FRITTER AWAY this money are essentially PARASITES! They give nothing useful to the world. It may well be that their ANCESTORS who created that wealth became justly rich, thanks to their own excellence... It's possible, although I honestly doubt that's true in most cases. But it doesn't matter, because anyone who throws money around like that is not one of these (possible) respectable ancestors, but one of their idle descendants! Let them sacrifice for the environment and the starving, and leave me alone! I have been a sucker too many times in my life already, and I'm not willing to sacrifice ANYTHING so they can have more money for hookers, drugs, space tourism, a tenth luxury car, an ocean liner, private jet, or any other unnecessary bullshit! This is my opinion, and if that makes me envious and selfish, then so be it... But in no way more than the aforementioned freeloading, useless millionaires and billionaires!

I don't care if the environmentalists are angry with me. Let them see themselves as ENVIRONMENTALISTS, and me as an ENVY-ronmentalists—that is, they try to protect the environment, while I protect my envy! And even more so, my interests... at least my standard of living, which is not particularly high anyway... There is a proverb that goes: "You don't have to be more papist than the Pope". What this means in this situation is that the world leaders—the politicians and the super-rich—must first set a PERSONAL EXAMPLE, that is, to live and behave in a way that is worthy of respect, and then I might consider following their example. BUT NOT UNTIL THEN. Oh, so you're saying that the Earth can be destroyed in the meantime? Fuck that too. First of all, I'm not going to live to see that... And second, I can't prevent its destruction. And the Earth isn't likely to perish anyway. Only mankind will, but if it does, the human race will have deserved it. So in the meantime I'll try to live as well as I can, within my modest means.

And one other thing. I was not always of this opinion. In my youth I was very enthusiastic about many things. For example, I made donations to several charities. Just so that fewer people would die of starvation... That was until I realized that at most, ten percent of such donations go to the cause they are advertised for; the rest is used by the staff of these organizations, who are paid exorbitantly for their work. Of course, there's always a few volunteers who work for free, who are shown on television for publicity... They are suckers just as much as the people who donate to these organizations. Or they might technically be working for free, but they get so much travel allowance and other entitlements that

they're getting plenty of benefits. In other words, the majority of the money goes towards their salaries. And their travel expenses. On representation, promotion... And the most infuriating thing is that often that remaining 10 percent is distributed by extorting sexual favors from those poor women... Ever since I found out about this, not a single organization has received a penny from me!

Yet another example of my naivety is that I went to volunteer as a blood donor. I don't remember exactly how many times I donated blood, but it must have been at least ten times. And I did it all for free, of course. That is until I found out that the blood I donated for FREE (as well as that from all the other donors) was being sold to hospitals by the blood bank for HUGE SUMS OF MONEY! Well, fuck you, that's what I say! What I wanted to give to hospitals and PATIENTS was for FREE, a gift, so don't go making a profit out of it! Naturally they'll say they have their own costs too, but I DON'T GIVE A SHIT! If blood donation is so important, then if I allow my blood to be drained for free, perhaps our government could at least provide the infrastructure for the blood donations, and ensure the payment of the necessary employees! So I haven't given any blood either since then. I would be prepared to give my blood as a gift, as long as it's not turned into a for-profit business.

All these events (and many others like them...) have forced me to think of myself as a SUCKER. Giving me that feeling of, "Damn, I've been a sucker again! I wasn't cautious enough and have allowed myself to be deceived again!" Well, that really is an awful feeling. I don't like to think of myself as a sucker, I have to be honest... I may not be able to avoid every occasion, but I've decided that I will try to minimize these sorts of deceptions in the future. So basically, those sorts of things have totally reduced any altruistic impulse in me to zero.

Well, that was a rather long detour. Let's now return to my childhood and my mother...

She was very angry, but naturally she couldn't think of any pithy reply, and insisted that if I didn't eat my soup, I couldn't have any of the main course. But here she missed the mark, because this tactic may have worked with a neurotypical child, but not with me. Because I really was UNABLE to eat those foods I didn't like. I tried in vain, but I just couldn't get it down! So I would simply get up and leave the table, without eating anything. Later, if I could, I would steal something from the pantry, although that wasn't always possible. It went on like this for a while, and finally it was my dad who talked her out of it, although I could see that he actually agreed with my mom in principle that I should have eaten the soup. Even so, he was on my side. He must have been afraid that all the fasting would make me sick, which was actually quite plausible... And he said that he also thought I was entitled to my rightful portion of the main dish, regardless of whether or not I ate the soup or anything else, but naturally that didn't mean I would get a larger serving of what I saw as the tastier foods... And that would have been fine, but then my mother got it into her head that even if I didn't eat the soup, I had to sit in front of it until everyone else had eaten their soup (or whatever the first course was), and ONLY then could I start the next course when everybody else did, EVEN if that next course was something my mother didn't have to serve up herself, since it was already steaming on the table in front of me, on a separate plate. Needless to say, it didn't make any sense to me at all, and I told my mother that I understood that she thought it made our family look more distinguished in some way, but it might be a good idea to limit this ritual to the rare occasions when we had guests, because when we're alone it's just pointless frivolity in my eyes...

She completely lost her temper, and screamed at me for a good while. But she still insisted on it... My father didn't say a word, just kept his head buried deep in his plate, pretending not to notice anything... The old man didn't like to quarrel. However I went on to ask her what the point was of spending so much of my time waiting needlessly, when instead I could quickly grab my own share of food and go off to study, which would make far more sense in any case?

"See this as your punishment for not eating the soup!" my mother hissed at me.

Ah, now that was something I could finally understand. Punishment, of course! Yes, an argument I could grasp, and it fit in very well with the image I had in my mind of my mother's character. I just refused to admit that I deserved to be punished for it. As I saw it, I wasn't committing any sin by not eating the damn soup or whatever, because I wasn't harming anybody!

I stood up. "In that case, Mami, I'll help you punish me more efficiently. My punishment is that I'll stay hungry, I'd rather not eat anything!" and I left the kitchen.

Of course, my father didn't want that either, and after a while he told my mother that he would also find it unpleasant to have to wait needlessly in such a situation for somebody else to finish the previous dish. So he perfectly understood why I didn't feel like doing that. Eventually my mother slowly gave up this artificial pretension, this habit of imitating the behavior of the "upper classes"... But it was a difficult period!

As for the mixing of flavors, I didn't just dislike it when sour flavors were mixed with meat dishes. For example, my father loved "stuffed peppers" (a famous Hungarian dish where a bell pepper is stuffed with ground meat) MIXED TOGETHER WITH SUGAR! That's right—he didn't add salt or pepper to the stuffed peppers, but mixed them with a large quantity of granulated sugar and ate them like that... I was baffled! With regard to this dish, I completely agreed with my mother that sugar was not appropriate in stuffed peppers. Stuffed peppers was a dish I loved, I could eat it anytime, just not mixed with sugar. That was revolting to me. I tasted it once out of curiosity, a spoonful... But then I ran into the toilet to spit it out, and almost threw up. Fortunately my father had no intention of forcing me to mix the stuffed peppers with sugar. He ate it that way, but the fact that my mother and I ate it differently didn't bother him in the least. Yes, compared to my mother, my father was very "liberal-minded". His principle was "live and let live", and it was beyond doubt one of his main principles, because although he was not a "proverb-maniac" like my mother, this one "saying" or whatever you want to call it, was quoted by him on many occasions.

So, as should be clear by now from this book, I got along with my father far, far better than I did with my mother, so much so that I not only respected him as my father, but I can openly declare that he was my best friend too. And naturally he had a far better opinion of me than my mother had. However, that didn't mean my father didn't find fault with my character... in fact, he was unfortunately convinced that I was a COWARD. I clearly remember the situation of how this firm belief (although I can assure you it was absolutely groundless!) came to exist in his mind. I was having a conversation with him about something, I can't remember exactly what it was, but it was about some book I'd read recently, a sci-fi or adventure novel, and the topic of our conversation was something about the actions of certain characters being cowardly. I said something like, "I wouldn't have done that, because I'm brave!" (I can't remember the exact words I used, but the point is that I somehow expressed my belief that I was brave).

My father looked at me in surprise and asked me why I thought I was brave! I just stood there gaping, because it never occurred to me that I had to justify or prove my statement. It seemed entirely self-evident to me that I was BRAVE! I think I was probably so convinced of my own courage because I had been beaten up so many times at school, and yet I dared to keep going there day after day... even though I knew every morning how risky it was for me, but I took the risk again and again without a word of complaint... unfortunately it didn't occur to me to tell my father this argument at that time. I just looked at him dumbfounded, thinking, "Why wouldn't I be brave?!"

My father, however, seemed to have a different opinion, or at least strong doubts. I don't know why, at least I didn't know at the time, but now, in hindsight and with an adult mind, I suspect that it was because he doubted my courage due to being beaten up so many times by my classmates. That is, he must have thought I was *not* brave for the very reason I thought I *was* brave—because I was beaten up a lot. Although the fact that I was beaten was not at all an argument against my courageousness. Even the bravest of superheroes can be beaten up any number of times, if his opponents outnumber him... Anyway, whatever the reason, the point is that my father had at least some doubts about my courage, and he was quite honest about it to my face. He said something to the effect that anyone could say they were brave, and that it had to be proven...

"I would gladly do that," I replied, "but there's no spaceship for me to travel to some distant planet to do some heroic exploring or whatever, although I'd be happy to..."

My father smiled at me. "What do you need a spaceship for, when you wouldn't even dare to go to the end of the garden in the dark?!"

"What do you mean, I wouldn't dare?!" I said in astonishment.

"Are you prepared to do it now then?"

"Of course!"

"Well, go on then, do it!" he said. It was getting dark outside. It wasn't midnight yet, but it was around 9pm, so it was still quite dark.

Of course I was ready for this "test", I just didn't understand how it would test my courageousness. After all, there was nothing really difficult about it—I knew the garden and where it ended, so I was very familiar with the place I had to go to, and as for ghosts and other such fantasies, that didn't scare me because I didn't believe in them (I was brought up completely atheistically by my father). It's true that I was often afraid of my classmates, but they didn't come into our garden, especially not at night, and there were no wild animals to be afraid of either, because no one had ever even seen a fox around the neighborhood; the biggest monster that could appear was at most a hunting cat. Finding a hedgehog would be an adventure and an exotic experience! I didn't even have to worry about a stray dog, because our garden was fenced on all sides, and none of the neighbors had dogs... So nothing could really go wrong here, it wasn't a test, simply a ridiculous fuss, much ado about nothing... But if that's what my father wanted, if it made him happy, then so be it!

So I stepped out the door and headed for the back of the garden. I can't remember what phase the moon was in, but either it was barely visible, or if it was a full moon, it must have been covered by a cloud, because although it wasn't pitch dark, it truly was VERY dark! It was possible to see something, but it is undeniable that such an "environment" would have been frightening for a small child. Anyhow, I started making my way to the end of the garden at great speed, but my pace dropped once I had passed within a few meters of the outhouse, which—as I mentioned earlier—my mother more or less

lived in, since she spent a considerable part of her time there, often with my sister. So I passed this building by about four or five meters, but then my steps slowed and I stopped—though not out of cowardice, even though I will admit that it might have seemed so to a casual observer. But that wasn't really the reason. Up until that point I could actually move fast even in the dark, because I knew where everything was; there was a well-trodden and practically straight "path" leading from the house. However, after that point the vegetable garden began—those damned "planting beds" my mother used to make me weed all the time, AS PUNISHMENT... And although I understandably hated these beds because of this, I didn't want to trample them, because I knew very well that the next day when my mother noticed what had happened, I would be in big trouble. Even in the best case, if she didn't slap me for it, she would still yell at me... and I didn't want that either.

So far I knew the path well, but the remaining fifteen or twenty meters I was less familiar with, because I didn't really like going there (who the hell likes to go to a place they are sent to as punishment?!). I only knew that I had better not hurry along, because then I'd be sure to trample something. It was dark, and there was only a very narrow path between the planting beds, barely a foot wide, so I came to a stop and tried to discern exactly where I had to go to avoid the "beds". And as I was staring into the darkness, I heard a noise behind me. Like a branch snapping... I instantly became as alert as a hunting lynx. I wasn't scared—I was still convinced that I was in no danger here in our own backyard. If I had been in any other garden, I would have been scared. But HERE?! Actually, the thing I was most afraid of here was MY MOTHER... So I wasn't scared, especially because the sound wasn't coming from directly behind me, but from a considerable distance away. However, I did turn my head in that direction...

And then I heard the noise again. Or something very similar. As if a twig had snapped, something like that... I now managed to "localize" where the sound was coming from. The outbuilding, "my mother's house", was not built directly on the boundary of the plot, but there was a strip of maybe one and a half meters between the fence and the edge of the house. Well, that's where the sound was coming from. I completely forgot that I was supposed to be at the back of the garden for some kind of "test". I was caught up in the passion of hunting. I would unravel what was moving about over there! Perhaps a lost mole that had crawled to the surface of the earth! Or a hedgehog! I would capture it! Hunt it down! What fun that would be!

I turned back and ran towards the corner of the house (the outbuilding). I could run because there weren't any "planting beds"... And of course, it wasn't a mole nor a hedgehog making the noise, but my father. He had been "secretly" following me behind the house, because he wanted to make sure I really was going to the end of the garden, not just lying about it. And now he believed I had lost my courage and was running back. I futilely told him that I just wanted to discover what the noise was... He didn't believe me. It was also in vain that I told him I would turn back and walk to the end of the garden. He just replied that it wouldn't be a "real test" anymore, because I already knew that he was watching me, so I wouldn't be afraid.

I could never wash off the shame of being a coward in front of him, because I didn't dare to go to the back of the garden in the dark... Although it was HIS FAULT! If he was following me, then why wasn't he more cautious, why didn't he sneak around with due diligence so as not to make a noise?! Because I think what happened proved not my cowardice but my COURAGE, because I dared to go without hesitation to the unknown source of the noise, to find out what it was, to investigate it... Any

other child would probably have frozen on the spot, thinking that it might be a snake or some ghastly, mystical creature... But I DARED TO GO OVER THERE! Yet unfortunately it wasn't my courage that I proved to my father, who—incorrectly—came to the opposite conclusion...

If I want to be a bit humorous, I can sum up this adventure by saying that we have seen one of the main laws of quantum electrodynamics at macroscopic scales. Because the general view in microphysics at the moment is that if you observe a particle, the observation will affect that observed particle, and indeed the very INTENT of the observation will affect the position, velocity and direction of motion of that particle. And there's no denying it, my father's intention to observe me significantly influenced—changed—my direction of motion...

And that wasn't the end of all my problems. Because although, to my father's credit, he never mocked me for it, my mother came to know the "result" of this so-called "test of courage", and for months afterwards she made unkind remarks about me, saying what a pathetic, cowardly, wimpy son she had, who was even afraid of the dark... Which was a silly slander anyhow, because she must have known very well how often I crawled into all sorts of dark corners on my own, so I was clearly not afraid of the dark! (At least, as long as I was able to fit into boxes and cupboards...)

I'm absolutely certain that I'm not a coward, and I wasn't in my childhood either. I have proof of this, or rather, a "story". The thing is, as a child my body was seriously covered in warts. I had copious amounts of them on both hands, and often on other parts of my body as well, on one occasion even growing near my anus. The way it was treated back then (and may still be, I don't know...) was that the doctor first sprayed the wart with a fast-evaporating spray that froze it, then he scraped the wart out with a spoon-like special tool that had a sharp edge. Well, despite the preliminary freezing it was not a pleasant feeling, and it wouldn't be for an adult either, let alone a young child... I don't know how old I was at the time, but definitely under ten. And I had to return to the doctor very frequently, because the warts kept coming back, sometimes even where they had been scraped off once before. Or several times... I usually had five or six at a time on each hand.

Eventually I got totally fed up with the whole thing. It was clear to me that this freezing method was simply not working. It was fine as a temporary solution, but not a permanent one. I was particularly annoyed that the warts would sometimes grow in places where they had already been scraped out. I assumed the doctor just wasn't doing a good enough job. So I decided to take matters into my own hands. However I didn't have the right tools, that is, no sharp-edged "spoon" or any freezing spray. "No problem," I thought. "If frost doesn't help, then maybe its opposite will—fire!"

And I acted accordingly: one day I scraped off the flammable material from the end of a good dozen matchsticks with a razor blade, then took a pinch of this powder and piled it on top of and around the largest wart, which was on my left hand. Then I struck a match and used it to light this "explosive mound"...

Well, what can I say, it was not a pleasant sensation. After all, being a young child, I had no external or internal anesthetic to use before this "surgery". It didn't turn out the way I imagined—it didn't instantly explode, but burned for three or four seconds... however, the most unpleasant thing was when I had to scrape the black, burnt cinders out of the wound with a pin. I suspected that it wouldn't end well if I left them in there, because then it would probably get infected.

Now, I think what I did was brave, because I knowingly took on a lot of pain, even though I didn't have to. Of course, someone might say that isn't courage, it's ignorance, because I didn't know in advance *how much* it would hurt. Except after the first time I certainly *did* know... and despite this I did the same "trick" three more times, immediately after the first "cure", killing all the warts on my left hand. Surely that's courage, right?! At least for a child under the age of ten...

But now comes the biggest surprise, although it has nothing to do with courage. There were also warts on my right hand. And when I had finished "treating" my left hand, I decided that although I wouldn't remove the warts from my right hand for the time being (because I wanted to at least have one undamaged hand), I would definitely deal with them as well, not right now, but roughly a week later when my left hand had mostly healed. I was determined to do this. However, I could not realize my Grand Plan... But it wasn't my courage that failed me, Nature herself intervened—believe it or not, by the time the burns on my left hand had healed, the warts on my right hand had simply disappeared all by themselves! In fact, they disappeared from every other place on my body too. I still don't understand how this miracle could have happened; I'm thinking that maybe it was the enormous determination I had to kill the warts, proven by the pain I was willing to endure to remove the ones on my left hand. This must have triggered some kind of "self-healing mechanism" in my body, like "turbocharging my immune system" or something... after all, although a wart is ultimately caused by a virus (at least as far as I know...), technically it is a form of skin cancer, even if it is benign, because it retains many of the properties of normal skin tissue. And it does happen, albeit rarely, that someone can recover from even a serious cancer on their own...

So that's what happened to me, and although the wart virus, once in the body, never leaves (so I'm told), I didn't have any more problems with warts for decades after that. Some years ago, however, in my early fifties, a single wart appeared on one of my thighs, and without hesitation I resorted to this effective, tested and proven "fire treatment" again, which worked magnificently. And since then I have never had any further problems with warts.

I will tell another story that I think proves brilliantly that I'm not a coward. This also happened in my childhood...

There was a huge black cherry tree in our garden. It happened once that as I was climbing the big tree to collect fruit from it into a large basket, a branch suddenly broke off from under me. I fell a good five or six meters until I finally got stuck on a lower branch, just above the ground, which I was able to climb down from fairly easily. Naturally I grazed myself all over, and was covered in bruises. I was so scared that my legs were shaking, and I had to sit on the ground because I couldn't stand. I thought I would never be able to climb a tree again. But at the same time I felt ashamed of myself. I looked up at the tree, and there was the basket hanging high above my head, which I knew was almost full. And I knew that if I asked my parents (who weren't present at the incident) they would bring it down for me, but I also knew that if I asked anybody else to do it, I would never dare to climb a tree again, and I'd be a coward, haunted by this moment for the rest of my life and feel ashamed. Even if I did climb a tree later on, I would feel afraid, because no climbing of any OTHER tree would remove my fear. I would always know that THIS tree defeated me once, therefore I am not invincible to certain trees, and that means I could be defeated by other trees as well! But I must not allow a single tree to defeat me! And although my legs were still trembling, I climbed up that tree again and fetched the almost full basket.

It's true that after this "heroic deed" I rested and didn't climb any more trees that day, but I was satisfied. I experienced the whole thing as a victory—I had fought the tree and won, yes, *I* had won, not the tree, and I'd done it without any external help! And the next day I climbed a tree again, and I climbed it proudly, the same tree as well as another one, and I felt no fear at all. I think this proves that I am not a coward. I admit that I was scared when I fell, and I was scared for a while afterwards, until I climbed back up the tree to get the basket... However a brave person is not someone who doesn't feel fear, but someone who is able to overcome their fear. If somebody simply doesn't feel fear, they are not brave, just a crazy imbecile, who is not aware of the dangers. Therefore fear and courage are not mutually exclusive, in fact, the existence of fear is, in my view, a necessary condition for talking about courage at all, that is, if one is able to overcome one's fear. Because if you can't, you are not brave. So an Aspie is not necessarily a cowardly nervous wreck. (I also used this event from my life in one of my novels called *Path of the Silkworm*.)

I'll tell you a third story too, although it has to do with courage in a more indirect way, because it's further evidence that I'm not easily "shocked", that I don't have extreme physiological reactions like fainting at the sight of blood and so on.

Many years ago, when I was still living in Hungary, a falling metal plate hit one of my fingers at my workplace. I was wearing thick leather gloves, but the plate was very heavy (perhaps 20 or 30kg), and it hit my finger with its edge. The result—it immediately cut off (yes, through the gloves!) half of the upper thumb phalange on my left hand. Ever since then that thumb has been significantly shorter, and I only have half a fingernail on it... I was there alone, looking at my hand and wondering what had just happened... Eventually I shrugged and said, "Oh, shit!"

Then I went over to see the foreman—but he wasn't in his office, only his secretary—and with my hand behind my back, I said, "Sorry ma'am, but you'd better let the boss know that I definitely won't be coming in tomorrow. And you'll need to find someone to replace me for the rest of the day, but don't worry about the plasma-cutting machine, because although it's currently unattended, I shut it down safely before I came here to announce that I am on strike..."

The lady just looked at me at a loss, and asked what the problem was. So I pulled my hand out from behind my back and showed her what the problem was... or more precisely, the injury... Well, I didn't faint, but she almost did. She turned white as a sheet and started screaming. I told her I didn't mind if she wanted to shriek, but could she be so kind as to call the boss first and shout into the receiver?

And then, of course, they immediately drove me to the hospital and everything... But the point is that after I performed this little horror scene in the lady's office, I felt a bit dizzy, so I sat down on a chair (without even asking permission, I'm embarrassed to say...), but I was far from fainting, and by the time the foreman came running in I was basically fine. Still, I had lost a significant chunk of one of my fingers forever!

To prove the truth of this story, here are two photos of what my left thumb looked like shortly after the incident:



So I was clearly not a coward, but unfortunately both my parents thought I was.

My mother not only believed I was a coward, but also that her son was a compulsive liar. For when I was a child, my mother used to nag me all the time when I came home from my grandmother's house (which was nearby—my grandmother and great-grandmother sold their old house and moved into the same street as my parents' house around the time I was ten) about what I ate there, what I had for lunch.

I just looked at her in astonishment, wondering how on earth I could remember what I had eaten two whole hours (or more) earlier, when it was a completely insignificant event, not worthy of being remembered, and I didn't understand how anyone could care. However, she didn't understand how it was possible for me *not* to remember less than two hours later! She was deeply convinced that I was lying, and was offended. She couldn't understand why I deliberately wanted to hide from her what the lunch was, what was so terribly secretive that I didn't dare tell her—although I wasn't keeping it a secret, I truly couldn't remember it!

For this reason I later endeavored to memorize what I was eating for lunch, but I only managed to recall it a few times on the way home, because I really didn't care, so I almost always totally forgot by the time I got home, because my mind was busy thinking about other things. But even when I did tell my mother what I had eaten at my grandmother's, it turned out that I had unintentionally lied, because I hadn't told her what I'd actually eaten that particular day, but what I had eaten there the day before or even two days before, because that's what I remembered. I seem to have created a kind of virtual "drawer" in my brain, a "memory partition" with the label: "The food I eat at Grandma's", and to put the name of a meal in it and update it again and again, was such an effort for me, it required so much "brain power" that I didn't always succeed.

My mother was very angry with me for this, of course, and she became firmly convinced that I was a pathological liar. She tried to convince me on numerous occasions that she didn't mind if I was secretive or even lied to people, because it was necessary to protect the secrets of private life; she even understood if I wanted to hide something from her, but why the insignificant thing of what I ate that day?! It was in vain telling her that I didn't remember precisely because it was so insignificant, that I wasn't lying on purpose... She simply didn't believe me, or couldn't grasp it, or who knows what she thought about me...

But back to my alleged cowardice! So that's what my parents believed about me, although I didn't mind so much that my father had this opinion, because my old man didn't mention it very often. I don't know if it was due to being tactful or just because he wasn't very interested... But the situation with my mother was quite different. She would often tease me about it. However, I soon got my mother to stop doing this. I'll tell you how in a moment, but first I have to tell you another story, both because it happened chronologically beforehand, and because it illustrates how clearly my mother did NOT love me, how heartless she was, and... and in fact, despite being a writer, I can't find the right words to adequately describe her behavior in this matter! One thing is certain, of all the abominable acts she committed against me, I condemn this next one the most. There are many other deeds that would compete for "second place" on this imaginary list of abominations, but this one is unrivaled in my eyes!

At that time my mother kept pigs, not many, just two, but even these required plenty of work, and of course she wanted me to help out with the animals. For example, she regularly left me in charge of cleaning their pigsty with pitchforks, shovels or whatever I could manage. Now this was a job that—incredible as it may seem to my Reader—I did NOT hate. It's not that I particularly loved doing it... I admit, I didn't like doing any kind of physical work. I was a very "intellectual" kid in this respect, and liked to use my brain, not my muscles... But this work was relatively easy—I could daydream while I was doing it, my "nervous system" could rest because it wasn't stressful, I didn't have to frequently redirect my attention, after all, there were no "cultivated plants" to pay attention to, and it was quite clear where there was enough pig shit that needed further work. It's true that the work was difficult for my small physique, but I still hated the other jobs my mother used to give me far more. Besides, I almost always had a cold when I was a child, and the pig manure I had to clean out of the pen contained plenty of pig urine too, therefore it smelled strongly of ammonia (at least I think that's the right word for its odor), which my Reader might find stinky and disgusting, but it was incredibly beneficial for me at the time, because my cold always went away immediately after this work, so the smell actually cured me! I have to admit that even today I have no idea why. Perhaps someone with a background in medicine can explain this miracle. I don't know, I'm just writing down that this is what always happened to me, which is why I never objected to this task.

So it's not true that I wasn't willing to do any physical work for the family when I was a child (and that's not even mentioning the other jobs like shelling beans and peas, cherry picking and pitting, etc.). But the point is that one day my mother came up with the idea that the pigs needed nettle. I was surprised by this. Nettles sting... but later my father explained that it doesn't sting pigs because the skin inside their mouths is so thick. Anyway, my mother ordered me to gather nettles for the pigs (using gloves, of course). But there were no nettles growing in our yard. My mother told me to get them from the edge of the "nearby" woods, for there were large areas covered in nettles there. Well these "nearby" woods were on the other side of the meadow near our house, which was at least two kilometers away. But I had no choice—she had ordered me to do this, so I had to do it.

I slung a large hessian bag over my shoulder with thick gloves in it, walked to the woods, gathered the nettles and brought them home. I had to do this several times that summer. Obviously I wasn't enthusiastic about this job either, but it wasn't as bad as, say, weeding the garden, or "tidying up" the living room. I did hate walking, especially in the blazing sun, but at least I wasn't being disturbed, I could be alone with my thoughts, which meant I could rest my "nervous system".

One day, however, when I had half-filled my bag with nettles, I heard voices. Two kids approached me, my schoolmates, although they weren't in the same class as me. Nevertheless, they already knew that I was the guy who was often beaten up by my own classmates, so I was "fair game", and if I was beaten up they didn't have to fear the revenge of my other classmates. In order to have some pretext for the fight, they decided that this was their "territory", that I had no right to pick nettles here because they were "theirs", in fact I wasn't even allowed to be there, unless I begged for this favor on my knees, and humiliated myself in various other ways. Obviously I wasn't willing to do that, nor empty the nettles from my bag, despite them demanding that I do so because I had "stolen it from them".

One word led to another, and not long afterwards came "the violent resolution of the situation". And by this I essentially mean fighting, but it was very different from school fights. It's true that this time I wasn't being attacked by a full dozen young savages, just two, but it soon turned out that one of them—the stronger one—had a KNIFE... A big, saw-toothed dagger! That may not have been the right name for it, but either way, it was certainly not an ordinary kitchen knife; it was huge and very scary-looking. Needless to say, no one had ever attacked me with a knife before.

I'll be honest, I was truly scared, although it wasn't like I panicked. In fact, I immediately came up with a method of defense that took the bloody hooligan by surprise—I grabbed the bag half-filled with nettles and started whirling it in front of me. This had the advantage of him having to be careful not to get his knife stuck in the bag, because then I might knock it out of his hand; on the other hand, he didn't want me to hit him in the face with the bag, because it may be light and the blow itself wouldn't hurt much, but the nettles were poking through here and there, and who wants to have a bunch of nettles dragged over their face?!

So we circled around each other like that for a while, until somebody abruptly kicked my legs from under me. Naturally it was the other kid... I jumped up and flew at him, but then the hooligan with the knife came closer, so I had to watch him again. After a while I forgot about the kid who had no knife, so he was able to kick my legs from under me again. This was repeated a few more times, and they roared at me with laughter. It's true that they never managed to beat me up, in fact I didn't get a single hit or slap in the face; they didn't dare come too close to me because they were afraid of my bag of nettles, so I had chosen a good means of defense in the spur of the moment. But for them it was also great fun to kick my legs from under me from time to time. Their laughter made me feel humiliated.

Eventually I realized I couldn't beat them, and that it was impossible to finish gathering the nettles. I had no option but to retreat. I carried the half-filled bag with me, but they followed me for a good while, sneering, so I had to retreat almost backwards, because I had to keep my eye on them. They thought I was running away from them in shame, in fact, I was of the same opinion, although I couldn't see a better option. But the main point is just coming now... Because when I arrived home, my mother immediately yelled at me for being a lazy pig and gathering so few nettles. Of course, I immediately told her that this time it had nothing to do with my lack of diligence, that I was attacked in the woods by two hooligans, so I was outnumbered, and that one of them even had a knife!

Now here's the point in my story that my Reader might not believe, because anyone would think that there is no way a mother could do such a thing, but it's what happened—my so-called "mother", my "dear, sweet mother" ordered me to return and bring back a whole bag of nettles!

I protested in vain. I explained to her that I seriously considered it DANGEROUS to return there. It wasn't just that I was afraid they would beat me, since I'd almost become accustomed to that, but the

fact that one of them had a KNIFE was a whole other level of threat! After all, it's very rare for someone to die in a school fight. But when a knife appears, anything can happen...

However my mother said I was talking nonsense, because they must surely be gone by now.

"And what if they're still there?" I asked.

"It'll be fine, they didn't stab you before, did they?"

I argued in vain that I may have gotten away with it this time, but she must understand that this is no guarantee that I would get away with it the next time. Anyhow, if a fight gets out of hand, ANYTHING can happen if one party has a weapon, even if the armed fighter doesn't intend to cause any serious injuries and just uses it primarily to threaten, "for the fun"! Because if I defend myself, things could escalate and get ugly. For instance, I punch his nose, it hurts him, he loses his temper for a moment and stabs me with the knife... And if it's in the right place, then I'll die! Of course, that may not necessarily happen, but it's by no means impossible! So the situation is definitely risky. Especially because there are two of them. Did my mother really want me to take such a huge risk FOR A MERE BAG OF THAT FUCKING NETTLE?! Yes, that's exactly what she wanted!

One word led to another, and she insisted that I go back because the pigs needed the nettle, that I shouldn't be such a cowardly rabbit, and that it was my duty...

Well I didn't feel it was in any sense my duty! The situation would have been different—as well as my opinion on whether I had a duty to do so—if, say, these hooligans had kidnapped my sister and I had to free the little whimpering idiot, this "biological disruptor" from their clutches. I wouldn't have thought of objecting, even though I didn't like my sister. But in such a situation, it doesn't matter whether or not I like her—she's still one of the family, and in addition a girl who is younger than me, so obviously it would be my duty to even risk my life for her safety! It's only natural, I wouldn't think otherwise. But FOR A MERE BAG OF NETTLE?! No, I did not consider myself a coward. However, I believed—and still do—that the amount of risk to be taken was simply not commensurate with the expected benefit! If it hadn't been a bag of nettles but a suitcase full of money, that would have been different. But it really was just a bag of nettles! It wasn't my sister's life, or a large sum of money! It's not true that the pigs would have died without that nettle. They could have eaten some other food. And yet my mother sent me back. She sent her child back into danger, just to make things a little better for her pigs! I felt that she valued my life less than the well-being of her pigs. I was worth less to her than pigs. Or less than the value of a single meal for her pigs. In fact, the value of my life can be defined quite precisely—it's less than the price of a bag of nettles, or essentially *weeds*! And I had no choice, that was the order, I had to go back! Actually, I could have gone on my way and then hidden myself, or not gone as far as the woods and searched for nettle elsewhere or something. Yet I didn't choose to do this.

However I was well-prepared for the confrontation—when my mother wasn't looking, I took a broken broomstick lying in the yard and attached the biggest bread knife I had at home to the end of it with duct tape. That's how I set off. And I was determined that if I ran into the hooligans again, no matter what happened, I'd attack them right away and stab them! Yes, dear Reader—right then I was really and truly determined to KILL. To MURDER. I still feel that this was the moment my childhood ended. At that very moment. Well, it felt like shit, that's for sure! I sincerely believed that I was in mortal danger. The two hooligans may have thought it was an innocent joke when they threatened me

with a knife, but I took it seriously. We Aspies generally do take things seriously, and we don't have much of a sense for that sort of stupid barbaric humor.

Yes, at the time I was prepared to kill. Of course, it wouldn't have been the same type of killing as when fascists defend themselves by saying "I did it on orders". Obviously it took my mother's order to do this, but I also thought the two hooligans deserved to be killed, if I was able to do it. And I wasn't afraid of being punished for it either. On the way to the woods I thought in detail about what would happen if I survived this adventure and killed one of them, especially both of them. Surely it would cause a big scandal, the police would be involved, there would be a court hearing, that sort of thing. SO WHAT?! On the one hand, there was a good chance it would qualify as self-defense. And on the other hand, I was simply too young and underage to get ANY punishment; at worst I would get a good slap on the wrist and that's it! But my mother certainly wouldn't get away with it, if I told the cops that I didn't want to go back but she had ordered me to. Oh yes, my mother would not get away without punishment, that's for sure! I didn't know what kind of punishment she would get, I had no idea, I wasn't a legal expert, but it was sure to be SOMETHING, because treating a child the way she treated me was not allowed! A sensible, normal mother would simply NOT send her child back to a place where they had been threatened with a knife! No way!

Of course, my Reader will have guessed the end of the story by now—by the time I made my way back to the edge of the woods, prepared to fight to the death, there was no trace of the two hooligans. So my mother had been right about that. But it was only a guess, she couldn't have been certain of it...

So I picked up that fucking bag, filled it with the damned nettle, and carried it home to my fucking awful mother. I could not have hated her more right then! Especially because she immediately started mocking me about being right, that the bad kids were not there anymore, which proved that I was a wretch and a coward. It made no difference me saying in my defense that I actually *had* ended up going back, and that it wasn't cowardice because I truly believed that the risk I took was out of proportion to the expected benefits. She stuck to the view that I was a shitty, cowardly wretch. This was her opinion. However mine was that even in the worst case scenario, that is, if I really was a coward, it doesn't alter the fact that a real mother who loves her child would not send even her fearful and cowardly son to a place where his life was being threatened with a knife! Even if this threat was just fun and games. Because a knife is not a joke. Things can get ugly at any time, as I wrote above.

So I was extremely angry with my mother for that, and I could never forgive her for it (even now that she's dead!), but to my good fortune, a few days after the incident I had a great opportunity to get revenge on her, which I'll talk about now.

It happened yet again that my mother wanted me to gather nettle for the pigs. I didn't dare to protest, but by then I had got myself a sizable pocketknife, since I suspected that my "dear" mother would be so "kind" as to send me back there. Why not? After all, if I could get the nettles successfully, then all was well, there was a clear profit, and if they beat me in the meantime, there was no harm done, because my mother herself wasn't being beaten, and if they stabbed me it wouldn't be much of a tragedy, after all, it would only mean the death of someone who was worth less than pigs... So I carried the pocketknife on me, but I didn't tell my mother, of course. Nor anyone else.

By the way, I will say in advance that this knife won't play any role in the story; I only mentioned it to show that I considered this "mission" seriously dangerous, and to give an idea of the sort of mood I was in at the time.

So I was sent there again, but this time my sister went along with me. I don't know why, but my mother sent her away for some reason. Perhaps she was tired of her chattering too... Anyway, it doesn't matter. She ordered me to take care of the little "snivel-machine". Okay. She could come with me, I didn't mind. Her presence was unlikely to worsen the danger, or how disappointed I was in my mother. So we went to the patch of nettle, and I gathered it of course, since my sister had no intention of helping me in the slightest... I didn't even bother asking her to help, for I considered the situation hopeless—if I asked her and she refused to help me, then beating her would be futile, since I'd be the one who'd be punished at home; on the other hand, if I couldn't force her to help and just accepted it, my authority would be diminished, because it would be clear that she was allowed to do whatever she liked. So I preferred not to say anything. If she wanted to help, she would do it without being asked...

So I gathered the nettle, the bag was almost full, and to my infinite joy the hooligans hadn't even turned up. But suddenly a long green liana nearby started moving and creeping forward... although fortunately not towards me. It was a snake!

Now, in Hungary venomous snakes are extremely rare, both in number and species. As far as I know, the only species they have there that is dangerous to humans is the viper. But it's very easy to recognize. The snake I encountered wasn't one of those, which means it was most likely a harmless grass snake. However I only know this now as an adult; I had no idea as a child, of course. All I knew was that this "long animal" was a snake, therefore it was DANGEROUS! An ENEMY! It wasn't small either, over a full meter in length. So it was a decent-sized snake.

Naturally I was instantly awakened to the ancient memories of all my ape ancestors from millions of years before. It is a well-known fact how much apes hate snakes. Whether my herpetologist readers like it or not, if there is a snake in the immediate vicinity, the ABSOLUTELY NORMAL human reaction is to run away... Or if not, they will try to destroy the snake as quickly as possible. The Ancient Evil. It's coded in our genes. The fact that apes also feel this way is proof of this. Of course, one can certainly admire the beauty of snakes. I myself can acknowledge that there is an incredible beauty about them. They can even be caressed in a friendly manner if they are kept as pets, when you know with absolute certainty that they are harmless. All this is true. However, if it is an UNKNOWN snake, then the sight of it automatically puts all the defensive and offensive subsystems of our body and nervous system on a thousand percent alert, and our stress hormones soar to astronomical levels... Again, this is genetically coded and perfectly normal!

This is what happened in my case too. And of the two possible alternatives, I chose not to flee but to instantly attack. Which in itself proves more than any words that I am by no means a coward. It does take a certain amount of courage for a child who has barely finished the "lower grade" of elementary school to attack an almost two-meter-long, bulky snake... Especially in Hungary, where snakes are a very rare phenomenon. People here are not at all used to snakes like in the tropics. In fact, Hungary is one of the safest countries in the world when it comes to snakes. Okay, it was almost certainly a perfectly harmless grass snake, and now, as an adult, I feel sorry for the poor reptile. But I couldn't have known that at the time. So the poor thing was in the wrong place at the wrong time... May it rest in peace...

I grabbed a large stick lying nearby and immediately began to beat it, swishing the strokes with a speed that a threshing machine would have envied. And I tried to aim for its head if I could. The poor devil tried its best to escape, but it couldn't... Finally it stopped moving. I wasn't prepared to gather any

more nettles, and the bag was almost full anyway. Instead, what I did was to take home not only the bag, but the snake as well—I coiled it onto the end of the stick that I had used as a weapon, and held it high as if it had the skull of a defeated enemy stuck to it, carrying it home as a badge of victory! I remember singing some sort of victory song along the way; it was only one line, but I repeated it over and over: "The march goes on, goes on, with the snake as leader!"

Nobody noticed my arrival home. My mother was not in the yard, nor in the "big" house, but in her dreaded "sanctuary", the outhouse, to which I—the persona non grata—had no access. But I knew that she was in there, because I could hear her rummaging about from outside. "Well, this is going to be quite a surprise for her," I thought, and I took the dead snake off the stick and placed it on the doorstep in a more or less regular ring. Then I knocked on the door and said, "Mommy, come out, I've brought the nettles!"

"Throw it to the pigs," she replied.

"But I also want to show you something. Something interesting."

I don't know what she said to that, I remember her not wanting to come out for some reason... However I persisted, and finally she opened the door. Then she immediately slammed it shut again, shrieking. I burst out laughing, so hard that I wasn't able to remain upright, and I fell to the ground, slapping the earth in jubilation. I can tell you, I hadn't felt as good as I did then in a long time!

"What's wrong Mommy, why aren't you coming out? Don't be a coward, it's already dead, it must be because I beat it to death! Yes, I killed it myself, because I really am brave!"

"Just take it away, take it away!" she continued screaming.

"But why are you being such a coward?! Come out and take a look at it! You can't possibly be more of a cowardly rabbit than your own son, whom you've labeled a wimp so many times?! It's dead, unlike those hooligans with knives you sent me back to! Do you remember, huh?"

"Oh, just get it out of here, take it away right now!"

I continued laughing and mocking her, but eventually I got bored and took the snake carcass far away, throwing it onto the bank of the creek. I regretted this later, because it occurred to me how nice it would have been to conserve it in alcohol, and I went back for it, but couldn't find it—some animal must have found it and taken it away to eat.

In any case, after that my mother never mocked me for being a coward again. She knew that whether I was a coward or not, I could always retaliate by saying that she was no braver than I was, after all the hysterics she threw over that dead snake. Although I had fought it while it was alive! Well, which of us is the greater coward, huh?!

My father also found out about the incident. He didn't even scold me for scaring my mother, he just thought it was funny and had a good laugh about it. But I did get a good scolding for attacking the snake at all. Because what if it really had been a venomous snake? Even if I was willing to take the risk, it could have bitten my sister, who was standing nearby!

"But didn't Mommy order me to take care of my sister?" I asked.

"That's precisely my point! You didn't take care of her, you put her in danger by trying to be a hero!" my father said.

"I disagree," I retorted. "In my opinion, everyone is safest when we eliminate all potential threats in the vicinity. There's even a saying about it: 'The best defense is offense!'"

"Hmm..." my father muttered, and then stopped pushing the subject.

My Reader may wonder if I hadn't considered that my mother might have died of fright when she saw the snake. Oh, that had definitely occurred to me! But in a way, it was like a man of deep faith shrugging and saying, "Thy will be done, Lord"! In other words, I wasn't particularly worried about it. First of all, I believed that the chances of that happening were slim. It was a similar attitude to that of my mother's, as to whether the knife-wielding hooligans would still be there at the edge of the woods when I returned... And I figured that if my mother died of fright, then she actually deserved it, because I could have also died from being sent back to a place I'd been threatened with a knife. Furthermore, her death wouldn't be a great loss, since she didn't love me anyway. She had proved that brilliantly. And besides, I felt that it was simply worth the risk to be able to wash off the stigma of cowardice. I suspected that she'd back off after that and not make mention of me being a coward. I had calculated correctly.

Now, of course, my Reader may be horrified at what a cruel and wicked child I was, after all, I was willing to risk my mother's death, I didn't have the slightest hint of "filial love" and so on... I did indeed lack this, I will admit. So what? She made me this way. She was allowed to risk my life, but I wasn't allowed to risk hers? Come on, you must realize that this would be a typical case of "double standards"! In addition, please take into account that I was most definitely a minor at the time, in fact a child. Mind you, by the time this incident happened, my mother had done a whole slew of nasty things to me—this was just the "last straw". This was just the most brutal of them, at least in my opinion. But there were a number of other very cruel things too. I will refer to some of these right now.

Let's start with another example of my mother's favorite "philosophy of life", which I mentioned earlier, that "as long as I'm living in her house, I have to do what she says", and naturally this included the fact that it was my duty to adapt to her, not her to me. Which is a perfectly legitimate wish in principle, I won't dispute it. It's fine for a child to be required to obey their parents... GENERALLY. To a certain extent even if the child has Asperger's, especially if neither I nor my mother had any idea about the fact. But as they say, "The devil is in the details"... The rule that the child must adapt, perhaps shouldn't extend to every stupid, idiotic whim of the parent, especially when everybody knows the whim is seriously harmful to one's well-being!

As it happened, no one in the family smoked. Well, my uncle did—he became a smoker during his compulsory military service, and later he couldn't give it up. But the fact that he smoked didn't bother me, simply because he didn't live in the same house as me and my parents. When I once made a disapproving comment to my uncle about adopting this filthy habit in the army, he "reassured me" that if I was there I would take up smoking too... I had received this prophecy from many others as well before enlisting in the army, but despite military service being a mere nightmare for me, it DIDN'T EVEN OCCUR to me that it would be a good idea to "light up"! In fact, I hated all forms of smoking there even more than I had hated it before.

So nobody in our house was a smoker. THEORETICALLY. Because one day my mother decided to buy a bag of pipe tobacco. Not for the purpose of smoking it, she didn't even try, but occasionally she threw a few pinches, sometimes even half a handful, on top of the cover of the hot oil-burning stove. Since it was winter when this disgusting neurosis, or whatever you want to call it, got a hold of her... I certainly didn't consider it to be normal behavior!

Naturally, the dry tobacco leaves thrown onto the hot metal plate were incinerated in an instant, filling every cubic centimeter of the air in the rather small room with a noxious stench. And holding my

nose, deathly pale, I immediately asked her why the hell my mother was doing this, because I had assumed up till that point that she was a non-smoker. She "reassured" me that it was not smoking, as she was not inhaling the smoke. I had a completely different opinion about this, however, arguing that she was obviously inhaling it, because the whole room was filled with the stench of tobacco... According to my mother, it wasn't a stench, but a scent. She told me it was very fragrant, and very different from cigarette smoke, because with cigarettes the paper is also burning, and that's what stinks. But pipe tobacco is fragrant!

In my opinion it stank too, and was no better than cigarette smoke. I certainly couldn't tell the difference between the two, and soon I began to feel unwell, arguing with my mother that she had no right to do this because it was detrimental to my health! And although she had the right to destroy her own health, I didn't dispute that, she had no right to destroy *my* health, however now I also had to inhale this smoky, nicotine-filled, filthy air! I suggested we ventilate the room immediately, and of course never do anything like this again.

Then she lost her temper and came out with the above-quoted expression, that it's my duty to adapt, that she can do whatever she likes in her house, etc. But I hated smoking so much, as well as anything that "scents" the air (even those women who use strong perfumes on their body or clothes...) that I wouldn't give in. I started explaining to her that the house might be hers, but not the air I breathe. I had a RIGHT TO MY HEALTH, to clean air... But it was in vain. My mother did not yield, only got angrier, and told me that if I didn't like it, I could go wherever I wanted, because she was in charge here! And, as if to demonstrate that she was in a position of power and could do as she pleased, she ostentatiously threw a larger than ever handful of tobacco on top of the stove.

"Fine," I said, "if you insist on destroying my health, I'll help you do it faster!" And I left her "beloved" house as I was—barefoot and in thin pajamas—and went outside. I didn't wander very far, not even into the street, just out on the front porch... but it was winter, and freezing cold, the temperature below minus ten degrees Celsius. The snow was so hard that when I lay down on it, it barely gave way beneath me. Since I did not stay standing or sitting, but simply lay down on the thick layer of snow. I was stubbornly determined to freeze to death. Because why should I continue to live in a world where I can't even have the pleasure of breathing clean air that doesn't irritate my nose, and where it's my own mother who is forcing me to breathe in stinky fumes! It was then that I first thought of calling her, even if only to myself, not a mother but a "cranky old hag". In terms of age, she may not have been old, but she acted like it. From then on I thought of her with those words quite often.

So there I was, lying on my back, and although my mother could have easily seen me—she didn't even have to leave the house to do it, just peek out the front door window—she didn't even do that. She was sure I would soon "come to my senses" and come back in groveling to her, begging for her forgiveness... Why the hell wouldn't I, since it was bone-chilling cold outside?!

But, of course, she was completely wrong there. Any other kid may have done that, but I was an Aspie, and if an Aspie really means something, then they will be more stubborn than a mule about it... I wanted clean air, and the air outside was clean, even if cold. But my mother was also stubborn. She wasn't really worried about me, even though she should have had the sense to know that in this weather a small child would freeze in no time, even if they were well dressed, but especially if they were only wearing pajamas, and no shoes or socks... But she didn't go out searching for me.

It so happened that my survival was entirely due to my father, who had just come home from work and found me lying on the snow not far from the front door. My goodness, was he terrified! He asked me what had happened, was I perhaps taken ill?!

I told him that yes, I was feeling unwell, from the stench that my mother had been filling the room with... But I could hardly say anything because my lips were already blue and green from the cold, and I could barely move... my legs were unable to move at all. Then my father took me inside, and gave my mother a serious scolding... so much so that he even beat her. And he wasn't generally an aggressive man. I can remember maybe three occasions where a quarrel between him and my mother turned into a shouting match, but this time he had become physically violent towards her. I must admit that this pleased me no end. And he immediately ventilated the room and turned the oil stove to maximum. However it was in vain, for I still couldn't avoid getting sick. This was the time I caught my second pneumonia...

For the record, my father didn't approve of my behavior either. It's true that he didn't smoke either, nor did he like pipe tobacco smoke, but he felt that I was "overreacting". In fact, my mother wasn't beaten because the rotten witch had tried out the "scent" of pipe tobacco, nor because of her opinion that it was my job to adapt. All that was fine in my father's eyes. But he believed that after a minute or two, my mother should have taken a look outside to check on me, and if she could see that I wouldn't come back in of my own accord, then she should have dragged me back in, and if I resisted she should have slapped me, just to keep me from freezing to death! My mother had not done this, and it had almost killed me. So she was a bad, careless mother! Well, I had exactly the same opinion...

Here I would like to briefly touch on my views on "smoking" in general. Of course, you may have guessed from the above story that I do not endorse smoking, to put it mildly, but my dislike of smoke is much more general. I can't stand any kind of cigarette smoke, so much so that I have turned down more than one job that seemed to be excellent, even in times of the highest unemployment, simply because the working conditions would have been such that I would have had to put up with being cooped up in an office or workshop with smokers. Or even if the workplace wasn't like this, the so-called "human beings" smoked on the bus that transported them to and from work. I say this because in my eyes such a person is not human! These creatures are just barbarians in my eyes. Ragtag. They're no different from common animals. Uncivilized rabble. I know, this sounds rather harsh and impolite... not "politically correct". But I'm just being honest, as I promised earlier in the book that this would be an **honest** self-confession. For this reason, I will go one step further—not only do I not consider smokers to be real human beings, but not even common animals. For common animals are perhaps worthy of love. But smokers ARE NOT. Not in my eyes. Not at all. I confess to hating each one of them with a passion! Because as far as I'm concerned, such a person is a low, vile, dirty pig, and the only reason I won't say this to their face is because it would insult the noble, refined species of real pigs! Yes, I will admit that in certain circumstances I would be much more capable of loving a pig than a smoker...

To some extent, this sentiment even applies to my own relatives. Because, to be fair, my uncle is a very likable, kind and gentle man, and I don't pretend not to like him, but I have to acknowledge that the fact that he smokes has taken an immense toll on my sympathy for him.

I absolutely detest all kinds of smoking. Cigarettes, e-cigarettes, pipes, cigars or anything else that can be smoked. I would like to point out, however, that although I would happily ban these disgusting

things if I could, my wish is not the prohibition of TOBACCO, only the burning and smoking of it. I agree with the view that banning "consumer goods" such as stimulants, drugs, narcotics, may not be such a good idea, because all the brainless idiots will just buy them anyway, and if they can't get them legally, they will buy them on the "black market". But I don't have much of a problem with somebody who's such a cretin that they want to ruin their own health. Go ahead, do it! Good luck to you! Hopefully they will die before they can reproduce, or if not, at least have fewer children than the more rational people. That's how evolution works! So that's fine. They have a free will and we live in a democracy and so on, therefore anyone who wants to die from tobacco usage or other drugs has the right to do so, I acknowledge that. But they have **no** right to destroy MY health, and the health of others who want to stay out of this craziness! And because smoke drifts into OUR lungs too, it's the production of smoke that should be banned, not the tobacco!

Don't go telling me that I shouldn't generalize, that there is such a thing as "cultured smoking" and so on... I don't accept this view. Cultured smoking may be conceivable in a strictly theoretical sense, but in practice there is NO such person as a "cultured smoker". This concept is logically equivalent to the "empty set"... I am of this opinion because tobacco (or the nicotine it contains) is an addictive narcotic. Smokers crave it. And the longer they've been smoking, the more they crave it. If they aren't allowed to "light up", they become edgy. They crave it more and more because they get withdrawal symptoms. Initially, of course, they don't smoke in the presence of others, attempting to be a "cultured smoker". But that only lasts for a short time. There comes a time for *every smoker* when they are no longer able to abstain from smoking. Then the illusive mask of the "cultured smoker" falls away, and we see a delirious, frantic savage with withdrawal symptoms, who cares for nothing more than the opportunity to smoke his disgusting "stink stick"...

Consequently, I am not in favor of the legalization of marijuana either that is going on in the US today. It smells even worse than ordinary tobacco... Seriously, the stench of a sock that hasn't been washed in months is even more pleasant than marijuana smoke! I have no problem at all with them legalizing marijuana or whatever else, as long as it isn't producing SMOKE. In other words, I think that tobacco, marijuana or whatever else should be legal to use, but ONLY in a way that it doesn't disturb others. And since the smoke is what disturbs others, that's what must be prohibited. However, if it were up to me they would be free to make band-aids out of them, make food or drinks, inject an extract of it into the vein of a stupid moron who wishes to be knocked out (directly into his brain for all I care, which would be more useful since it would surely have a stronger effect and kill him sooner, a plus, because it wouldn't be a loss for society if such idiots died...), they could even make an enema out of the drugs if they wanted. BUT DON'T SMOKE IT!

Another story I really want to tell my Readers is related to alcohol. My father was a complete teetotaler. If he ever even had a sip, it would have been as rare an occasion as a May snowfall in, say, Italy, because I don't remember a single instance of him drinking anything alcoholic, even a tiny drop! Unfortunately, I can't say the same of my mother. I hasten to add that I'm in no way saying she was an alcoholic. During the first half of my childhood I never saw her drink a single mouthful of anything that contained alcohol. She did love coffee, a habit she kept until her death. But she didn't initially drink alcoholic beverages. And she didn't drink much later either, not until about the time I was in high school.

However, there was a period between these two "eras" when she became quite addicted to beer. Especially the so-called "light" beers. I still remember, her favorite beer was called "Kőbányai Világos Sör", which in English roughly translates to: "Light Beer from the Quarry". That was the name of the brand. And she took to drinking that a lot. So much so, that it was not uncommon for her to drink up to thirty bottles of it in a single week, which is quite a considerable amount, because that means four bottles a day, and in those days a "bottle" contained half a liter...

I can state with full certainty that this was the weekly amount, simply because it was me who she had carry the empty beer bottles back to the store in order for them to refund the deposit. Naturally I had to walk back there, and I had to hang the huge bag of bottles over my shoulder. They may have been empty, but they still weighed a considerable amount, and I had to carry them for a good kilometer. My spine has been a bit crooked ever since. Of course, it's not absolutely certain that that's what caused it, but at least it can't be ruled out. And anyhow, if it's not the cause, it certainly didn't do my spine any good.

In addition, she frequently not only ordered me to return the empty bottles to the store to redeem them, but also to buy and bring her home full bottles. These full bottles were obviously even heavier. Unfortunately, at that time there was no law against selling alcohol to minors... I would have been glad if there was such a law and I hadn't been able to buy the beer, because I was terribly ashamed of doing it. I knew that no one would think I was buying the beer for myself.... but I was still ashamed of the fact that ANYONE in my family drank alcohol, even if it was just adults, and a "mild" drink like beer. After all, as the frequently-quoted proverb went at that time: "Alcohol kills, makes you stupid and penniless". Or in another English translation: "With alcohol you lose your life, your mind and everything else". Alcohol kills brain cells, and I was most proud of my mind, so naturally I wanted to be proud not only of my own mind, but also of the minds of my family members! This viewpoint inevitably led me to shame and condemn any activity that could be described as unhealthy in a broad sense, but especially drinking! And now my mother had appointed me as "alcohol delivery boy"...

I want to point out quickly that I never once saw my mother drunk. Never ever, not even a little "tipsy". She was very careful about that. It must have been to uphold her reputation... And even if she did drink a lot sometimes, it was easy for her to keep it a secret, because she just had to hide in the "outbuilding", her private sanctuary, where I couldn't see her. She didn't even have to lock the door, for she knew I wouldn't dare go in there on my own, uninvited.

But all that wasn't really so bad. The reason I brought up this alcohol thing is the following story. One day my parents decided to make their own brandy. At that time home distillation was forbidden in Hungary, or at least you had to obtain a license for it, and there was a limit to the amount you could make, even if you had a license. I'm not sure of the exact details of these laws, partly because I didn't know them then (I didn't care...), and a lot of time has passed since then, but the point is that you weren't supposed to do something like that and suddenly decide to make your own brandy. It wasn't even permitted to be made exclusively for private consumption and not to sell. Yet despite this, my parents decided to have a go at it. The reason for their decision was that they had acquired (for free) an enormous quantity of plums—I don't know how many, but as I recall, it was at least two or three hundred kilos... Obviously it was impossible for us to eat that much before they went bad. Bottling them was one option, of course. But there was too much to make jam out of, and even if they could have, too much sugar would have been needed and it wouldn't be worth it.

In the end, only a minority of these plums were suitable for bottling, because most of them were "windfall" fruit, which inherently runs a high risk of spoiling quickly. So not wanting to let the unexpected gift go to waste, my parents decided to make brandy from it. In the case of brandy, it's not a problem if the raw material is windfall fruit, even if it's a bit rotten, since it has to ferment anyway...

I'll mention in advance that I never saw my father drink any of the homemade brandy. Of course, I have no doubt that he tasted it... He may well have drunk a very small amount of it on rare occasions, it's possible. But I never saw it. Although I did catch my mother drinking it. However, as with the beer, I have to admit that she never got drunk on it, nor even tipsy, so she didn't drink that much. But as far as my father was concerned (I have no proof, but I'm sure it was my mother's idea to make the brandy...), he didn't agree to make brandy because he liked to drink it, but rather because he didn't want to throw away all the free plums; and besides this he was an engineer, so he was enticed by the challenge of whether he could solve the technical problem of making brandy with the tools he had available, and without any expensive investment. So to him it was simply an experiment.

He soon succeeded, so my parents rigged up a very primitive distiller in the kitchen. Meanwhile I was plagued by conflicting feelings. On the one hand, I fully shared my father's curiosity to see if this great "chemistry experiment" would succeed, and I benefited from it in the sense that I learned a lot about chemistry, physics, fermentation, distillation, etc. I understood that my father was excited by these questions. I could also grasp that they didn't want these plums to go to waste. On the other hand, I had an aversion to the fact that alcohol was at the center of things again. Alcohol was in my eyes an evil, sinful, despicable substance, and so everything that was used to produce, consume, advertise and sell it was "unclean" in the moral sense. But even if I could accept that my parents were making brandy, I wanted to at least be sure that they weren't drinking it, but selling it or giving it away. Well, that would have also been a sin in my opinion... Still, it's less of a crime than drinking it themselves! Of course, I wasn't the least bit afraid that my father would drink it regularly. But I wasn't so sure about my mother!

So the big day came when they made their first attempt at distilling it. It was scheduled for the evening. They told me to go to bed because it was going to take a long time, perhaps until morning, but I needed to sleep so I wouldn't get tired at school. So I dutifully went to bed, but before I did, I was told not to say a word to anyone the next day about the fact that we were making brandy at home, because no one must know about it. I promised not to say anything, although I didn't like my parents doing something illegal. But what else could I have done?!

When I awoke the next morning, before leaving for school, I took a look in the kitchen. The distiller had already been dismantled, but that didn't tell me if it had worked or not. Looking at the coat rack in the hallway, I saw that my father's clothes were missing, so he wasn't home. I looked out into the garden, and saw my mother there. So I went to the doorway and called out, "Mami, did the brandy-making succeed?"

Then she immediately began shouting too. However not like me, that is, not like someone asking someone something, someone relatively far away, but shouting in a shrill, angry voice with a twisted face: "Didn't I order you not to tell anyone about this, you little idiot?! Come here at once, so I can slap you!"

I just stood there inanely, failing to understand what was wrong with my mother. And I started nervously explaining to her that I hadn't told anyone about the brandy-making. How could I have?! It

was physically impossible, since I had just woken up and hadn't even met anyone I could have spoken to! But she disagreed, shouting that I had indeed revealed the secret, because I should have had the sense to know that if I shouted this to her in the garden, then the neighbors could hear it.

My mother was right in principle, of course, however I tried to make her understand that this was not the same as what she had ordered me to do yesterday. She had instructed me not to tell anyone. To me, "not telling" implies the notions of "intention" and "willfulness". That I do something deliberately. In other words, I understood that I couldn't start a conversation with anyone about it, I couldn't boast that we were able to make brandy; and I even understood—although it wasn't specifically in the order—that if someone else started questioning me about whether or not we made brandy, I was supposed to lie, and tell them that we didn't. That's how I interpreted her order. However, to me the situation was quite different when we were in our own garden, and I wasn't talking to a stranger, not even to my classmates, but my own mother, who already knew that we had made brandy because she was the one who actively carried out the whole process, and even invented it!

Somehow I didn't feel the matter was serious enough to live in fear for the rest of my life of making a blunder, even in OUR OWN HOME, in the very place I was supposed to feel safe. But my mother insisted that she meant I was not to talk about it in any public place. I disputed that the garden was a public place. Because I didn't think it was. According to her it was, because the neighbors might hear. I told her that it was a purely theoretical possibility, she just had to look around and see that there weren't any neighbors in sight. Besides, she was arguing with me much louder than I had spoken, so if anyone here was revealing the secret it was more likely to be her than me!

That's when she got really angry, and again told me to come over to her so she could slap me. I vainly told her that fine, I wouldn't talk to her about it in the garden next time, for she maintained the intention to slap me, saying that if I didn't go to her now, it would be much worse for me later. I believed her, so I went over there. And she really did slap my face... That is, she punished ME because SHE HERSELF had broken the law! In addition, she punished me despite the fact that it would have been perfectly enough to repeat that I really wasn't to say a word about it, *even in the garden*. Yet she slapped me nevertheless...

I sometimes wonder why my mother had such a "drinking" period in her life. She wasn't an alcoholic... But it is undeniable that she had guzzled a lot of beer at that time (as well as home-made brandy...). As I see it, she eventually realized that although my father was a good husband, he was too boring for her. I think my mother's life lacked romance (my father must have been anything but the romantic knight of a girl's dreams...), and that made my mother a little depressed, so alcohol gave her some relief. Then later she gave it up, and "resigned herself to her fate".

As for me, I was very ashamed of it as a young child, but eventually I resolved my cognitive dissonance and realized that drinking wasn't as dark and satanic as I first thought. Therefore my parents weren't that guilty. Okay, they broke the law, but it was a bad law. So after modifying my viewpoint, I decided that as soon as I had the chance, I would try all kinds of alcoholic beverages.

I had the chance to do this less than six months later, because my parents were invited to a New Year's Eve party my uncle and aunt were throwing. They lived only three houses away from us, so it didn't take long to get there. Obviously they had no intention of offering me, a child, any alcoholic beverage. But there was plenty of everything on the table—wine, beer, brandy, liqueurs, and who

knows what else... They were good brands too, and quality products for the most part. My uncle was a wealthy man, at least a lot wealthier than my parents, so he could afford it.

As I wrote above, I wasn't offered any alcohol, and I didn't ask for any either (I knew they would never give it to me...), but it so happened that for some reason everyone had left the room to go into the kitchen or some other room, and I was left alone in the living room with the TV as my only company. There was a special New Year's Eve program on, and they probably assumed I was going to peacefully watch it... Well, that's not what happened at all! I immediately began tasting all the available drinks, one after the other... Of course, I knew that if I drank too much of them I would get drunk, and I didn't want that. So I was very careful to drink only a small amount of each one. It wasn't difficult to stick to this rule, because it soon turned out that none of the alcoholic beverages actually tasted very good, except for perhaps the liqueurs because they were so sweet... but even those weren't exceptionally delicious. I liked the eggnog best of the liqueurs, however I really thought they had spoiled it by adding alcohol...

So it wasn't long before I stopped the sampling. And I really hadn't drunk much of each one. But then I was still a child, who weighed much less than an adult, which meant the alcohol had more of an effect on me. Plus I had mixed the drinks, and it is well-known that this enhances the harmful effects... so what I had done would have its consequences. By this I mean that I sat back in my armchair and continued watching TV, but after only a few minutes I unexpectedly began crying. Because it occurred to me that the year was over, and we would NEVER again write this year into the calendar! It was not that I lamented the bygone year as if it had been so exceptionally great; it was simply the mere fact that it would not be the same year that would appear at the top of the calendars, but a year that was greater than it. The fact that the four digits that marked the year would change caused me immense sadness, and I truly sobbed my heart out.

There were still a few drops of common sense in me, however, and although I couldn't stop sobbing, I said to myself: "Zoli, you're not generally stupid enough to cry over something like that! *You're drunk!*" So I knew I had "lost my mind", but in spite of this knowledge I was unable to stop crying.

In the end I thought it best to get home quickly, before the adults noticed I was drunk. Especially because I might even get punished for it... So I stood up in order to go home. Then I suddenly felt as if somebody had pulled the ground from under me... I was reeling. Somehow I managed to reach the door, and I stepped out. There was a blizzard outside, the wind was howling. But it was good, for the cold air brought me back to my senses a little. I stumbled over to our house. I had a key and went in... I don't remember how I got into bed, but the next morning I woke up in my clothes. Fortunately I didn't climb into bed with my shoes on, although I don't remember how I got them off.

In any case, from then on I stopped drinking alcohol. What was the point when it was no use to me? First of all, my own experience had proved that it could be really harmful. And then it didn't even taste good! Why should I spend a lot of money on something that is not only harmful, but doesn't even taste good?! And to top it off, it doesn't even make me happy—it makes me sad and depressed! I was certain of that, after all, I had experienced it. Why the hell would I spend money on such a thing?! I wouldn't even want it if it was given to me free of charge! I have no intention of drinking it. There's no point. Ever since then, it has been my opinion that anyone who drinks alcohol is stupid.

I will also describe here the event that is the "runner-up" in the ranking of the "heinous acts" committed by my mother against me. It is true that this event did not happen during my childhood... so chronologically it would not quite fit here, but I will still include it here because it shows that my mother's attitude towards me did not change after I grew up and "fled the nest".

So, the story is that I was visiting my parents, and it happened to be just as they were finishing a big cooking session. My father enthusiastically informed me that the day before they had received some wild boar meat from one of their acquaintances who was a hunter, and they had just prepared a meal out of it. He invited me to sit down at the table, because of course they were going to offer me some of this rare delicacy too. I had arrived at just the right time! My father was absolutely right that game meat was an exceptionally rare delicacy in Hungary at the time (I think it still is... in fact, I know that even in the US the price is far higher than for "ordinary" meat...), but the facial expression of my mother showed that she believed quite the opposite of me arriving "just at the right time", however she didn't say anything.

We chatted (that is, I chatted mainly with my father), and after a few minutes it was time to dish up. My mother served everyone the "pörkölt" (a special type of Hungarian Goulash made from stewed meat and paprika), which was prepared using the game meat. She had made about a pot's worth, enough for all of us, so it was all gone by the time she had distributed it. We started eating, and I have to admit, it was extremely delicious! I can't deny that my mother was a good cook, despite not liking every one of her meals. I can only imagine that this "fault" is in me, because nobody else ever complained about her food. Moreover, the food she made that I was willing to eat was not only "edible" to me, but incredibly tasty. So basically her dishes fell into two extreme categories—the ones I hated and couldn't even get down (even though other people enjoyed them), and the ones I absolutely loved. Unfortunately, there was no middle category between these two for me...

So the point is that the meal had been portioned out, and it definitely fell into the category of what I considered very tasty. However, I had barely finished my third mouthful when my mother jumped up from the table with this sudden exclamation: "Oh dear, we forgot about Sultan!"

"Sultan" was the name of their dog. It was a big, black dog, I don't know the breed, it must have been some kind of mix, but it certainly looked very dangerous. My parents told me that once their house had been broken into while they were home (although the burglars weren't aware of this), and as soon as the door opened, the dog had jumped up and snarled at them... One of the burglars had shouted, "Whoa, there's a dog, there's a dog!" and they fled as fast as they could. He only had to glance at the animal... This dog didn't really want to allow *me* into my parents' house either, but that wasn't his fault because my parents got him when I was no longer living with them.

Now he was lying in the corner of the kitchen. And as soon as my mother got up from the table, she began to eloquently explain that she had misallocated the food, since Sultan hadn't got any! I just looked at her, not comprehending why she was saying this. Why should we be concerned about that now? Surely she could give the dog something after lunch... although the dog didn't even seem hungry, he was lying calmly on the floor. My mother, however, seemed to want to feed him immediately, which would have been fine, except that she walked up to me, took my plate (which was still almost full), brought it to the dog and spooned out about half the food into the dog bowl. Then she brought me back what was leftover. I just sat there speechless, and looked at her wondering WHAT IS HAPPENING?!

And she began explaining to me with an innocent smile on her face, that everything was all right now because Sultan had gotten his share...

I'm sure he did get his share, but the question that arose in me, which I asked my mother (without even touching my food since she had brought me back the leftovers), was "Why is it necessary to feed the dog with this rare game meat delicacy?! Couldn't he have been given some regular dog food to eat?!"

"We share everything with him. We are not envious, we don't begrudge him his food," my mother sneered at me.

I will admit to you, dear Reader, that I certainly begrudged him that food! Not food in general, but this particular food, because it was the very first time in my entire life that I had ever eaten real game meat... Especially wild boar! However, my main problem wasn't that the dog got some of the game meat, but what I told her: "Don't you think that if you are going to feed the dog such a rare treat, then you should have served it to him separately, not by taking back what you have already given me?"

"Yes, that would have been ideal, but what can I do, I overlooked the matter and forgot about the dog, and now you're throwing a tantrum because of this insignificant detail?!"

"This isn't a tantrum, nor is it insignificant. It's a terrible insult and a humiliation! It's not polite to take back from a guest what has been given to them, and certainly not if it is given to an ANIMAL!"

"You should be grateful that I offered you this delicacy at all!"

"I would have been grateful if you hadn't taken it back from me."

"Don't lie, I didn't take it back, it's on your plate!"

"And on the dog's plate too, whereas before that portion was also on my plate. There's no point denying it, for it proves to me perfectly that in your eyes I have the same value as a DOG! As an animal!"

"That's not how it is—that dog is like a member of the family to us!"

"That's all well and good, but there still has to be a hierarchy of family members, and I refuse to be treated as less than the dog, or even on the same level!"

"You don't give me the orders—in my house *I* decide how things are run!"

"That's obvious, but you could still value your own son more than your dog!"

"Stop making such a fuss, there's plenty of food on your plate to stuff your face with!"

"Alright, I'll stop," I said, standing up. "And because I can see how much you love the dog—I'm touched by the sincere feeling you have for him—and that he's a brave and loyal dog that really deserves to be treated as a family member, even more than I do, I'm going to help you to make him feel even better!" And I walked over to the dog with the plate in my hand, and dumped the rest of the food into the dog bowl. With that I turned and left without a word, not even saying goodbye.

From then on I visited her very rarely. In fact, even when I did, it was not for her sake but to see my father, although he wasn't the same anymore because he had had a stroke, which unfortunately changed his character in an unfavorable way. Yet despite this, he was still much friendlier towards me than my mother was.

It was typical of my mother that whenever I visited them, the first thing she would say to me was, "When are you going back? Because there's nowhere here for you to sleep!" and then continue with, "We weren't expecting you, I can't offer you anything!"

Needless to say I had no desire to sleep there, and I didn't visit them in order to stuff my belly with a free lunch. I'm not a freeloader... not to mention the fact that she might take half of it back again after serving it up, to give to the dog... But the most offensive and annoying thing was that when I took leave of them, and said "Sorry, but I have to go now", my mother routinely responded with, "I'm happy when you come, but I'm even happier when you go!". Well, I don't know where she got that from—it may have been some sort of proverb she said to show how fucking wise she was, thinking it was something profound. But it hurt me very much, and it still hurts to recall it (especially considering that she never did seem happy when I arrived...)

Finally, after my father died, the only time I saw my mother again was at the notary's office when we were settling all the official business regarding my father's estate. As soon as that was over, I said goodbye to my mother, and even on this sad occasion, she AGAIN made this fucking ridiculous joke or whatever you want to call it, that she was even happier to see me go... So I said to her: "You know what, fuck you mother, you'll never be happy to see me go again, because I won't be coming to see you! Ever! You don't deserve it!" and I turned and left. That was the last conversation I had with her, and I don't feel any remorse.

I note that my mother's attitude of valuing me no more than an animal was not an exceptional event on her part, but a kind of "default setting". I can mention yet another example of this. When I was in elementary school—I can't remember what year it was, sometime in the upper grades—my sister suddenly decided that she wanted to enroll in a ballet class. I'm not sure if it was actually my sister's idea, in fact it was more likely my mother's, but in any case, my sister was very enthusiastic about it. The only problem was that we lived in Felsőgöd, however there was no such class in that village. On the other hand, there was one in Alsógöd, which was not the immediate neighboring village, but the one further on from it. Or to be more precise, the name of our village was officially Göd, which was technically a large town, and because it was so big, it had three railway stations called Felsőgöd, Göd and Alsógöd. At that time we were living in Felsőgöd, between the railway stations of Felsőgöd and Göd, but much closer to Felsőgöd station. And the ballet class was in Alsógöd, not even near the train station in Alsógöd, but a fair distance from there towards the capital city. So you could say that the class was two whole train stops away from where we lived.

Now, obviously my sister was too young to go there on her own. It wasn't an option to allow her to go either on foot or by train alone. I didn't dispute this myself either, it was out of the question. In fact, even when I was that young, it was very rare for my parents to let me go anywhere by train alone, and if they did, it was not without concern. But my sister—being at least five years younger than me—really had no chance of being allowed. To make matters worse, it was wintertime when this nonsense about "ballet classes" infected the minds of my female family members... And seriously cold, with lots of snow. (Global warming wasn't such a threat then, it seems...). And that's when my mother came up with her Great Wisdom—there was no problem, my sister didn't have to take the train or walk, she could get in the sled, and I could pull her the distance of more than two train stops on every occasion, then wait until the ballet class was over, and pull her back home in the sled! I don't know how many kilometers it was, but it was certainly a lot. And I had to do it regularly, going there and back in the bitter cold, even in a snowstorm, and not just on foot, but pulling the sledge as if I were a horse or a

draught animal... just so that Her Highness, the Little Princess, could do ballet! (and I haven't even mentioned being bored the whole time she was jumping around in the gymnasium...)

So generally speaking, my mother didn't think of me as anything more than an animal, and this attitude was the norm for her. Mind you, I didn't really object to this sled-pulling that much. Because it was far from the worst thing my mother could conceive against me. It's true that it was cold, and heavy work (at least during the second half of the journey, and when the snow was slushy and didn't slide well...), but it had the advantage of being SILENT! No one wanted to talk to me while I was doing this, no one disturbed my musings, even my sister kept her mouth shut, because on the one hand she knew that we were alone, so no one could protect her if she made me angry and upset; and on the other hand she didn't want to say anything anyway, because who the hell wants to talk or sing in minus degree temperatures, especially if there is sometimes a headwind?! She was so wrapped up that even the tip of her nose was barely visible, and her mouth was covered with a scarf...

So on these occasions I could finally rest at least my brain, my "nervous system", if not my body. And I fantasized about all sorts of things, many of which I used later on when I became a writer. I remember around this time I had a nice dream that I still remembered after waking up, and I enjoyed it so much that I recalled it several times while pulling the sled, because it made me feel calm and happy. The dream was about me being a little mouse. As is fitting to a mouse, I naturally lived in a mouse-hole, but not alone, because I had a wife, who was of course also a mouse. The mouse hole led into a huge pantry, packed to the brim with all sorts of tasty morsels. And my duty was to go out there from time to time and bring as many of these delicacies as possible into the mouse hole, because that's what my mouse wife expected of me. Of course, a visit to the pantry was not without danger, because there was a cat there too, and if it caught me then I was finished, and it wouldn't be me who brought the treats, but me who became the treat... Yet I was so brave that it never deterred me, and I would go out into danger again and again, because it was my duty, after all, my wife expected it of me...

I wouldn't want anyone to presume from this that I hate cats. On the contrary! I hate dogs (at least BIG dogs), but I adore cats...

I think any psychologist reading these lines will immediately conclude that I have "awakened" the "family model" of the prehistoric caveman going out to hunt in the dangerous jungle or savannah, and bringing the prey home to his wife (or wives) awaiting him in the cave... Yes, I think that's the kind of family model I would have liked to have had, and I would probably have been quite happy with it! But Life did not give it to me...

And while I was pulling the sled, panting and sweating despite the cold, I imagined that I was carrying not my sister but some big, heavy treat home for my beautiful mouse wife... This fantasy helped me greatly to endure and survive those days.

My Idol

From what I have described so far, my Reader may think that if I had such a lousy childhood, I must have had some kind of "idol" or "role model"—not necessarily a living person—on whom I lavished

the warm feelings I did not consider my parents worthy of. After all, it can hardly be disputed that I didn't love my mother—whether rightly or wrongly, it doesn't matter, but I certainly couldn't feel for her what one would normally expect a child to feel for their mother, and the very fact that I dared to write such nasty things about her is proof of that.

The situation was much better with my father, of course, but he may appear to my Reader as a rather aloof intellectual who was harmless and inoffensive, yet at the same time of no great importance to me; I may not have been "indifferent" towards him, and although I received some benefit from his existence in my life, he wasn't someone who could evoke deep emotion in even his own son. Well, this picture is somewhat true. But only partly... I did truly love my father, even though I will admit that he actually was as I described him above. But that suited me quite well, because as an Aspie it was precisely these types of "intellectual" people I needed as friends. He was just the right level of "emotional" that I needed him to be. This "emotional temperature" was by no means zero, but it was certainly much less than the average child would have needed. So I can acknowledge that my father might not have been a good father for a neurotypical child. BUT HE WAS JUST RIGHT FOR ME. Okay, I wrote earlier that I didn't have a "perfect" relationship with him either—but perfection is an unreasonable dream in our world. So to reiterate, he was very suitable for me, and if there was such a thing as reincarnation, I would have no objection to having him as my father again in another life.

Nevertheless, I can't say that he was my idol. But again, this is not because I found him unfit to be a role model. It's rather that... Actually, I think instead of a long explanation, it would be better to tell another true, yet short story.

So: when I was in elementary school—I don't know which year, but it was definitely in the lower grades and therefore I was very young—we were given an assignment to write an essay about our "idol". Naturally this was in Literature class, although in the lower grades it was called "Reading and Writing". However, as can be seen from the task, the title of the class was interpreted broadly, and they must have figured that while the students were practicing how to write, they could simultaneously have "moral lessons".

So the task was to write an essay about our idol. I informed the teacher right away, of course, that I didn't have one. She looked at me in astonishment, amazed at how that could be; how indecent for a child to have no role model! But then—emboldened by the fact that I had already spoken out—a few other children indicated that they didn't have an idol either. The teacher told everyone that if they didn't have an idol yet, then they were just going to have to choose one for themselves. Of course, it was me again who objected—this time I was the only one—and I asked her if she really wanted the noble concept of "role model" to be devalued in our eyes?!

She looked at me very strangely, I must say, and asked me what the meaning of "devalued" was... This may seem odd to an English reader, but I had used a word that is uncommon in Hungarian: "devalválódik". So upon hearing her question, it was *I* who looked at *her* strangely, because it was interesting that she, a teacher, didn't know the term, whereas I, a student, did... But I explained to her that in this context it meant "losing its value".

"I don't understand what you're trying to say by that," she answered impatiently.

"Well, I don't think it's a true role model if we just choose somebody randomly and state that they are our idol. You can lie about such things, you can write an essay about it, but it's still not a *true* role

model. In my opinion, a role model is not primarily the result of a conscious choice, but of a serious emotional commitment, which can't be made on command!"

"You're being a smartass again! You heard what the assignment was, now sit back down and start writing your essay!"

Fine, so I sat down in my seat and wrote her the essay. In my own way, of course... Unfortunately I don't remember the exact words I wrote at the time, but I do remember that it was very short. Obviously they didn't expect too much from such a young student, but mine was very short by even those standards. It roughly went as follows:

My Idol

My task in this essay is to write about my idol. But I have no idol. I could lie and choose a random one, but I don't like telling lies. I'm sure other kids will choose idols like King Matthias or St Stephen, but I don't feel I have anything to do with them, and I don't like everything they do. So I don't have an idol, but I don't feel that I need such a psychological crutch! I don't strive to be like anyone else—my goal is to be the best Viola Zoltán I can be, that is, to make the most of the abilities I have!

Again, that wasn't my exact wording because I can't remember the details, but it was something along those lines. That was really the essence, and I remember it because it remained with me so long that I later included it in one of my novels, titled: "Empire of the Golden Father", in which one of the protagonists, a young girl called Rahkshee, has the same opinion about her "idol".

However the teacher was very shocked by it, and told me that it wasn't the task I'd been given. I replied that she may be right, but at least I was honest, and if she didn't like it then that was fine, I'd write her another essay about whoever she wanted to nominate as my idol, but she had to first put it in writing that she explicitly ordered me to LIE... This made her very angry, and naturally she didn't order me to do such a thing, just told me to stop being insolent. But at least she didn't ask me to write another essay...

I wrote this story here just to show that in this situation it would have been logical for a child of my age, who didn't want their idol to be a historical figure, to say that their father was their idol. But my father was not my idol either. I loved him very much, I looked up to him, respected him, but the thought never crossed my mind that I should become just like him. I always wanted to be *me*, myself, but not a static me, a me that was constantly developing, becoming smarter every day and more successful and so on. Besides, my father could not have been my role model, because as much as I loved him, I considered him to be far from perfect, since he had made a terrible, unforgivable mistake—marrying my mother...

The Birth of the Totoya

Based on what I've written so far, my Reader might conclude that I was constantly suffering at home, or studying, programming, reading, or—in the worst case—thrashing my sister, and that there were no shared activities or entertainment in our family... But that isn't true, because there *were* indeed such things. Were, yes. *Were*. Unfortunately this was only for a while, perhaps a few years... but it definitely occurred! It even had its own special name: "Totoja", which in English would probably be spelled "Totoya"... This indoor game basically evolved in our home because when I was a child, there were no personal computers that games could be played on. The TV offerings were also very poor (at least in Hungary, so I'm not talking about the US). There were a couple of "game consoles", "video games" that could be connected to a TV, with a few pre-programmed games built into them, but they were INCREDIBLY EXPENSIVE, pretty much unaffordable for any ordinary citizen...

Therefore it was a MUCH BETTER world back then (I say this despite the fact that computer programming is still one of my favorite hobbies...), because kids weren't "entertained" by staring at screens, killing the tiniest seed of creative imagination in themselves, but needed to play some kind of COMMUNAL game with each other, or if they were alone, read or do puzzles and such things... At that time, drawing maps of imaginary planets or islands was a very enjoyable game for me. This greatly developed my imagination, and I strongly believe that it contributed significantly to my later development as a writer. Yes, I will emphasize that it was GREAT fun, and all that was needed was a piece of paper and a pencil or pen. So it is not true that a child needs expensive electronic gadgets to have fun, especially not the latest, trendiest kind! This was a solitary game, of course.

One group of games that can be played together is board games. This was what our family preferred, apparently in no small part because none of us were keen on a lot of exercise. Neither was I, I admit (although you can guess this from my long rant about my dislike of gym class earlier...), but I was still the better case in this area, because I sometimes liked to play a little badminton with my sister or cousins, or one or two kids from the street (but they weren't my classmates...). My father was even less keen on exercise than I was. My mother was much "better" in this respect, but to no avail, because she was of the opinion that if she wanted to exercise, it was more useful to do some gardening. She called this activity "active relaxation", which I always thought was idiotic, because for me relaxation can only happen when my muscles don't have to work. I made this opinion known to her too, on numerous occasions, accusing her of lying when she said it was relaxation, because gardening is not relaxation but serious effort and exhaustion. This always made her furious, and neither of us could ever convince the other... I simply felt that when my mother called gardening "relaxation", she was deliberately mocking me, because it is so obvious that it's anything but relaxing; it's tiring, and in addition fucking boring!

That leaves my sister, who was much more agile than any of us, but again to no avail, because she never wanted to play what I did... Except for badminton, but that was only on rare occasions, maybe once a month or even less. So that's why we turned to board games.

The first of these games that I learned to play was chess, which I naturally learned from my father. I gained considerable knowledge of it quite quickly, so much so that I won a couple of chess tournaments when I was in high school—not national competitions, just "local" ones. For example, I once won a silver medal in the chess championship of the "Vác district". A "district" was an administrative area that included several towns or villages, but was smaller than the size of a "county". At that time, the "Vác district" was one of the strongest districts in Hungary in the field of chess, which is not surprising,

because if you look at a map, you can see how big the city of Vác is, which is why the district was named after this city... So there must have been quite a few good chess players living there! And this was where I won the silver medal... Although I hadn't really prepared thoroughly for that competition. In fact, not at all. I didn't take it seriously. I just went because it was a hobby of mine. Consequently, if I had really dedicated myself and my life to chess, I would most likely have become a world-famous grand chess master. I knew that I had all the necessary innate abilities for this career, but I didn't choose this path, and I'll tell you why, since it's important for understanding the essence of being an Aspie. The point is that although I learned the rules of chess, the truth "deep down" is that I never liked the game. This may sound strange, but it makes perfect sense. I couldn't like it, because it didn't feel like a place where I could realize my desire to CREATE. In other words, I couldn't alter the rules of chess... Not that I thought the existing rules were bad. They were fine. But then, I didn't invent them, did I? And an Aspie is a being whose favorite pastime is CREATING SYSTEMS. Chess with its rules is of course a system, I don't dispute that, but it's a system that I didn't invent; someone else did, a long time ago, and I have no hope that if I change any of the rules, the chess players of the world will accept it. And I didn't like that...

For the record, I would like to point out—for the umpteenth time in this book, I think—that Aspies have a distinct fondness for CREATING! If a person doesn't like to create, they are simply not an Aspie. They may be "unusual" or "eccentric", but not an Aspie. Aspies have an irresistible and overpowering desire to create. Which I also have, of course. I have already proved this desire by writing more than sixty novels, creating my own programming language (I use it daily on my laptop, great stuff!), creating an artificial human language, as well as many other minor things. I have always had the principle, even as a small child, that "Life is too short to waste even a single day". Much later, as an adult, I put it this way: "You'll never live this day again, so make it count!"

Recently I came across this wonderful wisdom in a book by Gábor Szendi, which I immediately took to heart: "The rest of your life starts today!" Okay, by Mr Szendi's own admission, he didn't invent it, he just read it somewhere and "recycled" it. But that's no problem—the Truth is not relinquished by repetition!

So I have a very strong creative urge, which was true as a child too, but chess didn't give me much scope for it. The only thing I could have done in chess is train myself to be an excellent chess master and play against other chess masters, hoping to win more than I lose. I obviously could have done that. But this is again something I've already touched on with soccer—the very concept that the basic essence of an activity is to "play" AGAINST each other is fundamentally alien to me! To try to obstruct each other! Well, of course, by the time I was old enough to learn to play chess, I was a lot older than when I was arguing about soccer with the neighbor kid in the meadow that time... By then I realized that there are games that are games precisely because you have to play them AGAINST each other... in fact, the vast majority of games are like that! I understood that, yes. But I still didn't like the concept... Or I should say, I was willing to put up with this loathsome feature of games if they offered something "extra" that I could enjoy, as a compensation. In a way, chess was close to meeting this need, because at least it didn't require running like soccer, or sweating, or panting, but only THINKING. Obviously that suited me much better! Even so, it wasn't perfect...

For a good while there was no other game I could play with my family members. But one day the "miracle" happened... Namely, my father bought a "game collection". I seem to remember that he

purchased it for Christmas, for the whole family, but I wouldn't swear to it... I have a vague feeling that he did buy it for Christmas, but either way, this fact is unimportant. The point is that it was called "12 games". That's it, no more. It was marketed by a company called "Triál", I remember that. It was a big box with twelve cardboard boards inside, and there were all sorts of plastic figures in separate plastic bags to play the various games with. The collection included games such as the well-known "Ludo" (which has the Hungarian name "Ki nevet a végén"—"He who laughs last, laughs best" in English), "Merils", the "Mitre game"... And many others whose names I have forgotten. Naturally all of these games were extremely primitive compared to chess; most of them were little more than rolling the dice, moving the piece forward, and if any of the opponents' pieces were on that part of the board, you could knock them out.

My father didn't deny that he bought this pack of games specifically so that he could play board games with my mother, since she didn't like chess. What I mean is, she didn't even know how to play chess, or if she did, she knew the moves at the very most, but there was no way she could have won. A chess player far inferior to me could have beaten her easily anytime. That's not to say that she was too stupid to play chess. In fact, I firmly believe that if she had devoted the time and energy, she would have become a BRILLIANT chess player! As I've mentioned before, my mother basically had a sharp mind and lightning-quick thinking. I can acknowledge this about her, regardless of whether I love her or my memories of her. It's true that she never did any intellectual work in her life, but she still had the talent for it. She could have gone far if she had been as interested in intellectual things as she was in that detestable gardening...

In any case, my mother sat down to play chess no more than maybe half a dozen times in her life, and quit playing practically as soon as she found out that I could easily beat her at the game, even if I was reading sci-fi during the long periods she was thinking about her next move. She could have learned to play chess as well as I did, maybe even better. But she was too lazy. Her vanity couldn't stand the fact that she was always the one being beaten by me, so she found the simplest solution was not to play chess at all.

However, one day my father brought home this collection of "12 games", making no secret of the fact that he hoped they would contain games that my mother would enjoy too. Well, he was right, these games were a huge success, and quite obviously because my mother was capable of winning them, since in the vast majority of these games, logic and thinking played only a minor role. Luck played a much bigger role, that is, whatever number happened to be rolled on the dice... and obviously my mother had as much luck in this area as anyone else. From then on we played board games quite often, but it very quickly became clear that for my mother the only fun was in WINNING. In fact, to her the concepts of "fun" and "winning" were almost synonymous. It wasn't the activity of playing games together with her family that she enjoyed, but purely the WINNING. This was already evident on those rare occasions she used to play chess, but it was the same with these board games—she felt it was a personal insult to lose. On such occasions she would literally spit. Seriously, she would SPIT on her opponent! And she used such expressions as her opponent being a rotten bastard, a dirty pig, that she was disappointed in them, didn't expect it from them... and very often she would get so upset that she even tipped the board over, and then made it my duty to pick up the pieces that had flown into the corners of the room and under the furniture. I'm telling you, this was already the case with chess, but her behavior remained the same with all other board games, whenever she lost.

And the truth is that she threw minor tantrums even during the game, not infrequently either, when she had not yet lost, but her opponent had dared to "knock out" one or more of her pieces from the board. If she saw that she was likely to lose, she would often flip the board over before the end of the game, and then start explaining that I hadn't really won (or whoever her opponent was) because we hadn't finished the game, and she had only flipped the board over because she was bored of it, not because she was losing... But even if she didn't do this because she still had a chance of winning, she would nevertheless spit when one of her pieces had been knocked off the board.

I also liked to win in a game, but I very quickly established that my mother's behavior simply wasn't NORMAL. Yes, I think the label "abnormal" applied to her much more than it did to me! But soon my mother stopped playing games with us completely, which I didn't really mind due to the above reasons. The reason she stopped will be explained in a moment. I mentioned that my mother liked these games (at first...) because they required much less mental effort than chess. The only problem was that this primitiveness, this simplicity might have suited her, but not me and my father... I will admit that chess can be tiring sometimes, it does require a lot of mental effort. However, it's also true that these sorts of dice games are the other extreme. Sometimes they can be fun, but once you get to know them well, the novelty wears off. In my opinion, anyway.

Then one day I surprised my family members. I drew a new board, which had different paths on it, multiple paths that led to the finish, so it looked more exciting. After all, there were more possibilities to win... or to lose. Of course, considering the pitiful state of my dexterity, the board was not very attractive, but it was still usable. My father and I tried it out, and he liked the idea. So much so that soon he himself started designing and drawing different game boards onto cardboard and various papers. He also had them printed on tracing paper and then had a couple of dozen copies made at work, just in case the original copies got lost or were damaged. These were far more beautiful creations than the first one I made, which is not surprising, since having often made precise technical drawings, he obviously had much more talent and experience. Besides, he had a serious set of drawing pens...

During this time a good working relationship was established between us, because I also occasionally came up with new ideas for the shape of the boards, as well as the rules of the game, even though some of them were invented by him. We discussed these new suggestions, and even tested them "in practice" by playing them. Soon we weren't playing any of the original board games anymore. We didn't feel like it, because the newer ones we had invented were far more appealing to us. From our modern perspective today, these games were very clearly "strategy games", and on a very serious level (taking into account the limitations inherent in board games). That is, for these games we no longer used just one type of game piece, but many different types with different shapes that originally belonged to the various boards of the "12 games" collection.

Soon we started running out of game pieces, because each player had to build an army, and there were not enough pieces in the "12 games" collection for this purpose, but then my father went and bought some more game sets just for the pieces. The rules also became far more complicated than just rolling the dice and moving the piece. For example, there was a flat, button-like piece that was originally included in the "Merils" game. We called it a "tank". Here the rule was that it could move less than the number of moves we were throwing, so it could hit the nearest piece—that is, the tank "hits everything". The most common piece (that had the greatest number available) was the one originally used for "Ludo". It was called "fejes" in the Hungarian language, which in English roughly

translates to "headed", because it had a tiny head on the top. This piece sat nicely on top of the flat "tank", therefore they could both move together if we wanted. Moreover, there was also a hollow, pointed conical piece that we could add onto the "tank". This piece was originally from the "Mitre game", and its name was simply "hegyes" or in English, "pointed". This was the "anti-aircraft gun", and it had the rule that it could not be jumped over (by the enemy). Naturally because it shot at anything that tried to pass over it... So on a single field of the board you could have a whole "division": a "tank" with a "headed" piece on top, and up to four "pointed" pieces on top of that—no more, because they would fall off. This way they could move quickly together on the board, representing a great force, and on the other hand, it was possible that the whole division could be knocked out by the opponent in a single throw of the dice, if they were lucky... There were rules about how such a division could be made up of separate figures and how it could be broken down into individuals. They were not very complicated, but they had to be remembered.

Soon the terrain drawn on the board became more complicated. There were countries, islands and even seas. Ships moved on the seas, which were made from the box covers of film strips sold for the slide projectors of the time, or from suitable plastic bottle caps. These ships could transport up to ten pieces. We could travel to the islands on them, colonize them, or transport conquering troops to our opponent's country. Money was also introduced, which came from another game called "Gazdálkodj okosan" (Be smart with your money), a socialist equivalent of "Monopoly". I never liked that game, I found it boring, but all the "token money" that came with it was now very useful. Thanks to that, our game didn't begin with each of us having the same number of each type of piece, but with each of us getting the same amount of money, and with that money we could buy the army we needed; obviously a ship was much more expensive than a tank, but a tank more expensive than a "headed" piece, etc. Occupied islands generated extra income for the owner every time he made a move, which he could use to expand his army while playing. New pieces came into existence too, such as airplanes, and there was also a "propagandist" (sometimes called a "missionary"), which generally moved on the playing field like the common "headed" pieces (i.e. a common soldier), except that if we wanted, it could not only "knock out" the enemy's piece, but "convert" it—that is, we could replace it with one of our own.

It was also possible to found cities, either on the territory of our original country, or on the occupied areas, and these cities would generate income for the "state treasury" at every step. This could be used to found new cities or develop our army, but cities only generated money if they were at peace and there was no war going on where they were located, i.e. there were no opponent pieces in that territory... If we felt we were going to lose a war, we could destroy the towns there before we retreated, although it cost extra money to do this. And not only did this mean that the enemy who marched in could not make money from those devastated cities, but if we re-occupied the territory later, we couldn't make any money there either, and building a new city was enormously expensive. And so on and so on... Writing any further details about our game would be superfluous, because anything else would only apply to a specific version of the game (my father and I created many variants).

We really enjoyed it, finding pleasure not primarily in the "playing" of the game, but in the process of CREATING the game, of constructing and planning the SYSTEM itself. We invested an enormous amount of time in the development of this game, especially since even a single game of this complexity took a considerable time to play—an hour was hardly much at all, in fact it was common for us to spend an entire afternoon and evening on a game.

My mother never participated in these games, except for the first few initial occasions; she found them unnecessarily elaborate and complex. She was angry with us for complicating the original games, turning them into some unfathomable mush. And on numerous occasions she tried to interrupt our game by telling us that we should be doing something else, to which we either replied, "We're busy right now," or "We'll do it later once we've finished". This would usually make my mother even angrier, and she would yell at not only me but also my father, "Ne totojazz már annyit!" What does this Hungarian expression mean? Well, it's very difficult to translate into English. The literal translation is "Don't totoya so much!" But the question is, what does this mystical word "totoya" mean? It is not a word that even exists in the Hungarian language. Only the verb "totojázik". For a start, the dictionary doesn't even include the word verb "totojázik", which is no surprise, because most native Hungarians don't know it either. The closest thing is the verb "totojgat", which in English means (molly)coddle. However my mother didn't ever use it in that sense, but rather to mean "procrastinating, wasting time, delaying, making someone wait, being lazy"...

One day I came up with the Great Idea that, just like the action "to hoe" can only be done with a hoe, it is obvious that in order "to totoya", you have to play with a Totoya, whatever that is! In other words, I proposed that this game—which had no name until now—should be called "Totoya". My proposal was instantly accepted by the whole family without the slightest debate, even by my mother. She was obviously flattered that the name of the game had been derived from her own utterance.

The only thing left I have to say about this game is that there was a big difference between the way I approached the game and the way my sister approached it. Namely, my sister was in complete agreement with my mother regarding the attitude of not enjoying PLAYING first and foremost, much less CREATING, but solely WINNING! I can't deny—although it didn't occur to me at the time as a child, but now as I write these lines I deeply believe it to true—that it was NOT ME, but MY SISTER who was (and still is...) the more "masculine" one of us, at least in that sense. The fact that my sister is a "masculine" woman is proved by her not having had any daughters, but giving birth to three sons, and I have read in the literature that women who have a tendency to bear sons are often more "dominant" or "masculine"... So in that respect, I was far more "feminine" than she was, even though physically I was the boy. Because, although I also liked winning in a game, it was far more important to me to be able to CREATE something.

What I'm trying to say is that my mother soon stopped playing "Totoya" with us, but fairly often it wasn't just my father and I playing, but also my sister, who became a third player. And sometimes it occurred that some previously unknown situation arose in the game, for which a rule had to be created on the spot, or it seemed logical to change certain rules that were previously valid, in order to maintain the consistency of the game. I always agreed to such modifications, EVEN IF the new rule or change to an existing rule reduced my chances of winning in that particular game. For me, the question of whether I was going to win was an important one, but it was still quite inferior to the goal of making the game better. But my sister never agreed to such changes, or perhaps that's an exaggeration, because she did agree sometimes, but then only with a big sulk, and she made no secret of the fact that she felt she was being conned, in fact she felt that any such suggestion was a conspiracy against her winning—provided, of course, that in the particular case she was the one who was disadvantaged by the new rule. For her, it wasn't about creating, inventing and making the game the best it could be, but about winning at any cost!

My father once told me that my sister takes everything too seriously. I pondered over this, because my mother sometimes told me that I take everything too seriously, that I take everything to heart... Therefore I replied to my father that I think it's not just my sister who takes everything seriously, but me too. Both of us do. Just not the same things. We take certain things seriously for different reasons. My father nodded and said I was right about that, I could see the situation clearly. My sister takes ordinary things too seriously, whereas for me it's more "abstract" things of a "higher order", "superior truths"... I objected, telling him not to mock me with such silliness as "higher order"... after all, he knows I'm not religious! To which he replied that in his opinion I was also a believer, only not in any religion but in science. Science is a "higher order" in some sense, I certainly won't deny that... And it's true that I'm not religious, and neither is my sister. Even so, a religious example would best capture the difference between us: If our parents had raised us children following religious traditions, my sister would have grown up to be a deeply religious woman who took religion seriously, prayed a lot in the evenings, and never missed a weekend service. But that still wouldn't make her a nun... If I, on the other hand, had a religious upbringing, I might not even have been able to stand it until adulthood, and would sooner escape and join a very strict monastic order, or even find none of them strict enough and become a hermit instead.

The older I get, the more I think my father was absolutely right about that. Even more than my old man thought—because I don't need a religious education to become a hermit! Although I don't mean a religious hermit... yet I don't even know if there is such a thing as a "secular hermit". In any case, as I write these words, in my mid-fifties, I am more and more often longing to live as a hermit. I have already taken certain modest practical steps in this direction, in order to "get off the grid": things like trying to be as independent as possible from large distribution networks, eg. electricity, gas, warehouses and so on... and from the "built-in obsolescence" that characterizes modern products... For example, I had a master blacksmith make me some iron plates, cups, and forks etc. They aren't particularly attractive, but they will last a lifetime because they don't break. They may not be shiny or light, but they are strong! I'm sympathetic to the idea that when I retire, I will light my house with kerosene lamps and candles in the evenings, even if I have electricity in my house... but that's off-topic here.

So for me back then (and now as well...) the point was not to PLAY, and not even to WIN, but to CREATE—to create something new, which in this case was a new game. In fact, it was a kind of primitive simulation of our World. And of course I wanted to make it as perfect as possible. My mother wasn't prepared to co-operate in this, she wasn't interested, and neither was my sister, although she was available for the occasional game. But even then, she wasn't in it to create, she was in it to win—or at least try to win. This fundamental difference in aspect between the two of us led my sister to decide over time that she was better suited to traditional (primitive...) board games, because they don't run the risk of the rules changing from time to time, and that meant she was also better suited to CHESS. Namely, the rules don't change with chess either, and even luck has no part to play, unlike in dice board games. In other words, my sister preferred chess for the very reason that I could never consider it my favorite game—because the rules cannot be changed! That's why she liked it. And why I DID NOT, because it gave me no scope for CREATING. My sister was not bothered at all about the latter. She was never interested in creating. Only (the hope of) WINNING!

I have to admit that as far as chess is concerned, my sister achieved considerable success in this field. She participated in a few tournaments, although I don't actually remember what awards she won.

She certainly wasn't a world-champion... but I do know that she was a great chess player. It is an even greater merit in my eyes that she has three sons, one of whom has no interest in chess (at least that's what I last heard), and the other two of whom have become chess grand-masters. This was because my sister educated them in this direction from the beginning. You could say she implemented "talent management" to a high degree... Even though I still don't like my sister in my older years—we don't really have much in common—if she ever reads this book, I want to tell her that the one thing I will definitely acknowledge and give her credit for is that she was a much BETTER mother than my "mother" (and her own, of course...), simply because she successfully developed her children's talent, while my mother never even remotely considered it!

Regardless, as far as I'm concerned, I cannot consider chess to be CREATIVE, even at grand-master level. It may be a good profession in that you can make a good living at it (I don't actually know if that's true, but I don't think it's impossible), and I certainly believe it's a more worthwhile activity than going to the pub, or watching TV... I acknowledge that it requires a good mind, so I do respect chess players. Yet it's all in vain, because it still isn't creation. Nothing NEW is brought into the world by it!

Mitigating circumstances for my mother

In court trials it is common to check whether there are mitigating circumstances in favor of the accused. In this book I have written myriad bad things about my mother, while she was not allowed to say a single word in her own defense, both because I did not ask her and because I couldn't have asked her even if I had wanted to, since she is no longer alive. I therefore have a particularly great responsibility to try to be objective, and to reveal any possible exculpatory circumstances, since she has no counsel for her defense. Strange as it may seem, there are indeed such circumstances. I will describe them now.

I am a first-born child, and my father was an engineer... This is important because statistics show that it is particularly common for an Aspie to be a first-born son, and for his father to be an intellectual and have a technical career. In most cases he is specifically an engineer. This is also proof that I am an Aspie...

Now, how is that a mitigating circumstance for my mother? You are about to find out, dear Reader. Namely, my father had quite similar characteristics to my own. He wasn't an Aspie to the extent I was, but I'm convinced he was close. He was never really sociable, more of a "homebody", very sober, rational and predictable... He didn't have much of a sense of humor either. I never loved my mother, because she never loved me. In fact she was always cold and cruel to me, but my sister was everything to her. I have mentioned this already. But I got on very well with my father. When my father died, I grieved for him deeply (we Aspies do indeed have emotions!) and mourned for a long time. When I heard the news of my mother's death, I felt NOTHING, or if I felt anything at all, it was more a sense of relief, of liberation... despite not having seen or spoken to her for a good ten years, we hadn't had any contact, so she had no authority or power over me. Yet I still felt this way... Even if you despise me for it, dear Reader. That's how I felt, and how I still feel now when I think about it.

I have wondered a lot about why my mother never loved me. I came to the conclusion that the most likely explanation was what I had noticed as a child—*it seemed that my father and mother were not suited to each other*. Proof of this statement can be seen by the fact that my mother refused my father's first proposal. (The female intuition that this man was not the right partner for her...) Then my father married another woman, but that marriage very quickly ended in divorce because his wife fell in love with another man. When I learned this as a child, I was naturally angry at this woman. After all, what a rotten bastard she was to not want my wonderful, perfect father! Today, however, I think the failure of his first marriage was somewhat testament to the fact that my father wasn't fulfilling as a husband even then—not sexually unfulfilling, but emotionally. Then he asked my mother to marry him again, and she said yes... Even though her first decision was the right one, to refuse. Because they weren't suited to each other in any way.

On the other hand, I was very similar to my father in character, and was becoming increasingly so, and because my mother was always lacking something in her marriage to my father—possibly "romance"—and she saw that I was like her husband (whom she didn't really love, even if she didn't admit it to herself), she naturally wasn't able to love me either. But she could love my sister. At least I believe she did. My sister was completely different from me. She was a chatterbox and had no interest in science, despite having an excellent mind; I'll acknowledge that about her, even though we don't have a good relationship, to put it mildly. That's not to say there weren't a lot of quarrels between her and my mother, but I think their relationship was at least within the bounds of "normality".

I remember often having great conversations with my father, I loved those occasions... but they were always exclusively about scientific topics. Regarding some sort of theoretical or academic question. Or occasionally he would teach me something... science-related, of course. We would never blather on for hours about "mundane" or "trivial" matters like women tend to do. That never happened. Neither did we require this from each other. In fact, I think he had a far better relationship with me than he ever had with his wife (that is, my mother). The love between him and my mother could not have been very strong, except for perhaps in the first few weeks at the beginning of their relationship. I base this on the fact that I noticed very early on, even as a small toddler, that my mother didn't have much respect for my father. During my years in elementary school, I would frequently hear loud, heated arguments between them. This eventually subsided, in such a way that my father became even more withdrawn and uncommunicative...

So in essence I can say that my mother "won", because she had, if not formally then implicitly, taken on the right to make all decisions, apart from some extreme exceptions. My father mustn't have had much authority, because I heard my mother refer to him on numerous occasions—even when he could hear—as "the Muci". "Muci" was of course a nickname, which originated from my father's "official" name, Imre (Emeric, in English), going from Imre to Imuci to Muci... So ultimately it was just a nickname, which isn't insulting THEORETICALLY, but my mother always pronounced it in a tone that I didn't like because I felt it was insulting to my father. However I never told her this opinion of mine.

So my mother was in her own way a violent, domineering, ambitious woman, who resented the husband she eventually got. I did notice, however, that she was on very good terms with a man much more charming and "determined" than my father, who lived right across the street from us. This macho heartthrob was widely known to be a "cool guy", but at the same time he was anything but a good

husband, not even close to my father in this respect, since he would do things like beat his wife regularly, drink heavily, and many other terrible things. Yet my mother cultivated a remarkably intimate friendship with him, even calling him "Lovag" (meaning "Knight" or "Gallant" in English), which had nothing to do with his original name. After that, of course, I began to suspect that by "knight" she didn't mean the medieval knights in armor carrying swords, but the "gallants" who court (married...) women.

By the way, this so-called "Knight" was none other than the father of the boy who once tried to play soccer with me in the nearby meadow, who had the strange delusion that two half bricks were actually a goalpost... and who—I have to admit—was so incredibly patient with me, the soccer ignoramus. I'm not actually surprised by his patience, since his father, the Knight, was also a very patient and extremely witty charmer. I mean, when he was fooling around with my mother or other women. He only shouted obscenities at his wife, but he shouted them so loudly that they could be heard across the street.

Although I never caught my mother actively being unfaithful to my father, I will admit that the thought crossed my mind more than once that there might be something like that between them. Even today I couldn't say with certainty that something like that didn't happen a few times while my father was working (far away in the capital) and I was at school... After all, there was plenty of opportunity, because as I said, the "Knight" lived across the street, and being a housewife most of her life, my mother spent the majority of her time at home, and even when she did work it involved typing on her typewriter in the house. That is, it was entirely up to her to decide whether or not to do it, because she could always find time for a little cheating. The only thing she had to be careful of was making sure she was done by the time I got home from school. She was obviously smart enough to do that.

Quite frankly, I'm not even sure whether my sister and I are true brother and sister, or just "half-brother and sister"... Because I don't think it's impossible that the genetic father of my sister is the "Knight"... I'm not stating this as fact, not at all, but I'm seriously not ruling it out! Only genetic analysis could give the final verdict on this, of course. Theoretically the "Knight" could also be *my* father, but I think the chances of that are very slim, because when I was conceived my parents didn't live in the house opposite his, but at the other end of the village, so it's practically impossible that my mother would have even known the "Knight" at that time. On the other hand, my character is obviously far more similar to my father's than to that of the "Knight". For starters, I'm not "macho" in the least... However my sister's character is very different from my father's. In fact, I can't find any similarities between them at all. For example, she has absolutely no interest in science, not only in the sense that she doesn't engage in scientific discussions, or work in the field of science, but she doesn't even like science fiction (which both my father and I loved). At least I never saw my sister reading science fiction, and she never mentioned having read anything like that. In addition, it seems pretty clear that my sister isn't an Aspie like me... which is rather logical, if she happens to have a different father to me. In that case, she would not be born from a semi-incestuous marriage...

Ultimately it doesn't really matter whether or not my mother was unfaithful physically. Perhaps she wasn't. But there is no doubt in my mind that, even if she was faithful in practice, she certainly thought about it a lot, dreamed of being with him, because even I, an Aspie child with almost no sense of social relations, could notice how much my mother was attracted to the "Knight", how much more friendly and intimately she spoke to him than she did to my father. So it was quite clear that my mother would have preferred the "Knight" to be her husband rather than my father. I think my mother regretted

having married my father and having a child (me...), and fantasized about how good it would be to become the wife of that "Knight"... She would have deserved to have this dream realized. Because then *she* would have been the wife who was beaten and scolded by his Lordship of Machismo, and who had to scrape the vomit off her husband when he staggered home drunk. It's a shame it didn't happen that way, for my mother would have gotten her just punishment...

My mother didn't even like it when my father was kind to her. On several occasions I witnessed my father, in his own awkward manner, trying to be affectionate by caressing my mother's head; but my mother's reaction was always to pull away from him in annoyance and lash out at him: "Don't ruffle my hair—I'm not a puppy!"

So my mother felt there was something missing in her life, felt she had not chosen the right husband—and she was right about that, because although I don't think she had much to complain about with my father, it is true that they weren't a good match in character. As if fire and water had formed a connection by marriage... And because my father was the "water" in this pair, he didn't have much authority over my mother. I often heard my mother say, when she was talking to someone, "Oh, it was just Muci saying that", "Never mind Muci", "Let Muci sulk, he'll get bored of it soon", "Muci doesn't matter", and so on.

Come to think of it, it's quite similar to what happened to me in my marriage—although I wasn't called "Muci", but "Papamaci", which is something like "Papa Bear" in English. I didn't have much authority either. It happened dozens of times that I discussed something with my wife, and after a long exchange of ideas, a common position was reached, some compromise solution, but it was in vain, because later when I asked her what she had done, it turned out that she had done everything as she had originally planned, totally disregarding our agreement. And when I called her to account, saying that it wasn't what we had agreed on, she just shrugged and said, "Well, it occurred to me that things would be better if I did it this way".

Another example from my marriage is that when I met my future wife, she had beautiful long hair, reaching to her waist, which I absolutely loved, and I often complimented her on it. Well, no sooner was the marriage consummated, than a few weeks later she came home with short hair—she had had it cut! Of course, she had no intention of discussing this with me beforehand... I was struck dumb with horror, and asked her why she had committed this atrocity against her beauty! Her reply was that long hair is uncomfortable and troublesome, so it's more convenient for her being short. I argued that she knew how much I adored her long hair! To which she countered that she hoped I would love her with short hair too... Well, THAT WAS THE VERY MOMENT I SHOULD HAVE LEFT HER! Right away, immediately, instantly, without delay! But I was a fool to *not* do that, and of course she knew perfectly well that I wasn't going to leave her because of it. *But I should have...* Even if at the divorce hearing people would have found it unusual that I wanted a divorce just because my wife had cut her hair! But I think that would have been reason enough. Because she KNEW EXACTLY how much I loved her long hair, and she cut it anyway, without even discussing it with me first! Her comfort was all that mattered to her. After all, we were already married, so from now on it wasn't so important to be beautiful in order for me to like her...

And this opinion of hers, or I should say this *attitude* to things in general, that my point of view doesn't really matter, that it's not necessary to take me into consideration, was later shown in many other situations, in ways that were unfavorable to me... Obviously I immediately made her promise to

grow her hair back, and she did so without the slightest argument. Needless to say, she never kept that promise. Twenty years later her hair was still short, and every time I asked her, she always unashamedly replied—LYING—that her hair wasn't growing anymore... The hell it wasn't! But it's so easy to lie to a Papa Bear, isn't it, because he's a benevolent idiot, who believes all the lies, or at least pretends to for the sake of domestic peace...

So "Mucis" and "Papa Bears" don't have much authority in a marriage, if any at all. No matter how good a husband the "Muci" or "Papa Bear" is, no matter how diligently he brings home his full salary, even the "extra" income she wouldn't otherwise know about; no matter how much he takes care of the children, no matter how many household chores like the washing up he does—none of this matters when it comes to authority. "Mucis" and "Papa Bears" cannot have authority. It is only an attribute of people who have earned such a name as say, *Knight* from a woman... Well, I have to acknowledge that somebody called "Knight" is certainly more masculine than a Papa Bear, or some "Muci"... A girl might marry a Muci or a Papa Bear because she has enough brains under her long hair to know that it's an advantage to have a hen-pecked husband who doesn't object to her taking even his last penny from him when he's paid, as well as having someone to do the washing up for her occasionally. Yet the girls will still secretly dream of a "Knight"...

After my father died, my mother admitted quite openly that she never loved my father. She said she only married him so she wouldn't be alone. I don't understand why she didn't wait for someone else to come along whom she could have loved, because she wasn't an ugly girl by any stretch, she was rather beautiful, and still quite young. I think it's likely she wanted to be independent as soon as possible, to escape from her parents' house. However I still don't think it was a good decision to marry a man she couldn't love, and meanwhile dream about the "Knight"...

Naturally this is the same behavior, or rather "psychological attitude", that I experienced at school as a small child—the girls didn't want me, even though I was arguably the most talented in theoretical subjects, especially mathematics, which is usually considered the most difficult subject. They had no interest in me, in fact they even thought it shameful and unpleasant to sit next to me, as I mentioned earlier. Instead they fell for the loud, aggressive guys, the brawlers, even if the boy was as dumb as an ass and close to failing the class. It didn't matter, as long as he was muscular or at least dared to be tough, a hooligan, to beat people up and use offensive words, because that's what made him "masculine"... Well, I have to admit that in terms of their behavior, these boys in the class were more like the Knight, or even the medieval braggart knights (who are dirty, ignorant, stupid, illiterate and superstitious...) than my father. Or myself.

In addition, around the time my sister was born, my mother started developing strange habits that I didn't understand back then, however I now think they were symptoms of some kind of mild neurosis. First of all, as I mentioned already, she started drinking a lot of beer. On the other hand, she had a period where she suffered from a constant "checking mania"—whenever we went out somewhere she would often run back three times to check that she had locked the house and the garden gate, turned off the gas in the kitchen, turned off the lights, check ten times if she had the house key in her pocket or handbag, and so on. This got on my dad's nerves quite a bit, but it eventually went away, pretty much as soon as my mother suddenly decided to take up needlework—specifically sewing "shag carpets". (This is a rather popular pastime in certain circles of Hungarian women who like needlework). It seemed that this activity helped eliminate these symptoms. I am not surprised by this, because I've since learned

that in cases of depression and other neurological disorders, monotonous yet physically undemanding manual work is often curative.

Further evidence that she had not chosen the right husband and was missing something in their relationship—most likely ROMANCE—is that she read nothing but romance novels (well, also crime novels to a lesser extent). She had hundreds of them. This way she could live out in her fantasies what Ugly Reality failed to give her.

So this is the first mitigating circumstance for my mother. The second is that, although I always loved my (maternal) grandmother very much, even as a child I noticed that she was extremely pro-male and had a good deal of misogyny in her. I also mentioned this in a previous chapter, where I quoted her favorite expression, 'bedwetting girls'. It wasn't difficult to see this, since she barely hid the fact that she felt this way. Now, this fact about my grandmother is important, because as a child my mother may well have felt as neglected by her mother as I did later by my mother. This is all the more likely because, again, I myself noticed that my grandmother loved my uncle far more than my mother. If even I, a small child, had observed this, it's impossible that the person concerned, i.e. my mother, would not have noticed it! Therefore I can't rule out the possibility that although my mother eventually married, there was a good deal of misandry in the depths of her "soul". She was very good at hiding this in general, but this hatred still manifested itself in the way that she was simply not interested in me, purely because I was a boy. At least, she lost all interest in me after she had a daughter, who was of the gender she had no aversion to. In this sense, it could be said that my mother's lack of love for me was to some extent my grandmother's fault, because she didn't love my mother either.

On the other hand, we can follow this thread even further. Because *why* didn't my grandmother love my mother? Why did my grandma become a misogynist? I think it was because her husband, whom she divorced long before I was born, was constantly cheating on her with other women. So in that sense, not getting love from my mother is my maternal grandfather's fault. Or rather, it was my grandmother's. Because it was she who wanted to marry that guy, the "cock of the walk". And she didn't have the sense (although she should have!) to know that even if she obtained the "alpha male", he was not only an attractive male to my grandmother, but also the one other women liked best, which meant that he would more than likely not remain faithful to her in the long run. This was predictable. Yet my grandmother acted as if it was a huge surprise, despite it clearly being INEVITABLE...

None of this occurred to me as a child, only now, as an adult, as I began writing this book. I admit, however, that this is not enough for me to forgive my mother, or the memory of her. As a child, it would have been useless to think of it, it wouldn't have helped me any more than it does now. Because just think, dear Reader, what my life was like as a young child—it's normal that when a child is in trouble or has some problem, he runs to his mother, who he rightly assumes will protect him, reassure him, make him feel safe and secure... But my mother never caressed me, nor could I go to her for a little love, because even at her best she was indifferent to me, and very often I downright FEARED her! Yes, my own mother! I was ultimately afraid of her until I grew so big that I was stronger than her. But even then she kept on bullying me, only not physically terrorizing me—beating me—but doing her utmost to destroy my self-confidence and self-esteem with sarcastic and belittling remarks.

That's why I tried to move out of my parents' house as quickly as I could. As a consequence, I did not finish university. I wanted to be independent as soon as possible. I don't think it was necessarily a

bad decision on my part. It was in vain that my kind but naive father always told me to study, because he who studies will go far in life—I could see that this statement was simply NOT TRUE. For despite my father having two degrees, he wasn't really that rich, in fact he wasn't rich in the slightest. His house wasn't big either, and we were constantly struggling financially, even though we didn't live a posh life. We didn't even own a car. The ones who were really rich, I noticed, were the ones I would call CUNNING. Those who "fished in troubled waters". People who were always looking for loopholes in the law, and who had good "connections", and of course relatives. Even those who had specifically committed a crime, but cleverly, so as not to get caught... This was true in the era of socialism, and even more so later on, after the fall of communism and the unfolding of rampant capitalism. And Knowledge could go to hell; nobody respected it anymore! In fact, those with a high level of education could even sometimes be at a disadvantage. I have an example of this from my own life.

I was already an adult with a family when I became unemployed. A few weeks later, however, I heard that in the next town (which was less than five kilometers away) there was a printing company where one of the editors had quit for some reason. I was delighted—I was a certified publishing editor! So I quickly went over there and told the manager that I would like to apply for the job. I had my publishing certification to prove that I was qualified, but I was also very good with computers, I could program, it was one of my favorite hobbies; I lived nearby and I could cycle there whenever I wanted, so it would be fine if any unexpected work came up, and I could work overtime...

But he didn't hire me. The really strange thing, however, was not that he didn't employ me, but how he justified this. Initially he said, "We'll notify you soon", but of course I never was notified, and so I went to see him again a few days later in person, to find out what was going on. He told me he hadn't chosen me because I was "overeducated". I was at my wit's end. Overeducated?! What the hell was this?! That was the first time I had ever heard the word. It turned out that his problem was that I had told him I could program. Therefore he didn't think this job was suitable for me. I was overeducated. That is, I knew TOO MUCH. So you could say, the problem was that I was STUDYING too diligently before, while the others—the lazy ones—were just fucking around, relaxing or going out! It really is DUMBFOUNDING!

To this day, I still don't understand the idea that it would be wrong for an employee to know more than what is strictly necessary to fill the position at hand. I think that in a sensible society, a normal employer would be only happy if the employee could do more than the minimum requirement, simply because then if something happens to another employee (they quit, get sick, etc.), they have someone who they can use as a replacement, either temporarily or permanently. Of course, he may have just been lying to me. I later learned that the person he hired in my place was a young girl, who had absolutely no training or experience (unsurprisingly her work was worthless, I saw one of her "creations"...). And how interesting that every employee in that workplace—at least in the office—was a young woman! Ever since, I have deeply believed it was because these women had the extra duty after working hours of "seeing to" the boss's manhood...

Okay, so in this respect it's understandable if he didn't choose me, after all, I had lost the opportunity to become a pretty young girl the very moment I was born. That's not really my problem, it's how he could possibly justify my rejection by saying that I am OVEREDUCATED?! He basically said, "I won't hire you because you're not stupid enough!". The fact that anyone would even think of that as an excuse is still very strange to me. In any case, that's when I started to think that there was

something fucking wrong with this country (Hungary), if it can be a problem for a potential employee to be skilled, smart and well-educated. Even if this is not the real reason, but can be used as an acceptable excuse to reject someone. In other words, I decided that I urgently had to escape from such a crazy and absurd place, where—to put it somewhat ironically—the social system was not socialist, not communist and not even capitalist, but IDIOCRACY! To a country where knowledge and diligence are valued, and where people with these qualities are respected! Later I did just that, because at the time of writing this I live in the USA...

But this is not really the subject of this chapter. So, back to my mother—no, I am not able to forgive her. I know it would be a noble gesture, yet I am unable to do it. However, one thing is for sure—I don't consider myself to be sinful or bad for this, nor am I ashamed of it!

Aspies and Literature

I am a writer. Writing is my favorite pastime. This is why I have devoted a separate, rather long section in this book to this topic. Two chapters (as well as this one, which is just an introduction to the subject) on different aspects of writing. So now I will explain how I write, why I write the way I do, and dare to give advice to "wannabe" writers on how to create a sizable series of novels. These chapters will also show you which literary works I consider beautiful, interesting, valuable or worthless, and what criteria I use to judge each work. All these things are related to Asperger's Syndrome to such an extent that I have to mention it for the umpteenth time, because it's so important: an Aspie's favorite pastime is to CREATE SYSTEMS. For this reason, an Aspie—if he becomes a writer—cannot help but approach writing not primarily as an artist but as a designer, and will try to look at the writing process scientifically. He will consider the works of art (novels) he has created or wants to create as a kind of system. This will naturally also be reflected in his working methods as a writer, which I will present in the next chapter.

First, as just a small taste, I will provide a rough outline of the rules of writing that I believe must be followed in order to write well, or at least acceptably... I have inserted these rules into one of my novels, titled "The Great Longing". In it, a writer called Zurna adopted these principles as her own. For the time being I've come up with eleven main precepts of writing:

1. Write in the style that appeals to you. Otherwise you'll get bored halfway through, and you can never be entirely sure what style *others* prefer anyway.

2. Everything has to be completed. Because only completed novels can be published.

3. A happy ending is half the success.

Motto: Even the most serious thoughts can be expressed without sadness. Besides, who the hell likes to be sad?!

4. Lifebelt: If you can't get out of a difficult emotional situation decently (for example, the mother and her son fall in love), then have one of them killed off by an unexpected murderer!

Important: Keep in mind that this is a very dirty trick against the Reader, so only use it out of extreme necessity!

5. Exceptions not only fail to strengthen a computer program, but also a novel. In a novel, every random event is an exception. Therefore reduce the number of random events to a minimum!

Quantitative estimate: one important random event in each chapter is already too many!

6. Write regularly, preferably daily, always at the same time, even if you don't feel inspired. However, if you are inspired, utilize it immediately and start writing!

Slogan: Lost time is never found again, so whatever you can write today, don't put off until tomorrow!

Otherwise you will never finish. And if you learn to write without inspiration, then you are close to professionalism!

7. Anything you write from inspiration must be read through thoroughly, because inspired work is quick and pleasant to do, but unfortunately it will be full of mistakes!

Note: It is highly recommended to read through the non-inspired parts of the novel too!

8. Learn the correct spelling, don't trust the computer!

9. You can leave the chaptering for when the novel is finished. So don't worry about the form—be concerned with the content and the message.

10. Don't even give aliens unpronounceable names, unless you're writing a deliberately grotesque or humorous story.

Note: Our readers often find names with archaic spellings or names adopted from other nations unpronounceable. If you do use such names, at least footnote how the name is pronounced.

11. Don't write scientific nonsense!

How I write

Although I'm not yet the most celebrated best-selling author on the planet, there are people who have read some of my work, some of them even the whole series, and from time to time I get various feedback from readers. They range widely in sentiment, some questioning my sanity (one simply saying, "You're an idiot, you stupid ass, you blockhead, go and find a good psychiatrist!"), others

raving about my genius as a writer, and some even saying that I am already one of the most important figures in world literature today. Moreover, that I am probably the most significant writer of ALL TIME. (Yes, I really have had people write that to me, and not just one. Granted, they are not the majority. YET...)

Of course, most people fall somewhere between these two extremes, although fortunately there are more positive than negative opinions. But they all have one thing in common: even those who are my most loyal fans and praise me with the most wonderful words—and especially the others—think that although I have written some really great novels, they still aren't PERFECT, because in order for these works to be perfect—individually, but especially the series as a whole—they would have to be... and here come the objections, the list of "trivialities" that the critic feels spoil my novels, the "errors", or to put it mildly, "imperfections"; and this unacceptable defectiveness bothers them, so they ask me—politely, of course—to urgently "correct" these things, and to not take offense because they are only trying to help me, since they truly believe that these "minor errors" are the only obstacles to me ascending to the pinnacle of my rightful glory, the Parnassus of Literature!

Well, whoever writes me such things is, on the one hand, unaware of my aims, because I will state here that I have no intention or desire to ever attain the "Parnassus of Literature", I never have, even when writing my first book as a downy-chinned teenager; on the other hand, by far the vast majority of what my fans criticize (and certainly my non-fans) is not an error at all, but either a very deliberate feature of my novels, or simply an inevitable consequence of writing what I write, of writing in this style, or of writing anything at all.

Now, in this essay I would like to elaborate on the above paragraph, in order to explain what my goal is with this series (if not attaining the "Parnassus of Literature"), and why things are written the way they are, because in my series most things have a purpose, they're not there by accident... but I won't go on, let's get to the point...

Just as a preface, I really regret the time I wasted writing this section, because instead I could have used it to create another chapter in my latest novel. But unfortunately it has become timely, since there are becoming increasingly more people who want to "help" me "steam ahead" with nuclear force, and I'm very tired of having to explain and excuse myself all the time by saying, "but please understand that...", "you must consider..." and so on. It is simpler to write this down in detail ONCE, and then next time I only have to send this text file to the well-meaning voluntary helper.

First of all, let us clarify what we mean by the term "Parnassus of Literature". Because this concept is rather vague. We could say, for example, that it's the Nobel Prize for Literature—well, if you think about it, the chances of attaining that are pretty slim. Such a prize, as we well know, depends more on political considerations than on the value of the writing. Then we need to examine how many writers there are in the world, and how many of these have won the Nobel Prize? And those who succeed are old men by the time they attain it. And what's the point of it? Do more people read their books? Not as far as I can tell. In fact, I think the reality is just the opposite—that if an author wins this prize, their books are usually shunned by the younger generation of readers, because they fear—and rightly so, I believe—that there's a good chance the book is some boring crap that's agonizing to read. Like the compulsory reading in school. In other words, something guaranteed to be a sad, depressing story with no happy ending. Or some holocaust story, in which all the sympathetic characters die. Or at the very

least they are raped and beaten into a cripple, but even then they want to tell us the lesson at the end of the story as they sit in a wheelchair, naturally poor as a church mouse, that life is still good even in these circumstances, that they bear no ill will towards anyone and have forgiven everyone who did this to them, who caused their misfortune... And those who don't like to be sad don't like reading such things either.

I must admit that I also hated the compulsory reading as a child, and avoided reading them if I could get away with it. It follows that I don't want to attain the "Parnassus of Literature" in order for me (or my work) to be a recognized part of "high literature". I would not consider it a great honor to be included in the compulsory reading. I don't want to be hated by children! I would like my readers to imagine me as some kindly old peasant uncle sitting by the fireplace or the campfire, who stares into the distance as he starts telling a story, and the children listen with open mouths, and even some of the adults, and while they are listening to him they imagine themselves in another reality, in a better and more beautiful world, forgetting their troubles of everyday life...

I hope this explains why I chose the following sentence as my "ars poetica": "There is too much horror in the world without needing to expand it with our written words, therefore I always strive to create a happy ending". Since if my story's ending wasn't "happy", my readers would be sad, and that is not my aim at all, but quite the opposite. This is why I not only ensure that there is a happy ending, but also that not too many sympathetic characters die during the story, preferably none of them, or even suffer any serious injuries. Frankly, I can't even understand writers who don't follow this principle—I don't understand why they don't care—but I certainly don't understand the CRITICS (and I don't agree with them either) who appreciate the very works that don't take this principle into account and make them compulsory reading in schools. Few people read nowadays anyway, and making depressing, sad works compulsory and viewed as valuable is the best way to make those who would otherwise have chosen to read for pleasure hate reading. The creation of such works is, in my eyes, nothing more than tastelessness and DESTRUCTION, deliberate corruption of children's aesthetic taste, deliberate (with malice aforethought!) dulling of their love of reading, therefore it is ultimately MENTAL, INTELLECTUAL and INFORMATIONAL POLLUTION! In my opinion, such books belong in the trash heap of literature, because they are simply cultural trash....

It is not an argument in my eyes that novels without happy endings are necessary for children to learn about the so-called "real" world. BULLSHIT. A complete IDIOCY, as well as a LIE! What kind of "real world" can a child learn about from these books? The era in which the work is set is generally not the world in which children live in today's society. This is particularly true of "Holocaust" stories and any other novel that is set at that time or before. But that's the least of it. What conclusions can be drawn from such a story? Because when I read this kind of book as a child, this is what I concluded from it: "The hero of the story is a FUCKWIT. He sacrificed his life for a community that DID NOT LIKE OR RESPECT him, and his sacrifice was so successful that he died for it!"

In addition, in most of these depressing books, the goal set by the community is usually meaningless BULLSHIT, or in the best case a superfluous absurdity. This is especially true for stories that are not only without happy endings, but also about children. In such books there is almost always some kind of gang warfare, and these rival gangs are of course made up of children. My opinion about them is that instead of the two gangs fighting each other, they should come to a mutual agreement in a way that is worthy of intelligent beings. And what the hell is the point of forming gangs anyway?! They

would be much better off studying in the afternoons instead; after all, a student's job is to learn, not beat each other up or kill each other in gangs.

So if somebody dies in such a novel, I'm unable to feel sorry for him, because in my eyes he's just a stupid asshole, not a real hero, just a mentally-retarded moron, an undiagnosed IQ-negative imbecile, who sacrificed his life for a completely unrealistic goal. It served him right, for anyone who is that stupid should die, because he's not worthy of breeding! Yes, let everyone else who takes such childish bullshit as "gang warfare" seriously die! The sooner they die, the happier I'll be, my heart won't ache for them, because the less of these brainless, aggressive, screaming kids there are running around in the world the better! That is, as far as I'm concerned, the hero in these stories was a NEGATIVE HERO, even to me as a child, and I didn't feel sorry for him at all when he died. Not negative in the sense that he was evil, I just thought he was a hopeless idiot. An idiotic, IQ-negative brainless animal, although at the time I couldn't express my opinion of these people in a very artful way. Today, however, with my present knowledge, I could briefly describe them as worthy of the Darwin Award...

To me, such "heroes"—whether children or adults—are no different from the "Behins" in Sándor Szathmári's brilliant novel, *Voyage to Kazohinia*. Which, by the way, I read when I was in primary school (more than once!), and I thoroughly enjoyed it. So much so that I have since read it in its English translation several times.

Generally speaking, the only thing the reader can learn from stories that don't have happy endings is that "It's not worth being good, because good people die, or their loved ones will be raped and killed, or at the very least they will be tortured, stripped of their wealth and die a beggar". Now, in my opinion this message is completely contrary to what I consider to be the true and only purpose of Literature—to educate people in the good, beautiful and noble virtues; that is, first of all setting examples worthy of emulation, and secondly to develop in them the belief that being good, decent and virtuous is worthwhile and beneficial, because by imbibing these virtues we will eventually succeed, not necessarily immediately, but at least in the long run, and perhaps not in the way we originally imagined, but at least somehow!

I don't think it's a valid argument that this is supposedly not how things work in reality. For starters, no one can be sure that it's not true. You could show me any number of examples of people of great and noble character being treated unjustly by Life. That isn't a counterargument, for the following reasons:

1. Perhaps the guy wasn't so noble after all, we just think he was. Who knows how many contemptible things he did that haven't yet come to light, or are known only by historians, but not by the masses?

2. Even though they died miserably, no one can know with exact certainty whether or not rebirth exists, and when they will receive the well-deserved reward for their present virtuous life. (In my imagined world rebirth DOES exist, although it is not a frequently used theme. I rarely need to use it, however it does exist in my series.)

3. Perhaps that person's life may only seem terrible to us, from our point of view, but for some reason they were quite content with it.

And there are surely other possibilities too. But that isn't my main argument for the "happy ending". Because even if it were irrefutable that the world is not like that, I'm still of the opinion that... (the following is a proverb that I heard long ago): "If you want to become a member of a society, pretend you've been in it for a long time!" To me this means that if the inhabitants of the Earth, in sufficient

numbers and with sufficient determination, believe that the World does work like this, that it is worth behaving decently and being a good and honest person, then the World (human society) will be a place where being a good person really pays off. It will be a "self-fulfilling prophecy".

But even if what I wrote above were not true, I would still be in favor of the "happy ending". Because I believe that when somebody picks up a book, they want to relax and feel good. If this is their wish, then it means they definitely don't want to be sad. Generally the reader puts themselves in the shoes of one or more of the protagonists, and thus imaginatively lives out desires that they cannot live out in reality. Now, no one can possibly have the desire to die miserably, and/or to be unsuccessful in life, to fail. If someone *does* have this desire, it should not be satisfied—even in their imagination! Such a disturbed soul should be treated urgently in a psychiatric ward, because besides his tendency to self-destruction, he is almost certainly a serious danger to the public, and at the very least a psychological masochist!

So the protagonist must be successful, victorious. He must win. And that obviously means a happy ending. Therefore I write happy endings. At least, I strive to do so. I don't do it to make my books more marketable, or to better suit the poor taste of the supposedly uneducated masses, but for the reasons I've just stated, from a *deep conviction*, because I deeply believe in the need for it. I write happy endings sincerely. Not for business reasons, but because I *believe* in this goal, and because I can't really write anything else—if I wrote any other way, I wouldn't feel comfortable writing. And not afterwards either... It is also the reason why I am unable to really enjoy Tolkien's books, despite all the praise he rightly deserves. Because although the series FORMALLY has a happy ending, since the main villain is defeated at the end, it doesn't have one FUNDAMENTALLY, because before the final triumph over evil takes place, an incredibly large number of sympathetic characters die in his story. In fact, that is why I haven't read his books more than once. However this is not characteristic for me at all, because I usually read the books I like several times. But not his. Why would I want to become so sad all over again?! (The other thing I don't like about Tolkien's books is that he glorifies smoking—at least pipe smoking. I abhor smoking in all its forms, and in my novels it is *always* solely an attribute of the negative characters).

The other criticism I often get is that the characters in my books are predominantly stereotypical in character. That they are almost "manufactured on an assembly line". They include the following types of character templates:

- The very beautiful woman or young girl who is a law unto herself, who only listens to her own conscience in the face of official laws, and who is superior to everybody else in her environment;
- The best friend who soon becomes almost entirely like the aforementioned girl/woman;
- The young child who is far, far smarter than is appropriate for their age;
- The hero, who is a professional fighter, and almost always comes from another country/nation. He typically saves the heroine with his fighting skills, yet despite this he regularly has conflicts with the very person he saves because she objects to his crude, violent and often deadly methods, even if these "problem-solving methods" are used for good, because she is so incredibly super-good and benevolent.
- The priest or a group of priests, or even the Church as a whole, who represent traditionalism, fanaticism and cruelty.

My critics' view on this is that not every novel can be based on the same character types. It is fine in a single novel, and the familiar ending can be quite lovely, but if the same character types are present in all of the novels, then my whole series will suffer.

Well, my answer to that is that this series, with all its elements—including of course these character models, which I don't dispute the existence of—follows a certain style, which is the one that I am capable of producing... And I don't see why it would be a problem to have different styles in literature, when no one considers the existence of different musical styles a disaster, for instance. Yes, this is the style I write in... so what?! Obviously anyone who does not like this style will not read my novels. I can deal with that. It would make no difference if I were to write in any other style—there will always be a reader with different tastes. Moreover, I am incapable of writing in any other style.

I will yet again use music as an analogy—someone who can compose beautiful medieval madrigals is hardly likely to be as successful in composing in a modern hard-rock style, and it is highly questionable how well he would do at writing some kind of symphonic poem. Or a film score. Or even writing a tango or a waltz of acceptable quality... There are many different styles, both in music and in literature. Yes, I do have a certain style, and that style has certain elements, attributes, let's say a "tool-set", including a few character templates, some which have been correctly identified by a number of my critics. Why would that be a problem? To demand that I change this and start writing in some other style would be as pointless as expecting someone who has been creating magnificent relaxation or meditation music to suddenly switch to writing songs for parties and weddings, because there is allegedly a greater demand for it! I'm not sure if there is a greater demand for it, but even if there was, the person may not be as capable of producing that style of music at the same quality. And even if they could, those who have enjoyed their previous works will be unlikely to enjoy the music they create in the new style...

Let's face it—just as it's impossible to make shoes that fit everyone's feet equally, it's also impossible to write a book/series that everyone likes, let alone that everyone likes *equally*... In all honesty, I can only advise to anyone who doesn't like my style, my characters, my templates or whatever, to read other novels that weren't written by me... I won't be angry! I ask only one thing—don't tell me that what I write is crap, bad, unreadable etc. IT IS NOT. It's only YOU who doesn't like them. There is nothing wrong with YOU having different tastes. But it's pretty obvious from the feedback that there are some people in the world who *do* like my creations. If you don't, then you are not one of them. That's fine, I can deal with that, and so can you.

This argument is generally acknowledged by my critics, but, as I quoted from them above, their response is that although I am right in this respect, the style does get boring after so many novels. Boring... Well, there may be some truth in that, but it's like listening to nothing but tango for a year. You may well get a bit bored towards the end... but that's not a problem, just listen to some other music for a while, and then when you get bored of that too, go back to the tango again! This doesn't mean that tango as a genre or style is bad.

It's the same with my novels. No one is forcing any of my Readers to read my whole series straight through! On the other hand, there is an advantage of knowing in advance what style my stories will follow. This advantage is that anyone who starts reading one of my books will not be disappointed: They can be *dead certain* that the ending of the book will be a happy one, and they can be sure that no character who is even slightly sympathetic will die, and if they do, they will be resurrected somehow in

a later novel of the series; furthermore, since the character templates mentioned above—as well as some others that weren't mentioned—do exist in my series, it is easy to see which character falls into which "template", and my Reader can easily inadvertently detect this (without requiring any literary critic qualifications), therefore assisting them to get into the role of the character, and anticipate what is expected of the protagonist in a given situation. So my Reader will not be disappointed, and they will know this in advance, giving them a sense of reassurance, which is exactly what most people need in our stressful world!

I am aware that some people will say that this is boring, I just admitted it myself... Well, yes, it really can be boring for those who only like deep psychological novels with very complex characterization, I admit that. But again, my response is: I simply don't create in that style and that's all there is to it! It is undeniably true that a novel needs excitement, I don't dispute that, but I'm convinced that excitement is not achieved merely by some unexpected oddity in the protagonist's character. In fact, to me it's more disturbing than exciting. As far as I'm concerned, the source of the excitement should not be the protagonist's thoughts, not their intellectual or emotional world, but the external environment, to which the protagonist **MUST** react as logically expected from their character and the events of their life that have been made known to the Reader thus far. If they don't react in this way, well, in my eyes it's not something worthy of the label "complex character" or "rich inner life", but is simply deceiving the Reader. In fact, virtually all the books I've read that were said to be a "psychological" novel and "rich in character", were for me more or less **UNREADABLE!** Because this "richness of character", and the endless sentimentality that went with it, virtually incapacitated the so-called "heroes". They were constantly suffering, moaning and groaning (about something in particular, or for no good reason), whining, complaining, vacillating, crying, tolerating, but never **TAKING ACTION!** Never ever!

I must confess that I am strongly inclined to think that the novels "high" literature calls "psychological novels" are no different from what might be called "sentimental novels", i.e. full of cheesy sentimentality! Well, I'll be honest and admit that I simply don't like that literary genre. Of course, if I don't like it I wouldn't be able to write in that style, especially not anything of good quality, however I have no desire to anyway, because I seriously doubt the value of this type of literature, I will frankly admit this too...

Unlike sentimentalism, the style of my series has far more to do with romanticism. I wouldn't dare to state that it is entirely romantic, far from it. Yet I can't deny that it is far closer to romanticism than to sentimentalist whining. My protagonists **TAKE ACTION**, they have desires for which they are willing to take significant risks, they believe in their goals, they are confident, and they will not give up the fight even in the face of incredible odds, and this is typical of heroes in romantic literature, not the sentimental genre. All this is ultimately true even for the "negative" protagonists in my series—they don't do evil deeds for no reason, but also have goals they believe in, even if my "good" heroes (and my Readers) don't generally agree with this goal. However, this is what often allows the negative protagonist in my series to reform—they simply realize that the goal they believed in is not worth pursuing... (a typical example is Princess Mushuli in my novel "Kayam as a Woman").

Now, this is not typical of traditional romantic literature. Nevertheless, it still makes my novels closer to Romanticism, because reformation of an "evil" character is **NOT** an attribute of sentimentalism either: in that, evil always wins, at least to the extent that the so-called "hero" never

succeeds but fails. If, on rare occasions, they do not fail, their success is not by their own merit, but the result of a random event, while they constantly complain about the evils of the world instead of taking action, because they are such lofty beings with such deep, rich emotions. Well, if that sniveling sigh is a rich psychological portrayal, then thanks, but I don't want any of it, I'll stick to my templates... Besides, this sentimental whining is also a template, isn't it?!

Another common criticism about my novels is that they too often contain swearing and obscene language, and that I write too openly and sometimes in pornographic detail about sex and sexuality...

This is a valid criticism, in the sense that all this can indeed be observed in my series (although not in every single novel). However, allow me to make two comments here. First of all: The target audience of this series is *not* young children, but ADULTS, or at most older teenagers who are already perfectly aware that it's not a stork who brings newborn babies into the world, who have probably already watched many porn films (in the present era of the Internet it can't be hidden from them, no matter how much their parents may try to), and it's also very likely that my novels aren't the first time they have encountered foul language.

Secondly: The criticism of the previous point may of course be that I should not promote these dirty words. THIS IS TRUE! However, I am NOT doing that, on the contrary... I'll explain it now. The point is that if one reads my series carefully, one should notice that although there are indeed an abundance of dirty words within it, they are EXCLUSIVELY used by the so-called NEGATIVE characters. That is, these expressions characterize them. Their way of speaking in itself informs the reader—as if there were a big, red billboard on the character's body—that this person is a negative character with whom you need not identify. They are not worthy of being your role model!

The situation is similar with smoking. In my series, smoking is the exclusive attribute of negative characters, without exception. Actually, there is only one semi-exception to this—when a character uses such words who is basically a "good" character, but only because they will BECOME good. However, at the beginning of the story they are still a negative character, or at least neutral. So before they become a good character, they can (in my conception) use such words, but by the time they become a good character they have STOPPED using these terms, and it is usually clearly emphasized in the story that they are trying their utmost to give up their former bad habit. A typical example of this is my novel "Wraith-children".

I don't think that this is in any way an attempt to promote or even make acceptable a vulgar style of speaking, but on the contrary—it is to suggest that this kind of style is an attribute of hooligans and delinquents, and if someone wants to be "positive", that is, attractive and likable, they should stop doing it, or even better, not form the habit in the first place!

Let us now turn to another common criticism, but one that is partly related to the characterization mentioned earlier. But it is worth separating it from that, because even if it were theoretically a subset of that criticism, it is thrown at me with a curious frequency. This criticism is that there are practically no "normal" women (or girls) in my novels. Even those of my female characters who are not especially outstanding intellectually or morally in their society are somehow not "normal"; they don't behave like a "real" woman, but more like a man in a woman's body...

Hmm... so my critics are basically saying that I only write about women with masculine characters... This criticism is both true and false. I can definitely state that my female characters are "real" women (or girls), insofar as me having no intention of modeling them on men. Yet my critics are right in the sense that there is something unusual and uncommon about these female figures, if they are not what we would imagine an average or ordinary woman to be. However it doesn't necessarily follow that they are men, at least "mentally"... What deceives my critics about this is simply that not only the male but also the female characters TAKE ACTION, not just suffer and whine like they usually do in the sentimentalist squalor I previously scourged, and since in our current male-dominated world, activity, action, courage, and the audacity to assert oneself are traditionally seen as the exclusive attributes of MEN, because of this very male chauvinistic prejudice, it seems that my women are actually men... How ridiculous!

They generally have very different goals than my male protagonists. All they dare to do is FIGHT and take risks for their goals. They even dare to express their OPINIONS... Wow, what IMPROPER BEHAVIOR for a woman to have an OPINION of her own, and my goodness, these impudent sluts even have the audacity to speak their minds! Ugh!

This is what is at work in the "subconscious" of those who give me this criticism that I have mockingly described in the final sentences of the above paragraph. In other words, anyone who throws this criticism at me just FEARS women of strong character, has an aversion to them, perhaps because they don't consider themselves strong enough... I'm not surprised that people who feel this way don't like my novels! That's fine, I can only say to them they are not part of my target audience, so they should read something else that wasn't written by me... After all, literature is full of novels in which the only type of woman is some poor, humiliated slave girl, who must be rescued by the male hero, and he must carry her on his shoulders into the sailing ship, because she is so incapacitated and helpless that she doesn't even think of running away when the shackles have long been removed from her feet...

I am not a fan of these sorts of novels, nor such horror movies in which, for example, even though the woman has the gun in her hand, she has no intention of firing it at the monster, but just stands there and screams. Even though she has an axe at her side, she won't strike the zombie's head with it, or whatever is attacking her—she will let her lover, the Great and Powerful Hero, the Man From Head To Foot, fight the monster himself... Or die. But the woman will just stand there and scream, or better yet, suddenly faint. She certainly shouldn't interfere and help, because that would be inappropriate for a woman; then it would seem that her lover isn't man enough, doesn't stink of testosterone enough to be successful on his own merits...

Well, the women in my series are certainly not like that, that's true. Although I occasionally have a few slave girls in my novels who need to be rescued, it is usually clearly shown in these cases that this slave-status of the girl is temporary (after all, everyone can get into bad situations, can have a bad year and so on), but even if she's a slave NOW, this only applies to her social status, not to her CHARACTER. This is so true that such women in my novels usually actively collaborate with their savior in order to escape, or at least they are somehow revealed afterwards to have been very worthy of rescue, because they become enormously useful assistants to the rescuer, that is, they are not just fancy packaging around a brainless pussy, not designed for the sole purpose of going to bed with the muscular hero...

If there is a woman in my series who is a slave unlike the one I described above, she is most certainly a twenty-sixth-ranking minor character, someone of very little significance, so much so that it is questionable whether she can be called a "character" at all, since she is more like a kind of moving biological prop. Such slave women (or even non-slave women) never appear in my novels for more than a few short paragraphs, and their role is so insignificant that the Reader forgets them as soon as they turn the page. I repeat—they are not real characters, just "decorations", and they are very few in number anyhow.

So yes, I admit that the women in my novels have *strong* characters. Anyone who claims that this makes them men, well, I think I have every right to say that this critic is a male chauvinist, a sexist, phallocratic individual with a barbaric, atavistic, primitive mentality, and it is not for me to change my writing style, but for them to change their way of thinking!

There is yet another criticism, that I must have been molested by priests when I was little, and that's why I hate religion so much and write so many bad things about it, however I totally misunderstand the role of religions and churches in human society, because the church has done a lot of good throughout history and there's a real need for it, and so on...

Well, I was not molested by any priest as a child, nor as an adult. I simply have a GOOD KNOWLEDGE OF HISTORY, unlike my critics. Of course I do. It is necessary if one is a writer whose novels are set in a "medieval" setting. And no, I do not feel there is any need for an organized framework of religion that can be called a church. I am of the opinion that the Church has been at the forefront of barbarism in all ages, it has just lagged behind since the Age of Enlightenment... The Church is also inherently anti-science, anti-freedom of thought, and heavily anti-woman, even downright misogynistic! But I would like to emphasize, in order to reassure my Christian fellows, that this is not just my opinion of the Catholic Church or any other Christian church, but of ALL churches, because even if some of them are not like this, it is only because they do not have the power to enable them to do the same things as the others. The "church" as an *institution* is such because it cannot be otherwise, and it is completely independent of the specific religious doctrines it preaches. I refuse to acknowledge ANY benefit or legitimacy of churches. Not even that they do a lot for the homeless and hungry, for example. I DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE IT. Naturally I don't deny that they *sometimes* do something for these people and other deprived groups, but as far as I'm concerned, it's much like a thief stealing say ten million dollars from society, and then doing some spectacularly good deed with roughly one thousandth of the stolen money. Because I ask, "Okay, but where's the other 999 thousandths of that money, huh?!" Moreover, even this small amount of money from that which was STOLEN, or at least obtained by false pretenses, that has been spent on charity is not altruistic—it is used for church image-building, for advertising purposes... There is no better advertising than a well-chosen charity! Other groups outside the Church have already recognized this...

So this is my response to that criticism, and that's that! This is what it is, whether my Readers or critics like it or not—this is my OPINION and it will not change, so any discussion about it is spoken to deaf ears and is wasted breath. I admit that strongly religious people may have their religious "sensibilities" offended by my series. Well, I really don't care, because my SCIENTIFIC sensibilities have been deeply offended by the fact that many religious groups (not just churches) deny evolution, which is something *I* believe in! If they are allowed to deny that, then I am also allowed to deny

religions. If they are allowed to mock evolution, then I am allowed to mock religions. If anyone doesn't like that, I will repeat yet again: Read something other than my books, because my opinion is not going to change!

Anyhow, the criticism that I must have been molested by priests is idiotic. Because even though I have said that this is not true, let's assume that I admit (or rather lie) that yes, I was molested by priests as a child... I would still be right in this case too, because that means priests really are evil, since the abuse of innocent children is despicable. Therefore it would be perfectly legitimate for me to say that they are evil!

Yet another "criticism" that people often throw at me is that they think my writing is generally shit. He—the critic—doesn't like my novels, THEREFORE what I write can only be bad! According to him I have no idea how a good novel should be written. And when I ask in return, "How many books have YOU written?", the answer is "None, but I don't have to be a chef to know when a dish is bad".

Well, my response to that is, you're MISTAKEN. It is indeed necessary to be a chef in order to determine whether or not a meal is bad. If you're not a chef, all you can rightfully declare is whether YOU specifically like the food, whether it is to YOUR taste. But you have no idea if anyone else would like it. You don't know, but the chef does! However, if you don't like spicy food and the chef has made a spicy dish, you will only know that YOU don't like it. And you will reproach the chef for not making fruit juice and cake, because you prefer sweet foods. But the chef's cooking is still good, it just doesn't appeal to you, you're not in his target group... Well, it's the same thing with writing too!

Becoming a god

or a methodological guide for advanced authors on how to create their own "Author's Universe" (= fabledom).

This guide is based solely on my own experience of my life's work. There may be some advice and points of view in other authors' reflections on writing, but I have not read them. I came up with all this myself. However, it was not the result of a sudden epiphany, but of hard, painstaking work. At present, as I type these words, I have written 65 novels, 16 short novels and 41 short stories. Some of my novels are extremely long. I consider "short novels" to be less than 60 thousand words, therefore my longer novels consist of more than 60 thousand words, most even longer than 120 thousand words... All of the long and short novels, as well as the vast majority of the short stories, are part of one huge series. This series is my "author's universe", which I call the Poliverse series.

I am not writing down this information to boast, although I will not deny that I am not free from feelings of vanity, and I am very proud of what I have created. However, my aim was to prove with facts that I have plenty of experience in how to create a truly large-scale series. As a testimony to these words, I publish here how many works I have completed at the moment of writing these lines. For below is a list of the entire Poliverse series in chronological order. The titles marked with an asterisk

(*) are just short stories or "novellas", their length being less than 60,000 words (as I mentioned above). However, some of the other titles without an asterisk are very, very long...

The Perfect Solution (*)

Breeding Humans (*)

Y

Badjaharata

Cripples (*)

The Two-holed Man (*)

The Sky-high Tree (*)

Kayam, the Mistake

Dark Truth (*)

Once Upon an Era... (*)

Kayam's Sweetheart

The First Invasion of the To-Be-Hanged

The Renegade (*)

Lord of Lightning (*)

Kayam

Kayam and the Diadem

Kayam and the Lord of Monsters

The Lost Princess (*)

Sittie, the Wizardhorse

Candiman (*)

Kayam and the Soothsayer

Kayam and the Hidden City

Rescuing Kayam

My Little Baby Spy

Daughter of the Priestess

Kayam in Captivity

The Book of Power (*)

Black Pearl

The Dwarf Witch

The Barbarian Woman

The Great Exodus

Kayam's Daughter

Path of the Silkworm

The Great Expansion

Remembrance of the Queen

The Bodyguard Horse

The Island of the Phallocratics

The Pirate Queen

The Triumph Token (*)

Kayam's Bet
Daughter of the Light (*)
Tiger-bridal
The Story of Nyau
Give me Back my Death!
The Floating Island
The Sexbombe (*)
Kayam as a Woman
Maua
Zardan the Tyrant
Traitors (*)
The Ghost of the Amber
Yummy Mummy (*)
Colossus
Sex-slaves (*)
The Writings of Kayam (*)
The Kayam Plan (*)
The Book of Kayam (*)
The Real Gold (*)
Empire of the Golden Father
Knights of Intellect
Psychological Novel (*)
Last Days (*)
The Eye (*)
Lovesield (*)
Mouse God (*)
Wraith-children
The Book of Fate (*)
Bio (*)
The Waste Princess (*)
Children of the Virgin Father
Revenge of the Chisees (*)
Barbarians (*)
The Heroes Return (*)
Kayam's Grandchildren
Kayam's Experiment (*)
Pull of Money
Kayam's Sprite
Kayam the Celeb
The Great Yearning
Island of the Earthquakes
Spirited Present

Kayam and the Gods
Soul-attendance (*)
The Legacy (*)
Money Talks
Whitekind
Fff
Brain
Alternative (*)
The place to be (*)
The Fugitive Groom (*)
Fatties (*)
Watchdevils (*)
Rock-music (*)
Matt (*)
Spring (*)
The Power of Music
Specialists
The Light-bearer
The Rebirth of Ofra Haza
Ofra Haza and Kayam
The Beloved Woman (*)
True Longing (*)
The Mistlanders
Children of Iron
The Planet of the Seven Suns
The Portable Hole
Kayam and History (*)
The Magical Carriage
The Big-eyed (*)
Aspia
United Planets of the Universe
Kayam's Light-Garment
We are meant for each other!
Vegania

However, I wish to make it clear right now in the beginning that in this guide I am not simply presenting my readers with a method for creating a large series, because what I mean by the expression "author's universe" is much more than that. Although it is not this semantic issue that I would like to address first, but why I have offered my guide to advanced writers. It's because if you can't write a single novel, then you shouldn't even try to create a whole series. After all, if you can't climb a single step, you'll never get to the top of the staircase!

The method I describe here will make writing a series much easier, hopefully more readable and more artistic, yet it still requires very hard work and the utmost diligence! It is not recommended to venture upon creating a series if you have not already written at least one novel. (It doesn't matter whether or not it's published, just that the book is finished). At first it didn't even occur to me that I would have my own series. Even while I was writing my very first novel, when I was in the throes of pride and conceit, I had the hope that this work might grow into a trilogy in the future. But never in my wildest dreams would I have imagined that I could create so many novels, all part of the same series, and have plenty of ideas for further books too...

And now let's discuss what an "author's universe" actually is, and how it differs from an ordinary series; and above all, why it is advantageous for a writer who has decided to write a lot of books in the future to create their own universe. First of all, as a rough approach, you could say that having your own "author's universe" (henceforth abbreviated as AU) means that your stories are not set in the real world. This really is a rough way of putting it, of course, because even if you take a look at any of the more well-known series—even the most primitive, trashy soap operas—it's obvious that those characters never actually existed, and perhaps not even those cities either. Yet an ordinary series is different from an AU in that the events in the series are (or could have been) theoretically possible in the real world. In principle, there could have been a slave girl of one name or another, or an unscrupulous businessman doing similar things, having similar events happen to him as described in the series. The framework for the events and plot of the series is therefore the real world, a framework determined by the natural and social laws of the known world. An AU is more than that. Not that it's unbelievable. On the contrary, the most important rule is to make it as believable as possible for readers. But the AU has some additional "rules" or "laws", and these extra ones are invented by its god, that is, the Creator of the AU—the writer! These laws can even sometimes be superior to the known laws of nature, and can override them. This is typically the case, for example, when the writer allows magic into his universe. (I will explain in detail what I mean by this soon).

It is very important to understand the above paragraph. It is NOT that the author is unaware of the known laws of nature and society, or that he deliberately ignores them. The AU must have more laws, not less, or it will be disbelieved. The point is that the author is only a god to his own imagined beings in his novels, not to his readers, who live in the real world and know its laws. The AU cannot contradict this. He is allowed to invent many kinds of things, but whatever it is, it must be based on the real world. In other words, the writer has to bring his fictions into line with everything that his prospective readers are supposed to know about the world. But don't be alarmed, because even the wildest fabrications can be reconciled, without much imagination, with the facts of the real world, with just a little good will.

Concrete examples: Tolkien's books are full of extraordinary beings, wizards, trolls and that sort of thing; in fact he starts his whole series from the Creation of the World, and even includes the destruction of Atlantis, although he doesn't call it Atlantis, but Numenor. Yet despite all this, there is no contradiction between his AU and our real world, because he places his plot in the ancient past, telling us how and why the world changed into the one we know—it was changed by God, who he calls Iluvatar (he has the right to include God because he started the series with the Creation of the World, and so there is a God in his world), and furthermore, the elves sail away to another world, and everything is ultimately left to the humans.

I started with the example of Tolkien, because he's a great "classic" author, although his situation (that is, his AU) is quite extreme compared to the AUs that I mainly want to talk about, at least basically. It's extreme because although he reconciles his AU with our world, it has little to do with it, except that there are humans in his AU too. Since for him, elves, orcs and other wondrous creatures are just as important as humans.

But even this can fit into an AU, in a way that looks relatively authentic to the Readers. I didn't go that far in my series. I did assume or invent several things, but they were minor compared to Tolkien. They are the following:

1. Humanity's home planet (where it evolved) is not Earth, but a planet called Zoya.
2. Humanity as a species is a hybrid, having evolved from the interbreeding of two other intelligent species, and unfortunately inheriting the worst qualities of each.
3. From its home planet, Zoya, mankind swarmed to many planets in the cosmos, but on numerous occasions (not always) the settlers of the new planets became so barbarized that they forgot not only the knowledge of spaceflight, but in many places even the "metal age". Most of this descent into barbarism was thanks to a war between the colonists. This is what happened on Earth too.
4. On many planets, including Earth, humanity rose on several occasions to a certain level of civilization (about where we are now, i.e. nuclear power and the primitive space age), but then almost completely destroyed itself and fell back into barbarism.
5. The Universe is full of planets of varying degrees of development, but basically inhabited by humans, ranging from the prehuman level to the Tutu Supercivilisation (The Tutus own almost the entire southern pole of the Galaxy).
6. In addition to humans, there are a small number of planets inhabited by other intelligent species, but humans are in overwhelming majority in the Galaxy, because humans are the only ones with the irresistible urge to expand.
7. Women are gentler than men, much kinder, so in normal circumstances a female-dominated society is much more humane and pleasant, even for men, than a male-dominated one (like the current Western European countries, and especially the Islamic world states). This is a social law, essentially a natural law that applies throughout my universe, and it's not in conflict with the real world, because there are many studies that support it. In my series it's just that the women are perhaps even smarter and gentler than they are in reality, so I've enhanced their true qualities a little, but not so much that it's unbelievable. And if anyone wonders what the phrase "in normal circumstances" means here, well, I have given an example in my series of what it is like when there is female domination, but the circumstances are far from "normal"... This is the *Venda* nation.
8. The Universe as we know it is just one of many floating in the multidimensional incomprehensibility of hyperspace. This collection of Worlds is the Poliverse, from which my series was named—the Poliverse series.
9. There are beings who live in hyperspace, who have the power of gods, and can even destroy an entire Universe without much effort, although they don't tend to do that.
10. There are some beings who, although are born inside one of the Universes, cannot live outside of it in hyperspace (unlike the beings mentioned in the previous point), but they are able to travel between Universes.

11. Hyperspace exists, and humans can travel through it (by special spacecraft or other mechanical means).
12. Wizardry exists, but only those who are born with this special ability can become a wizard, and even then, they can only do so if they devote an enormous amount of effort to learning the skills and undergo serious training. There are wizards with great power, and some with less power. Wizards with enough knowledge can do practically anything, for example, travel from one planet to another in an instant without a spaceship, but they hide their powers for various reasons (which I describe in my novels). Therefore despite their great power, their influence on the world isn't that significant, which is why we believe wizards and magic don't exist.
13. A long time ago wizards were more active than in the present day, because they have since realized that it is impossible to make people happy against their will. That's why almost all stories about wizards happened in ancient times.
14. There is no Absolute Evil in my series. There are evil deeds, however humans (and other beings) are not driven by evil for its own sake, but by their goals, self-interest, beliefs and upbringing.
15. I have defined "goodness" as a being who cares for other beings, even if they have nothing to gain from it.
16. Although there is no "absolute evil" in my series, there is selfishness, which is when one cares only for oneself.
17. Everyone can improve, that is, they can start becoming more "good" according to the definition of point 15 above.
18. Women are not only gentler, but generally better than men on the grand average, as well as according to the definition of goodness in point 15, although there may be the occasional woman who behaves quite the opposite, and there are occasional exceptionally good men too.
19. There are more female wizards than male, but at the same time, the best wizards are mostly men.
20. Wizards are usually good. (Although they can be angered...)
21. There is no God, or if there is, he does not interfere in the functioning of the World (or worlds, the whole Poliverse).

These are pretty much the main organizing principles of my universe. Individually, none of them seem impossible, even the most incredible point about the existence of magic, but this cannot be disproved, since magic is a secret science in my series. Otherwise, in my universe, wizards play a very minor role indeed, and if I left this point out, my world would still be very similar.

Again, the main laws of my own universe are not given out of vanity, but as an illustration of what I mean by an author's universe having more laws than the real one. So, as you can see, it is that the writer essentially starts to dream about what a universe could be like that they find more favorable than the real one in some ways, if for no other reason than because it has more interesting stories, they invent the laws of that universe, and then, strictly adhering to them, they start to create.

Of course, the creation of the main laws (illustrated above) is not the end of the creation of the AU. It is only a skeleton that must be clothed in flesh and blood. And that means that the writer starts to think about what interesting things follow from these laws, in a perfectly logical way, and writes them down. But not yet in a novel, just in notes to himself. For example, if he has the law that a female-led society is more logical than a male-led society, then he has to plan how that logicity manifests itself.

And he elaborates in detail the structure of that society. Not so that he will necessarily write it down as a novel yet, but so that when he does write about it in one of his novels, he will not have to invent it at the time, improvising, full of mistakes, but rather invent it now, when he has plenty of time, so that he will not be contradicted later. Then if he thinks that some society is so logical as to be a record-breaker, he might wonder if the shape of our letters is not logical at all, and start designing a logical alphabet, saying that this is the way that people write. I have gone so far in this that I have my own font (.TTF file) for my computer with the writing of the *chisee* nation (although the .TTF file itself was not created by me, but by a virtual acquaintance of mine, Nóra Somlai, many thanks to her!) But if the writer thinks that his people live, say, in the trees, and therefore prefers the curvilinear in everything, for example, his art is dominated by curvilinear motifs like vines, then he should design a set of such curvilinear letters.

Speaking of people... your people or nations have to be invented too! Now, I must warn you all not to invent the sort of idiocy some authors do in fantasy literature. It doesn't work, because it's not plausible that you would just slap together creatures from the body parts of existing creatures. A cautionary tale is the mermaid, who is guaranteed to be impossible to live underwater. Consider the laws of biology!

Once you have decided on the appearance of your nations, which is easiest if they are all human, then they have to be placed somewhere. It's easy if they all live on separate planets, because a planet can be anywhere, especially if you go through hyperspace to get there. But if the story takes place within a single planet, then the writer should draw a detailed map of it, and in order to do that, it is highly recommended to have some knowledge of geology. So for example, don't write that there's a tropical climate on a plateau four thousand meters high, or that there's an inland sea ten thousand square kilometers in size... If you do want to say something like that, justify it very carefully, with serious scientific arguments, in order to be plausible.

Even when you have the nations on the map, I still strongly recommend that you do not start writing the story yet. You should first create some kind of timeline or chronology, not necessarily one used by one of your nations, although this is useful, but for yourself, the writer, to get your bearings. And if the story you want to write begins in, say, the year one thousand, then I highly recommend that you write down at least a rough outline of the events of the world from a minimum of a thousand years before the start of your chronology. In any case, at least from the beginning of your calendar, because it is appropriate to justify why the calendar began at that time, since there was obviously an important reason for it, some significant event... If the writer does so, his characters can also refer to the past in their dialogue, which adds considerably to the credibility.

If there are several different kinds of intelligent beings living on the same planet, then the writer should explain how this is possible. And not just in the sense that human astronauts went to the planet and found this blend of different species already there. That would only explain the presence of humans.

Each nation that the writer has put on the map must be characterized. Even if he does not intend to write about them in his present novel. This is important because the story tends to make unexpected detours in the process of writing it, for example, the writer might find that it would be great if the hero visited the Valley of Terror, or the Three Peaks Mountain where XYZ people live, or maneuver his heroine into a situation where she can only escape with the help of a guy who has just come from the

XYZ people, and then it would be nice to know exactly what their customs are. And it's bad if the writer stops and begins to elaborate on the customs of the XYZ people at that very moment. Because if he starts characterizing at that point, he will—first of all—fall out of the writing mode, and then after characterization, when he tries to get back into the writing mode, he will have wasted his time. Since he has had to get into a characterization mode too, which is also a waste of time, and believe me, that requires an entirely different frame of mind, very different from the actual writing! Also, while characterizing, he may have a great idea for another nation that he simply doesn't want to miss out on, however if he describes them there, it will not fit in at all with the plot of the novel he is writing, or at least with the sequel he has already imagined. And then there's the problem of reworking, and the contemplating that goes on for days or weeks... It's better to work out the details of your nations as much as possible before writing even the very first line of your very first novel!

How much detail? Well, the answer is that detail cannot be overdone! Let the nation have a history, starting from their formation; let them have a script or alphabet (if they are literate); let them have gods, or if not, let them categorically declare that they are a convinced atheist nation, who consider all religions to be a load of bullshit. For me, such a religionless nation is, for example, the Chisee, but also the Tutu (and even some of my other less important nations), so it is possible to write about such a nation. In any case, in the latter case it is useful to explain the reasons for their great irreligion. Such reasons could be, for example, the following:

1. The nation was founded by people who fled some kind of inquisitorial, religious dictatorship to their current place of residence, and therefore hate all religions.
2. The reason people are irreligious is simply because they are so scientifically advanced that they have realized that religion is an unscientific, irrational matter.
3. The people actually do have a religion, but for some reason they hide it from all other nations.
4. People think they're religious, even though their religion is science (or mathematics), because they believe it is a form of religious thinking.
5. They used to have several religions, but in a horrific religious internecine war, these religions led to horrific massacres of their own people, and this war also resulted in great financial and artistic losses, so the survivors vowed to no longer practice religion.
6. Their scientists have realized that religion is a form of insanity, and have developed a drug (or vaccine) to treat all their newborns.

But other explanations are also possible. Furthermore, the legendary world of the nation should be planned, their great heroes, what these heroes did and when, their own chronology, or if not, then it must be mentioned which other nation's chronology this nation has used; the sound of individual names, i.e. the acoustic structure—things like their names having a lot of consecutive vowels, or they prefer long vowels, or, as in my case with the "Trogg" names, the masculine names can only have the endings "ez", "az", or "ar"; or perhaps they have "speaking names", like "Enormous Elephant". It is important to discern which sounds exist, and which are missing in the language, because it may explain why other nations consider them barbaric, since to them their speech may sound like a grunt or a snake hiss, for example... It is also good if the nation has a myth about their own evolution, which is not necessarily the same as the truth, i.e. what the writer 'knows' about the real evolution of the nation. It is

essential to describe the appropriate technical development, and in relation to this it is good to clarify what ores and raw materials are available in the area, and what kind of agriculture the area is suitable for. Minor things are also important, such as how do they greet? What are the rights of women and men in that society? Do they have money management or is everything shared, what is the name of their money and what is money worth? How far do they live from other nations?

Now let's discuss why it's advisable to go down this complicated path. Why does one create an author's universe? Because it seems like a lot of effort! The answer is that there are at least three good reasons. On the one hand, it's great fun. Meanwhile, the writer can truly feel like a god, because he is actually creating his own world. And within it, absolutely everything happens the way he wants it to. And he truly has power over his world's past, but can also foresee the future. Secondly, it all makes the world seem authentic to readers. The detail greatly enhances the authenticity. Then, when the author becomes famous, he can publish these many appendices, which fans will be happy to buy and study, and which can be the basis for the formation of fan clubs of their fairy tale world, as is now the case with the Tolkien's Circle of Friends. This is good publicity. Moreover, the author obviously receives a royalty for the publication of all these supplements. This is not a minor point, after all, we do live in a world of money (unfortunately). However, the third aspect is the most important. It has to be written like this because—despite all impressions to the contrary—it is *easier*! Easier, more enjoyable, faster and less likely to be contradicted.

Of course, if you plan on only producing one or two novels, or even a trilogy, then it doesn't have to be planned in this way. It may not even be advisable, because you don't shoot a sparrow with an atomic bomb. But I'm talking about the really serious, sizable series that consist of at least a dozen novels. Although Tolkien's work doesn't include that many, it has nevertheless benefited from a thorough elaboration.

So imagine, dear prospective writers, that at home you suddenly discover how to put together a computer program that will write a variety of works for you, within the same series, good works, and that no one knows about the existence of this program but you. I think you would be a fool to make this program public domain; instead you should sell the resulting novels as your own intellectual products! And rightly so, if it was you who created the novel writing program. How nice and convenient that would be! Well, I don't have such a program yet, but this great thought process about the design of the world is very similar. The point is that if a world is thoroughly planned, then the novel falls out of it, almost of its own accord, and the more novels that have fallen out of it, the more will come afterwards, and the faster they will come, with less effort! For the plot will follow from the relationship between the nations, the plot will create the heroes, the heroes will come from a certain nation, and this will already determine their character to a considerable extent, which is very important in literature. And then, once you have written a few novels, well, you have to know that at the end of almost every novel there are some loose ends, if not a few minor characters whose fate can be written in another novel, where they become the main characters, and this has happened to me many times. Therefore a good fantasy world produces novels almost on its own, and each novel enriches the world with many tiny details, so the more novels the fantasy world produces, the more detailed the world becomes, and the more works it will produce, with less additional effort! After a while, the writer's problem will no longer be what to write, but what not to write, because he will have so many ideas that he will realize that he couldn't write them all even if he lived for two hundred years! I can say without exaggeration

that I reached that stage a long time ago, so I can tell you from experience that it's true. At the moment, my concern is not whether I can write another novel, but whether if I set out to write one in my limited spare time, I have made the right decision to write that particular one, because writing another might enrich my fantasy world more, since it would have more interesting 'stories'. At the moment, I am working on 23 novels at the same time. They are in various stages of preparation.

So we should not regret the effort involved in creating the world. If anything, it really pays off later. For a writer, I simply cannot imagine a more useful and clever intellectual investment! **I CANNOT IMAGINE**, I emphasize this in bold, capital letters, it is so important! You have to realize that what I'm talking about is essentially a kind of strange pyramid. The writer, as god, is at the top—he determines the main parameters of the world, such as the laws of nature (by which I predominantly mean whether there is magic in the world), the mountain and water geography, the creatures in it, such as whether there is a human race, and so on. To a certain extent, this predetermines the possible nations and their ways of thinking, because consciousness is determined by being, but at the same time the writer still has a great deal of freedom here. In this world, the nations, as communal entities, determine the possible heroes and characters; yes, even if the hero is a hero because he does not share a belief common to that nation, in which case he is a rebel hero, and the nation in which he lives determines what he rebels against. And as soon as we have heroes, with their own characters, well, these characters already clearly determine the plot. It's like someone throwing a small pebble on a mountain top, and it gradually creates an avalanche.

So once the writer has created a good world, the less he has to think about when planning the plot. Because planning the plot is the lowest level of his writing process. And the lower the writer goes in the writing process, the more he has to work from routine. But that doesn't mean that his writing can't be art, only that his artistic vein should not be expressed here primarily, but at the higher levels, most importantly in the design of the world. The plot should not be set by him, but by his characters, who—though fictional—have a will of their own. In other words, I, the writer, am a god for my characters in the novel, because I live in a completely different world from them. They cannot leave their world, but at the same time they are completely at my mercy—I can do whatever I want with them, since they cannot dictate what I write about them. To them I am omnipotent. At the same time, however, they have free will, and sometimes they can oppose me. Me, their god. Because in the beginning when I create a character, when I first write about him, I can make him up as I like, and can put him in any environment I like. But once I've written a few pages about him, once he's "lived" in the story for a while, in the local time of the story, he's already developed a certain character. And the more I write about him, the more "grown up" he becomes, the more his character is formed, he becomes a believable character, he has a past, he has feelings, he has hope, we learn what he hates and what he loves, what he fears... As a reader I see him endowed with rights and a web of obligations, and then the situation arises that the guy in the novel has free will. As a god I can do anything *in principle*, I can write anything about him, but *in practice* I can't, or more precisely I "shouldn't", because if I write something that goes against the character of my protagonist—that is, if I write something that he, the character, *doesn't want*, then the whole work of art becomes unbelievable. So although I would have the divine power to force the character to act in one way or another, it would immediately strike the Readers that the character is now obeying an alien will, or is "possessed" by something that is not him. So I, the god, am forced to obey the will of my creature. Even though I am omnipotent. I have sometimes had to

think very hard about how to twist the thread of a story so that the end of the saga would be what I originally wanted it to be, without contradicting the personality of any of my characters. Therefore I believe that when priests tell us that God has given us humans free will, it is simply not true! Of course we have free will, but only as much between God and us humans as between me and my fictional characters. So if God created us humans, he probably didn't even think of free will, it just came about by itself, simply because the process of Creation entails it, and although God is omnipotent, he can't create unless the creature has a free will of its own! Interestingly, this does not contradict God's omnipotence. That is, if we were really the result of divine creation, because I have a different opinion on that, but that is not the subject of this chapter.

Now, let's get down to the details of exactly how the would-be writer should go about creating an author's universe. What questions should he answer first, and what consequences might there be for his decisions? Most importantly, I think, is the question of whether there will be humans in his universe. It is possible to answer "no" to this question, but for me a universe without humans is so strange, unfamiliar and uninteresting that I don't even care about the consequences of answering "no", and whoever chooses to do so as a writer is torturing himself! But if there are humans, there are already serious problems. Because according to our current knowledge, the human race evolved on Earth. We know what is here on Earth, and the writer cannot contradict that. He must therefore reconcile his fictions with reality. To do this, he has the following options:

1. The whole story is set in the distant, ancient past, so long ago that all traces of what he wrote in his novels have been destroyed since then. Tolkien followed this path. The advantage of this is that it isn't necessary to explain how mankind ended up on some alien planet, why the plants and animals are the same as on Earth, because everything takes place on Earth anyway. The disadvantage is that geography limits your freedom as a writer, for example, you can hardly change the shape of the continents, or if you do, you have to take into account the facts already discovered by geology. Therefore, at most the writer can invent a few large islands of his own accord. He cannot invent something on such a major scale that its effects would be felt to this day. And it's very embarrassing, because if the writer invents, for example, some other species that he is very fond of, or even some humans, he has to kill them, since he has to explain why they are no longer alive! I don't like this kind of "intellectual harakiri". Furthermore, it is conceivable that this "trick" might make the reader feel that the writer doesn't take his work very seriously, and the reader's enthusiasm will be dampened if he finds out that it all happened a long time ago, because why should he care about a story that not only happened a long time ago, but has no relevance to the present time?! None of it matters!

2. The writer can say that it all takes place on Earth, but in the distant future. In that case, he can put his heroes among the stars, because by then people will have discovered space travel. Many science fiction works do this. The problem with this is that it's all implausible, because how can the writer know now what will happen in the distant future?! Furthermore, this method is less suitable for writing costume stories, where swords and other such weapons play a major role, because in the age of space travel, such things cannot play a major role. In this respect, Star Wars is a hit, because it simply modernized the sword.

3. The writer can also resort to a religious explanation: it all takes place on another planet, but there are also humans living there, and plants and animals similar to ours, simply because God created them there too. The problem is that most readers are not religious enough to accept this...

4. Finally, the writer can do what I have done—consciously defy the claim that the human race evolved on Earth! In principle, this is not as impossible a claim as it might first appear, since suspiciously few caveman remains have been found. Then the author can safely say that the cradle of humanity is not the Earth, our ancestors came here from elsewhere, brought with them all kinds of animals and plants from their home planet, but here they became barbarians for some reason, while other humans may have gone to different planets and developed some other type of society there. And they brought horses, dogs, wheat and other things with them to those planets, which is the explanation for the fact that there are "earthly" plants and animals on those planets. This really does give you complete literary freedom, with all the advantages that entails. Just make sure you do the following:

- First of all, it is appropriate to include in the series a novel about the colonization of the Earth (this point is "ticked" for me, as I have already written a book about this in my series. It is called "The Two-Holed Man").
- Explain why mankind has swarmed into space from its home planet (I've written about this too, the title of the work being "Y". Yes, just a single letter Y).
- It is imperative to explain why the inhabitants of Earth have become so barbaric that they have forgotten their origins.
- In the case of the writer not writing about humans living on Earth, then of course, since they did not come to that planet from Earth, he cannot use any of the legends, myths and religions of Earth that we know. This is sometimes a definite inconvenience (the most inconvenient of the limitations of this method!), because if, in a different book, the writer uses, for example, the word "Christianity" or "Islam", he doesn't have to explain much, because the Reader knows what it means anyway, and has a whole lot of associations with these words. But if he writes "Impalementity religion" (there is such a religion in my universe), then the Reader knows nothing about it; he has to be "taught" what the main tenets of this religion are, and even if the writer has to invent this religion in detail, its rules have to be carefully "fed" to the Reader in such a way that the story remains exciting, and doesn't become a boring religion lesson. This is also true of all other ethnographic customs.
- The author has to come up with a logical explanation for space travel.

Let's say the writer chose this fourth explanation (I myself consider this the most hopeful, at least this is my experience). Then he chooses some planet with humans on it, and this is where, if not all his stories, a lot of them will be set. Then it's only fitting that he decides that as soon as the humans arrived, they became barbarians, that is, they lost their high level of civilization. If the writer does not decide to do this, he cannot write stories set in ancient or medieval times, and that would be a great loss.

So then the author has to come up with an explanation for what has caused people to be so messed up. It is obvious that the cause was some great war, but it must have left a memory in the minds of the survivors, like the Great Depression. So there's the first legend! The Great Destruction, and the Golden

Age before that, when the ancestors of man were still in the sky, and they came from there... But of course there could be other explanations for the mess: for example, an epidemic in which all the adults died, and only children under the age of five survived... And there are plenty of other possible explanations too. Let the writer use his imagination!

The second thing the writer has to decide is whether there are alien beings other than humans, both in the universe and on the planet on which his stories take place. As far as the universe as a whole is concerned, it would be a pity to decide that there are none, because why limit his options as a writer, otherwise it could turn out at any time that there are. If, on the other hand, he decides that they do exist, he loses nothing by not writing about them. As for the coexistence of these creatures with humans on the same planet, that is something to be strongly considered. There are two possibilities here—either they lived there before the humans came, or they came after the humans. If they were there before, then it must be decided how humans could have settled on a planet that was already inhabited. The following variations are possible:

1. They defeated the natives. They were then either all wiped out, or the small remnant of them live in subjugation, such as slavery.
2. They don't even know the natives are there, for example because they are superior, but for some reason they let the humans in, for example they took human form or moved deep into the planet. I've written about this sort of thing.
3. The natives welcomed the humans, letting them into their midst. They might regret that later...

If the alien beings arrive after the humans have arrived, so they are not indigenous, it is the same, but in reverse. In any case, as soon as we start writing about alien beings, the difficulty arises of how to write about the culture of a non-human race. This is many times more difficult than writing about human nations, that is, if we want to solve the problem in a plausible way. The more different a race is from a human one, the more difficult it is to get into their mindset.

Do not include more than one non-human species on a planet. In that case an interesting evolutionary counterargument immediately arises—namely, that I do not believe that more than one intelligent species could have evolved on a planet at the same time. Because one is bound to evolve faster than the other, and the one that got ahead is bound to wipe out the less intelligent one. Here on Earth, the most intelligent species after man are the apes and the dolphins, but even they are not catching up with us, and even so, they are in danger of extinction!

I can easily accept (I am ready for it) the existence of a world with many different species of intelligent beings, even orcs, trolls, and mermaids! Okay, let there be such a world. But it's very different from ours, so explain to my unbelieving, atheistic, materialistic brain in a "veristic" or plausible way how this world came into being, and not just by saying that human astronauts came to that planet and found these creatures there. Because that only explained the presence of humans. By the way, there is a perfectly plausible explanation—genetic engineering. Not many people doubt its potential. (In fact, I have a short novel in my series about just such a planet... It's called "Bio").

Another obvious solution to the problem of how to include several different intelligent species on the same planet is to say that these intelligent species evolved on distant continents or large islands, and simply had not discovered each other before humans arrived, and so could not have exterminated each other. Obviously this solution implies that in this case the technology of none of the intelligent species

can be particularly advanced, the most we can allow them is the medieval level, when their most formidable weapons were muzzle-loading cannons and muskets—although muskets are often outperformed with a good crossbow... Because if any race has more advanced technology than that, it will discover the others. The story might be made more interesting if one of the races had discovered the others, or at least one of them, but had NOT yet managed to exterminate them, and was at war with them when the humans arrived... which is how I wrote it in my novel titled "Aspia".

So it is possible to explain the existence of a multi-species world, but then it also must have a past, and it is also more difficult for the writer to deal with, because he has to invent and deal with many very different cultures at the same time, and in parallel. Very few people do that well! (I don't think even Tolkien's non-humans are very well characterized). It is many times harder to invent a non-human race than a human nation or tribe. In any case, humans are mostly only capable of experiencing human emotions, and so even non-human shaped sentient beings are always anthropomorphic, if not physically, then mentally. Then it doesn't matter, they might as well be human in form! If anyone wants to know how to characterize a non-human nation fairly, I can give you an example from my own work, and you can read about what a mannikin and a hork look like...

But I will now talk about the most important one of all, the nation of humans. Let's see how a human nation is invented. To do this, I'll provide a list of what you need to figure out/determine about them. The more of these questions the writer answers, the more fairly his nation is characterized.

1. *Questions regarding appearance*: their average height, hair color, whether they have a mustache or beard, their general appearance, for example, how they feel about tattoos, jewelry, clothing, etc.
2. *Their technical development*: This also depends on the type of environment they live in. For example, it is difficult for nomads in the desert to have a nuclear disintegrator. Unless it was obtained or stolen from someone... but then this "obtaining" or "theft" should be described, at least in broad terms. This is, of course, part of their history...
3. *Their trade relations*: generally their relations with other nations, good or bad relations, wars, what they sell or trade and why, etc.
4. *The structure of their language*: What sounds is it made up of? Are there many exceptions? Do they have distinctive idioms, greetings? Do they speak an artificial language? Are they agglutinative, isolating or inflectional, etc.?
5. *Do they have writing*, and if so, is it alphabetic or syllabic, or hieroglyphic? Are there many spelling rules? I warmly recommend that each and every nation that has a writing system should design its alphabet. It is often useful, to spice up the work, if the writer edits a text in the original spelling into the novel, for example as an inscription for a hidden door. Which the hero may or may not be able to read... Of course, you don't have to have one for every nation, because an alphabet can be used by several nations.
6. *Their history*: their great heroes, their victories, their failures, their struggles for freedom, a chronology of their rulers. If they are democracies, when and how did they switch to parliamentarism?
7. *Their form of government*: Here you can choose roughly from a primitive society (i.e. the rule of some chieftain based largely on brute force), feudalism, capitalism, city-state, slave-holding society, some kind of caste system, "rule of the smartest", solidarityism (I made that up), phallocracy (I made that up too). Anyone who knows of anything else, let me know, I'm very interested in discussing it!

8. *Their family relationships*: with particular attention to sexual practices and the status of women. This is important because this type of theme will be central to all the novels. So, whether women and men are equal or whether there is "machismo" (i.e. male domination or female domination), polygamy or polyandry, whether they are capable of feeling love, whether they praise it or consider it a perversion, whether they have a family or whether anyone can be with anyone, what the punishment is for a woman who cheats on her husband (or a man who cheats on his wife), how a girl is proposed to (for example, by kidnapping...), whether it is permitted to marry outside the tribe or forbidden to marry inside the tribe. Is nudity a disgrace? From what age is a girl considered a woman and from what age is a boy considered a man? Is there a male (or female) initiation ceremony? What about prostitution? Are whores despised or respected as educated hetaira? What about homosexuality—is it forbidden, is it considered superior to heterosexuality, or is it ignored? How much do they value (or even despise) virginity?

9. *Their daily habits*: their greetings, their manners, whether it's polite to get to the point quickly or to be polite for hours beforehand. It is highly recommended that a few proverbs be invented, and various similar things. A good number of special celebrations are also in order.

10. *Their religious customs*: very important! Even if they have no religion because they are materialistic, it is important to know what they think about the religions of other nations and why they are not religious. It is advisable for the writer to create a complete hierarchy of churches, if there is a church and not only shamanism. There should be a list of the gods with their functions, the typical structure and layout of their temples, the power of the priests, whether the state is ecclesiastical or secular, a list of sects other than the official church and their customs, whether there is human sacrifice, and if so, how it is performed, the main ecclesiastical feasts, what a funeral ceremony is like, possibly also a birth ceremony, what the naming customs and ceremonies are, what a wedding is like, whether a marriage is valid without a church blessing, what the priests' dress and behavior are like. What do the priests believe—how did their religion develop and what is the real truth about it? What is the position of the clergy in society in general? What do the priests know that others don't? That is, the secrets of the priesthood (poisons, secret tunnels, hidden treasures, maybe they have some working machines from before the Great Destruction).

11. *School system*: Who can go to school, who can't, whether it's free or not, what they learn, whether women can attend?

12. *Their units of measurement*: their calendars, calculation of time, their number system, the names and values of their money. I most charitably recommend that the writer make a table stating that the money of the nation in question is called, say, "gizmos," and that this table should include that the value of a camel is, say, one thousand gizmos, the value of a good sword two hundred gizmos, and the value of a pretty virgin slave woman three thousand gizmos, and then you will always know that a slave girl can usually be obtained for three camels, and if you have this table before you, you won't be in the situation where at the beginning of your novel you write that a young man has exchanged a girl for his sword, but by the end of the novel he was not able to obtain another girl for even ten thousand gizmos! It's embarrassing if money inflates like this by the end of the novel, or even deflates! Let us avoid inconsistencies!

13. *Their housing conditions*: their cleanliness culture, for example, whether they are cleanliness freaks or not bothered by legions of head lice. Do they have a bathing culture, a sauna, famous masseurs, etc.?

14. *Their art*: for example, are they famous storytellers, singers, etc.? Do they prefer fast or soft melodies in their songs? What are their instruments like?
15. *Weapons*: It is easy to see how this is an important point! Do they have a self-defense style? Do they like duels? Can women carry weapons? Do they have ritual suicide, and if so, how and when is it done?
16. *Their morality*: Are they truthful? Is there such a thing as hospitality? Is it a crime to steal from a stranger? Do they even consider a man to be human if he does not belong to their nation? So much so that they call him a "long pig" and eat him because they are cannibals? What is the justice system like? Is there blood vengeance? Do they keep their promises? In their opinion, in what cases is physical violence justified, either individually or in the form of war?
17. *How do they run a war*? Do they prefer big, open battles or partisan warfare?
18. *Their favorite games and pastimes*, their sports. Do they like betting?
19. *Family trees* and family relationships of important figures, especially kings.
20. *Cross-reference list*: i.e. what they think about other nations and what other nations think about them.

Of course, there are many other things that can be invented in addition to the above, which is also advisable. The characterization of a nation simply cannot be overdone! It may be horrifying what I am about to say, but I consider the above to be the minimum requirements for characterizing a nation!

However, it is a very important question whether the people of that nation can do magic, or at least some of them, such as priests or shamans. This is, of course, linked to whether the writer allows magic into his world. This is a crucial, fundamental and very profound question, which needs to be very carefully dissected, because the implications of either a yes or no answer are enormously wide-ranging! But first of all, let's be clear about what is meant by magic here. I am going to use the word in a very broad sense, because by magic I mean absolutely anything that can be described as miraculous in any sense. And by "miraculous" I mean "mystical", i.e. "not scientific". So whether the writer "allows magic into his world" means whether he intends to include magic, sorcerers, psi-energies, telekinesis, telepathy, working divination, real existing gods, ghosts, spirits, sprites, elves, zombies etc. An example of a world in which all this is 'allowed' is Star Wars, where the 'Force' is easily seen to be nothing more than a mystical thing, which might be called a "psi-energy", and thus the Jedi Knights are in fact nothing more than wizards. I have also allowed magic into my own world, the Poliverse legendary circle, although I have developed it much more thoroughly than Star Wars, because I have created a complete philosophical-ethical system for it. By "letting magic in" I don't mean whether the writer includes a person who is *said* to be able to do magic, but whether the person is *actually able to do magic* in reality!

Now, there are pros and cons to including magic. The biggest advantage is that it's interesting. Obviously a world that has it is more diverse than one that doesn't, gives more freedom to the writer, and allows for more interesting situations, conflicts, even more humor. But the downside is, however, the excessive increase in literary freedom. It can tempt the writer to abuse it, to regurgitate everything into the novel without restraint, to vomit it all onto paper, since it is possible to explain everything with magic! And this is simply not permissible, because it undermines credibility. Why is credibility important? Well, because the Reader is entertained when they feel engaged in the story, and this is not

possible if they are constantly skeptical because they consider the things written there to be nonsense. And here's the other problem: the use of any magical device risks losing credibility, because most Readers are inherently skeptical about the existence of magic. So when the writer allows magic in, he has to explain very thoroughly why magic is possible, and if it is possible, why we do not experience its existence today. This question must INEVITABLY be answered by the writer who creates the fantasy world, and this cannot be stressed enough! The following explanations are possible:

1. Magic is possible in general, but for some reason not on Earth.
2. Magic is possible, but the human race in general is incapable of it, only other sentient beings can be wizards (most readers will not like this, since why should humans be appointed inferior).
3. Mankind has simply not yet figured out the right way to practice magic.
4. Magic is an activity that only the exceptionally good people are capable of doing. (Or conversely, only the most evil. Or both extremes—the most evil and the most good).
5. Wizards do exist, but only perhaps one in a billion people are qualified to be wizards, because they have to be born for this purpose, and they keep their science secret (I followed this path). Then, of course, you have to justify the reason for their secrecy.

Once we have decided that there will be magic, we must immediately consider the group of wizards as a special nation (or maybe race), and we must plan for them as I mentioned above in the characterization of nations. If there are several independent groups of wizards, each group must be properly characterized, and the system of relations between them defined in the most minute detail. But that's not all, because we also need to design the rules of magic. Here I am thinking, for example, of the following:

1. Does every spell have a counter-spell?
2. In principle, can everything be solved with magic, with sufficient knowledge?
3. Does magic have to be learned diligently, or does it just come naturally?
4. Does one who has the necessary magical sense necessarily find out that he is a wizard, or does he have to be told this, or does he have to be "awakened" to this ability?
5. In principle, can anyone be a wizard?
6. Do wizards have different skills/powers?
7. Does magic need special objects, or does it just come from within?
8. Can magical power be transferred to someone else?
9. What property of the World makes magic possible at all?
10. Is wizardry inherited? (For example, a wizard can only be the child of a wizard, but not all children of a wizard will necessarily become wizards).
11. Is magical ability just something you are born with, or can it be acquired later, or is it something a god gives you if they decide to?
12. What is the role of spells and hand gestures in magic? Because they may play no role at all.
13. Is it possible for a wizard to lose their abilities?
14. Are all wizards benevolent, or are there benevolent and evil wizards? If there are benevolent ones and evil ones, why are the benevolent ones not benevolent enough to try to defeat all the evil ones as

soon as possible? If all wizards are benevolent, then why do they not strive in every way, using their great power, to bring happiness to the non-wizard masses of humanity?

15. Does magic consume the wizard's power, energy, life force, etc.?

16. The relationship of magic with the religions and mythologies of the fantasy world.

17. Do wizards live forever?

18. If there are real gods, is there an afterlife or a transmigration of souls?

19. Is it possible to curse someone successfully, and how does the curse work?

And this is just a modest sampling of the problems. Magic is a complicated thing! We have to consider very carefully whether to include it. And I haven't even mentioned what happens if the writer includes existing gods! Because then you have to think about how a god is born, how he dies, how they can cross each other's wills, and even how they can "interbreed", that is, whether they can reproduce and if so, how; how they can be allied, what distinguishes gods from wizards or good or evil spirit demons, what a god can do, etc. Yes, magic does make the world very colorful, but so colorful that the writer can easily get lost in the myriad possibilities, so he has to draw on those possibilities, use conscious self-control to leave only those he can classify into some kind of *logical system*!

The next topic that needs to be elaborated in detail is almost as "tricky" as the magic issue. This is whether time travel can be included in the author's works. This also has obvious advantages—time travel can be used to describe a number of interesting events, and it colors the author's universe. The main advantages are:

1. In this way one can write something about how a modern person sees the past. It will be a semi "social-fiction" creation, a social fantasy, because a modern man comes from a society quite different from the past, and the values of the two societies will inevitably clash, so there is the potential for great conflict. If in the past the hero time-traveler saves someone, preferably a poor but very pretty girl, who is perhaps for some reason ostracized, he can play the role of the savior god, because if he brings the girl to the future, he will give her a great life. It is also a way of describing how a man from the past sees the present age, which is also a very rewarding subject and full of satire!

2. An even greater advantage is that if there is time travel, the past is not permanent in the author's universe. This means two things at once, and both are very useful for the writer: On the one hand, if he "kills off" a character in a novel and later receives indignant letters from Readers saying what a stupid thing he did because they loved the character, or if the writer himself realizes it was a shame to destroy the guy, he can safely operate with the option that the person didn't actually die, because even though he was buried in the previous novel, some time-traveler arrived in time and replaced the corpse with an indistinguishable plastic replica, and the real one was taken to the future and resurrected/healed. Or he removed the corpse from the grave later on and took it with him, and thanks to the advanced knowledge of the Future, he could still be brought back to life!

On the other hand, an even greater advantage is that precisely because the past is not final in this way, it is really possible to save anyone, as I have just described, and so in a special sense the writer can create the afterlife, because what's to stop him saying that at some point in the future there will be an

organization that collects the prominent people of the past by time travel, taking them into the future, so historians will simply believe they are dead! This will appeal to Readers in that it will enhance the sense of the "happy ending" in the stories, as there really is a reward for a virtuous life! Furthermore, it may explain many of the miracles of the past—it was not an angel who descended over the burning pyre to snatch the virgin tied to the stake, but a time-traveler who saved her; it was not a god who snatched the prophet, but a time-traveler, and so on.

There is really only one drawback to time travel, but it's a big one—it's unbelievable and full of paradoxes! Consider the most typical: I travel back to yesterday and shoot myself. But then I'll die, and I can't travel back today to shoot myself. So I don't shoot myself. Therefore I am still alive yesterday. And also today. So I can travel back to shoot myself. Therefore I die yesterday. So I'm not alive today... And so it goes on! This paradox must be resolved in stories that involve time travel. The following methods are ways this can roughly be done:

1. Time travel is possible, but history cannot be changed, or rather, the history that we know happened because it was built into all time travel. Therefore only changes to the past that do not alter the present as we know it are possible, including the information we currently know about the past. I have followed this path.
2. The traveler to the past is so far removed from the source of all events known in the present that he cannot interfere with them—he would not get there in time. The only problem with this is what the point would be of traveling into the past!
3. The past can be altered at will, but at the cost of the "timeline" branching from the moment of arrival in the past, so that the time traveler has come from a different timeline than the one they create by their actions. The problem with this is that it makes space-time look very unbelievable and terribly complicated. Moreover, this has two subconcepts: when the time traveler travels back to their own time, they either arrive in their own abandoned present (future), or in the one they have changed, i.e. the new timeline. Or perhaps it is not even possible to travel back! (Well, this is a third case).

All this has to be worked out for the journey into the future as well, but I won't go into that now—I'm just pointing out that the writer has to deal with that issue as well, of course. The easiest way is to say that there is no such thing as time travel. If he has allowed magic into his world, it will be interesting enough without time travel, and he will have plenty to tantalize himself with without time paradoxes.

From the above, it is clear that the writer's most important task is to invent his nations and societies. How does one go about this? And here I don't mean inventing things like language, greetings etc., because I've already explained that. Now I'm talking about *how*, how to invent them, that is, how to get the Great Idea for them!

Let's start with the easier method. Let's say that Mr. Writer already has a fictional society, which is also quite interesting, even peculiar, with rather different customs from the societies of our world. He thinks he should have another society, but of course with different customs, because how nice it would be if he could then write down some of their conflicts! Well, there are at least two good ways to do this. One is the Opposition method, the other is the Exaggeration method. Instead of explaining what these mean with words, here is a short example, a small table of how I made two other nations, the Tutu and

the Payan, from one of my own, the Chisee. I created the Tutu using the Exaggeration method and the Payans using the Opposition method. By reviewing the table you will understand what I mean.

Chisee	Payan	Tutu
<i>Method:</i>	<i>Opposition</i>	<i>Exaggeration</i>
female domination	male domination	the rule of the smartest
they do not use money	money has great importance in their society	they do not use money
cleanliness-loving	the men aren't bothered much by dirt	cleanliness freaks
risk averse	cruel, savage	extreme cowards—the sight of a mouse makes them faint
their society is built on cooperation	everyone fights for himself	their society is built on cooperation
no crime	most of what we consider to be crimes, such as theft and robbery, are considered to be honorable individual initiatives	no crime
they despise the barbarians, but welcome those who ask to be accepted	they kill everyone who is not Payan	despise non-Tutus, and don't accept them either
men should not be in positions of power	women are not even considered human, they have no rights	whoever is smarter has more rights
men are not killed	women are tortured to death in public at the end of their childbearing age	eternal life has been solved
always honest	lying and deception is an honorable individual initiative	they are honest when their lives are not in danger
they do not duel	those who refuse to duel are despised, ostracized	anyone who is heroic is considered barbaric and ostracized
their science is advanced	underdeveloped, medieval "science"	the Tutus are the leading superpower in the Galaxy
have a high regard for science	they despise cleverness, everything that is not strength and skill	<i>only</i> science is valued, nothing else
carefully modify their genetics, for example to remove pubic hair and eliminate bleeding in the	they don't alter or adorn themselves, except by tattooing	they transform themselves to extremes—hairless, toothless, nailless, big-headed

Chisee	Payan	Tutu
membranes		

But what if the writer does not yet have a society that can be multiplied by these two methods? For example, if he has to invent the first society of his life. Then the only thing he can do, if he doesn't come up with a brilliant idea in a moment of inspiration, is to start from the societies of today, the ones on Earth. It's not difficult. He only needs to pay attention to today's problems, to the issues that people are concerned about, for example. He selects one such topic and an opinion on it, and says, "Let's suppose that this opinion will prevail. What would society be like then?"

I'll give you a concrete example... Let's take abortion as a starting point, an issue that has often provoked bloody tempers in the United States. Suppose that the view that ALL fetuses must be born prevails. But the Earth's surface is finite, and so are food resources. The consequences are not particularly rosy! However, to sharpen the example, let's narrow down the available space and food supply—let's not think of it in terms of a whole planet, but a special society confined to the space of a large spaceship. Let's say they can't get out of the spaceship because there is a disaster; the food resources aren't depleted because the dead and the excrement are recycled by their machines... but everyone is allowed to be born, there is no contraception, no abortion, they can't leave, and there will continue to be more and more of them... What will society be like then? What will the customs of such a place be? This is not an example pulled out of thin air, in the sense that I wrote it, and I dare say it's a great novel! It's called *"The Island of Earthquakes"*.

Or there's the Arab world, where women don't have many rights. Well, let's take the opposite of that, let's invent a female-dominated society. That's how I created the *Chisee* nation. If you have a female-dominated society, where men are treated kindly, it can be exaggerated by not treating men kindly—that's how I created the *Vendas*. If I exaggerate all the qualities of the *Chisees*, we get the *Tutus*. If I create their opposite, we get the *Payans*. It is also possible to invent a female-dominated society in which women are the rulers because there are fewer men—in my case, the *Luti* nation. Then one can also fantasize about what it would be like if humans were a bit like ants or bees—not in appearance but in their customs. So, what if we had men with only haploid chromosome sequences like the drones in bee societies? And then of course we would have hardly any women, just like bees have only one mother. Let's create such a society! That's how I came up with the *Mannikins*. And what if men were only interested in mating for a short period of time each year, say one month, as is the case with deer today? Well, this is how I created a society of *Horks*! And if they are on a planet where gold is as plentiful as sand is here, what do they pay with? What is the material that money is made of? Magnetic iron, perhaps? After all, a magnet is a rather mysterious substance, it has long-range power... and if they paid with gold in the beginning, but later found a continent that was very rich in gold, how would their society change? I have written all these ideas in one of my novels already. Some of them are in several books.

Other alternatives to the male-female relationship: men are not intelligent beings, they are only a few centimeters tall and live in women's vaginas (*Roecepis*); or men are the size they are now, but not intelligent beings because they are raised from childhood by animals (*Mau* folk); only men exist without women, and reproduce with the father-machine—they are the *Campies* in my short story *"The Two-Holed Man"*...

In addition, the writer can, of course, include in his works any number of traditional societies, modeled on nations that exist today or are known from history. And even with these he can apply the method of exaggeration: for example, what if the wearing of earrings by a primitive tribe is so deforming that the ears are stretched to a length of several meters—on women of course, because it is always the women who suffer—but in addition the women's labia are stretched to this length? (I wrote about this too, in my novel "The Floating Island").

Other things can also be invented. Garbage is a big problem on our planet. What if somewhere trash is considered such a treasure that people even go there to collect it? Or what if we take it to some ancient society where they welcome empty sugar sachets and plastic bottles as a divine gift? Since all value is relative... But so much so, that what if somewhere physical disability, the condition of being crippled, is a man's chief adornment? Because that can be logically justified, but as for how, I will leave that to your imagination... I certainly succeeded! It's true, I only wrote one short story with this idea, but it turned out really well, I think.

So I have written about all these things I've listed above, but they can also be written by other writers, because they won't write them in the same way as I did. In any case, these examples show what the main virtue of a good writer is: the ability to see familiar things from a new and unique perspective!

So let us assume that we have several societies. How do they create heroes? Let's now look at this aspect, because it's very important, since it is heroes that we mostly write about. Heroes can be diverse, and I don't mean the traditional division between "positive" and "negative" heroes, but a more fundamental one. Heroes are defined by the framework of a society in the following way:

1. The hero wants to achieve something within society, such as a position (e.g. to become king) or some material or spiritual "commodity", i.e. to acquire some secret knowledge or great treasure, but this also includes acquiring someone as a husband or wife.
2. The hero wants to achieve something in relation to another society, for example to acquire a wife from there, or maybe he wants to be accepted there, or spy on something there.
3. The hero rebels against or wants to change some feature of his own society.

You can see that the hero is defined by his actions, the hero is a hero because he *acts*! (This is why I think that sentimentalist novels only have protagonists, not heroes. They do not deserve the name hero, because they only whine and don't act). The three aspects above are not mutually exclusive, of course, for a hero can wish to do all these things at the same time. For example, if he wants to be king specifically in order to use his power to change a social custom he does not like, such as abolishing slavery.

So the hero can want to do all these things simultaneously, but that's only for more complex novels. For the most part, this threefold division is very good for us writers, because it marks out certain main character trajectories for the heroes, or rather a "plan of action". Since if a hero wants to achieve something within his own society, it is not typical for him to rebel, to upset the established relations. Then he is usually a law-abiding character, even if he sometimes gets a little clever. This does not preclude him from being an action hero—he may fight sometimes, even kill, but then his opponents are presented as villains, bad guys. Such a hero is often a determined, "heroic" defender of the pillars of

society. Examples of such heroes might be Superman, or Bobby from the Dallas series, or any of the ingenious detective inspectors in crime fiction.

The second type of heroes do not want to change their own society either, and for the most part not even the other society, but their activities are still focused on the other society. Examples of such heroes are Agent 007, almost all the heroes Sylvester Stallone has played, usually the heroes of spy stories and many of the space operas.

The values of the first two types of heroes are thus largely identical to those of their society, and can be built up from the type traits common in that society. The third type of hero, by contrast, is the "rebel" hero. The rebel hero is characterized by the very thing he is rebelling against. This is usually a custom or law of his society. For example, he doesn't like the fact that women have no rights in his society, and rebels against this. Of course, it's more interesting if the hero is not a man, but a girl or a woman... Or, the hero doesn't believe in the existence of witches, so of course he doesn't like the fact that many people are being burned by priests accusing them of witchcraft, and rebels against it. But many other examples could also be given...

Now that you have what the hero is rebelling against, then the writer must justify why the hero is rebelling against it. For example, in the previous case mentioned, where the hero rebels against burning witches, the perfectly logical and plausible explanation might be that he doesn't believe in witches. But you can elaborate on that, because *why* doesn't he believe in the existence of witches? The obvious explanation is that it's because he, the hero, is very clever, plus he's not religious. And that pretty much sums up the character of our hero: he is an intelligent, enlightened man in a backward, medieval society. Obviously his character determines his actions—he will do very different things from what a stupid, religious person would do in his position.

Masculine presenting transgender lesbian

To an Aspie, the term "politically correct" is at best some unintelligible "wooden nickel", at worst nothing more than a lie. That's because an Aspie likes to see things in black and white, with sharp contours, and the best way to do that is to name things BY NAME, and not try to "muddy" them by inventing all sorts of vague and convoluted terms. This does not mean that an Aspie is fundamentally opposed to solidarity with marginalized or persecuted groups. He is, however, against the artificial and alien LANGUAGE that the advocates of these groups and some politicians want to impose on everyone.

In any case, I, as an Aspie, am of the opinion that even beyond the language, sometimes all the various "rights defenders" go too far. In my eyes their efforts often lead to the impression that they want to allow certain minorities to bully the majority in the name of their "good taste", which is a blatant twist on the principles of democracy... I'll give an example of what I mean.

I really like the USA. Still, that doesn't mean I agree with everything that goes on there. For example, I believe that what I call "gender fetishism" is rampant there—although it's rampant in Europe too. What I mean specifically is that in many places (Apple being on the forefront...) it is already to the

detriment of efficiency and performance that employees are not hired on the basis of their SPECIFIC professional skills, but on the basis of some "gender" criteria, "positively" discriminating against certain "minority" groups. It is interesting when women are also considered a minority, even though there are as many women as men, and perhaps slightly more... But that might be okay, if that's all it was about. But it doesn't stop there. Although, even if it did stop there, there are still serious concerns about it. It is difficult to argue that so-called "positive" discrimination is correct, as it can only exist together with NEGATIVE discrimination, since light only exists together with shadow. For where there is "positive" discrimination towards ANY minority—women, gay, black, whoever—there will be "negative" discrimination against the opposite group, for example, the white heterosexual male!

However, again, it would be fine if it stopped at discriminating towards women in a "positive" way. Although nowadays gender fetishism is so rampant that I don't even know how many "genders" there really are. These days it's becoming a bit of a nuisance if you're just a man, and it may even be the reason you are not hired, because the quota for men is full, and they need a woman. But I laugh at the fact that this positive discrimination was originally forced on women, and now it's becoming "embarrassing" to be a woman too. It's not cool anymore. A man has a much better chance if he comes out as gay, and a woman has a better chance if she also comes out as a lesbian. But even those two options are... well, boring! They've become so common. To have a really good chance at a cool job, you would have to belong to an extreme minority group; then it's okay to be as dumb as a box of rocks, a sure thing for being hired, because the HR person can rave about how ultra-modern and progressive the workplace is, how much it cares about protecting oppressed minority groups! It doesn't matter if the hiree is incompetent to do the job anyway, since all the ordinary mortals (the "average" men and women, especially if they don't have exotic religions and/or skin colors) will do the real work. Or not. Then the company will go bankrupt. Never mind, we'll move on to the next one...

The only problem with that is that it's hard to embrace being part of a minority group that is in stark contrast to your true sexual preferences or whatever. But I figured it out! I thought I was a genius, but I googled it and found out that I had reinvented Spanish wax, because it's supposed to really exist... but it's EVEN BETTER! I used to think of myself as just an ordinary man, an ordinary heterosexual anybody, a boring, ordinary mortal. Well, as of today, that is NOT TRUE! I'm "coming out" too! Do you know who I am?! What I am?! I'll tell you!

MASCULINE PRESENTING TRANSGENDER LESBIAN! Yes, that! I'll explain it to you, so you can see the genius of it.

I never liked machismo, I wasn't into fighting and dangerous sports when I was at school, I didn't like gym classes in general... (what do you mean "in general"—not at all!) Hmm... Maybe it's not so impossible that I am actually a woman, "deep in my soul"! Why not... Who has the RIGHT to say that I am not a woman?! That wouldn't be liberal enough, would it! Everybody is what they FEEL they are! If someone thinks they're really a spotted iris or a crawler garden tractor, then that's their gender and that's that, because we're all for individual freedom and liberalism!

Oh, the fact that I have a very obviously male body?! Never mind, that's just the outside, the ugly appearance! I am a woman, but a woman who's been locked up in a man's body. So I'm transgender, a transgender who displays an external male body. In other words, "masculine presenting transgender".

But because I have no intention of changing my attitude that I've followed for half a century, that I love WOMEN, just like real men, I'm obviously a lesbian, because if I "feel" like a woman inside, and I still love women, that's lesbianism!

Well, now I hope you understand how brilliant this is! I can live exactly the same life as before, dress the same, behave the same, talk the same, and still love women, which means I DON'T HAVE TO CHANGE ANYTHING! And yet, from now on I am NO LONGER A MAN! That is, not officially. I can call myself a member of a tiny minority, with all the advantages of being a minority. Down with the tyranny of men! There are too many of them in the workplace! But I am a minority, hire me, I demand to be positively discriminated towards! I am not a man! I used to think that, of course, but I've been enlightened over time. I dared to face my true desires, and finally made peace with my inner being. I am proud to admit it—I am a "Masculine presenting transgender lesbian"! I hope that everything will be okay now, and I won't have to worry about being negatively discriminated against just because I'm normal (sexually...). I'm obviously not normal. I am a minority! Nobody can prove that this is not the case, and the very attempt to prove it is indecent, an invasion of privacy, contrary to liberalism, fascism, and that's that! Besides, I have the right to go into any restroom, which is not an insignificant advantage. I can enter the women's restroom because I feel like a woman "inside", and the men's restroom because I have the necessary equipment to do so. What a luxury, I can use the toilet anywhere! What an achievement of democracy and progress! So, I am finally satisfied. It's true that I'm well over fifty, but I've already managed to find out what my gender is... I'm not going to die stupid!

Now, to put a serious spin on it, at least in relation to the above-mentioned toilet usage: I was absolutely shocked to find out that people who take themselves seriously entertain such mindless nonsense. Is it really and truly the biggest problem in someone's life that they can't go into the ladies' toilets because they have a penis?! Or vice versa—if someone has a vagina, why on earth would they want to go into a restroom that was originally built for men?! They can't use urinals without a cock, so what are they doing there?! I can't help thinking that such "women" secretly want to be well and truly spanked in the men's room!

Therefore I don't agree at all with this "movement" or whatever you want to call it. I'm willing to accept that it's possible for someone to feel that their gender is not what their body shows. Why shouldn't it be? The brain is after all our most complex organ, it can be diseased in many different ways; of course it is possible that someone's brain gives them a feeling about their gender identity that is contrary to reality! So I don't dispute anyone's feelings, I can't see into their thoughts anyway. I believe them when they say that about themselves, and I'm even happy to consider them as the gender they are and behave towards them—as much as I can "behave" as an Aspie—as they would expect me to, in order to make them happy. So I have no problem with that, that's fine.

However, the issue of which restroom to go to is quite different. My attitude to using the toilet is that for me it is NOT a PSYCHOLOGICAL need, but a very PHYSICAL need! I have never gone into a toilet in order to meet an emotional need. I only ever go into such places to take care of a specific PHYSICAL need, and I have always tried to get this physical need over with as soon as possible. And then I would leave the premises of this noble and illustrious institution... I don't stay there to enjoy how nice it is to have been able to go there, I don't socialize with the people who urinate in the urinals alongside me, I don't listen with pleasure to the mysterious moans and groans that come from the other cubicles, not to mention other sounds...

In other words, I think the issue should be resolved in a very obvious way, which is not open to debate: everyone should go into the restroom that is justified by the PHYSICAL structure of the space between their legs, regardless of what they "feel" like! If one has a penis, they can go into the men's restroom, not the women's. If one doesn't have a penis, then they can use the women's and not the men's. It doesn't matter if someone doesn't have a penis because they were missing one at birth when they were classified as a girl, or if they are missing one now because they had one at birth but have had it cut off in gender reassignment surgery. It doesn't matter. It also doesn't matter if the man would have liked to keep it, but the family pig bit it off when he was six years old. The point is that if he didn't have a penis, he wouldn't have any use for a significant proportion of the equipment in the men's restroom, and what he was able to use he could find in the women's. As for those with vaginas, if they have grown a penis and can even urinate with it, that is, use the objects in question in the men's restroom, then fine, they can go in there. But until then, what would they be doing there?!

So, if someone is not born into the right sex physically and still wants to use the toilet designed for the other sex, there is no obstacle, but they must make the sacrifice for it—by having their appearance altered to suit, and all their problems are solved. I don't see why else one should go in there. I repeat—these premises are for PHYSICAL needs, not for PSYCHOLOGICAL needs! It's pathetic and tragicomic in my eyes that some people are able to make such a big debate out of this. It seriously boggles my mind! It really does seem sometimes that the total amount of intelligence of mankind is constant, but the population is constantly increasing!

The Aspie and religion

People with Asperger syndrome are generally not religious, that's my experience. Although they are often keen to engage with certain issues that are called "esoteric", and even though they may have one or two beliefs that could be called mystical, the idea of joining a church and following its dogmas point by point is really far from them. The main reason for this is that an Aspie looks for logic and meaning in everything, but the religions currently prevalent on Earth are all more or less logically inconsistent, a fact an Aspie soon realizes. Another reason is that religions are full of descriptions of actions attributed to God, which for the most part deeply offend the Aspie's "instinctive" sense of truth.

Below is a summary of my religio-philosophical views, because we can safely consider this to be more or less true of all Aspies in general (i.e. other Aspies also hold the same worldview), or rather "more" than less is true for them. It could be said that an Aspie is "instinctively atheistic" with an innate tendency towards atheism, at least if they have had the opportunity to be somewhat educated in the natural sciences. Obviously these words are not meant to be a point-by-point summary of every Aspie's views, but if you read this summary, most Aspies would probably agree with the vast majority of these points. So let's see! First of all I will show you how I group worldviews:

Classification of worldviews: Philosophies/worldviews can basically be classified as follows, according to their views of the world:

1. The world (its functioning, laws) is knowable.

2. The world (its functioning, laws) is unknowable.

These are the two main groups. The subgroups are:

1.1 The world (its laws, functioning) is knowable by man(kind)'s own power and effort (by our own merits). (If we want to know it.)

1.1.1 Understanding of the world may occur in the course of scientific research work; consequently this understanding will not be a one-off, sudden and complete, but slow and gradual. This is (among other things) the atheists' stance. And mine, too.

1.1.2 Understanding of the world may occur suddenly, as quick as lightning, or at least in a very short time, within a human lifespan, namely not by scientific research, and not even by divine revelation, but with a kind of spiritual awakening to the truth that a person can achieve mostly with meditation. This is the basis of many Eastern religions.

1.2 A person can come to know the world by divine revelation. In this case it is also instantaneous, and theoretically a complete understanding may be possible on our part (if God allows this, and if we claim it). This is the idealist philosophy attitude.

The first and second groups crossover, regardless of what the philosopher's viewpoint is of this cognition's potential, but what do they think about this cognition's value? Namely, do they believe the world is actually worth understanding?

The possible groups:

a. Understanding the world is a worthwhile goal that we should strive for. Atheists generally believe this.

b. Understanding the world is not a worthwhile endeavor, it is unnecessary effort.

The worldview of atheists is generally **1.1.1a**, that of religions based on revelation (Christianity, Islam) is mostly **1.2a**, whereas phenomenology is **2b**. In addition to the three philosophies mentioned so far, many others are conceivable, for example in the nature of 2.a, one says that the world is unknowable, although it would be useful if we could know it, and we must strive to know it, even if failure is certain.

Type 1.1.1.b is then also possible, which says that the world can be understood little by little through scientific research, but it is pointless to strive for this, because the abundant knowledge may cause trouble, for example, world destruction; so the acquisition of knowledge is possible, but it's a harmful endeavor. This is the subject and message of several fantastic films and novels. In extreme

cases a philosophy of type 1.1.2.b can be assumed (although I don't know if it specifically exists), which says that the world can be understood through meditation, but it is harmful to seek this (because for instance the enlightened person may die, or the known world will be destroyed for some reason, or the world is so horrible that its understanding only causes sorrow). In fact, still further variations are possible, which according to 1.2.b, the world can be known by divine revelation, however this is unnecessary effort, so it would be better to close our ears to God's word.

It is only possible to decide which worldview is the most useful with a method that leans on a viewpoint outside the philosophies, and for this goal it may be obvious to choose the benchmark of efficiency. The atheist's worldview, which is type 1.1.1.a, is beneficial to the advancement of science. Science *works*, it cannot be denied. It works by enhancing people's comfort. It is for this reason that atheists usually choose this as their philosophical point of view, thus for purely practical reasons, and not based on abstract speculation.

And now I will briefly summarize my own views:

The basic features of the atheist (and my own) worldview

1. The world is knowable.
2. The laws of nature control the world.
3. The world is governed by a finite number of natural laws.
4. All natural laws can be described with the help of mathematics.
5. Miracles do not exist.
6. There is no God.
7. The nonsense of mystic doctrines—for instance, the soul—do not exist. For a list of these, see *Explanatory notes*.
8. We consider the brain to be the essence of Man (or the information accumulated within it).
9. The living world—including Man—was formed during the process of evolution.
10. Only an intellectual product that can be subjected to experimental control is called a science.

Explanations for each point:

1. In other words, there is nothing in the world that is inherently and forever incomprehensible to the human mind.
2. The knowledge described in the first point applies to a precise understanding of these laws.
3. So theoretically it is possible that at some point all laws will be known to mankind, despite the fact that there is such an enormous number of them.
4. This is not necessarily true, based on the current state of development of mathematics. That these laws can however be described at all mathematically is guaranteed by the approach (of the atheists) that we consider mathematics an intellectual construct that is the current global model (or at least for part of the world), thus providing valid results. However, this does not mean that we object to purely theoretical mathematics, because as has been shown in several cases (the discovery of the binary

system is a brilliant example), with the development of technology, it is easily possible that today's useless mathematics may become useful over time.

5. What this means precisely is that nature never violates its laws. So if someone claims to have seen or experienced a miracle, they are either lying, deceiving themselves, being deceived by others, or are mistaken and have experienced a phenomenon that does indeed have a scientific explanation, only they don't know it. They may have encountered an unprecedented natural phenomenon that requires research, yet there is nothing mystical about this phenomenon.

6. We do not accept the explanation that the existence of the world proves the existence of God, because then it would be necessary to demand what or who the god is, who created this God, etc. And if we assume that God is eternal, then it can also be assumed that the world is eternal (but does not exist in the same form all the time). It is simply unnecessary to assume there is a God, because this concept does not explain anything!

7. We consider the following to be such mystical fabrications: God(s), spirits, angels, devils, witches, wizards, ghosts, vampires, werewolves, the afterlife, hell, heaven, purgatory, karma, the astral plane, reincarnation etc. This list is only inclusive and not exclusive because it is impossible to list all the outrageous products of the human imagination.

The definition of consciousness and self-awareness

8. This follows directly from the fact that we do not believe in the soul. Regarding **self-awareness**, we think that this is what mystics call the soul. Scientifically we may decide that in order for an organism to be able to thrive in the world, it is necessary to build into its nervous system a certain detailed model of the outside world, on which thought experiments may be carried out ("imagined"), and then the action that was most successful in the thought experiments put into practice. This is faster and less dangerous for it than trying out all the variations in practice. This is the model of **consciousness**. Self-awareness emerges when the model becomes so detailed that it also includes a model of the modeling organism. Therefore if it also includes an image of ourselves. One may on the other hand assert as a criticism that this is impossible, because it would lead to an infinite recursion, since then there would have to also be a model in the model of the being (ourselves), and so on and so forth! However this is not true, because a model is never completely identical to its original, it is simpler (as it is a model and not a copy) and so the recursion chain is necessarily broken, not infinite. In general the models are satisfied with their external modeling, and they never model their own models: if we imagine ourselves in a given situation, we might imagine that we will speak in a particular way, but never that we will think in a particular way. That would be modeling the modeled model!

9. We do not claim that the current evolutionary theories explain everything, they are not even completely infallible. We do claim, however, that (to put it modestly) they comprise a significant part of the truth, and we do not believe that any scientific evidence would emerge that would refute the current evolutionary doctrines as a whole, or even the vast majority of them. We also believe that creation is by no means a satisfactory alternative to evolution.

10. Mathematics is also an experimental science: for example we know for a fact that $2 + 3 = 5$, that if we add 3 marbles to a 2 marble pile, then we will perceive that the outcome we get is a 5 marble pile, and this experiment can be repeated anytime with the same result. {This interpretation of mathematics

—as an empirical science—to my knowledge, first cropped up by John Stuart Mill. Furthermore, it was not only Mill, because although this demonstration was ridiculed by Frege in his book titled *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik* (however I am convinced by Mill!), mathematical empiricism did not disappear with Mill, for an empirical philosophy of mathematics has returned in another attempt in Lehmann's book (1979, so this is not an old piece of rubbish!)}

Nevertheless, mathematics is not so much an independent science, but rather a language of the sciences. We acknowledge that mathematics has abstract objects that are exceedingly difficult, if not impossible (for the time being), to find material equivalents with which to experiment, although this is why they are of little practical significance. (Namely, if it had significance then it would refer to something, and would already have a practical interpretation). However, we also believe in the conclusions of mathematics regarding these objects, because so far mathematics has proved to be a useful and thus successful model of reality, therefore it is legitimate to believe in extrapolation beyond the limits of our current knowledge, of which we can not yet carry out experimental verification concerning factual content. So there is no such thing as "faulty mathematics": Mathematics is always necessarily the reality of true science, by definition, for if it turns out that a part is erroneous, it no longer qualifies as mathematics because it is not a true model of reality.

The connection between experiments and theories

A theory is not overthrown by contradictory experimental facts, only by another theory that explains further experimental facts. In itself, one or several contradictory facts only indicates that the theory is incomplete, and is not as widely valid as previously thought. Any number of successful experiments cannot verify a theory, just make it more likely to be true, because it is possible that later, even centuries from now, contradictory experimental evidence or experience may turn up. If someone says that from this viewpoint we cannot believe in the truth of mathematics, we reply that it is precisely because we believe in it that we believe in mathematics instead of gods.

Furthermore: The World is made up of what we call matter. This consists of different forms, and these are investigated by the science called physics, therefore this is the primacy of all science. If matter takes on a particularly complex form of appearance, then various specialized sciences come to the aid of physics with their own specific research methods, primarily chemistry, and if the matter is organized in an even more complex manner, then biology as well. They may reveal several properties of matter that physics cannot, however it is quite certain that they can't discover anything that contradicts the discoveries of physics. This also applies to psychology, which ranks after biology. For the essence of Man is his brain, therefore psychology is the science of the brain functions, and since the brain consists of matter, it cannot be contrary to the laws of physics.

Now, how did I develop this worldview? How did I become an unbeliever? Or I should ask how I did NOT become religious! But rather than dwell on this at length, here is another personal "story". It is long, so it deserves a separate chapter.

How did I become an unbeliever?

This chapter is (also) a self-confession. It is intensely personal. I want to share with my Readers why I am an atheist, what the word and concept "atheism" means to me, and what is good about being a non-believer. How did I become an atheist? Why is this important to me? What moral principles do I have if I reject religious morality? How can an atheist be happy if they can't believe in an afterlife?

I think these are important questions, because I have been asked them many times. I am revealing myself now in the hope that I can help my fellow human beings to choose an approach to life, and I make no secret of the fact that this will of course be an extremely biased piece of writing, and it cannot be anything else, since it is about me, about myself. And at the end of the chapter the question will be raised of whether I am an atheist in reality and in essence...

In my writing I try to avoid as much abstract philosophical discussion as possible. I try to approach things more emotionally, because many people consider atheism to be the worldview of the "all-brains" people, the cold, insensitive intellectuals, who lack any warmth or human emotion. But I am convinced in my bones that the truth is the opposite! At worst I have at least half chosen this emotionally as my philosophy of life, moreover, perhaps even 80% for emotional reasons... In fact, when it all started for me—as a small child, when I literally couldn't read and write—there was no question of any logical reasoning, yet I feel that I had already decided then, and how else could I have decided as a small child if not emotionally?! So let's get to it, and start with my very early childhood...

I was really quite young, I don't know how old exactly, but I don't think I was even in school when I first met a priest. It was an extremely innocent encounter—the priest did me no harm, he just walked past me on the pavement in his "work clothes", in the way priests dress. He didn't touch me, he didn't speak to me. Yet I feel that this encounter was a pivotal moment in my life. I had never seen a priest before. It was not typical for us to live a religious life at home, and I had never seen such a "strange man"—no offense, but that's what he seemed to me at the time! And it was not a sympathetic experience at all. I was quite a "boyish boy" back then, not in the least influenced by the later rather pro-women mindset, and I had a deep contempt for all female beings in those days. (Please don't judge me for that, my lady readers, I really was just a little boy!) And of course I knew even then that men didn't wear skirts, that skirts were for girls! And now a man in a skirt was walking past me! It was horrible! I remember staring at him in shock, my eyes bulging at the sight. And he wasn't just wearing a skirt, he was dark, gloomy, black, and his face was sad. And he was old too, perhaps only in the eyes of a child, but he looked old to me. It was a frightening and nasty experience, it terrified me. A man grafted onto a woman—almost as if the Iron-nosed Midwife of fairy tales had come to life before me! And that wasn't all, because there was a big knotted rope hanging from his skirt, it must have been a rosary, but I had no idea what that was either; I figured it must be to strangle his victims! It was a true horror! I think I must have been a brave child, because despite all these thoughts, I didn't run away or start screaming. I did notice, however, that there was a palm-sized cross dangling from his neck. And I involuntarily identified this horrible experience with this symbol—and quite rightly, as we know!

I can no longer remember when and who told me that this person was a "priest". But I found out from somewhere. And I can't say they became my favorite type of people! Nevertheless, priests have never left such a deep impression on me that I have ever had even a single bad dream about them.

I don't even know when it was that I first went into a church, but one of my classmates encouraged me to go once after school, saying "it would be very interesting". It happened to be a Catholic church. I didn't really feel like it, but I went with him anyway. However, I didn't find it the least bit interesting! It felt like when we went to visit my grandmother's distant relatives, all old ladies, who may well have been very nice to me as a little kid, kissing me and giving me sweets, but then while the old lady was talking to my grandmother I had to sit still on a chair or a couch; I couldn't play with anything, even though the display case was full of beautiful, interesting porcelain animals, yet I wasn't allowed to move, because they would immediately scold me, and I was just so bored...

That was the same feeling I had in the church. How could it not have been, when my classmate immediately warned me that this was "God's house" and that only whispering was allowed! It was also the first time I saw someone making the sign of the cross. My classmate did it. I was surprised by the strange waving, and thought maybe he was chasing away flies. But he assured me that if I didn't do it, God would be angry with me!

I don't know where it came from, but by then I already had some vague childish notion of "god". I knew it was some sort of omnipotent being that lived in the clouds, I mean *supposedly*, because my father said it was nonsense, there was nothing there at all! I was inclined to believe my father, whom I loved and respected. And I didn't think it likely that any bearded man could live in the clouds, because he would fall down, and besides, he'd get hit by airplanes! To my mind now, of course, this was an incredibly primitive image of God, but at the time it seemed to me a deadly serious counterargument to religion. I told my classmate, but he retorted that God doesn't live up there, but in our hearts! To which I replied that he would surely not be angry with me if I didn't wave my hands around, because if he killed me then he would die in my heart! He just shrugged and told me to pray with him. And he knelt down in front of the altar, clasped his hands in a strange way, and raised his eyes to the crucified Jesus. I didn't like this either. I had no intention of kneeling down; my parents had made me kneel once as a punishment, and it was unpleasant. I figured I wasn't stupid enough to do it if I didn't have to, and instead I walked around and looked at the church's interior.

Well, I didn't like the church either, not from the first moment I saw it, and the more I looked at it, the more I didn't like it. Later, with the mind of an adult, I went back to look at it, and I can state that there is nothing wrong with that particular church, it is not any uglier than the average church, in fact, it is probably one of the nicer ones. I was simply a "born atheist", so to speak, even as a child. For example, I didn't like the fact that it was so dark in there. I wasn't impressed by the colorful mosaic windows with the sun shining through them, I was annoyed that there were dark corners along the walls, and I didn't understand why the depictions of the saints were so ugly, so unrealistic, and of course most of these painted figures were bearded old men! The huge number of crucifixes were also alarming. I wasn't a fan of horror as a child, but I also didn't understand why, if someone died because they were crucified, they should be prayed to! Since if they can't hear the prayer, it's useless, and if they can, they aren't actually dead and it's all a lie!

I also didn't like the fact that the church's interior was so terribly large. I found this pointless, as it couldn't even be heated. Of course it wasn't heated—it was cold inside! I remember, in a strange but interesting way, that it was this enormous interior space, this senseless height, the thing that should have impressed me, that repelled me the most; it reinforced my view that religion is pointless, because

religious people do such stupid things, build such huge, useless buildings, because there is no person tall enough to need such a large space!

While my classmate was praying, I quietly left.

As far as I can remember, I had no contact with religions in any form for perhaps two or three years afterwards, but I did later on, almost of my own volition. It so happened that one day the teacher asked the class if anyone wanted to register for religious education. The English expression "religious education" is "hittan" in the Hungarian language, and I had no idea what it was. I was so far away from religion that I didn't even realize that the word "hittan" was a compound of the Hungarian word "hit" which in English means 'faith' and the Hungarian word "tan" which is 'doctrine' in English. So I didn't know that it was actually a religion class. But because I was a relatively good kid, I didn't want to do anything without my parents knowing, and I said I would ask my parents about it. It turned out that this wasn't possible, that I had to decide right then. Me, a lower-grade student! Well, that's why I still think it wasn't quite legal, given the rather anti-church nature of socialism... To put a finer point on it, the teachers may have organized religion to be part of the school illegally. Of course, I didn't think about it at the time, but because my parents had never told me to go to religious education, and because I couldn't ask them (and because I was lazy...), I didn't register for it.

I didn't go for maybe half a year, but then I heard stories from various kids that it was an interesting class, that they had fun playing there, were told stories... This made me decide to start going after all. At that time, however, religious education class was no longer held in school (I don't know why) but in the church after school.

I told my father about the decision I had made. Now, my father was a party member. It can't be said that he had much enthusiasm for "building socialism", as it were; he was a party member more out of propriety, but he agreed with the prevailing views of the time that religion was an old-fashioned intellectual product, an outdated idea. And he didn't want to find out that he couldn't even convince his own son of that—what kind of father was he?! It would have reflected badly on him among his "comrades". He tried to talk me out of the idea in every way he could, and I had the most serious fight of my life with my old man. Interestingly, I can't remember if I was beaten for this, but I don't think it's out of the question. I certainly cried, but I also shouted. And I DID NOT BACK DOWN! I won in the end, and even managed to get a hymnbook. Yep!

So anyone who thinks I have never approached churches in my life is very mistaken. By the way, I have observed that those who are true believers are very afraid of learning about doctrines that they suspect might lead them away from their faith. However I have never met an atheist who was afraid to learn about any faith or religion; the only thing that could prevent them from doing so was if they didn't have the time or inclination. But in the case they did have the time or inclination, the fear of some "false doctrine" could not have hindered their desire to learn about it. Atheism is therefore an essential condition for spiritual freedom!

But I'm running ahead. I was on my way to study religion after school. And of course I couldn't help but be thrilled that I had won a victory over my (otherwise beloved) father for the first time in my life. I said to one or two of my classmates, "Hey guys, I'm going to Religion class today too!" And that's when I got my first big shock. I had to realize that maybe the biggest conflict in the world is not between believers and unbelievers. For the kid who had first tempted me to go to church long ago had

already been receiving the dubious blessings of religious instruction for a long time, and was therefore much better educated in this field than me, and not at all pleased that I was going along with him again. He may have been happy about it, but he certainly didn't show it, and asked, "Tell me, are you even Catholic?"

To which I replied, "What?!" - since I hadn't the faintest idea what this term meant.

"Ask at home what you were baptized for, because the Father only deals with Catholics! Are you even baptized at all?"

I didn't know that either! I went home rather crestfallen, and it didn't even occur to me to ask the priest, although now that I think about it, it was probably just the "ideological excess" of the little religious boy, and the priest would have been quite happy for me to attend.

In any case, back at home I immediately attacked my parents with the question, and it turned out that I *was* baptized (my father hadn't wanted me to be, but my grandparents arranged it), however I was baptized as a Reformed Christian, not a Catholic.

Well, the next day I told the boys what the situation was, and there was complete agreement among them that I couldn't go to religion class with them because I didn't belong to their church, in fact I had better not even go near the Catholic church because it was *their church*! So there was no question of me being invited to attend, I was banned! But I was a stubborn kid even then. I didn't quarrel with my parents just to be left out of religion! I knew there was another church in the village. I figured if one was Catholic, the other must be Reformed. And I had reasoned correctly. I went there after school and rang the bell. The priest was very happy to welcome me, and told me when the next religious education class would be (because he also had one). And so I went.

There must have been five or so people there other than me, from different age groups, and there were girls too. The priest began by saying that because there was a new child, they would start the lesson with a game. I was very happy about that, of course. I have forgotten the name of the game, but it was a game where long, thin sticks of different colors were scattered in a pile, and they had to be carefully pulled away so that the others didn't move. I absolutely loved it! I couldn't wait for the next lesson so we could play it again. We never played games like this at home, although we did have other sorts of family games.

However, the game was not even mentioned in the next religion class! It was just boring singing, praying, clasping hands (I thought it was farcical and could hardly stop myself from laughing), and it wasn't even true that the Bible stories were interesting. I don't recall what the priest talked about, but I do remember that he went into some boring theological discussion, obviously for the "more advanced" kids. I went there maybe twice more, but we never played the game I liked, or any other game. This made me angry with him, and I began to think that he was originally just trying to trick me, giving me a little game to get me in forever, and without any notice I simply stopped going and stayed away from religion. I gave the hymnbook to my grandmother as a present.

I also took revenge on the priest: for a month or so, every time I went home that way (which was roughly half the time) I would ring his bell and run away. Let him come out unnecessarily if I had to have an unnecessary argument with my parents over religion!

My parents, especially my father, were of course very happy about my decision, and never said a word to encourage me to visit the priest again. I didn't consider what happened to be my own failure, nor do I now. Rather, I am proud of my childhood self, because even then I had intellectual curiosity. I

even found this little detour into the world of religion useful, because I realized that not only is unbelief the enemy of religion, but also that "religions prey upon one another", and that even very young children can be infected with sectarianism and partisanship, such as "this is my religion, my church, you don't belong here" etc.

Of course, my classmates knew that I had studied with the Reformed priest a couple of times, and they also knew that I had dropped out. They asked me why, and I said it was because it was boring. And then the following conversation took place between me and the guy who first lured me to the church (perhaps not verbatim, but in essence):

"But if you were Catholic, your religion classes wouldn't be boring!"

"It also wouldn't be boring because I'd have more sense than you and go home and play or read instead!" (since reading was my favorite pastime, particularly science fiction and popular science books).

"Why are you so proud of reading so much? Do you think you know everything?!"

"Certainly not everything, but more than you, because you only read the Bible, and that's only one book, which was written a long time ago anyway!"

"That's the Word of God, it has all the answers!"

"Okay, then tell me how to derive the parabola!" I retorted proudly.

I have to say that my father must have been quite frightened by my sudden interest in religion, and he may not have said so, but I suspect that this was one of the reasons he started to cram so much mathematics into my head when I was a little child that I didn't even have to take out my math book until the end of high school, and even got top marks without it! He must have thought that knowledge was the best shield against the nonsense of religion. I actually knew the basics of integral calculus before the sixth grade, which I was extremely proud of. And don't think my father was abusing me in any way, for I mostly demanded that he teach me myself, because I enjoyed being better than the others so much. My father was very clever to not smack my bottom in order to teach me (he must have realized from the past that it would do no good, I'm stubborn as a mule) but appeal to my vanity. Although I've actually already mentioned this in previous chapters, but never mind—repetition doesn't invalidate the truth!

As for my parabolic question, the guy replied, "Smart ass! You don't even know how the world came into being!"

"Yes I do, the evolution of animals...", I began, using what I had gleaned from the popular science books, but he cut me off:

"Evolution isn't true, but I wasn't asking about animals anyway. I'm talking about how the whole World came into being!"

I was stunned into silence. I really didn't know! I wanted to run home and ask my dad, but I couldn't. Somehow I had never thought about the whole world before.

"You don't know, do you, you little idiot!" shouted my debate partner, enjoying his triumph over me.

"Neither do you!" I tried to save what could be saved.

"I do know! God created it!" he answered, and puffed out his chest.

And that's when something happened that I think has been a decisive factor in my relationship with religion. "Okay," I replied. "All right, I don't know how the world came into being. *But you don't know how God came into being!*"

"You really are stupid... Why would God be created? He has always been there!" and he stared at me like I was actually crazy.

"Using that logic, I could say that the world has always been there!"

"You're a fool, the world isn't rational, it couldn't have been there from the beginning of time! Someone had to make it!"

"Not necessarily. You say that God is an intelligent being. Anyone who is intelligent was born to someone, so why can't I say that someone gave birth to God, but you don't know who?" I was starting to enjoy the debate. It was the first philosophical discussion of my life, but it was almost bloody, it was vital to me—my reputation was at stake because many people had heard the debate, and I didn't want it to seem as if I was banned from that "great place" where Catholics go to hear about religion, yet I wasn't allowed in! I had to prove that I had decided not to go there of my own free will, because it was all nonsense!

My classmate was nowhere near as logical as I was. "The point is that I know how the world came into being, and you don't!" he tried to backtrack. But by then I had no mercy on him.

"It's not about whether we know how the world came into being, but you're wrong anyway! The point is that it's true that I don't know how the world came into being, but you know just as little, because you don't know how God came into being! You don't know a lot about the world, and neither do I, but you don't know a whole lot about God either, which doesn't bother me, because I don't believe in him! If I accept that there is a God, I would be no further ahead, because even if I got an answer to how the World came into existence, there would be a lot of things I don't know about God. It's not an acceptable answer that God is eternal, because I can believe that the World is eternal! And I am more courageous than you, since I dare to admit that I don't know the origin of the world, but you are too cowardly to admit that you don't know the origin of God!"

Then he went at me and it turned into a fight. Which I was very happy about, even though I got a good beating, for I figured it was proof that he couldn't get back at me verbally, so he had resorted to using his fists.

I know now that I was probably a genius as a little snotty-nosed kid, for even then, without ever having heard of it, I had applied to the debate the principle that is now known in philosophy as "Occam's razor", namely, not to unnecessarily multiply the number of hypothetical entities. This principle worked very well for me at the time.

After that, until the end of my elementary school years, I had little contact with religion in any way, except for two things: one, I had acquired a very broad general education, but rather one-sided—my knowledge was almost exclusively in the natural sciences. My father was at least partly to blame for this; he did not discuss religion with me very much, nor did he hide his opinion on the subject (it was not flattering!) but he did not "directly" incite against it. Maybe he was afraid that I would rebel just for the sake of it and start "practicing religion" again. On the other hand, he tried to encourage me towards all things scientific, and he easily succeeded with this. But I think I was attracted to the natural sciences from the start. And this is important in my relationship with religion, because it was clear to me that there was no way that the World, or even a small part of it, the Earth, could have been made in just six

days, especially out of nothing! Okay, for an omnipotent being it was no big deal, but I was very skeptical about miracles, because I had the good sense to know that everything had the potential to be explained by miracles. But even more doubtful was the fact that if I accepted that God created the Earth in such a short time, then I also had to accept that he created it in such a cunning way that it would not look a few thousand years old, but at least four billion years old! This blinkered approach made no sense to me at all. I was also very puzzled by the fact that I found the teachings of evolution extremely convincing, yet they were in stark contrast to the creation story. I was not able to do what many others do—accept the two to be true at the same time, stored in separate compartments of their brains—so I rejected the "double truth" principle out of hand. EITHER creation is true OR evolution is true, there is no middle ground. That was how I saw it, and still do today. It can be said, then, that although I did not often think about religion during the rest of my elementary school years, I grew to dislike it, simply because I was becoming more and more scientifically educated, and this, as a "side effect", was pushing me further and further away from it.

On the other hand, there was an event that made religion particularly emotionally repugnant to me. Two such events occurred. The second of these might even be called adventurous, but I must start with the first, because without it I don't think the second would have happened, even though they were at least two years apart.

I don't know when, but sometime after I had won the debate with my classmate using the "Occam's razor" principle, there was a movie on TV. I don't remember the title or anything about the plot, except that it was "costume", i.e. set in a medieval environment, and there was a scene in it where the priests burn a "witch" at the stake. I don't know why they burned her, but I do know that she was a very pretty girl, and I liked her a lot. It was a matter of course that I liked her: I was just at the age when boys start to ogle every pretty girl, and—I dare say—I was also at the age when I was already "ogling" myself (perhaps I was a precocious boy), so much so that I would touch myself several times a day!

And then I see on TV that priests were just burning the sort of girl I would have cherished with great pleasure! I had previously heard about there being witch hunts and heretic burnings. Of course I considered them to be unjust, and it is fair to say that this knowledge also made me somewhat anti-church or anti-religious in general. But the extent of this was minimal. Yet what I saw in the film was quite different. I was deeply affected emotionally (film is a very suggestive medium!), and I saw the church's past in a different light. I suddenly thought about the thousands of women who had been burned, who were ALL INNOCENT (they must have been, since there are no witches), and these women were barbarously tortured before being burned; and at least a tenth of these many thousands of women were girls I would have happily accepted as my own, however THESE EVIL PRIESTS—yes, I was beginning to think they were clearly evil—just killed these lovely, pretty girls, and tortured them to death!

This great depth of emotional upheaval was mainly due to the fact that, as I have admitted before, I was one of the boys who, to put it mildly, the girls at school were not a fan of. Not that my appearance was unfavorable, although I didn't look like someone from a toothpaste ad. I wasn't fat either. It's safe to say that I was at least average in appearance, or maybe even slightly above average. But looks were not the only thing that mattered in the school "pecking order". It was also important, for instance, how 'cool' someone was, how aggressive, how many fights he won (unfortunately I was in a class that brawled a lot), how athletic, how much money he had for status symbols that were fashionable at the

time, which consisted mainly of the following: fashionable jeans, a motorbike, a racing bike, a four-colored ballpoint pen, a scented or plastic eraser, colorful pornographic pictures from smuggled Western magazines, a "dimensional calendar"... I had a bicycle but not a racing bike, and a four-colored ballpoint pen that was only given to me by my uncle at the end of eighth grade when it didn't matter any more, but the most significant thing was that I didn't just lack an aggressive nature, I specifically hated fighting, and I admit I was even afraid of it. Not that I was significantly weaker than the average person, but I found the constant brawling pointless, and I was very fond of comfort, and fighting is a major source of discomfort, even if you win in the end. Which may not even happen! I didn't even like to fight people I was dead sure to beat, and without much difficulty.

So I wasn't one of the cocky boys, and that's why the girls didn't like me. Of course, I tried to get attention by showing my advantageous qualities, especially the fact that I was so good at math. Unfortunately I was disheartened to find that my brilliance in this science was only useful for making boys dislike me, and the girls didn't give a damn. I cannot use kinder words, because it's true—not only did they not appreciate my knowledge, but they often even mocked me for being interested in it. In fact, I have often witnessed a girl declare with a great sigh, "I'm so dumb at math!" and the people around her would look at her with warm affection; the boys as well as the girls would start to console her, saying "It's OK, math is boring anyway, and stupid", and in general they would look at the girl saying this almost with respect, as if it was some kind of particularly meritorious act to be "dumb" at math!

At such times I occasionally wished that I had been dumb at this subject too, but in vain, for I could not forget what I had learned, and I didn't actually want to forget it. I slowly began to think that I was the better one, and that those who thought this way, who valued ignorance, were in fact inferior beings. Moreover, such a girl would not make a worthy partner anyway! It's all very well for a woman not to know math, but she should at least not consider her stupidity a virtue!

Now, under these circumstances, I think it is quite understandable that when I first heard the phrase "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven", I immediately began to suspect that the vague expression "poor in spirit" might mean stupidity. And it turned out—at least according to the person I spoke to—that it must indeed mean that, because according to Jesus, the wise will not enter Heaven! Since Jesus shames the wise, but exalts the ignorant! I immediately began to think that if this is the case, then religion is something that was specifically designed for the very people I couldn't stand—the ignorant, boorish masses who not only knew less than me (which is fine), who not only failed to acknowledge how smart I am (which is a bigger problem for me, yet I can still let it pass), but who were even proud to be stupid! I instantly became deeply convinced that if Heaven was full of such people, I would not want to be there, because I'd feel terrible around such a gang!

At the same time, I increasingly longed for the company of the opposite sex. Not just sexually, although I don't deny that I did in that way too. But also emotionally. And I fantasized more and more (perhaps because of all the science fiction I'd read) about how cool it would be to have a time machine, to go back to the Middle Ages with a good machine gun, go to a witch burning and massacre all the priests in a rampage! I'd show those bastards! And I'd free the girls tied up to be burned, among whom there would likely be many beauties, and they would naturally be very grateful to me...

I had such a fantasy victory many times in my dreams. I mean, I hadn't even finished elementary school yet, but I already had a pretty solid image of the enemy: priests in general, ultimately all

religions, but especially Christianity, and within that the Catholic Church, because it is this religious group that had burned the most women! Not only women, of course, but I was most interested in those victims at the time. The other victims—including the famous ones such as Giordano Bruno, Galileo etc.—were just the icing on the cake, which proved to me that the Church in general is anti-scientific, immoral, and therefore a power to be defeated!

To put things a little simplistically, and perhaps with a little malice: because I was not wanted by the real living girls of my age, I lived out my desire to be with the opposite sex in a fantasy world, and I was angry with the priests for having "wasted" hundreds or thousands of girls living in ancient times, who I believed would have welcomed my advances, unlike the real girls of my own age who were alive now. I probably had a strong desire to excel—I wanted to be a hero. Of course, now I know that all boys go through this kind of psychosexual development, but for me it was terribly strong and took a very particular direction.

The question arises quite rightly of why was I so dominated by this desire? Was it just my sex glands working on overdrive? I'm sure it wasn't just that. There must be some truth in this, because even now as I write these lines, I feel quite good when I've had my six "rounds" a day. But I must have at least three... I generally don't have that many, but it would be desirable! However, I'm not a real sex maniac who is controlled by my dick. I've never had a time when I couldn't control my urges, and it's not like I want to fuck every female that comes my way. Another counterargument is that even if I was getting erections prematurely, I didn't seem to have reached puberty in any other way. More importantly, I feel that my father was quite adept at instilling in me a sense of vanity, a desire to excel, and it may simply be that I was born with a much stronger sense of justice than average. Once, for example, a teacher slapped me because she thought I had whistled in line when we were coming back to the classroom from break. I told her it wasn't me, but she snapped at me: "Don't lie!"

However, I knew I wasn't lying, and this untrue accusation and the earlier slap made me so angry that I kicked the teacher. Of course, I was thoroughly reprimanded, but I didn't regret it because I enjoyed standing up for my rights!

So I had a strong sense of justice (which I still have now), and I think it was a serious source of my growing anti-church sentiment, because I considered the things the church had done in the past to be unjust.

And now we come to the second event... I was able to get home from school via several routes. On one of these routes I had to pass a crucifix. Sometimes when I went this way, the guy I was arguing with about the origins of the world would come with me. Every time he would cross himself in front of the crucifix. He initially encouraged me to do it as well, but I just laughed at him. Then when I saw that movie where the witch was burned by the priests, I talked to him about it, trying to make him see what dark, evil, despicable people priests were, but he wouldn't listen. He said that there may be priests like that, but most of them aren't, and Christ, the one depicted on this crucifix, was sure to be quite different. Besides, we couldn't be certain that all those who had been burned were innocent, because there were witches back then!

Well, I hadn't heard much about Christ at that time, but I was pretty sure that he wasn't "my god". I also felt it was deeply pathetic that such a "big boy" could believe in witches. Which is why I said to the boy, "You know what?! This is what I think about religion and Jesus!" and I spat on the cross.

The kid was deeply shocked, and he made a face that looked like he was going to come at me again. But in the end he didn't, probably because he had won last time, he had beaten me, although I had left him in a terrible state, so he must not have been in the mood for another fight. All he could do was shout, "Get away from me, Satan!", and crossing himself again, ran away.

I really liked the fact that someone saw me as Satan, and from then on, every time I went that way I spat on the cross, even if I was alone. Eventually, after maybe a year, I got tired of it, because it occurred to me that spitting on an inanimate object was a waste of time; it was just as stupid as praying to it, talking to it. If I did that, I was attributing SIGNIFICANCE to it, which I didn't want to do, so I stopped spitting on it.

However, I was still in my "spitting phase" when I was walking by once, and I saw my religious "friend" in front of the cross, beating up a gypsy girl. It would be worth doing a separate study on my opinion of gypsies. In any case, I don't want people to think I'm a Gypsy-hater, or that like so many people today, I believe this group is "just like the so-called 'Hungarians' in every way". It is undeniable that a significant part of the Roma population is culturally quite different from the other ethnic groups living in Hungary, and for this reason there are often minor or major misunderstandings between these two ethnic groups, and sometimes the Hungarians—but often the Roma themselves—are to blame. There are, of course, historical reasons why the Gypsies are the way they are, but not all their faults can be laid solely at the door of the present generation. However, it is also not right to turn a blind eye to ostrich politics and pretend that we have nothing special to do in this area! The cultural integration of the Roma is a serious challenge, and ultimately, dare I say, I do not believe that it can ever be achieved other than by their complete assimilation into the so-called "Hungarian community". For these reasons, I also deplore any efforts to preserve some kind of Gypsy tradition, such as the preservation of a Gypsy language, because all this delays the integration. I would like to emphasize, however, that I am not talking about the extermination of the Roma, but about their *assimilation*, both culturally and genetically. Besides, the Hungarians were created by the mixing of many peoples and ethnic fragments that have long since disappeared, and the Roma will simply become another such merging ethnic fragment in time. Anyhow, I believe that this is what will happen to all Hungarians in a united Europe as well, naturally over a much longer period of time. I do not consider this a tragedy either!

But I've very much digressed from the story. At the time I didn't have such a nuanced view of gypsies, and I was quite angry with them because they had recently stolen my sister's bike. We later recovered the bike, but we found it in the home of a gypsy family. We got the bike back, but we were very disappointed with the gypsies, because the family that stole it was a gypsy family with whom my parents, especially my mother, had quite good relations, you could even say friendship. She may have been the only one who considered it a friendship, at least in hindsight, because you don't steal from a friend! And as a child, I simply thought: a gypsy stole from us, so gypsies are thieves! It is safe to say that I was well on the way to becoming someone who was explicitly racist, nationalist, anti-Gypsy, and xenophobic in general. And then on my way home, I see a classmate of mine who is already quite committed to religion, and specifically to the Catholic Church, beating a little gypsy girl in front of a large, man-sized crucifix! As I got closer, I could see that this was the gypsy, Marika, who was descended from the very same family where we found the stolen bicycle! Marika, of course, had no chance against the guy. How could she have when she was younger than me, not to mention a girl?! I

couldn't even say that she made a heroic effort to resist, at least to the best of her ability, but instead just crouched down and protected her head while she wailed and cried.

I'm embarrassed to admit that my very first thought of the scene was this: "Now you're going to get it, you stinking little thieves!" But the next thing I knew, my great sense of justice kicked in: "I'm not even sure if it was Marika who stole the bike! And if someone else in her family did it, she may not have known about it! If she did, she couldn't have done anything about it anyway! But even if it was her who stole it, her father or someone else's older relative might have ordered her to!"

So I immediately found a number of reasons why she should be rescued. I wondered why my classmate was giving her this special attention, but he was so engrossed in the "discipline" that he only noticed my arrival when I was quite close to him. And then the following scene took place (again, probably not word for word, but more or less):

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"What's it to you?!" he snarled, but stopped beating her, instead grabbing Marika's long hair so she couldn't run away.

"I have at least as much to do with her as you do, because I'm as much her relative as you are!"

"What?! Are you a gypsy?!"

"No."

"Then you're not her relative!"

"No, but neither are you! So why are you beating her?!"

"Just because!"

"I'm afraid that answer doesn't seem satisfactory to me!" (This sentence was spoken verbatim, because I had heard the hero in a film say something similar not long before, and I really liked it. I also enjoyed saying it myself).

"Thieves deserve to be punished, as the Ten Commandments say "Thou shalt not steal!"

Well, that's all I needed! If there was one thing that made me certain that I couldn't just go on without interfering, it was that the boy had mentioned something to do with religion! It struck me with an almost blinding light that this was almost the situation I had so often fantasized about: here was a damsel in distress, a helpless girl, being tormented by a priestly figure! Well, it's true that nobody was trying to burn this girl at the stake, and that my classmate was a long way from being a priest. Yet he was so priestly and sanctimonious, and the girl was suffering because of it! And the fact that it wasn't a real priest or a real burning at the stake is compensated by the fact that I wasn't an adult either, a real "hero", and of course I wasn't holding a machine gun. So it was actually the situation I had dreamed about, but adapted to the fact of me being a child.

But I wanted to maintain at least a semblance of justice, because I could see that there was a significant chance the girl was indeed a thief, and I was curious, so I asked, "What did she steal?"

"My four-colored pen!" and he pulled it out of his pocket. "It was hanging from her neck!"

"But how could she have stolen it?"

"How would I know?! I had it this morning, and now on my way home this little bitch walks across the road, and it's hanging from her neck! She was even bragging about it, showing it off, without an ounce of remorse..."

"But listen, that's not really a very convincing argument, because it could still be her pen, someone else could also have a pen like that, and even if it's not hers, she could have found it on the road..." I said.

"Don't be ridiculous—since when has a gypsy owned a pen like that?!"

"I've heard rumors that the gypsy chief brought a wedding dress from Paris for his daughter's wedding!"

"But not a beggar like her! Besides, she admitted that she stole it from me!"

"When?" I asked.

"Just now!"

"Oh, now I understand! That's what she said to get you to stop beating her! Because you used torture like the inquisitors!"

"I don't care about your bullshit, get out of here, and stop interfering in other people's business!"

"You interfered in someone else's business, this girl's business! Give her back her pen, apologize to her, and let her go!"

"Hey, what the fuck is wrong with you, you're Hungarian too, why are you siding with the gypsies?!"

My classmate had asked a good question. To be honest, I didn't really feel like getting into a fight for the sake of the gypsy girl. I thought it very possible that if she hadn't stolen the pen, then the boy had somehow lost it on his way to school, and the girl had found it... yes, that was the most likely assumption to make. But then the girl wasn't a thief! I'd have kept the pen if I'd found it, anyway. How would I know whose it really was?!

But even that only scratched the surface of the issue. The most decisive moment was when I felt clearly that I had to intervene not for the sake of the gypsy girl, not for some altruistic, abstract justice, but for the most selfish feeling that exists—I had to save Marika because I had to save my own most sacred, cherished dreams! No matter what it took, no matter how much I got beaten up in the end, I couldn't let this half-priest, this mini inquisitor continue to torture Marika, because then I would never ever again be able to dream of being a great hero in the Middle Ages! The only thing preventing me from being a hero was that I didn't have a time machine, but if I did, what a great defender of women I could be, what a great hero of liberation! After all, here right in front of me was a very similar case, tailored to my child size, and if I were to let it go by, then every time I thought about it I would blush, regretting the missed opportunity. Yes, if I just moved on now, I would be spitting in the face of my highest ideals, I would be desecrating all my past and future dreams! And it has nothing to do with whether the girl is a gypsy, and very little to do with whether she is a thief.

"You have no evidence against her. Let her go at once!" I stepped towards him resolutely.

"I'll ask you again—have you become a guardian of the gypsies?! Are you a gypsy yourself?!" he mocked.

"No," I replied.

"There you are! And if you're not a Gypsy but a Hungarian, then..."

"I'm not a Hungarian either," I said firmly.

"Well, what are you then?!" he asked in bewilderment.

And then I uttered the word I had read in the "Dictionary of Foreign Words" only a few days before. I had been looking for something completely different, but I had noticed this word and it stuck in my

mind. Now it came in handy. "I am not a gypsy, neither am I Hungarian, Russian, German, Jewish, English or any other nationality—I am a *cosmopolitan*!"

"What the hell is that?!"

"It means 'world citizen'!"

"I don't understand, because you're obviously a Hungarian!"

"No. My native tongue is Hungarian, that's true, but I don't consider myself a Hungarian!"

"You can't be anything else, you were born as a Hungarian!"

"You're wrong. I was also baptized as a Reformed Christian, but I don't consider myself Reformed, because that act was done without my permission!"

"Are you crazy?! Aren't you proud of being a Hungarian?!"

"What is there to be proud of? That the Hungarian people have gloriously lost all their struggles for freedom thus far?! But that isn't the point. Listen, in time the fate of humanity will be that all the nations of the entire Earth will unite into one country, the World State, because if they don't, they will wipe themselves out!" I explained to him what was for me a perfectly obvious, self-evident fact, because the idea of the World State had appeared in many of the science-fiction books I had read. "So in time, all the nonsense about nations, countries, borders, customs etc. will disappear, so it's best to get on the side of progress emotionally as soon as possible, and think of ourselves as citizens of the Whole Earth! Whatever I like about the customs of a particular nation I follow, and whatever I don't like I don't follow, and that's that! So I speak Hungarian, it's my native language, but I am not Hungarian!"

"This land gave birth to you, it is here that you must live and die!"

"That's like something out of the 'Call to the Nation'.⁴

"Whatever it is, it's profoundly true!"

"The Bible's true to you too, you idiot! As far as I'm concerned, I don't give a shit about the whole Anthem and the 'Call to the Nation'! It's typical that Hungarians have the saddest anthem in the world, and I hate the fact that it mentions God! If it were up to me, I would choose something more cheerful as the national anthem! And I have the exact same opinion about the 'Call to the Nation' as well!"

"But are you such a wretched person that your homeland is whichever place you are happy?!" he asked, with deep contempt in his voice.

"No, the whole Earth is my homeland! But you're right that if I could, I would of course go and live in a place where I'm happy! And I see nothing wrong with that! Now let Marika go!"

"You wouldn't dare fight for her!" he cried triumphantly, reaching into his pocket, and the next moment a switchblade flashed in his hand.

Now it really seemed like a serious matter! But I didn't give up. I couldn't! I may have been crazy, but it never occurred to me to back down. For all that though, I don't consider myself a particularly brave fellow: I acted out of the purest selfishness—I couldn't let my dreams go, no matter what the cost! I was ready to die for them without hesitation. Or even kill.

"If you don't put the blade away, I swear I'll castrate you," I said calmly. And I seriously meant it. If the boy had known how deadly serious I was that this affair was a matter of life and death to me, he probably wouldn't have resisted any further. But he was very confident in his knife. And that I was afraid of knives. And it's true, I was afraid of the knife, but it was a very secondary consideration for me at that moment. On the other hand, because I was not lacking in common sense, I opened my

⁴ This is a famous Hungarian nationalist poem.

schoolbag, calmly took out my compass, opened it, and held it in my hand in place of a knife. "Well, now I have a weapon too!"

That got him thinking. "All right, I'll let this little bitch go, but the pen remains mine!" he said.

"No, you'll have to give it back to her, because you have no proof that..." I began. But then he let go of Marika's hair, and the little girl, who must have been very afraid of him, ran away immediately. Which, of course, meant she didn't get the pen back. She ran away so fast that I didn't get a word of thanks. But I didn't really care. One thing was certain, however—even if I took the risk of fighting for the girl, a four-colored pen was not worth that much, and it might have really belonged to the boy anyway. Marika was not interested in the pen, since she had run away; and if it really had belonged to her, she should tell her parents, and her kind father would settle the matter with my classmate! I wasn't going to risk my skin just for a pen!

So all I said to the boy was, "I'm glad we met here!"

"Why's that?"

"Because you have just proved under the crucified Jesus how faithful you are to his teaching of 'Love your neighbor'! If it is true what you once told me, that he died for the sins of mankind, don't you think he died for Marika's sins too?!"

"It's not the same, you're as dumb as an ass about religion! Jesus only redeemed mankind from original sin..." he began, but I was no longer interested in his ramblings, so I moved on.

And I really didn't care if Marika ever thanked me for what I had done for her (she never did), because I realized that doing good, living a truly virtuous life—at least if that virtue is truly from within and not imposed on us by external sources—is indeed its own reward! I was satisfied as never before, I knew I was a great guy, the best person in the world, even if no one could see it in me—not because I had saved a girl, but because I had saved my dreams! The interesting thing is that after that incident, I hardly ever dreamed of these sorts of time-travel stories. Maybe I didn't need it anymore. I'd had my own real, true feat. Perhaps the short way to sum up this state of mind is that *I had proved myself to myself*.

However, this had the particular consequence that, although at the time I was having the discussion with the boy I had said I was a cosmopolitan only due to a sudden idea, because this event ended so successfully for me, I took the label seriously and looked with a very critical eye at our various celebrations, but also at the whole history of mankind, which I thought should have been written by an executioner, since nothing can come of people killing each other! The most glorious heroes were, in my eyes, merely murderers of great stature, or unscrupulous, sworn intriguers. I really hated the National Anthem, not only because it praises God, but also because it only asks for blessings for Hungarians. So I completely turned my back on any nationalist ideology, and so I think I owe Marika a great debt of gratitude, even if she never thanked me for what I did for her, because that incident was the trigger that not only prevented me from becoming a gypsy-hater and a nationalist, but also opened my eyes very early on to the values of the cosmopolitan worldview. This also had a fruitful effect on my "anti-religious" outlook, as I soon realized that one of the greatest pillars of the war between nations is the existence of different religions, because a common religion strengthens the national consciousness of citizens and promotes hatred of other nations!

Then, having got to know Christianity a little better, I was not surprised to find that it has so many different denominations, and that this religion, which proclaims love for all, is the cause of the most

violent wars. After that, whenever Christianity was mentioned, I always commented on it with deep mockery, and once as I was arguing with someone, I said that it is typical that Christians' love for their neighbors is so deep that they can't even get along with themselves, because if they could there wouldn't be so many different Christian churches and sects, although they seem to multiply almost divisively like bacteria—somebody figures out that the cross must be made not this way but that way, that there is not one person dwelling in God but three or however many, or that the saints will be resurrected in heaven immediately after death or will only be resurrected on the Final Judgment Day. This isn't accepted by the others, and so they start a separate sect, just to have one more group to hate...

That's about where I was at in my intellectual development when I went to high school, and it was around that time that I became more familiar with other religions, especially Buddhism. And I have to say that at first I liked this religion very much, I felt a deep sympathy for it, but so much so that I thought it might be a good idea for me to become a Buddhist!

Now that I'm leaving the elementary school years behind in my writing, I would like to say that I want to avoid the image of being a child with a head stuffed full of religion. In fact, I had very little to do with religion as a child. I could write a great many other things about my childhood, but I won't, because this is not a detailed autobiography. I am only reflecting in this chapter on the events surrounding my becoming an atheist, which is why I seem to have been so interested in religion. But this is far from being the case.

But back to my high school years and Buddhism... What I particularly liked about it is that it does not limit love to humans, but extends it to animals as well. I began to study all the available Buddhist texts very seriously. At the same time, however, I finally read the Bible, just to be able to argue correctly in case a well-prepared convert wanted to ensnare me.

Well, my opinion of the Bible is that it is a horror of antiquity. If it took anything to stop me thinking of myself as a Christian, it was reading the Bible. It's full of massacres at God's command; incest; God sometimes approving of intermarriage and sometimes threatening the perpetrators with death; there are many other contradictions in it too; at the Creation God speaks as if he were part of a group ("Let us make man..."), so it's not true that the Bible at least systematically propagates monotheism... So it was a muddled, confused and terrifying book for me. It was particularly obnoxious that God so often demanded bloody sacrifices for himself.

Yes, from a very young age, I came to believe that Christianity was not just one religion among many, but an extremely barbaric religion, because its god is:

- petty and jealous
- commanding of illogical things (circumcision, sacrifices)
- extremely bloodthirsty (sacrifices, extermination of nations e.g. in the book of Joshua, or when he destroys all the firstborn in Egypt)
- crazed (sometimes even destroying animals in conquered cities)
- unreasonably cruel (e.g. he killed a man who had touched the Ark of the Covenant only to keep it from falling, or the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts)
- unjust (the story of the prodigal son, and when the pimp Abraham is not harmed, but the innocent Pharaoh is struck with plagues; I was particularly outraged that this god regularly punishes offspring for the sins of their fathers!)

- unsuccessful (despite his best efforts, he could not lead his chosen people on the path he would have liked)
- schizophrenic (supposedly three people were dwelling in him at the same time, and perhaps a fourth, Satan, since there are places in the Bible where it says that the Lord also does evil things)
- inconsistent (he wants Pharaoh to let the Jews out of Egypt, so he strikes the country with plagues, but at the same time he himself "hardens" Pharaoh's "heart" so that he will not let the Jews go)
- a male chauvinist, phallocratic macho bastard, since he regularly disposes of women like pigs, really treating them below their merits again and again!

Yes, the God of the Bible was really not so different in my eyes from the god of the Aztecs, for whom human hearts were torn out. Even Jesus did not impress me with his supposed perfection, because even he was unjust, for example cursing the fig tree because it did not bear fruit, when it was not even time for it to ripen. I was also particularly disgusted by the fact that Christianity constantly proclaims humility as one of its main values: I wanted to be SOMEONE, a very significant person, I wanted to stand out among my peers, at least among my classmates, so I studied and tried really hard. I didn't want to humiliate myself, to consider myself inferior to others, but on the contrary—to be recognized by others for my excellence! And it was not just a matter of submitting to God, because we know that the Bible often says that we must obey worldly authorities, since there is no authority but that which is ordained by God. But the counterargument immediately came to my mind that Hitler's power was also ordained by God! The inquisitors' too! And I could go on and on... If all these things were done with God's approval, and God calls us to obey them, how much better is this God than Satan?!

It was hateful and loathsome in my eyes—and still is!—that Christianity so often calls on us to FEAR! It says things (because it is misogynistic!) like a woman's chief adornment is her HUMILITY, or for example, there is this quote: "*Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.*" (1 Peter 2:18)

Or this: "*Slaves! Obey your masters on earth with fear and trembling, with a heart as pure as Christ's.*" (Ephesians 6:5) (So according to the Bible, we not only have to fear, but also tremble with dread if we want to be good Christians... Thanks, but this is something I neither like nor want!)

I didn't like it either, and I was specifically repulsed by this religion in that the New Testament is so anti-sex! This was in stark contrast to the Old Testament position, where many patriarchs had multiple wives or even a whole harem. "If it was allowed then, why not now?!" I thought. I would have really enjoyed having concubines or harems!

I also thought it totally unfair that the Old Testament was not entirely pro-sex either, inasmuch that it faithfully demonstrated the profound stupidity of the people of that time, that if a woman was not found to be a virgin on her wedding night, she was stoned! Although I knew even then that there were many women who did not bleed during their first encounter with sexual intercourse—all of whom were innocently murdered! Is it possible that God did not know what I know?! How can God dare to claim the label "just" when he has subjected thousands of women to unjust torture?! And it was bordering on madness in my opinion—if not madness itself—that Christianity sometimes mentions pain and suffering as something very good! Buddhism, on the other hand, was a relief for me: since it forbids killing, even of animals! Perhaps this religion has the ultimate truth?!

Unfortunately it wasn't long after I started that my picture of Buddhism began to darken and become more nuanced. First of all, I soon realized that naturally Buddhism has evolved and changed since Gautama Siddhartha, the historical Buddha, revealed his teachings, and what he said is most closely adhered to by the so-called "Hinayana" school of Buddhism today. It has followers mainly on the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka). However, I was much more sympathetic to the so-called 'Mahayana' school. The reason for this was that according to Hinayana, only a very small number of people can become buddhas at the end of spiritual development, one in billions, and that for the rest only the so-called "arhat" (roughly translated as "holy"), a state of being alienated from the world, is the ultimate goal. The Mahayana, on the other hand, holds that every human being has the "bodhicitta", the spark of enlightenment, that every human being can become a buddha, every person has this potential! I understandably liked that much better. On the one hand, for vanity reasons—lest I, of all people, should not be able to become a buddha! It's okay that I'm *now* worth less than a buddha—but that I can *never* reach Perfection, even if I practice diligently, meditate, do good deeds... even after millions of rebirths?! No way!

On the other hand, I also saw in this conception a downplaying of the Human potential in general. For this reason, the Mahayana was much more sympathetic. But if I chose this, I felt that I was confronted with the doctrine of the historical Buddha himself. That said, I feel I could have chosen Mahayana, but I had other problems with Buddhism. Firstly, a logical counterargument is that if those who commit bad deeds are reborn in worse circumstances, that would be fine because it could be considered fair—yet in this case, the worse circumstances of rebirth can be seen as punishment for the wrongdoing. But what is the point of a punishment whose cause is unknown to the one being punished?! In other words, it would only have an educational effect if people remembered their previous lives, if not all of them, then at least the one immediately before, so that they knew, for example, "I beat my wife to death, and that's why I am now reborn as a woman, in a situation where my husband beats me!" That would make sense! But we don't remember our previous lives...

I also didn't like the fact that Buddhism mostly sees this world as a source of suffering. To me it was a fact that this world was indeed a source of much suffering—but I felt that this was only a half-truth, because it is also the source of all joy! Somehow I felt that the ultimate aim of humanity—or of the individual—should not be to reject all that the World can offer and withdraw from it (by which I mean nirvana, the state of withdrawal from the world), but to gradually eradicate all evil, and as much as possible make the World a pleasant, friendly, cozy, warm nest for Humanity, with all the good things it has to offer us!

In retrospect, I think that all the science fiction I had read by then was probably the main reason I didn't accept the basically pessimistic view of the world that Buddhism had. My readings were mostly about heroes and scientists who, through their actions and/or thoughts and inventions, had profoundly influenced the world, or even changed it for the better, and I saw them as my role models. For this reason, it was fundamentally alien to me to glorify the idealized life of "non-action" that Buddhism and many other Eastern religions and philosophies have. By this I mean a sort of ideologizing of laziness and slothfulness, because it was obvious to me that there were so many things in the world we should be doing that are worthy of our action.

It also made me suspicious that—again influenced by my childhood love of science fiction—I not only didn't consider science to be bad, and not even indifferent or neutral: I considered it and still

consider it the most positive thing ever invented by mankind! But science was mostly developed by Western civilization, even if it is a fact that some valuable results of our present technology were also contributed by the Orientals. And I have begun to suspect that this may be because Eastern people—due to their world view, which is reflected in their religion—simply do not consider life, everyday life, and therefore not even development or science to be important, and so they don't bother with it...

Now, if I deemed science to be good, it is clear that I couldn't consider anything that did not promote, and sometimes hindered, the progress of science to be good! As I have already written, this made me suspicious of all Eastern religions, although I do not deny that they had some insights, let's say "wisdoms", that I liked.

However, I finally broke with Buddhism when, shortly after leaving school to go to work, I got into an argument with a very nice but religious lady. She wasn't a Christian, but a sort of "jack of all trades": she believed a little of this and a little of that, but she was mostly a Buddhist. I don't know how, but the question of killing came up. She categorically rejected the very idea of killing, and even refused to take the risk of killing by accident. So I said to her, "But what if I'm walking with my sweetheart in a deserted place one evening, and a much stronger hooligan comes along and tries to rape her?! And I have a gun, so I can save my partner from rape if I shoot the guy..."

According to the lady this isn't permitted either, the rape should be allowed to happen! Because I am forbidden to INTERVENE! The fact that the woman is being raped now is her karma, which she deserved, and if I kill him I create bad karma for myself, and I will not have saved the woman because she will suffer the same rape at a later time anyway, perhaps in her next life, because she deserved it! In any case, by carrying a gun I have decided that I am willing to kill, and that is a crime in itself!

"Okay," I say, "let's say I don't have a gun, but the rapist does, and I manage to get hold of it in the struggle..."

She said I shouldn't shoot then either. I shouldn't even try to shoot him in the leg, because I might miss and kill him!

"But," I say, "what about the rapist's karma?! Maybe it's his destiny to die because of my shot, so that he realizes that he shouldn't do such things because there will be consequences!"

The lady says this is just my superficial reasoning, for who am I to decide whose karma is what?!

Well, I won't go into further detail. The point is that I couldn't accept such a fanatical position, even though I have found that many Buddhists share it (though not all).

In my study of other religions, I have come to believe that they are all essentially some kind of modification of Christianity, or a modification of Buddhism, or some kind of jumbled mixture of the two. This opinion applies not only to Islam, but also to Judaism. I know that historically the Jewish religion is the more ancient, but I am not talking about the actual lineage, only the nature of their doctrines in comparison. The god of the Jewish religion is the god of the Old Testament, so there is not much difference in my eyes between him and the Christian god. Islam, on the other hand, is a painfully obvious simplified or, to put it more mildly, 'modernized' version of Judaism for Arabs.

This left me with nothing but atheism. However, at the moment I no longer consider myself explicitly atheist. The reason is that I have "my own religion", hehehe... I put the phrase "my own religion" in quotes because it isn't really a religion—it is still atheism in practical terms. Yet in theory it is not. Since I am convinced that the World we live in is not "real", but only a (probably computer)

SIMULATION. I will not go into this here, because I have written an entire book about it, which can be downloaded here: <https://haroldking.weebly.com/home/is-our-world-a-computer-simulation>

("Harold King" is my pen name in English).

In that book I listed a number of pieces of evidence that support this hypothesis. In particular, I think I have succeeded in giving an interpretation of the formula for time dilation known from relativity theory, which explains it as being necessary for the simulation that constitutes our world to run at an enjoyable speed, i.e. not too slow. The corresponding formulae and the computational explanation are also given in detail in that book.

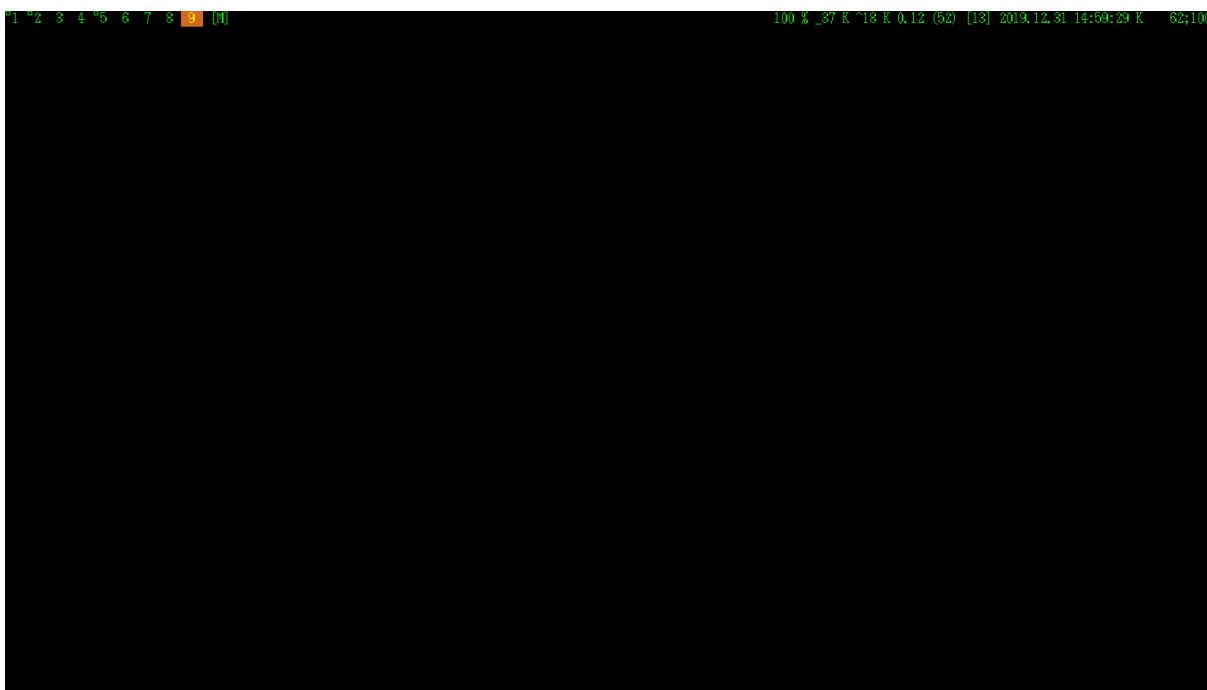
Austerity, minimalism, maximalism and functionalism

Aspies are accused of being both incredibly austere and fanatically maximalist. Well, these accusations are remarkably true... at least in some respects. But they are worth looking into. For as I see it, both accusations are rooted in two strong foundations of the Aspie ethos: an attraction to minimalism, and an attraction to functionalism.

By minimalism, I mean that it makes an Aspie's flesh crawl at the thought of not seeing something clearly. Of something being too complicated, unpredictable, confusing, contradictory, in short—inconsistent! It doesn't matter if the thing in question is a society, or a small group of people, or just a computer interface—he is only content if the rules are LOGICAL (that is, the whole thing is consistent), and even that there are as few logical rules as possible. It follows from this that for an Aspie, a minimalist style is most suitable for everything in general. Aspies do not like frills and ornaments for their own sake. Even if they don't make the given thing confusing and incoherent, they distract our attention from the essence, therefore the Aspie feels they are superfluous and even harmful.

The above ideas lead us to functionalism. That which has no well-defined function, no "use", is, according to an Aspie, superfluous. It is even considered superfluous if it actually does have a use, but the benefit it adds to the whole is, according to the Aspie, insignificant.

All this is often labeled "austerity" by an outside observer, but it is not. It is common for me, for example, that someone sees my laptop and says, "Wow, what an ugly interface! A big, black blank screen, no icons, no menu bar..." Of course not, I use Linux with DWM window manager. Originally there wasn't even a status bar management program, I wrote it myself. This is what my GUI screen looks like when I don't have any programs open (the info displayed by the status bar management program I wrote is shown in the upper right corner, displayed in green characters):



I admit, it's not some stylish, flashy color scheme... It *is* a minimalist interface. It *is* highly functional. No icons, no menus. Why?! If I want to open a program, there are hotkeys set for the most common ones, and if I need something else for which there is no hotkey, I open a virtual terminal (there is a hotkey for that...) and type the name of the program in the command line, press Enter, and it works... Am I supposed to use some fancy GUI that takes up half a gigabyte of RAM unnecessarily, that distracts me with all sorts of ridiculous colorful "visuals", eye-candy nonsense, at the risk of being full of bugs, since the bigger a program is the more bugs it has?! WHY?!!

This is just one example, of course. However the attitude is the same for an Aspie in all areas of life. It could be said that "by nature" an Aspie has a predisposition to being a "recluse" to a certain degree. I MYSELF certainly do!

But let's take another example, which may be more familiar to my Reader than computing. Let's take gastronomy:

I'm heading toward the checkout with my shopping cart, and I see a counter that says "Seafood". And lo and behold, it's on sale... Right in front of me is a huge bag, filled with sea crabs about 10 to 12 centimeters in size. There were about three pounds of them in the bag. According to the description, they were precooked in a salty, spicy broth, you just had to thaw them (they were frozen) and they were ready to eat. And believe it or not, the whole thing cost less than \$15! I tell you what, I was going to buy this and eat it! I didn't want to die without trying crab, it's a great treat in any movie! I checked the label—zero carbs, no trans fat, okay. Well, the surprise came when I got home: I defrosted it and everything, and it looked really delicious, at least it *would have been*... Because crabs are covered in a hard shell. Of course, a crab shell of that size is not so hard that I can't crack it open, even if not with my teeth. On the one hand, I don't have any teeth (they all rotted out long ago, thank you very much oh glorious Carbohydrate, may your name be exalted by all those ignorant louts who think you are an

essential nutrient! But fear not, in the meantime I've reduced my weight from 91 kilos down to 73 kilos on a ketogenic diet, and since then I've been following the "Carnivore diet" lifestyle...), and on the other hand, even if I did, it would have still been hard work for human teeth. But I had a knife, so I cracked them open... and then came the big shock—these crabs were really almost INSECTS, both in appearance and on the inside, that is, they contained almost no meat!

Now I should have thought of that beforehand, since the total caloric value of the huge three pound bag (which is over a KILOGRAM) was only 170 kcal, according to the label... So there was pretty much NOTHING edible in these big crabs! If I split open their shells, I could suck on the microscopic amount of whatever was inside... basically just the cooked juice! I was annoyed. It couldn't be true that there was a whole lot of junk in here and I could only eat 10% of it! Think about it, I was supposed to throw almost all of it in the garbage! It wasn't such a big deal that I had lost \$15, but this wasn't ECONOMICAL! Then again, it was DELICIOUS. How nice it would be if I could eat the whole thing, not just ten percent of it! And I thought, if I were a caveman in the paleolithic era, what would I do? What else but simply eat it, shell and all! The teeth of their ancestors must have been better than ours, they could easily chew through that shell. I had also seen in one of David Attenborough's films that certain monkeys that live in mangrove forests regularly hunt sea crabs at low tide, and they just take the crab into their mouths and EAT it! Chew the whole thing up, shell and all.

Well, I don't have any teeth... But hey, I *do* have a MEAT GRINDER! Now you can probably guess the rest. I simply ground all the crabs just as they were, complete with shells! Sometimes the meat grinder would protest a bit, and then I'd put in a boiled pork tongue or half a handful of boiled chicken hearts to "push" out the stuck crab pieces. I ended up with a good portion of minced crab pulp... DELICIOUS! Not even the most amazing store-bought liver paste or meat paste could compare! And it was nutritious too—a few teaspoons of it would satisfy my hunger for a long time. I don't even think it bothered me having the shell in it. I had no problem when I ate grasshoppers in the summer, even though I ate plenty of chitin then. But then again, the ancestor of primates was originally an insectivore, so chitin can't be a poison to our bodies. Even the almost completely vegan gorilla eats insects sometimes, and it doesn't hurt him... The worst that can happen is that I won't be able to digest the chitin. That's okay, I'll just poop it out, I'll have more "fiber" in me and that's it...

Reading the above, I imagine many of you will be horrified by such extreme FRUGALITY! To eat a crab WITH ITS SHELL! And what did I write above?! That I have eaten GRASSHOPPERS?! Eww!

Yes, I'm capable of eating them. Why not?! Eating bugs is on the rise these days. In fact, a larger proportion of humanity eats bugs than doesn't. Of course, to a "white-skinned European" this may seem overly frugal, even barbaric. But I, as an Aspie, simply deal with it in the following way: "Is it possible? Yes. Tasty? Yes. OK, then, I'll eat it. As for what 'tradition' is and what other people's ideas of what is 'proper' and 'civilized' are, I don't give a damn!"

I would like to note, however, that the consumption of grasshoppers cannot even be condemned in a religious sense, because they are considered a KOSHER food: it is written in the Bible that Moses allowed the Jews wandering in the wilderness to eat locusts!

Coming back to programming, I'll mention that I have also written my own programming language. Its documentation would not fit into the scope of this book, nor into the topics to describe it all here;

however, allow me to at least copy from it, from the preface, who the target audience of that programming language is. I think this is useful because, again, it makes it clear how we Aspies think about such things, being practical and all. By the way, the number of people with Asperger's syndrome, or at least suspected Asperger's syndrome, is very high among computer professionals... In another subsection I will publish a "joke" I came up with, which shows how I feel about the current trends in software development, primarily the AUSTERITY OF OTHERS in this regard, since the subject is austerity... Although understanding these two subsections requires some advanced computer knowledge here and there, I hope at least some of the details will be understandable to the layman. And the last subsection of this chapter is a long joke I made up about programming languages. Unfortunately, to grasp the humor of it, one needs to have a fairly in-depth knowledge of the various programming languages, the features of those languages that I have poked fun at... Obviously for this reason, few of my readers will find it amusing. Yet I thought it worth including in this book, JUST FOR THE SAKE OF IT. Because in this way I can show what kind of jokes we Aspies, the "professional barbarians", consider humorous! Of course, this also explains why everyone in a group of "normal people" remains unsmiling when we start telling jokes... It's because nobody gets our jokes! So, now for the three subheadings announced above:

What is the target audience of this programming language?

After reading the following, you can easily decide whether it's for you. I would recommend this programming language for those who think similarly about IT questions as I do. Of course, not exactly the same as I do, but similarly in most subjects. So if you are reading these lines, the more of the below statements that match your conceptions, the better you will be able to accept this programming language as your "own". It may even work for you if you feel this isn't quite the way you think, but you basically like this attitude and would like to become more like it.

So let's see what it is:

—You are willing to write a self-modifying program to spare 2 nanoseconds in a routine that spends 999 thousandths of its time waiting for the input from the user; so obviously even 2-3 seconds would make no difference, let alone a couple of nanoseconds.

—You are capable of replacing a nice clean switch, which includes only 6 case branches to an array with pointers to functions, because it makes your code faster, even if it also makes your code less clear-cut. You even calculate it based on benchmarks that this new solution will be 8.6% faster, which makes you extremely proud. It doesn't matter that the earlier version of your program ran with an absolutely fine speed too, even on a vintage '486 machine.

—You are not afraid of either using the command "goto" or arithmetic jump statements. Actually you are so wicked that when you think about your own programming language, you are looking for ways to embed arithmetic subroutine calls.

—You have already looked up how to execute code that is stored in a string. You are well aware of its risk and the security hazard; you have probably never used this feature yet, but have found a way to solve it, only because you WANT TO KNOW that too!

—In your opinion, only one useful complex data structure exists, which is the *array*. Anything else is either only an alteration of it or a specialized variant of it, meaning that everything else is only bullshit.

—Without a doubt, you are willing to not only make data, but pointers subject to explicit casting, and directly manipulate fields of objects if it makes the code run faster. You are confident that with caution you can use these possibilities, while you talk anybody else out of it by creating horror stories about the risk. It's because in reality you are deeply concerned about the risk it holds—for novice programmers...

—You don't like programs "systemd" and "pulseaudio", you think these are all just bloatware. You really don't like GRUB2, because you think it's just plainly idiotic to load a half operating system only to assist the booting of the real operating system...

—You have such a nasty opinion on the graphical subsystem labeled "X Window System" that it can't be published in any written form, either printed or as digital pixel, because even your monitor would be embarrassed displaying it...

—You are not fond of anti-aliased letters, or vector graphic font sets; you prefer serif, fix-width typefaces.

—You have looked up in references how to set NumLock "on" automatically while booting, because it's so dull to have to push that button after each restart. For you it's not illogical that you spent three days solving this problem, which is way more time than what you would have spent on pushing that button for the rest of your life.

—In your opinion, among distributions LFS is the "God Emperor", but in case of emergency it's acceptable to use other source-based distribution such as Gentoo, Sabayon or GoboLinux... although using something other than LFS without good cause makes anyone suspicious in your eyes. All the other distributions that are not source-based belong to the "out of the question" category, and are only good for elementary school students to get a feel for information technology.

—You have already compiled your own kernel for Linux distribution with unique settings.

—You have written your own programming language, or if not yet, it's your childhood dream. Or, if writing a programming language is not your dream come true, it's only because you want to create a full operating system to start with.

—You deserve a bonus if you want to write your operating system in your own programming language...

—You think that the fact itself of your endeavor to write a new programming language is more than enough justification, that all the existing programming languages are lacking one common thing: none of them were written by you!

—The other reason why you must write a programming language is that you are convinced that if you died without completing that noble quest, your ancestors would be ashamed of you, and as a punishment you would be ruled out not only from Heaven, but also from Hell, and as a deterrent example to the other souls you'd be deported back to Life! A terrible fate, painstaking to even think about! Obviously sane, intelligent people shouldn't take such a huge risk!

—Your favorite text editor lacking anything better is VIM, but only until you make your own.

—Even the sight of complicated expressions like "regex" triggers aesthetic pleasure in you.

—But lately expressions like "regex" don't cause you as much enjoyment as before, because you've realized that the one who wrote the regex rules is NOT YOU! And regex's analyzing function that you use is not yours either! Awful! You can no longer live with such a shame, that you don't have your own regex analyzing algorithm. It's barbaric and miserable... So you plan to write something like it for yourself, or at least something that is capable of accomplishing the sorts of things it can do.

—You are filled with revulsion against graphical programs overall. You accept that graphical platforms are necessary, but you think programs should only be graphical when pixel manipulation is inevitable. Such as in the case of picture viewers, or a WYSIWYG word processor, or desktop-publishing software, picture or video editors. But for activities like chatting, listening to music, sending letters or file handling, you can't imagine using a graphical program.

—You don't like watching YouTube videos online in your browser window. You just watch it for a few minutes, and if it's interesting, you download it to watch offline in your favorite video player.

—It's no problem for you to save only the audio track from a video clip, if you are only interested in the music but not the video. There is no way you're going to store a file ten times as large as necessary for the video information...

—Your deep-seated belief is that a window manager program should only manage the operation of windows, and that's it, it has no other job! There is no need for a control-center, because instead of manual settings on a graphical screen, you rather rewrite configuration files to apply the necessary settings.

—You think that in the case of a window manager, the possibility to arrange background pictures is unnecessary because they are hidden when a program window is open in the work area. When you switch to an empty desktop, you prefer to see an important system file listed by root-tail, or if not by root-tail then some program you wrote for this purpose...

—The sheer thought of using a window manager with ICONS makes you suffer a massive stroke. In your opinion, "icon" is a religious painting that can be found in Eastern Christian churches, and it has no place on the desktop of a "True Geek". IT and religion don't blend together well, except for the following possibility: "JESUS HAS CHANGED YOUR LIFE! Do you want to save it? YES - NO"

—While other r=0 users are looking for the best distributions and browsers, you are switching between different terminal emulators, because somehow none of them are ideal for you. So you have made the decision that, maybe not right now but sometime in the distant future, you will write one that will serve all of your requirements.

—In the previous paragraph there is the adjective "distant" before the word "future" only because you cannot start writing a terminal emulator NOW, since first you have to put together your own shell... because you think that all those that have been made so far are lacking certain functions, they are like bloatware with too much dependence and many other idiotic features.

—When you install a new distribution, you always start with the following "musthave" stuff, because there is no life without them:

1. Urxvt (or another UTF-8 supported terminal emulator)
2. MC
3. VIM
4. XBindKeys
5. XChainKeys

6. XdoTool

—You don't think that any decent man would use KDM or GDM or other graphical display manager, because it's profanity not to start the machine by command line only, and only after that enter the startx command to the graphical environment, if we want to boot the graphical environment at all, which is highly doubtful... You think that if someone is perverted enough to do so, it's recommended to take precautions preventing him from getting near small children, because who knows what else he might be capable of...

—In your opinion, the best programming language is the C, everything else is only frivolous playing around and humbug. If you need to put something together quickly, then you use C++, but practically you write C code, only adding a few features from C++. But you only do that when you have a high temperature (over 104 F) and have drunk too much, plus haven't slept for three days, so you are obviously unable to make any serious mental effort.

—In your opinion, in a programming language such as a prefix of hexadecimal constants, \$ is much better than 0x, because the latter consists of two characters, which makes processing time longer, takes more time to type, in addition makes your keyboard wear out quicker, and because of this, entropy increases in the Universe. The fact that it works like this in C is an awfully irritating error of this programming language, about which you have been annoyed for some time.

—You have dreamed about how nice it would be if humanity would finally come to its senses and switch to the hexadecimal system. It would free a lot of capacity if machines didn't have to make all the conversions between decimal and hexadecimal systems all the time. You know this dream will never come true, but still, it is so good to daydream about it...

—It used to be your ambition to learn how to write a daemon, because it's such a geeky thing to know how to write a daemon. But by the time you have learned it, you realize that what you needed that program for doesn't need to be "daemonized". It's enough to run it in the background, so you decided to rewrite the whole program, because without "daemonizing" its size is smaller, approximately half of the original size, which practically means you could spare 16 K! And sparing 16K makes you extremely happy, because your machine only has 16 GIGABYTE RAM, which means that the 16K you can spare is about one part per million of your full capacity! Actually, the truth is that you never used more than 30% of your 16 GIGABYTE RAM capacity, but even so, the 16K of spare memory thrills you!

—There is no file handling software installed on your machine, except for MC. But you feel it's unnecessary too, since you solve everything with your own scripts!

—You think the best striptease is when the beloved lady takes off the... the cover of her machine, so you can finally see the circuits of that topnotch machine in her naked reality...

—Whenever you hear the word "striptease", you associate the expression "Stripping executables..."

—Whenever you take a look at a source code that includes something at the beginning like

#pragma inline

you know that it's time to get excited, because a breathtaking intellectual adventure awaits you.

—A feeling almost as intense as that sweeps you off your feet when you see in the code the directive: **volatile**.

—When you write a program, you set all the possible warning levels for the compiler, then in spite of that, you keep working on the code until no warnings are displayed. Because your opinion is that a programmer who tolerates warnings while their program is being compiled deserves a painful

execution, which would be broadcast on prime time TV to deter others from doing so. Perhaps if all the warnings they got belonged to the pedantic category, it would be enough to put them in a pillory locked in the stocks in the middle of a crowded square, so they become the subject of everybody's deep contempt.

—It has already happened that you have mistaken the words "castle" and "casting" while you've been searching, or reading your mail...

—If it was up to you, teaching languages like Pascal or Python to children would be prohibited, because you think it will make them lazy and careless, and later they will not be willing to learn the only acceptable programming language, which is C.

—If you lowered yourself to the level of writing a program in C++, you wouldn't make yourself suck with "data hiding" or using "friend"; everything can be "public", because you know how to be careful! Since you are programming with C, even if you write the code in C++, as you are only there for those few extra features.

—When listing files, you like to see rights in octal form, because you think a style like "rwxrwxrwx" is obviously a blubber, which is too long, not space utilizing, and not aesthetic, plus it's only for beginners, or rather "infant" users.

—You hate Windows, although essentially not because it costs money (you would never use that so-called "operating system", which is a monstrous rascal), nor because it's full of bugs, but because its source code is closed: in fact, it's even prohibited to modify, so you can't test it and form it to your own taste.

—Whenever someone asks you to install Windows on their computers, you say no, because you feel like you would be getting filthy by doing so, in a ritual sense. It would be something like cleaning a toilet for a Hindu maharani, or eating something that is not kosher for a Jewish rabbi. If a friend asks you to install it, to whom you cannot just say "no", you lie, saying that you don't even know how to install Windows. You don't actually feel guilty about this lie, because the last time you used Windows was in the age of Windows 3.11, or max. Windows 98. Modern Windows operating systems are different, and you really do barely know them, because you have only seen them from a distance, and truly just for a few minutes. The thing is that the sheer sight of a Windows operating system makes you feel sick, and forces you to escape the scene...

—You basically keep yourself away from programs with closed source codes; you hate them, avoid them as much as possible, you think that the sheer existence of them is evil and disgusting, some kind of rotten memetic stench of death, whose spread must be fought against.

—Your choice can only be Linux or BSD operating system on your home computer, and wherever you have the right to decide on it. If not one of these, then maybe something even rarer, but it definitely must be open source code.

—You don't like Android because it's full of restrictions, and in spite of the open source system-core it has plenty of shit that is closed source. You think that Android is the Windows of Google, and only slightly better than real Windows.

—You are unable to tolerate the Windows logo key on keyboards, so whenever you get a new one, the first thing you do is cover the key with a sticker (an expensive penguin sticker perhaps?), or paint it with opaque paint, or in the worst case just put some duct tape on it. Whatever you do, the only thing that matters is to make it invisible, because it's a shame to let anyone see it on your keyboard, as if you

were advertising for Windows! But you are not a Windows billboard, especially because this gigantic company doesn't pay you anything for it...

—For that same reason, when you buy a new computer, the first thing you do is scrape it clean from the colorful Windows sticker. Or maybe it's just the second thing, because the first one is to uninstall the Windows that came with the package and is already installed on your new machine.

—If you have a task to solve and you have to choose between the two, you will always choose the open source code, even if it has fewer functions, is harder to handle, and even has more bugs than the other closed source one.

—It has happened that you voluntarily contributed money to an open source project that was otherwise free.

—You consider a command line to be the most user-friendly interface in the world.

—You don't like touchscreens and the virtual keyboards that are displayed on them; in your opinion, these are absolutely unsuitable for serious work.

—You don't like suits and ties and shiny shoes, in fact, as far as your clothing is concerned, you don't give a shit. And you think the same about the clothing of others. You think that geniuses like you should spend their time on making the code "pretty", not their looks. And spend even more time assuring high quality. If someone makes a remark about your appearance, you just casually say (if you say anything at all): "Anybody can be beautiful. I may not be, but I'm not just anybody."

—The fact that you don't care for either your own or others' appearance doesn't mean that you are intentionally filthy, ragged or scary looking. In fact, you despise those who express their "personalities" by wearing Cherokee-like purple hair sticking up high in the air, or leather jackets full of rivets, and often ugly tattoos covering large parts of their bodies. You think that there is a good chance they are IQ-negative idiots, who are unable to create anything important, and therefore instead of creation they try to get attention by being odd-looking. You avoid those people, because you believe you're not on the same intellectual level as them.

—When a pretty girl with a flirtatious smile on her face whispers into your ear that she doesn't yet have a program for the night, you as a heroic knight and genial programmer assure her that you will put together a program for her in no time so that she will have her entertainment for the night. There is no question about writing her that program, because you really love her!

—In general, you show a tendency for inviting girls to your room in order to show them your programs...

—You're familiar with the programming language called BRAINFUCK, and you have already written your own BRAINFUCK interpreter.

—You have already made your own Linux distribution (even if nobody else uses it but you).

—There is no TV set in your apartment, or it's out of order, because when it broke you realized that you never watched it anyway, so you didn't bother to buy a new one, or maybe didn't even bother to throw it out, because your potted flowers like sitting on top of the TV... Or maybe you do have a TV on your premises, and you use it, but only as an external monitor, because you don't watch TV channels... Or maybe there's a TV that works properly and is not used as a monitor, but it's not in your room; it's either in the kitchen or in your wife's room, because you have no time to watch worthless, stupid shows on TV, your time is far more precious than that. Your motto is: **"You'll never live this day again. So make it count!"**

- You don't mind if you are said to be a geek or a nerd... as a matter of fact, you are proud of it.
- You have defined your own keyboard layout, instead of using those standard or default layouts. This way you have all the characters you need, and they are right there where you need them.
- The window manager you are willing to use must be extremely minimalist, such as DWM, SithWM, NoWM... But you are thinking about writing your own. Maybe one day you will embark on this adventure.
- You agree with the statement that "**Programming is more art than science; as a matter of fact, the most imperial among the arts!**". Or maybe you don't completely agree with this statement, but you think there is some truth in it...

If you feel like the above statements are exaggerated, and I was being ironic or funny when I wrote them, I can tell you the secret that you're right—in a certain sense... When I started putting together this list, my intention was to intensify it by strong exaggerations. But as I proceeded I had to recognize that it was impossible. Of course I realize that some of those statements may seem rather comic, but as far as my ideology is concerned, those statements are not exaggerated; all of them are characteristics of my worldview... For example, I'm dead serious that humanity should come to its senses and switch to the hexadecimal system. And it really did happen that I had a pretty girl come up with me to my room, but because I had read a lot about how girls don't like to "get to the point" right away, and need time to "get into the mood", instead of approaching her directly, I tried the intellectual way—I initiated an interesting conversation about programming... Well, the conversation failed, and unfortunately not only the conversation...

What the software developer had in mind when he wrote...

Using the program requires no particular IT expertise...

= I made it for morons, it can do nothing more than what a moron would ever need.

The program has a completely user-friendly interface...

= Totally impossible to use without a mouse.

Modern design...

= Nothing at all will be located where and how you're used to it, moreover, even the most basic function takes the best part of an hour to find.

Uncluttered user interface...

= Every function was left out that you used and loved in the previous versions, and you can't even put them back in, without rewriting a 30K binary config file in a hex editor. In worse cases, even that won't get them back.

The software is perfectly usable with keyboard commands...

= This might be true, all you need to remember is that for 'bold' formatting you need to use LeftShift+LeftControl+AltGr+K, then Esc twice, then a colon. A command prompt will appear, where you just need to type the text BoldStartNow, then Enter, then Esc, twice. Disabling 'bold' uses the same method, only the text should be BoldStartOff. Oh, and this only works if you typed 'EnableBoldFormatUse' into the file \$HOME/.SuperProgi.rc before launching it, but this is only executed by the program, if the /etc/SuperProgi/config.global file contains the 'BoldFormatUse = EnableAllUser' line, and the respective user is included in the SuperProgi user group. But even this is only taken into account, if it is compiled from the source code, while the necessary configure script is called with the --BoldFormatUsing=IndividualPossibilities.

The program has a number of other functions...

= On which you will not find a single description, not even in English, since these functions are only spread by word of mouth among developers, so at best you can only familiarize yourself with them if you read through at least 3 years of mailing list archives of the program's developers.

Please read the README file before installation...

= That is in English for sure, and even if you speak English, you will have no chance of understanding it, unless you had serious IT training and a few years of experience.

For further optimization possibilities, please run the configure script with the --help switch before installation...

= Advanced version of the last point, for highly advanced users.

Please set the appropriate paths at the beginning of the Makefile before installation...

= Give up at this point, if you are not as familiar with your system setup as a physician is familiar with the inner workings of the endocrine system.

Please set options to your liking with the required modification of the config.h file before installation...

= Installing the program requires highly specific knowledge of C and/or C++ programming languages, furthermore, it is highly likely that even using it would not be advised for someone who is not a bug-eyed, out of his mind, budding hacker, murmuring hexadecimal code.

The software is highly scriptable...

= Something you will need a lot, because everything is omitted that would make it usable; it is more like a framework, you need to script all the functions you need, for which you need knowledge of the applicable programming language, of course.

One of the greatest strengths of the software is that macros can be easily created...

= Unfortunately, for this you will surely need to install JavaScript, something you easily lived without until now.

Has an aesthetically pleasing user interface...

= I could have written this whole thing in 20 kilobytes, but then no one would be astonished by my programming genius. So I went and spiced it up with heaps of totally useless but spectacular junk, so it flashes, makes sounds, whistles, moves its icons around and everything, so now it is not better by a fraction; at least now it does not take up 20 kilobytes, but doesn't even start unless you have 2 gigabytes of RAM. On the other hand, this way those unintelligent idiots, who get crazy about useless fancy crap, are all over it.

Please make sure before installation that you have libraries of the appropriate version...

= If your system is older than a fortnight, you will not be able to install it.

Rolling release...

= Check the developers website daily, and update if there is any news, because if you miss like three occasions, then the update will bin your system instantly.

Regular updates will be published...

= This one though, the one you can install now, is no more than a crappy, botched shit of a software, but we do not wish to deal with it now, just bag the accolades. If we have the time, we will botch it little-by-little until it can be used for something. If we don't have time, then sorry, but that's what you get.

The user interface received minor updates...

= None of the templates and skins you worked so hard for will ever work again with the new version.

The software is internationalized...

= Available in all languages, except your native tongue.

Contributions to the localization are welcome...

= Translate it for yourself!

New languages can be added easily...

= For this you need to create the appropriate .po file, unfortunately it can only be edited with special software.

Now set up the relevant code page...

= No matter what you do, 'ö' and 'ü' will never be displayed correctly.

The program uses UTF-8 encoding...

= In all your older documents, a bunch of weird characters or nothing will appear, instead of accented letters.

The less important functions are still available...

= Things that you could simply click on before are now 10 clicks away, hidden in the depths of the eighth sub-menu.

A number of new functions were implemented...

= We included a bunch of stuff that we know is completely useless for 99.999% of users, but we had to do something, so that we could say we made the thing better and it is being developed. We don't give a shit if that quadrupled the size, the need for memory and other computer resources. Buy a better computer if you want to use it!

Entirely compatible with earlier versions...

= We're great kids, because we could pull off something that should be absolutely self-evident, expected and natural for normal people.

Uses its own graphic library...

= Forget running it, unless you have at least half GB of free RAM on your machine.

Using the program can be learned from the man pages created during the installation...

= The man pages will only be on your computer if you have installed DocBook, LibXSLT, TexInfo and Python3 necessary for generating them.

In case the configure script requires any dependencies...

= I was too lazy to gather whatever my program needs.

For this you need to have the necessary drivers...

= for which you need to compile a separate kernel...

Following the installation, please create the necessary configuration files...

= The program is exclusively for hardcore/expert Linux users, who are console maniacs.

With the Neurses interface...

= It has no decent graphic user interface, it's made only for 'highly advanced' users, beginners should forget about using this software.

It is perfectly customizable and controllable with a number of command switches...

= A detailed description for these switches didn't even fit into a 200 page document; keep in mind though, that the variations also matter, as they are in complex interrelations. While there is a description on this in your native language, it was updated 7 years ago and is now obsolete. English man pages are newer but also obsolete. The current document is also in English, but it is only available in .info files that cannot be read on your computer unless you install a special software.

This is a frontend/GUI for the xxx program...

= I chose the 3 functions out of the xxx's 45764338 functions I needed most; I created a spectacular program for those, hoping that the half-idiot users who are afraid of using the command prompt will get onto it. None of the other functions are accessed by this program, though.

A number of hotkeys make our work easier...

= The program is either completely useless with a mouse, or just barely usable, and even the mouse specific functions aren't tested thoroughly.

Fills an important gap...

= No program was ever created to do this, meaning that you are a beta-tester who we experiment on!

Feedback can be provided on our mailing list...

= Solve your problems among yourselves, do not annoy me with it.

A tasteful design, based on user feedback...

= I asked my father, my mom and girlfriend about it. My parents shrugged, since they don't use a computer, my girlfriend agreed with me, but that is exactly why she's my girlfriend.

Most problems of this type can be resolved by using the appropriate patch...

= No chance of installing it without a 'pilot exam', not even sure if you can use it if you have it installed by someone else.

Can be downloaded using 'git'...

= This crap-heap is still a pre-alpha version, which is in its experimental stage to such an extent that even its own developer thought it wasn't worth compressing to a .tar.bz2 file. Most probably none of its functions will work properly, that is when you successfully install it. Good luck with that.

Provides room for using regular expressions...

= If you're not in IT, forget about this program.

After setting the appropriate permissions...

= You can't even install it without administrator permissions.

It is also required that the sh symlink points to the bash shell...

= I was too lazy to code it to be portable.

'Warning' messages shown during compilation should be ignored...

= I don't give a shit, if it just works, that's fine with me; I will take my time dicking around with optimization, type-validation, security and the aesthetics of the code in the case a more serious problem arises. I mean, if *I* get the problem. If it comes up for a user, it doesn't matter, since I included in the license that I take no responsibility whatsoever.

The program does not need many dependencies...

= Yes, only 3 other programs, that's not that many. Unfortunately, each of the three programs require a further 8-10 programs as dependencies, and they require a number of other stuff that was not installed before, and a further 47 things that you might already have, but they are not recent enough. All in all this program that 'does not need many dependencies' can only be installed and used if you replace 75% of your current system, and you also install a further 1.5 gigs of new programs you never needed before.

Previous versions of the program should be removed before installation...

= I did not care about the backward compatibility of my program, moreover, it's so primitive that it is neither able to check whether it has been installed before, nor can it prevent doing something stupid in that case.

The program was not created for beginner Linux users...

= I wrote it for myself, and I don't give a flying fuck whether anyone uses it besides me, the only reason I posted it online is for you to admire it, and the utter genius I am!

If programming languages were companies...

You give the companies that represent the programming languages the following task:

"I would like a banana!"

The responses or events:

Assembly: You will receive the best banana possible right away. Provided... Provided you have filled out the banana request form correctly. Unfortunately, the form is so complicated that you will need to undergo ten years of university study to get it right, and even then it's easy to get it wrong if you're not paying close attention. If you put even a single comma in the wrong place in one of the boxes, your application will be rejected. If you're not happy about doing this boring and difficult task, you can pay a legal expert to fill in the form, but he will charge you for an hour's work what you barely earn in six months, including overtime.

Awk: "Please clarify! Exactly HOW MANY millimeters of a banana are you asking for? Which slice?"

B: "We are sorry to inform you that our company has ceased to exist for many years! Please contact our legal successor, company C..."

Bash: "Access violation! You are not permitted to operate the banana harvesting machine because you are not a member of the banana harvester caste! Your impudent attempt has been reported to the Maharaja!"

Basic: "We apologize sir, but our courier service only delivers BASIC foodstuffs, that's why our name is BASIC. We are not prepared to satisfy such luxury demands as bananas!"

Brainfuck: "Dear Sir/Madam, we are pleased to be informed that you are considering satisfying your banana requirements through our company. Although such a request has not yet occurred in the history of our firm, our experts have studied the matter and concluded that the task can be accomplished, since respected professors have proven that with our single product, the Universal Steel Toothpick, anything can be solved with the right determination! To that end, we have sent you this toothpick. Suggested usage: carve a track for a railway line to Africa, build the railway, then travel there by train to get the bananas. If you have made your banana dream come true with our toothpick, don't forget to let us know so we can use it to promote our company..."

C: They will deliver you an excellent banana in no time. However, along with the banana you will also receive a large magic book entitled "Basic Spells of Casting Magic". It describes a number of spells that you can use to transform the banana you receive into a variety of other fruits. You are very happy about this, but then you start to frown when you read in a tiny footnote that some of these spells just happen on their own sometimes, even if you don't want them to...

C#: "Here you are sir, your banana has arrived!"

"But it's in packaging!"

"Indeed, we are a very hygienic company..."

"And how much will that cost me?"

"It's absolutely free!"

"Hmm... What a pleasant surprise! Thank you! But listen, this looks like a very strong steel box, and I don't see a keyhole or anything... How do I open it?"

"Naturally it can only be opened with the special Micro Smooth tools."

"Do you have any of those?"

"Of course!"

"May I have one for a second please, so I can open it?"

"Gladly, as soon as you pay me ten thousand dollars for it..."

C++: "We are pleased to inform you that your banana request has been received, and we have already prepared a wonderful tropical island where you and your family can relax in the pleasant jungle!

This jungle is full of friendly gorillas, each with their own banana, and they'll happily hand it over to you at any time. We enclose your plane ticket to the island, for a first class virtual flight on the Abstract Airline! However, be sure to read the 12,000 page Protocol Manual that comes with your ticket, because you must ask for the gorillas' bananas in the correct dialect, and you must follow the special Methods of eating them, because if you don't, our friendly gorillas—who enforce the island's laws—will bite your head off! This is an exceptional occurrence, of course, but they are obliged to deal with exceptions caused by ill-mannered tourists..."

Cobol: "Syntax error! Use English words & grammar only!"

Comal: "Here is your banana, Sir!"

"This isn't a banana. It's some kind of mixture of different fruits."

"Well, you're basically right about that, but admit it—there are some pieces of banana among the fruit!"

D: "We apologize, but our company is currently going through a period of 'finding its way', and we don't know if we want to deal with bananas yet. Please come back in a few years, maybe our concepts will be clearer by then..."

Forth: "Here is your banana, Sir!"

"Where? I don't see it!"

"It's *here*, at the bottom of this big stack!"

"But why did you throw it in there?"

"To avoid it being stolen by the sly hobbits!"

"Oh... But how do I get to it then?"

"Well, you have to bend down..."

"Okay, I am, but I still can't see it."

"That's because it's at the very bottom of the stack. You see, I've also covered it with all sorts of trash, because the sly hobbits are very cunning... But don't worry, the banana is still there at the very bottom, and it's yours. You just have to first clear away all the trash from above it..."

Fortran: "Here is your banana, Sir!"

"But this isn't a whole banana, it's a banana that's been sliced into millions of tiny pieces!"

"I don't understand Sir—what's the problem? After all, bananas are supposed to be sliced up..."

"But why?!"

"Well, how could it be otherwise—it's based on the fundamentals of Nature. After all, it's a widely known fact that only things that begin with the letters I,J,K,L,M,N are *integers*! The name "banana" begins with a different letter, therefore it can't be anything but a *fraction*!"

Grep: "We apologize, but our company does not grow bananas. However, if you want to send us a shipment of fruits, we will gladly pick out all the bananas for you, and then send them back to you. (We'll keep the leftover fruits for ourselves...)"

Haskell: "So, you want a banana? Okay. Then I shall now tell you an instructive parable so that you can figure out how to get hold of your beloved banana! So... Once upon a time there lived a king. One day his son looked up at him and asked, 'Daddy, I want a banana!' Then the king answered, 'So, you want a banana? Okay. Then I shall now tell you an instructive parable so that you can figure out how to get hold of your beloved banana!' So... Once upon a time there lived a king. One day his son looked up at him and asked, 'Daddy, I want a banana!' Then the king answered, 'So, you want a banana? Okay. Then I shall now tell you an instructive parable so that you can figure out how to get hold of your

beloved banana!' So... Once upon a time there lived a king. One day his son looked up at him and asked, 'Daddy, I want a banana!' Then the king answered, 'So, you want a banana? Okay. Then I shall now tell you an instructive parable so that you can figure out how to get hold of your beloved banana!' So... Once upon a time there lived a king. One day his son looked up at him and asked, 'Daddy, I want a banana!' Then the king answered, 'So, you want a banana? Okay. Then I shall now tell you an instructive parable so that you can figure out how to get hold of your beloved banana!' So... Once upon a time there lived a king. One day his son looked up at him and asked, 'Daddy, I want a banana!' Then the king answered, 'So, you want a banana? Okay. Then I shall now tell you an instructive parable...'"

Javascript: "Your wish is our command, we have already planted the banana tree that will produce your wonderful and appetizing bananas in the future! However, although we are treating it with a growth-stimulating fertilizer, the estimated date of the first harvest will be at least two years from now, at best, therefore we suggest that you eat something else for the time being, so you don't starve to death..."

Malbolge: "What?! How can *I* give *you* a *banana*?! You've gone mad! I've never dealt with bananas in my life, in fact, I've practically never done anything useful! In my entire existence I've only done four insignificant things, and they were only by accident!"

Oberon: "Here is your banana, Sir!"

"But this is just an empty banana peel...!"

"Well yes, you're basically right—you see, for economic reasons and to save production resources we remove the center, since it's unnecessary, nobody can see inside anyway..."

Objective-C: "Dear Customer, we have already fulfilled your order registered with the code 'banana'. We have built for you a complete banana-shaped anti-aircraft defense OBJECT, i.e. bunker, equipped with bloodhounds, electric barbed wire fencing, tank traps, anti-aircraft missile batteries and even some nuclear-tipped intercontinental missiles. We claim that it does indeed look like a beautiful banana, and is capable of meeting every conceivable need!"

"But listen, I don't need a bunker—I want an EDIBLE BANANA, because I'm hungry!"

"Well... in that case, perhaps you should consult a biologist or a farmer, not an OBJECT builder!"

Pascal: "We don't understand, what is it exactly that you want?! We've never even heard of such a thing. Our company was founded to solve educational problems, not to solve practical problems like growing bananas... Look, are you sure there isn't some misunderstanding here? Are you sure you put all the semicolons where they should be, and didn't put them in places they shouldn't be?!"

Peri: "Here is your banana, Sir!"

"Where?"

"Here it comes, in that big military transport vehicle!"

"What transport vehicle?"

"Well, the kind they use to transport nuclear missiles. There it comes, don't you see?"

"Oh my god! What the hell is this thing you're bringing me, and why are you bringing it?! I ordered a BANANA!"

"There's a banana there on its roof."

"That's impossible."

"Sir, don't be silly, it looks just like a banana."

"That's true, except for one thing: IT'S EIGHT FLOORS HIGH, if I'm seeing correctly!"

"So what? Be happy that you have the world's biggest banana!"

"But what do I need a banana that big for?"

"How would I know? It's not my problem anymore. If you don't want the whole thing, just use part of it!"

"But dude, a banana this big won't fit into my apartment!"

"Your apartment is outdated and obsolete—I think you should do a home extension. Or better yet, buy a new apartment that fits your beautiful new banana. Rooms are cheap nowadays, and Peri.inc can't support all sorts of outdated housing architecture, surely you can see that?!"

"But tell me, where did you get this outrageous idea to make bananas eight floors high?!"

"Don't think we're playing favorites with bananas! All our fruit is exactly eight floors high. We've standardized the size, you know, because it's much quicker to construct them, you don't need separate containers for each one and so on. The founder of Peri—may his name be praised—in his great wisdom figured out that every conceivable fruit would most certainly fit into this size, and our company has followed his hallowed specifications ever since. And why not, since we really haven't found a single type of fruit that hasn't been able to be stored in eight floors of space!"

"Okay, but listen. I want you to take back this enormous thing you call a banana, because I don't want it, and deliver me a SMALL banana, a normal-sized banana that fits in my hand! Can you do that?!"

"No problem sir, I anticipated your criticism. You see, there comes another military transport vehicle..."

"My god, what's that on top?! It doesn't even look like a banana!"

"That's true, but only because it's not a banana, it's an eight-floor high notebook. It has the address in it where you can find your tiny, hand-sized banana..."

Perl: "Syntax error. Sorry, but we cannot read this message. Please be aware that Latin characters are not fashionable in our society. If you wish to communicate with us, use the following method: Take a particularly irritable wildcat, starve it for three days to make it agitated, then yell what you want into its ear, and yank on its tail. Then take a photo of your scratched face, send it to us, and we'll read your intentions from the claw marks and cat scratches in a jiffy, because that's the only kind of script we understand!"

PHP: "Connecting to the <http://estados.federados.bananas.es> ... Gateway timeout, connection failed."

"Connecting to <http://estados.federados.bananas.com> ... Gateway timeout, connection failed."

"Connecting to <http://estados.federados.bananas.biz> ... Gateway timeout, connection failed."

"Connecting to <http://estados.federados.bananas.info> ... Gateway timeout, connection failed."

"Connecting to <http://estados.federados.bananas.org> ... Gateway timeout, connection failed."

"Connecting to <http://estados.federados.bananas.catering> ... Gateway timeout, connection failed."
"Too many errors—giving up."
"The Banana Republic website is temporarily unavailable, please try again later."

Python: "Your request for a banana has been rejected. Please honor our company in the future by taking care to use a proper layout, that is, submitting your request by either using spaces or tabs between all words, and not mixing them on the same form."

Sed: "Sorry, we are businessmen, we don't give anything away for free! Not even bananas. But if you send us some other fruit, like an apple, a melon, a plum or whatever else, we'll be happy to exchange it for a banana..."

The Aspie and the desire for freedom

I mentioned in one of the previous chapters that I have created my own programming language (in fact, not even just one type of language). Someone once asked me when it would be available for Windows (since I use Linux). I am copying my reply to that person (slightly edited), because it clearly shows the enormous longing an Aspie has when it comes to UNDERSTANDING things in general, how much an Aspie wants to see things clearly and have his own little "cave"—even if it's virtual—to arrange things as he likes; so in general, how much an Aspie longs for FREEDOM... At least in what he considers his hobby.

So the question was when my programming language would be available for Windows... My answer: If it was up to me, NEVER. Never ever! That's not to say that I would deliberately prevent it from being available on that platform, but very much that I would not lift a finger to aid this endeavor. I simply loathe Windows, not to mention its maker Microsoft, and generally EVERYTHING that is closed-source. By this I mean not only closed-source software, but also hardware that is not "open". Although there is usually a suspicious amount of interconnection between the two... I'll give you an example in a moment, which will explain why I hate Windows and everything that is not "open-source" so much.

As far as programming is concerned, my earliest experiences with it were with the Ti-58 and Ti-59 programmable pocket calculators—first my father, who was an engineer, got one, and soon I got one myself, at a huge financial cost—sacrificing all my previous hobbies, in fact, selling my beautiful stamp collection to buy one. Many of the keywords in my current programming language—named Peri—are taken from the programming language of that ancient little machine, such as *sto*, *sum*, *prd*. A few years after the Ti-59 came the C-64, which was also a great favorite of mine (from which my programming language inherits the keywords "poke" and "peek"). I wrote my own "programming language" for that as well, although it was more of a very thorough extension of Basic; In any case, not only my father but also his colleagues liked it so much that they preferred it to the then fashionable

Simon's Basic "programming language" for that machine, and the company where my father worked at the time—it was called GYGV (in Hungarian), of which the English equivalent stands for "Factory and Mechanical Engineering Company"—happily used it, that is, MY CREATION. My father brought it there, he used it, many people liked it, and whoever wanted it copied it. My father never thought of asking for money for it, but NEITHER DID I. It's not that I thought it was immoral to ask for money for my work, but I didn't really think about it because it simply never occurred to me. I was just happy that I had created it, that I was capable of making it, and I was proud of my success, especially that other people liked it and used it. At that time GYGV was not just any company in Hungary, it was a so-called "A" category company, one of the biggest, and it even took on a number of assignments abroad.

Of course, the C-64 was so dear to me because I could do EVERYTHING with it that only the hardware was capable of doing, since nothing was kept from me—they even published the ROM list for it, in books! But then the years went by and the C-64 was considered obsolete. I also had to switch to PC machines. It was a real "psychological blow" for me: I had to re-learn practically everything again. I mean, I *would* have learned it, if there were any sources I could have learned it from. But NONE EXISTED! I didn't have satisfactory documentation on what was in these machines and how they worked. Oh, yes, yes, of course... there were various books full of generalities... They were really good for learning the basics of programming in C and C++ programming languages, and even some basic assembly. I started doing this, with great enthusiasm, but I had barely reached the level of what might be called "moderately advanced" before already getting a severe slap in the face, figuratively speaking. Namely, I wanted to write some little graphical "toolchain" of my own, capable of things like "sprite management", as I had in my C-64 "era". Well, I'm proud to say that I wrote it, and it worked wonderfully! The only problem was that it could only handle 800x600/16 resolution, so it worked on a 800x600 pixel screen with 16 colors. And the reason I had a problem with that was that I soon moved to a slightly more serious machine, whose video card had the information that it could display so-called "TrueColor", and in a much higher resolution. Yes, but as for HOW, that information was not given anywhere...

The Windows operating system that I was using at the time knew. I DID NOT. If I was using Windows, the programs within it could take advantage of the capabilities of this video card, treating me to gorgeous colors and high resolution. Somehow I wasn't pleased at all, because I didn't primarily want to use the programs of OTHERS, I WANTED TO WRITE programs in this resolution. But I couldn't do that, because I had to stick to 800x600/16 resolution, since its address space fit into a so-called "64 kilobyte segment", but if I wanted higher resolution and more colors, it wouldn't have fit. I would have had to "page", i.e. enter some special values in certain registers of the video card, but WHICH values into WHAT, the manufacturer did not disclose!

When I mentioned this to a person very experienced in programming (a university lecturer), he laughed at me, saying that this kind of stuff was a SECRET—the Microsoft company knows it because they bought the information from the video card manufacturer, and I can have it too if I pay them a few million... And I was like, WTF?! Because I had PURCHASED that video card in a perfectly legal way, so I EXPECTED to be able to USE it for whatever it was intended for! But my conversation partner just laughed at my naivety that this was not the case. I could use that card by running programs that were able to take advantage of the card's possibilities. I could even write programs that took full advantage of it: there was a book on Windows programming, I could buy it and write programs on

Windows, using the system calls it provides for that purpose, and that would be fine, I could be happy with everything...

And I did buy a book on Windows programming (it was damn expensive...), but as I read it I felt increasingly disgusted. On the one hand, it was all terribly complicated, and on the other hand, I could clearly see that even if I undertook learning it all, my programs would only work until a new version of Windows came out. In any case, I was now completely at the mercy of Windows (or more precisely, the Microsoft company that makes it), but even if I accepted that, the fact remained that I DID NOT NEED 999 thousandths of the programming interface it provided! So WHY was this being forced on me?! This whole secrecy thing seemed to me to be a sneaky and despicable trick, that Micro\$oft had invented it all to force programmers (including me) to write all programs under their operating system, Window\$, and therefore, whether these programmers want to or not, become promoters of Window\$, without of course receiving any commission from its manufacturer... And there I was again, fuming with deepening anger that FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, I BOUGHT THE FUCKING VIDEO CARD!!!! I PAID for it! A LOT! I HAVE THE RIGHT to use it ANY way I want! What do you mean they don't give out the information?! And I felt a deepening nostalgia for the C-64, where no such KNOWLEDGE was hidden from me! With that I even had the ROM list for the disk drive! I never hacked it, but I COULD HAVE if I WANTED to, and that was the point! The intoxicating feeling of FREEDOM! In comparison, the PC seemed to me to be a confusing platform, completely ad-hoc, and even artificially complicated by all kinds of legal obstacles and the CONCEALMENT of Knowledge and Information! To tell the truth, even though my laptop can do much more than my old C-64 computer, has a million times more RAM and millions of colors etc., I still don't feel even a fraction of the deep emotional attachment to it that I felt for the C-64 back then.

Well, it was after this that I gave up programming for almost A WHOLE DECADE. In fact, that's the reason I didn't become a full-time programmer. Because of the goddamned fucking evil Microsoft company and their filthy closed-source crap, Windows! Because it just didn't make sense anymore. NO. No, no and no! I loved to program—but IN FREEDOM. I refused to accept being artificially HELD BACK, to be PERSECUTED with the WITHHOLDING of INFORMATION! If I couldn't get access to some area of it, I'd rather just leave it and not bother. I was ANGRY at Microsoft and the video card manufacturer for the things I described above (actually, the use of the past tense is not correct here—I am *still* angry, and not just a little...), and I felt that if I programmed on their terms, i.e. wrote programs on Windows, I would be SUBSERVIENT to them! Well, I was a much prouder person than to bow down to them.

So at that time I chose fiction writing as my main area of interest. It's true that out of necessity I did this using Windows with Word6.0, but only because I had no idea that Linux existed at the time. However, as soon as I learned of its existence from a colleague, I switched to it right away. Although this was also a difficult thing to do. Back then we didn't have the Internet, and Linux was a completely different platform from either C-64 or Windows. I had to relearn everything all over again, from scratch... And let me tell you, there was no Internet, no books, NOTHING... But I was not discouraged!

Plus, I'm a big music fanatic, and I almost always had music playing on my computer. As soon as I switched to Linux, that STOPPED. Because there was no driver for Linux for my sound card... This was also a huge blow for me. However, I persevered... I wasn't angry at Linux for this, but again at the hardware manufacturers, because those DAMNED EVIL BASTARDS don't release the necessary data

of how to program that sound card to the general public either, only to mammoth companies like Microsoft...

I was so serious about rebelling against it that although I was initially dual-booting Linux—that is, I also had Windows on my machine—on one occasion Windows "crashed" and wouldn't restart. I got really pissed off and said, "You bastard, you're even trying to screw me with this?! Well, fuck you then, okay, but FOREVER!!!" And with this exclamation I didn't even reinstall it, but went into Linux, mounted the Windows partition under it, and formatted it... And I DID NOT BOOT WINDOWS FROM THEN ON! Never again in my life... And I have NEVER regretted that decision since! In fact, I am proud of it! No, I can't really say that it was easy to quit Windows. But it was so worth it! It's like quitting drugs: the first period is very difficult, but if you overcome it with a strong will, everything will be easier and you will consider yourself a much better person.

As for the music: I had to wait a good half a year before my Linux colleague informed me that a driver had been released that would probably work for my sound card. He downloaded it, and gave it to me on a floppy... I didn't know what the hell to do with it, because in Windows I was used to clicking 'next-next-finish', but here I had to compile from source... Well, I know that many of my Readers envy me for being such a smartass, for having so much knowledge that I even have my own programming language, but there was a time when I was just a complete novice, a pathetic rookie, who didn't know even the most basic things. If you are in the same situation, dear Reader, I can reassure you that it is easy to overcome this state of affairs, all you need is perseverance and diligence. Moreover, your situation must be a million times easier than mine was, because you presumably already have the Internet...

Eventually I compiled the driver successfully somehow, but there was still no sound. Oh, of course, I still had to "load" the module... and it's a separate issue if I want it to load automatically on startup... More screwing around... I'll tell you though, I still liked it, even though I was annoyed because it was stressful. But I knew that it was my own ignorance stressing me out, and here at least I had the THEORETICAL opportunity to control the machine to the maximum. Here the knowledge was NOT locked away from me, although it made me feel like a stupid idiot because I could see the wealth of knowledge that I did NOT yet have. I couldn't see it in Windows. There I had the illusion of omniscience, which was really only an illusion...

In the end it turned out that for some reason the compiled driver module wouldn't load automatically (I'm pretty sure I screwed something up), but I solved the problem: I compiled a new kernel, which included this driver. I was terribly afraid of ruining the machine, because I didn't have the money to buy some external drive to copy my data to, so I didn't have a backup of anything... But I got away with it, and I was very proud of myself that my machine had sound again... I could listen to my music again... FREELY... I wasn't tied down by Windows, Microsoft, sneaky hardware manufacturers... I was free of them forever...

The truth is, I also see a lot of flaws in Linux, and I'm not satisfied with it at all. I think it's evolving in the wrong direction... Still, it's light years better than Windows or any other closed-source disgusting "memetic trash". I may well leave the Linux world at some point, but if I do, it's certain that whatever I move to will be an open-source platform. I can't imagine it won't be. I'm sympathetic to Minix for example, because I like the "ideology" of the microkernel, so to speak, but I'll wait until it has decent USB support and can natively handle the full address space on X86_64 architecture.

Yes, I like to "tune the system" and program at a "low" or rather "near-hardware" level. Just one example from my "adulthood": I was a programmer at a company. Some outsider software developer came to sell the company his program (written for C-64). He presented it, and printed out the results—on a dot matrix printer of course, because that's the sort of machines they had back then. I see the result, and ask him why he didn't write the text in accented letters? He starts explaining that it's because it's IMPOSSIBLE. And he lectures me in a superior tone that if I'm the programmer here, I should know that these printers have a character set burned into them, which is English, so I can't expect them to have accented characters. My boss was there, and I don't like to be humiliated like that... so I told the guy to pay attention, because he was about to see a miracle... I loaded one of the programs I had written into the computer, and what a surprise, it was able to print accented letters (too)! The guy just looked stunned... I explained to him that he, an "alleged" programmer, should know that these printers also have a so-called "graphics mode". That is, all you need to do is "tinker" with the kernel routine starting at \$FCE2 (I still remember this memory address!), which "writes a character to the primary output peripheral", and on each call it checks whether this peripheral is the printer. If so, it checks if the character to be printed is an accented character. If it is, it switches the printer to "graphics mode", sends it the bytes that define the shape of the accented character, and then switches the printer back to character mode... I even had my routine check to see if I was printing a "double-spaced" character, so that the printer would adapt to this option...

So even back then there were "programmers" who would rather tell you that something was impossible than think about it, but that mentality is much more prevalent today. And the saddest thing is that these people even have the upper hand, and they talk disdainfully about the Old Guys, saying that they are "stuck in the past", they aren't progressing, that what they know is redundant and obsolete today etc...

But that's not the point. As to the issue of the chapter title, I hope my Reader now understands the ELEMENTAL disgust and dislike I have for ANY closed-source crap—and especially the Windows world—that is, if my Reader wants my programming language, he is free to port it, I will allow it, but don't expect any help from me! I hate Windows so much that now, in my old age, I feel it's quite possible that if for some reason I could not use any open-source operating system, I would rather go back to writing my novels on paper with a pencil than put Windows on my computer again.

The evolutionary roots of Asperger syndrome – in my opinion

And so we come to the chapter which, in my opinion, is the most interesting part of the whole book. Others may, of course, think it's a completely insane theory... Anyway, let's get on with it! So the question I would like to dissect here is what causes Asperger's syndrome, in the sense of what the genetic peculiarity is that determines the different brain structure of Aspies; why these genes evolved; what the benefit is of this genetic peculiarity, and if it is not beneficial, why evolution hasn't weeded

out these "bad" genes long ago; why it is that Asperger's syndrome seems to be more common today than in the past; and, regardless of this chapter's main message, whether I have any PROOF of this, since it is well known that lines of thought can only be called scientific—at least in principle—if they can be proven, or if not, are at least refutable. In other words, can I propose experiments that—*theoretically* (i.e. if they were carried out) would prove the opinion I am about to express, and thus qualify for the label "theory", or—in the worst case—reveal that my views are untrue, unfounded?

So, let's get started! Before I say a single word about Aspies, I want to remind my Readers of my little "adventure" mentioned in a previous chapter, when I was arguing with my classmates about the fact that I believed dinosaurs were not extinct, and that today's dinosaurs are birds, that is, (some of) the dinosaurs simply evolved (or at least transformed) into birds. So the point is that I didn't think it was justified to use the verb "extinct" in relation to dinosaurs.

"What has this got to do with Aspies?" my Reader might ask. Because even if I think I was such a clever and brilliant little kid who guessed that birds were dinosaurs, as almost all experts nowadays accept, surely I'm not suggesting that Aspies are descendants of dinosaurs!

Don't worry, of course I'm not making such crazy claims! Still, Aspies do have something to do with dinosaurs... in the sense that this previous "dinosaur" debate of mine may demonstrate that I have little respect for authority, to put it mildly, even when it comes to scientific views! What I mean specifically is that it has been revealed countless times that when serious scientists have loudly claimed that a species is extinct, they have realized over time that, *oops*, it isn't in fact extinct at all... The most amazing example of this is that birds are actually dinosaurs, although there are many other less significant examples in the history of science. But I won't list them. "If you don't believe me, go look for yourself!" as they often say at the end of tales, the only difference being that it will be easy for my Readers to find this out... Too easy, because scientists are often wrong...

As for Aspies... The group of organisms they have some connection with are none other than the Neanderthals! Not in the sense that Aspies are true or even "evolved" Neanderthals, of course, but they do have some connection, as I'll explain in a moment. The point is that I never believed that—as I read in a book about cavemen some time ago—"modern man", *Homo Sapiens*, did NOT interbreed with the Neanderthals. The book (which I can't remember the title of, however I later read it in many other places, since it was obviously the generally accepted scientific view at the time) claimed that they did NOT interbreed, but I didn't believe it—not even for a moment—any more than I believed dinosaurs were extinct! In fact... to be honest, I believed in the extinction of dinosaurs far more, because initially as a very young child I believed that they were extinct, and only a few months later, when I looked at that chicken leg (my Reader will remember this incident, as I reported on it in detail in a previous chapter), I was struck by the realization that "something is wrong", the dinosaurs may not have died out but rather "transformed" into birds... So for a few months, even *I* might have believed that dinosaurs were extinct, but my delusion didn't last long. However, as for the Neanderthals not interbreeding with *Homo Sapiens*, or vice versa, I didn't believe it from the start! This may have been due to the fact that I first read about this topic long after the "dinosaur incident", and at that time the memory of the dinosaur incident was already vivid in my mind, warning me to be cautious about the fact that just because scientists make loud claims, it doesn't necessarily mean that they are true...

As there will be many more mentions of the Neanderthals in this chapter and because I find the term too long and cumbersome, allow me to introduce a convenient abbreviation, a nickname if you like, and that will be "Nandi". Because I like it... It's easy to say, and it ends in "i" like nicknames tend to, it's short, so it has numerous advantages. I'm also going to introduce an abbreviation for Homo Sapiens (hoping to make the Universe less entropic), and it will simply be HS. Now, why didn't I believe that Nandis and HS didn't interbreed? Simply because I knew my classmates, about whom I have written so much in this book, and most of the things were not particularly complimentary. Now one thing was certainly true of them: that they were HUMANS... And as humans they were cruel and savage people, in fact, from my point of view—let's not deny it—they were simply BARBARIANS. In no way was it credible to suggest that when the HS marched into Europe and met the Nandis there, they behaved any less savagely and aggressively than my classmates did with me. The reason my classmates were so outrageously cruel to me was because I behaved and spoke a bit differently than them. And it's pretty obvious that the Nandis were also quite different in appearance and speech than the HS that arrived there... Of course, the Nandis may have been savages and barbarians too, but it doesn't matter: we know that ONE side is enough for a war, that is, if one party has the intent of war...

In other words, I was sure (and still am) that there were a lot of conflicts between the Nandis and the HS. I mean, HS can't even get along peacefully with their own kind... That said, it's still possible that the Nandis didn't die out because the HS wiped them out, and for reasons to be explained later, I'm pretty sure of that myself. However, the point is not that, but that there were a lot of skirmishes between them.

Now, if armed conflicts occurred, the result would usually be that either one side won or the other side won. And it's quite likely that even back then only men were involved in these conflicts, simply because women were already weaker. So a fight broke out and one side won. Victory, if it was a big enough victory, must have meant that all or almost all the male members of the losing tribe were killed. Now, what does the winning party do in this case? Logically, if they know where the camp of the defeated tribe is, they go there and rob it... Especially if the whole fight starts with a raid on the camp... What is meant by robbery? Well, taking everything of value, of course, because that's what happens today in a war, but especially in those days when life was so hard, they would have taken everything that could make life easier, more pleasant... and that means the WOMEN as well! I'm absolutely sure about this... Back then women were simply RESOURCES, ASSETS that were capable of giving birth to the child of the MASTER, her OWNER! And a resource that makes life pleasant, because it's possible to have intercourse with her, which is a wonderful feeling for a man. And a resource that cures the skin of hunted animals, sews it into clothes, roasts the meat for the man, can be cuddled up to in the cold to warm the man's body, and even in the case of famine could be eaten by the man. In other words, she was simply a SPEAKING RESOURCE, a very valuable asset, a living work machine, a birth machine, and even a food reserve if necessary! No, at that time there was hardly any talk of feminism, or women's equality, or anything like that... whatever you want to call it. It was a BARBARIC world where the strongest was always right, without exception. And since a woman was weaker than a man, she was never right, period! So when one of the gangs won, it not only took the tools and food supplies of the defeated, but also the women who survived. And then the winners USED these women, that is, had sex with them. Even if the women didn't like it. No one asked for their opinion...

Nobody should start shouting nasty words at me about it. I'm not saying it's right to treat women like that, but it's pointless to pretend that it's not still the case in wartime. Even in Europe, rape was on a massive scale during the South Slavic war, and today as I write this it's going on in Syria, so there's less than zero chance that it wouldn't have been like this at least 40,000 years ago. It was such a barbaric world, except I believe the world is *still* just as barbaric now, nothing has changed, as you can see in my examples above...

The only kind of situation in which one can imagine this not being the fate of women is: if the two races were so drastically different in appearance that the winners considered the women of the defeated side so incredibly ugly that they did not want to mate with them. But this is utter nonsense in relation to the Nandis and the HS! No matter how many illustrations of Nandis I have seen, they have never looked **THAT** ugly that I wouldn't consider at least their younger female offspring to have been desirable! Especially if the woman is taken by some young warrior who, for whatever reason, hasn't yet had a woman from his own tribe... After all, there is a saying that goes, "all chickens are black in the dark", and even nowadays, as we know, some men are so hungry for females that they will even violate donkeys, goats or geese... You hear about such things sometimes... Well, the Nandis and the HS were more alike than, say, a goat and a man...

I'm not saying that it was necessarily the HS that always kidnapped the Nandi women. It could easily have been the other way around. I think it is most likely that sometimes one race won and on other occasions the other. So interbreeding happened in both directions. Actually, my opinion is that in the beginning, when the HS started to move into Europe, the Nandis almost always won, and the HS had very little chance. How could they have had much of a chance—they were a bit taller than the Nandis, but the Nandis were much stockier, far more muscular, and based on the pictures I think at least one and a half times as strong as a very handsome HS. In my opinion, an average adult Nandi could easily beat any of our current bodybuilding champions from the present era any day! Besides, when this conflict started, the Nandis had already been living in cold Europe for at least 200,000 years, and they were much better adapted to that environment... So initially they were sure to have always won. Then why did they die out? Well, there must have been a very unfortunate climate change... I mean, the ice age temporarily got so extremely cold that it was probably too much for them. It doesn't matter what caused the extreme cold, geologists will find out. It could have been caused by a slight wobble in the Earth's axis; it could have been from an unexpected volcanic eruption (Iceland is not that far away, and a large volcanic eruption can easily produce enough dust and sulfur dioxide to set temperatures back for years, but you don't necessarily need Iceland for that, because Italy, which is much closer, also has plenty of volcanoes...); there could be a cosmic reason for it, for example a small meteor (not that it would necessarily hit Europe)... So whatever it was, something could have made the climate worse. Now, this could have been a big problem for the Nandis, because they were already living in a very inhospitable region, so I'm pretty sure their population was small. An inhospitable landscape simply cannot support a large population. The Nandis were therefore much stronger than the HS, but they did not live in large numbers, just a few large families here and there—perhaps twenty or thirty, or even a hundred in some cases—and these families were separated by large uninhabited areas. That is to say, if for **ANY REASON** their population suddenly dwindled, it would be very difficult for them to multiply again afterwards.

And I think that's exactly what happened to them... There was a big deterioration in the climate, the Nandis were depopulated... and before they could multiply again, when the climate became a bit more hospitable, they had no more LIVING SPACE, because the empty spaces were filled by the HS hordes coming in from the south. It is likely that they were unaffected or at least much less severely affected by the climate change, simply because they originally lived further south, in a warmer climate.

So suddenly the population of Europe was transformed into being "filled up" with mostly HS, with a few "hidden" Nandi clusters here and there. As the Nandis were then in a multiple minority, their fate couldn't have been anything other than slow extinction... OR ASSIMILATION. The latter was certainly facilitated by the fact that the HS groups that "occupied" the former territories of the Nandi could no longer be "pure-blooded" HS themselves. By now they had been fighting with each other for thousands of years on the southern and eastern edges of Europe; sometimes one race won, sometimes another, and the winner must have stolen a few women from the defeated group... so they interbred! Obviously the further north a so-called HS horde lived, the more it hybridized with the Nandis; and the further south a Nandi horde lived, the more it hybridized with the HS. And when the climate deteriorated, obviously those who lived furthest north fared the worst, and thus hybridized the least or not at all: the "true", "pure-blooded" Nandis! They were virtually all extinct.

So the basic premise of my theory is that Europe was ultimately populated NOT by Homo Sapiens, but by a HYBRID POPULATION. Therefore Europeans are not "true" HS, but a MIXED RACE (a species, if you will), and I even predict that although they are a hybrid, they got most of their genes from HS. This last claim is due to the fact that when climate change occurred, it killed off many more of the "true" Nandis living in the north than those living further south, that is, genes introduced by HS from the south became more prevalent in the population. But that doesn't mean that the ancient population of Europe wasn't also a HYBRID! They must have contained a considerable number of genes from the Nandi genome... How many? Of course, I'm not a genetics expert, so don't expect me to tell you that with any certainty! I can, however, have my own opinion on this matter... which is that I have no idea how much Nandi heritage we have, but it's sure to be A LOT! By "a lot" I mean that the majority—i.e. more than fifty percent of the genes in any person of the population—are definitely HS genes, and in this sense it is legitimate to consider ourselves (also) HS. Yet there may still be A LOT of the Nandi genes in Europeans, and I dare to state this so emphatically because I believe there is a lot of evidence for it!

Let's start with the most striking feature: their WHITE SKIN. A few years ago I read a fairly modern genetics book, the author of which—who is world-famous, by the way—claimed that it was not known where white skin color evolved, although according to him it was possible that it evolved in Africa... Well, excuse me for being blunt, but with all due respect to the author, in my eyes this statement is pure nonsense... What good is white skin—in Africa?! Well, of course, it's possible that such a mutant could evolve there... But I don't think it would spread. If white skin were so advantageous in the tropics, every Negro would be white today. But we know that this is not the case... White skin is beneficial in the north, so that the body can produce enough vitamin D even with the low degree of sunlight. Now, I think it is simply that all the members of the HS were originally black-skinned—pure black, not even dark brown, but BLACK. The Nandis were white... and when hybridization occurred, the hybrid species inherited these "white" genes from the Nandis, simply because it was advantageous in the cold climate of Europe. Obviously, there may have been hybrids

that did not become white despite their hybridism, but these died out quickly because their skin color was less (or not at all) advantageous in the given environmental conditions.

It follows from my theory that the current human population of the world can be divided into groups that contain varying degrees of Nandi genes. It is likely that not all Nandi genes are present in all of these groups; some inherited this, and some inherited that. What is almost certain, however, is that the Nandi genes are virtually absent in the remaining groups of people in Africa! That is, among the indigenous people. The same is true, I believe, of Australia, and even of the ancient Dravidian population of India. Their ancestors could not have interbred with the Nandis, simply because there were no Nandi groups living in the areas where they live now (or where their ancestors lived), which are typically tropical or at least subtropical. And indeed—the skin of these HS groups I have listed really is pure black...

It is also well-known that it's easy to tell the difference between a native African and a European at first glance, even if you ignore the color of their skin. For example, Europeans have straight hair, rather than curly. Why is that? It's because curly hair evaporates sweat better, which is very beneficial in the tropics since it cools the body, but would be harmful in the cold North... I think we also inherited this from the Nandis. And even the tendency to obesity... It's a well-known fact that, although obesity is a threat to the entire population of the world and is now almost an epidemic, it is the "white man" race that is most at risk. Well, it's no coincidence: the Nandis rarely had the good fortune to eat well, so the smartest thing they could do was, if a lucky day did come their way, to gobble up as much of the prey as they could (they didn't know how to preserve it), that is, store the nutrients in the form of fat on their own bodies for a less fortunate day. Although this feature was to some extent beneficial in the tropics, it was more important in the North, where life was harsher. In fact, there the fat layer even helped to keep the body's internal organs and muscles warm... So that's why the "white man" has a much greater urge to gorge himself, to stuff himself full of all sorts of things, and to develop a huge layer of fat on his belly and other parts of his body...

I will also mention one piece of psychological evidence, albeit rather fearfully. I know in advance that it is very difficult—even impossible—to write this section without exposing myself to accusations of "being a racist" and the like... but the danger of this is especially great if I start to explore psychological issues. However, I'm going to do it anyway, whatever happens...

So: for centuries the stereotype has existed that the more southern Europe's population is, the more it is characterized by a cheerfulness, a lively temperament, a wish to live only for today, a love of fun and the "high life", an emotionality that can produce some really spectacular outbursts... There are also such frequently used phrases as "crazy Spaniard" (implying that a Spanish man is capable of anything crazy in his love passion), that a French woman (at least if she comes from the south of France) is a "passionate lover" (as opposed to the supposedly cold English or German women), that Italians are also very romantic and good lovers, that Greeks don't really like to work and would rather just play music and dance... In contrast, the English are aloof, measured, polite but very cold, have no sense of humor—or if they do it is very acerbic; the same is true of the Germans (some say even more true of the Germans...); moreover, it is quite common to think that "northern" women, although self-respecting and "feminist", do not remain virgins for long, but when they get married they are much more faithful than "southern" women (Italians or French for example), who are easily persuaded to cheat on their partners.

Of course, I'm NOT saying that everything I have described above is all true! Far be it from me to declare such a thing! I have only collected stereotypes and rumors that are quite common in certain circles. Obviously it would be a huge mistake to generalize them to all members of these nations. Still, there is a saying that "there's no smoke without fire". In other words, while these rumors are certainly not literally true in their extreme form, as with most legends they have a tiny kernel of truth in them, which has been discerned by the wisdom of the people over the centuries; and this is obviously that the people living further north have preserved (on average) more of the Nandi genes than the people living further south, and that this has an impact on certain character traits. What might these traits be? This is an important question, because here we are beginning to get back to and even closer to the subject of our book, Asperger's syndrome...

I mentioned that the Nandi population lived in small families, separated by great distances. They lived like that because it was impossible for them to live any other way, given the state of technological development (lack of development...) of the time, in that harsh ice-age landscape. The HS, on the other hand, lived in much larger groups, the reason for this being of course that the region from which he came allowed for the survival of larger hordes. And this very much determined the psychological attitudes of the two subspecies... What could be the reason for this difference? Well, primarily that the HS were better adapted to tolerate the presence of more of their own kind... So what I mean is, the HS brain was able to handle multiple social connections at the same time (in parallel) efficiently, over a long time period, without getting "exhausted". It could keep track of how to behave in relation to any of its multiple fellow humans; what that other human liked and disliked, what they expected of it, where it stood in the dominance hierarchy, even what the other person's name was, and so on... Furthermore, within a larger population interpersonal relationships in general are inherently far more complex, which means that more information about each individual needs to be kept in the brain, i.e. the increase in population exponentially (not linearly) increases the brain capacity needed to manage this complex system of relationships effectively.

The ancestors of the HS lived this way for tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of years before interbreeding, they adapted to it. The Nandis did not. Does it perhaps follow that the Nandis had a less developed social life/way of thinking? Does it perhaps follow that they were true primitive barbarians, savages, bestial humans, who could be described as emotionless compared to the HS?

Well, the answer to that is a resounding NO! No, it does not follow! Obviously they were not adapted to sustaining large crowds of people in the same way as the HS were, because in their world there were no large crowds, or if in extreme cases many Nandis were grouped together in one place, it was only a short-lived ephemeral phenomenon. On the other hand, they tended to live in large families. The word "large", of course, refers to a Stone Age scale—a few dozen people at most. It is likely that they were aware of more distant and thus more extended kinship, but they did not have to put up with their relatives for long, because they lived much further away from them and did not meet with them every day. In fact, rarely even once a month... So they lived in communities where everyone knew everyone else, and knew everyone else WELL, so there was a real FAMILY atmosphere within the community; everyone was aware of every little thing about each other—their skills, their strengths that could benefit them and the community, but also their weaknesses and what they were not good at; everyone knew what the other liked and disliked, and it was easy to remember all this because there were not that many people, and even the composition of this group of people did not suddenly change,

since they lived side by side for years, and there was plenty of time to become acquainted with each other, because generally a new member was added to the group only by birth. Very rarely someone from the outside may have joined, typically a woman who had been "married" from another group, or worse, kidnapped. In such cases it was the newcomer's job to adjust, which must have been stressful for this newcomer, but not a big problem for the others, since for them there was only one extra person to be identified. Moreover, the newcomer's job was made easier by the fact that the person who was her "husband" was not only her master, but also her support, and it was not in the husband's interest to mistreat his wife, because he knew that he would have a hard time finding another woman if he beat her to death, since the population was small and women were a valuable and rare resource... It follows, however, that among the Nandis, women had to become more accustomed to adapting. How interesting, as it is also the case that the incidence of Asperger's is less frequent among women than men, and if it does occur, it is less severe... in other words, for the current population as a whole, women are generally better adapted to new (social) situations. Why am I writing this, and what does it have to do with the Nandis? This will soon be revealed...

So the Nandis developed a "mental constitution" that was only able to "tolerate" a small number of people, but at least they could really get to know this small number, were able to adapt to these few really well, and PERMANENTLY! You could say that they did not wish to be around a large number of their fellow human beings, and therefore it may have seemed that they were unfriendly, but this was really just a facade, because the truth is that instead of many superficial relationships, they desired fewer yet at the same time *deeper* emotional relationships. I could also say that in terms of social relationships, the Nandis preferred quality to quantity... I don't think this is an inferior tendency to the version favored by the HS...

The atmosphere in the Nandis' groups was therefore friendly and familiar. Of course, they also had a "herd chief", but only in the sense in which the head of the family is nowadays regarded in more traditional families. They obeyed him because he had authority, because he deserved it, because they knew him completely along with all his past actions, so I don't think he often had to enforce obedience by the mere use of his physical strength. He was the boss, yes, but he was also a friend and family. In other words, formal rank—or any kind of "official authority"—must have played a very small role in Nandi groups, if any.

HS groups may have been quite different. The much larger population meant that there was no way for everyone to get to know everyone else thoroughly, let alone equally well. It's true that they had to know who everyone was, but only to a necessary minimum extent. Even though the HS brain was adapted to have interpersonal contact with more people and was far more efficient at it than the Nandi brain, there was still a limit, that is, the need for a large number of personal interactions inevitably resulted in a large number of relationships becoming superficial. However, as the HS also required deeper emotional connections at times, small clans were created within the larger population, like small families, whose members were more strongly attached to each other than to the rest of the horde. This inevitably created the possibility of disunity and discord within the large community, which increased the tendency to aggression. Despite this, however, these small clans were still not comparable to the Nandi families, because the emotional attachment within them was still weaker than within the Nandi families. To illustrate this, one example is enough: a HS man was certainly never able to bond with his wife—at least in the long term—as much as a Nandi man, simply because for him a wife, although of

great value, was of lesser value than for a Nandi man. The HS man knew that if he killed his wife, or if she was eaten by a wild animal, or died for any other reason, he could obtain a new wife far more easily, because the community he lived in was much more populous than the Nandi community.

So to sum up, I think the Nandis were "selected", and over hundreds of thousands of years (i.e. to a very serious extent), to have few but very long-lasting emotional relationships, and they found it difficult to tolerate the presence of large numbers of strangers, to make friends with strangers, and had no need for contact with people outside the family in general. In contrast, HS family relationships were much more superficial, but they were able to better manage far more of these superficial relationships in parallel than Nandis. Moreover, in addition to the relationships that could be considered "family", they were able to handle a large number of other, even more superficial relationships with relatively tolerable efficiency.

The HS may have also invented "official authority". Since it was not possible to know even the chief among the large population as well as it was among the Nandis, and since the chief was not necessarily related to all members of the HS horde (or if he was related to them, it was only very distantly), he was forced to maintain his rule by aggressive means, and many of the members of the horde obeyed him not out of conviction but because they feared him, not because they "respected" him, so to speak—since they recognized that he deserved respect as a person—but because they respected only the POSITION he held. And even that was only in the best of cases...

I can take it even further. The HS could also have invented a multitude of symbols such as coats of arms, flags etc., or more precisely, the stone-age equivalents of these modern symbols, which could be considered their predecessors. For example, the fact that members of the tribe use the same face painting, and sometimes instead of painting, all sorts of cuts and tattoos on the skin... All this was invented so that two HS who lived far apart and thus couldn't really remember each other (even though they should, because in a sense they belong to the same tribe) were easily able to recognize that they "belong together".

Which community structure is better and more appropriate? I admit that I like the Nandi "style" far better... but that's just my personal opinion, or not so much my opinion as my "individual taste", and I'm not claiming that it's better in some abstract sense. Since both formations evolved because THERE and THEN, under those living conditions, they were exactly what was most beneficial to that population! So in their own way each of them is advantageous and good, that is, they could be, but whether they really are advantageous depends on the conditions under which the selected group of people are placed...

But then what happened was that the two populations partially interbred. The "original" Nandis were all extinct; the "original" HS remained in significant numbers: they were the modern-day indigenous Africans, the Dravidians, and the Australian natives. The rest of the human race is a "hybrid"... Of course, they are hybridized to varying degrees, and even hybridization does not mean that the same Nandi genes are present in a hybrid population. Not least because the Nandis lived within a large area, all over Eurasia, and therefore their species were certainly not exactly the same.

In my opinion, most of the Nandi genes are found in the northern European population, i.e. in the inhabitants of what is now Scandinavia, as well as in the Scots, Irish and English. Of course, by

"English" I also mean the present-day white-skinned population of the USA, since they themselves are mostly Anglo-Saxon, because their ancestors came from England. In the same sense, the white-skinned populations of Canada, Australia and New Zealand can also be considered "English". In my opinion, the Nandi gene is significant (though perhaps slightly less than in the former group) in the Germanic population, i.e. essentially the Germans (including the inhabitants of Austria and Switzerland), as well as the Dutch, Belgians and Danes. I suppose that the degree of hybridization of Poles, Ukrainians, Russians, i.e. the Slavic population in general, is about the same as theirs. (If any of my Readers should try to infer from my words that those with Nandi genes are "superior", then—even if this statement were true—it does not follow that Germans are superior to Slavs...) Furthermore, I would guess that there may be a particularly high (but not more than Scandinavian) amount of Nandi genes in the Finno-Ugric population, because their ancestors came from Siberia, or at least the Ural region, and therefore their ancestors may have interbred a little less with HS groups. However, if my view is correct, then the Hungarians must have LESS Nandi genes within this Finno-Ugric population, because they have historically interbred with more "southern" nations, and thus are more "saturated" with HS genes. However, they still have quite a lot of Nandi genes.

As for the nations of the Far East: the formula is simple. It is OBVIOUS that they are white-skinned, and I deeply believe that white skin is always a sign that one's distant ancestor was Nandi. That is, the Chinese, Japanese, Mongols, Eskimos and Tibetans also possess some amount of Nandi genes, as do the Native Americans, and while it is irresponsible of me to make quantitative estimates, I would venture to say that the amount of Nandi genes is about the same as for the Finno-Ugric nations—but: it is NOT THE SAME Nandi genes that are present in that amount! I base this view simply on their appearance. If you take an unbiased look at a Far Eastern person, at least if they are South Chinese or Indo-Chinese (it is fairly well known that the population of China can be divided into two distinct races—North Chinese and South Chinese, who are strikingly different in appearance), it is immediately apparent that they are quite similar in body shape and facial form to certain indigenous populations in Africa, except that their skin is not black! Of course, it is a known fact that Africa is the most anthropologically diverse continent in the world, which is only natural, given that Africa is the cradle of Humanity. In other words, there are many groups of people in Africa that cannot be mistaken for being Far Eastern, regardless of their skin color. I'm just saying, there are plenty of groups that are spitting images of "orientals", only with black skin...

This suggests that although Far Easterners may have acquired Nandi genes, these may have been different genes from those that Europeans largely inherited, since it is clear that the genes that give rise to body shape and facial features, for example, were not inherited from the Nandis, or at most only to a minimal extent.

The situation in India is interesting. Obviously the Dravidians (the original natives of India) living there are almost indistinguishable from the truest African blacks, so they must contain virtually zero Nandi genes. The Dravidians may also have their origins in Africa, because when the group of people there eventually made their way to Australia along the coast of Africa (with some navigation between islands), the Dravidians were the ones who "were left behind" along the way, not going on to Australia. And as the Nandis had never lived in India, they could not have interbred with them.

Later, however, the ancestors of the modern Hindus invaded India from the northwest, displacing the Dravidians from most of the subcontinent. This 'displacement' effectively meant their

extermination. This conquest, by the way, did not happen all that long ago in historical terms, in that it was already in our written era, and in my opinion the great battle scenes of the great Hindu epic, the Mahabharata, which are described in great detail, date from this period: they clearly show the fearsome professionalism and cruelty with which this conquering campaign was conducted... The Hindus were already a mixed population, that is, they may have contained a relatively significant proportion of Nandi genes, which is why I assume that they, the conquerors of India, were themselves WHITE-SKINNED. Nowadays, of course, they are no longer white, but even now they are not black, even though given India's climate, black skin would clearly be preferable. Yet they are not black... it seems that the change in skin color due to climate alone (if there is no genetic mixing and we can only rely on random mutations) is not as rapid as some would like to believe: the Indian population of tropical Central America and South America is clear proof of this! They have lived there for an enormously long time, and still show no sign of their skin turning black. They are white because their ancestors were white... However, Hindus are brown. I think this can only be explained by the fact that although their ancestors were also white when they came to India, they were thoroughly interbred with the Dravidians. I suppose by this I mean, with the Dravidian FEMALES. That is, there were the usual events of war: a big battle, the (Dravidian) enemy was defeated, the Dravidian men fought in the battle, so they died, and those who didn't die were executed afterwards... but the women, well, they were pretty and therefore were not killed because they were "good for something"... And we know what for—as bedfellows and slaves.

In other words, I think that today's Hindus do contain Nandi genes, but actually less than today's Finno-Ugric nations, even the Hungarians, simply because they are secondarily re-mixed with a pure HS race, the Dravidians.

Since it doesn't matter to me anyway, because I know in advance that I will be subject to incredible attacks for what I have already said, I will try to answer the question that must be of interest to many: what is my opinion about Arabs and Jews? Well, according to my (strictly subjective) estimation, they may contain roughly as many Nandi genes as the aforementioned Hindus, or even the Italians (especially those living in southern Italy). However, my view applies only to the so-called "Sephardic" Jews, i.e. those who have always lived in the Middle East, in the region that is now Israel, or in Yemen, or at least in the southern part of Europe—Italy and Spain. I believe that even they have more Nandi genes than Arabs, because for religious reasons Jews have always tried to avoid marrying outside of Judaism. Of course, their efforts never led to absolute "perfection", and there has always been intermarriage within their circles, especially when it came to irreligious Jews. Still, in general I think this meant that when Judaism as a nation was established, there was less danger of it being "diluted", and thus less chance of HS genes being introduced into its gene pool by further interbreeding.

The other main group of Jews, the Ashkenazi Jews, originally lived (after an emigration) in the northern regions of Europe and Russia (and Ukraine), which obviously meant that although they too tried to avoid interbreeding, if they did, they were more likely to "acquire" new Nandi genes by doing so. Not incidentally, these two groups of Jews are already quite visually different in many ways, proving my point. In fact, it is in many cases impossible to distinguish an Ashkenazi Jew from a European with no Jewish ancestry at all. This is also true of me, for I hereby put it in writing that—although I did not know this about myself until I was an adult—I do have an abundance of Jewish "blood" in me. It's true that none of my "direct" ancestors were "real" Jews, but there were plenty of

them among my more distant ancestors, so in the end—even though it is difficult to calculate such things, and my "historical sources" are also uncertain in that they have been passed down to me by word of mouth as a kind of "family legend"—I can say with certainty that I am at least 15% Jewish! As for my other ancestors, they are mostly German, so despite the fact that my mother tongue is Hungarian, and I don't know a lick of Hebrew and only a few words of German, genetically I'd do well to be considered even 10 percent Hungarian. Of course, this is of little significance because there is no such thing as a "Hungarian", if by "Hungarian" we mean "pure-blooded Hungarian", since the Hungarians were a very mixed population even 500 years ago...

So I have plenty of Jewish "genes" in me, and family tradition says that during the Second World War my ancestors even had to get a certificate from the Nazis stating that they had no Jewish blood in them. Somehow they got this certificate and avoided deportation, even though everyone around them knew that they had a lot of Jewish "blood"... It may be assumed that their good fortune was greatly facilitated by the fact that, even if they were predominantly Jewish, they were not religious. That is, not only did they not believe in Christianity, but not in Judaism either, despite being formally baptized. So there is no doubt that I must have a lot of Jewish genes, although on the surface I'm no different from an "average" (Central) European. I'm quite certain this is true, because if I had been conspicuously different in regards to my appearance, my "beloved" classmates would have immediately used it to make fun of me. BUT THEY NEVER DID... Nobody ever told me that I was Jewish. It simply never occurred to anyone—neither child nor adult!

So at least the Ashkenazi Jews, in my opinion, may contain roughly as many Nandi genes today as, say, the Hungarians.

Let's summarize all this in a little table, showing how much Nandi genetic heritage there might be in each of today's populations, relative to each other. This is a subjective opinion on my part, and even if it is true, it is only true to the extent that it is a very rough STATISTICAL AVERAGE, and there could be HUGE individual differences even within a single population. So here is the list, with the proportion of Nandi genes decreasing from top to bottom:

* Anglo-Saxons; Icelanders; Northern European nations: Swedish, Norwegians, Danish, Scottish, Irish; the "whites" i.e. "non-Indian" and non "African-American" populations of the USA and Canada; the "white-skinned" people of Australia and New Zealand.
* Nations that are considered Germanic: Germans, Swiss, Austrians; people from the Netherlands, Belgium and Northern France; the Slavic nations: Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks. In principle the Bulgarians would also be included, but I don't think they belong here because they, along with the Southern Slavs, have already interbred significantly with the nations of the South; Finno-Ugric nations (including the Finns themselves) but excluding Hungarians; Mongols.
* Hungarians; Ashkenazi Jews; Southern Slavs; people of Northern Italy; Macedonians; Tibetans.
* Northern Chinese; all the Indians of the American continent, no matter which Indian nation they belong to; Japanese; Eskimos.
* Southern Chinese; Indochinese; Oceanic peoples; people of southern Italy; Spanish; Sephardic Jews; Arabs; Hindus; Greeks; Native Egyptians (they were not Negroes, but had much more in common with the white race!)

* African natives; Dravidians; Australian Aborigines; basically anyone with black skin. This group should theoretically have precisely 0% Nandi genes.

Now, this has gone on long enough, and my Reader must be impatient, because what does this have to do with Asperger's syndrome?!

Well, as I alluded to above, even if there are quantitatively the same amount of Nandi genes in some groups of people, it is not certain that this amount comes from exactly the same Nandi genes; on the other hand, there can be huge individual differences... This could result in the fact that if two people have children, and each of the parents have a significant number of Nandi genes, then their offspring will have a particularly high number of genes that "produce" a "Nandi"! This is, of course, more likely if the parents are close relatives, or at least not too distant relatives—as was the situation in my case...

In such a case, the offspring will be even more genetically similar to an ancestral Nandi than is considered average for that population. Now, in my opinion—to put it very briefly, although I will elaborate on it in detail after writing this sentence—it is THIS that is the true essence of Asperger's syndrome!

PLEASE NOTE that this does NOT mean the Nandis all had Asperger's! No, I don't think that at all. An Aspie is NOT, in my eyes, someone who could be considered some sort of "born-again Neanderthal"! This is not true, because even the most extreme Aspie has plenty of HS genes, so much so that even in his case the vast majority of his genes are sure to be true HS genes... Nevertheless, it is to be expected that both in appearance and mentality, an Aspie will be much more like a Nandi than a "normal" neurotypical person, let alone an African native (again, even if we disregard skin color!). This is even true for me: perhaps it is needless to say that my skin is white, after all, the skin of most neurotypical people is white (at least in Europe, where I come from). But it is well known, for example, that the Nandis had the rather striking feature of a distinctive crease prominent above the eye. There is no denying that this sometimes made them look rather savage, even ape-like... although I'm afraid the extent of this was not nearly as great as the creators of many of these pictures imagined in their illustrations. Well, as far as I'm concerned, at first glance I don't have any such bone crevices above my eyes, but I DO actually have some, even if they're small, because I can feel it through the skin in that area. They really aren't very big, perhaps only 1 or 2 millimeters in length, and it's just on the outside of my eyes. That being said, I DO have them, whereas most neurotypical people DON'T, as far as I know.

I can ultimately say that as I get older, and thus the soft features of youth disappear from my appearance, I look more and more like what people imagine to be a caveman (i.e. "savage" in appearance). Not truly savage... yet I quite obviously resemble a Nandi more than an old African Negro. The only exception is that I have a huge "negro" lower lip... I don't think any Nandi would have had such big lips, because it's not advantageous in cold climates. But to be fair, in my case it is only the appearance of having a big lower lip. It only SEEMS big because of what I mentioned in one of the very first chapters of this book, that my lower jaw is very large and protruding. So when it comes down to it, I really have a normal size lower lip, it's just that the distorted bone structure of my jaw makes it look like that lip is big. Also, my head is generally quite big. It was even big as a baby—so big that I couldn't get out of my mother, and I mean that literally, the proof being that I was born by cesarean section...

What does this have to do with Nandis? Well, it has to do with the fact that the brain capacity of a Nandi was greater than that of a HS. Because the average brain mass of a modern human is about 1450 cm³, while theirs was 1500 cm³! In fact, it was even bigger. And NOT because their body mass was any greater. It's true that they were stronger than the HS, but they were also shorter. Overall, they couldn't have weighed much more. But their brains were bigger... That's not something prehistorians who praise the HS race to the skies boast about... It's a shame that an extinct ancestor was apparently smarter than modern humans, at least there's a good chance that's true, because they had bigger brains...

If you think about it, it's obvious that the Nandis had to be SMARTER than the HS. And that's simply because they ate mostly meat, that is, they were essentially predators, and the harder it is for a species to hunt for prey, the smarter they have to be at finding and killing the scarcely available prey! And this is not the first time I have written that in the tropics where the HS evolved, there were many more prey animals. So yes, I dare say that on average an ancient HS was dumber than a Nandi...

Naturally the differences were small. And even these small differences were compensated for by the fact that the dumber HS lived in larger groups, and whether dumb or not, the larger population could easily produce the occasional exceptionally clever specimen who solved any problems that arose, and thus advanced technical progress. The Nandis, on the other hand, had to be individually smarter, because they were often on their own; that is, if a vital problem arose and they could not solve it by themselves, it was left unsolved, and they may have even died as a result: there were no other fellow members of his species nearby in whose brain he could trust to solve it.

I know in advance that when reading these lines, many of my Readers will be appalled, saying "See, the author of the book himself admits that this is BASED ON RACISM, because he previously explained that the Nandi gene cannot be present in black-skinned races, and now he's saying that those who are "original" Homo Sapiens are dumber than the Neanderthals, so he must be implying that those who have Nandi genes are smarter, therefore the author is claiming that black-skinned people are more stupid..."

Well, let's discuss this topic, because we really must. What am I claiming and what am I not claiming? First of all, I firmly reject the notion that I am promoting racism! It's simply impossible for me to do so, because I don't believe that the HS and the Nandis were separate races or species... that's an IMPOSSIBILITY! Because the concept of a species is currently defined as populations that are not able to procreate with each other, or if they can, they do so only in captivity and not under natural conditions. But the most basic central core of all my reflections so far is *precisely* that the population of the Nandis and HS has become HYBRIDIZED! In other words, they very much interbred and produced offspring capable of reproduction: the vast majority of the world's human population today is descended from these hybrids, they are the result of this interbreeding!!!! So there is no racism involved here!

Although I myself also sometimes use the word "species" for Nandis and HS, I declare that I do so only because of the brevity of the word, for reasons of convenience, i.e. out of negligence. It would be more correct to speak of subspecies, although even then only very cautiously. "Breed" would be the most appropriate word, perhaps. In any case, as far as I'm concerned, I think that the HS and the Nandis belonged to the SAME species, and therefore all human beings today belong to the SAME species, regardless of whether they have even a single Nandi gene, or many of them!

Well okay, but I said above that the Nandis were smarter...

Yes, smarter, but... how can I put this... just smarter *in a certain sense*. As INDIVIDUALS, it is possible (and I consider it probable) that they were smarter than other INDIVIDUALS of the HS race (breed...), (although this may only be true statistically because the individual differences could have been quite big even then). At the same time, it was in vain that the poor Nandi was smarter as an individual if the groups of HS individuals simply compensated for this with a MORE DEVELOPED ORGANIZATION.

What do I mean here? Well, what I mentioned earlier: the HS were much better adapted to organizing the relatively peaceful coexistence of large populations, that is, although the Nandis were able to cooperate between individuals within their own small group—and there is little doubt that they could do this far more effectively than the HS within SMALL groups—they could not cooperate effectively in LARGE groups, and quite possibly not at all. They were not accustomed to it, had not been selected for it over the millennia... For cooperation in small groups, things like friendship, love, reasoning, consideration of others, empathy, in-depth knowledge of the other party, and reason-based persuasion are sufficient...

Aren't these sorts of things wonderful? Aren't they attractive? Well of course! I'd argue that living in a Nandi family must have been a very pleasant experience (apart from the abysmal level of technology, of course). Yet as pleasant and attractive as the above concepts are, just look around in our PRESENT world—no major organization is built on such things, is it?! Not even big corporations, or churches, or states, countries, empires, not even the military, NOTHING involving even a moderately populous group of people: none of them use the above mentioned concepts as a cohesive force! In the army, soldiers are sent into battle not by persuasion to their reason (not to mention any love...), but by COMMAND. By intimidation. Practically the same is true—if not in such a crude form—of all state apparatuses: there is no love, not even persuasion, but LAW. Bureaucracy. A system of authority and command. Of course, within a state of law we can talk about things like law and duty, and it is not brute force but money that rules, yet all this is completely impersonal. It completely lacks even the germ of the intimate bond that is typical, or at least MAY be typical, within a small family—or at least a family of manageable size (i.e. a few dozen people at most). So a small group can be held together by a delicate web of personal bonds. A large one, unfortunately, can NOT.

The Nandis were able to be as smart as they were individually, and live as loving and congenial a family life as they liked within their own community. The HS had developed a way of organizing the management and cooperation of a more populous mass of people much larger than the size of a family, and that was enough to make it irrelevant if the vast majority of the population was even slightly less intelligent than the Nandis. It didn't matter. For if the population of the HS was large enough, there would still be one or two individuals among them who rivaled or even surpassed the intelligence of an average Nandi. In a large population, there are often extremely clever but also extremely stupid individuals. The latter must have been killed or ostracized, or at best considered court fools... the occasional geniuses, on the other hand, became chieftains or shamans, or their advisers...

None of this was enough for the HS to subjugate the Nandis, the final victory required a deterioration of climate. But the point is that in a way, the HS and the Nandis can be considered equally intelligent, just not in the same areas... The Nandis could obviously be more efficient at any task that could basically be done by a single person, or at least a small group of people. Such a task could be

anything that requires sitting in one place for a long time, paying attention to the small details of something... And Aspies are also very good at these things!

On the other hand, a Nandi would probably have been completely incapable of organizing the administration of a large country, and would have failed as a ruler very quickly. Even if a Nandi had been so very clever that at that time he had managed to create plans in his head for a spaceship with a complete warp-hyperdrive, or a dam because he had invented electricity—it would still all have been IN VAIN, because the IMPLEMENTATION and REALIZATION of these wonderful designs would have required the building of a complete civilization, that is, the mobilization of huge masses of people for a single purpose, i.e. the ORGANIZATION of large masses of people. And since in large masses of people there are inevitably those who disagree with the goal, it is also necessary to develop a coercive organization that "persuades" those who oppose it... or to put it bluntly, that subdues, intimidates, breaks, and even destroys... And the Nandis were incapable of these things.

Now, when the two races interbred, I claim that an extremely SUCCESSFUL and EFFICIENT hybridization occurred. It is a well-known phenomenon in biology circles called the "heterosis effect": if two populations of a species live/evolve separately over a long time, as soon as they come into contact with each other again and interbreed, the resulting hybrids have strikingly superior abilities. This is often used nowadays in chicken breeding, for example. It is also well known, for example, that the daughters of Pacific islanders are generally considered to be the most beautiful women in the world. And for good reason, since they are truly beautiful. I would argue that this is also due to the heterosis effect: historians have shown that those islands were populated in several waves, each time by new immigrants from relatively distant parts of the world.

This is what happened when the HS and Nandis merged. A hybrid race was created, which for the sake of brevity I might as well call "European", although I'm afraid I'll be accused of racism again... but what can I say, they really did interbreed, and it happened precisely in Europe, at least primarily... And this hybrid race had extremely advantageous abilities. They were obviously superior to the original Nandis, because if they hadn't been, the Nandis wouldn't have died out... But they also outperformed the "original" HS population who had *not* died out, although not as spectacularly.

What is the evidence for this? Well, whether it sounds racist or not I don't give a damn, I will declare it anyway, because it is a fact in my eyes that today's technically highly developed civilization is basically the work of the WHITE MAN—that is, the population with an abundance of Nandi genes! For quite some time now, historians have been puzzling over the mystery of Mankind's "civilization leap". That is to say, there were humans living on Earth for a long, long time, yet they did not evolve beyond the primitive Stone Age level... and then, several tens of thousands of years ago, great civilizations suddenly appeared out of nowhere... And they don't know why! *They* don't know, but *I* do, and I'll tell you the answer: because that's when hybridization occurred!

Let's look at it for a moment. What do we usually consider the cradle of civilization? Generally the following: Egypt, Mesopotamia, ancient Greece and Rome, India, and eastern China. (No, not even Japan—originally all the major knowledge came to Japan from China, I'm sorry to say...) Well, all of these places are where, at the time of the emergence of these civilizations, groups of people with Nandi genes were already living... But I'm not saying that these ancient cultures were formed by Nandis! Not at all! The Nandis did not develop a major civilization any more than the representatives of the "pure"

HS race. The Nandis would have been incapable of doing so, because a great civilization requires a LARGE POPULATION to be controlled, but the Nandis did not develop the science and ability for this...

However, something else was needed for civilization, and we can call this, albeit sloppily and generously, SCIENTIFIC THINKING. Which is impossible without the ability to PAY ATTENTION TO DETAIL and ANALYTICAL THINKING! Moreover, even this alone is not enough: there must also be a large number of individuals in the population who do not wish to participate in everyday "social life", who don't put the pleasures of the moment above all else, but prefer to withdraw into solitude, to think, to ponder... And although it obviously takes a lot for someone to have such a tendency, one thing is certain: only a person who can thrive with much less "social contact" than average can become one. And if anything can give a newborn baby this ability the easiest, it's having a lot of Nandi genes...

That is, neither the HS nor the Nandis alone have been able to develop any significant civilization. But once they hybridized, they *were* able to do so... And lo and behold, all these areas—as I said before—are exactly the places on Earth where this hybrid race has emerged! Egypt may be considered an exception because it is in Africa, but anyone who knows Egypt also knows that the natives of this region were typically white or at least brownish.

Of course, the logical thing would have been for Europe itself to become the most conspicuous cradle of civilization, right? After all, that's where the most hybrid hybrids lived...

Hold on: THAT'S EXACTLY HOW IT HAPPENED...

Ancient formations, usually regarded as cradles of civilization, obviously developed where they did because good natural conditions were essential for primitive technology, i.e. relatively stable and warm weather, and some large rivers with abundant fresh water, which is necessary for agriculture. This is true of all ancient 'great civilizations'. However, as soon as they reached a certain minimum technical level, they immediately LOST THE LEADERSHIP, and Europe raced past them in the field of technology, where the terrain was far less suitable for agriculture than in the sub-tropical zone around the great rivers, but where the Nandi genetic heritage was much more abundant, which seems to be beneficial for scientific thinking... By that time Humanity already knew enough to support a relatively large human population in the harsher European climate, and the scientific and technological achievements were taken over by the European population here, populous states were formed, and in no time technology and science were further developed, but to such an extent that it is undeniable that the EUROPEAN MAN from here is now the RULER OF THE WORLD!

Because let's just look at which countries are the world's leading powers today? Well, predominantly the USA (and its "little brother", Canada). Who inhabits it? Mostly white people, whose ancestry is in Europe. There are also a small number of Native Americans, but ultimately they too have Nandi genes, albeit fewer. That is, they can also be considered "white people" based on their skin color, even if they are not European. Then there's Australia and New Zealand. These are also rich countries, and the EUROPEAN MAN is dominant in them too, because that's where their ancestors come from. And although many accuse the USA of its current wealth only being a consequence of the enslavement of Negroes, interestingly Australia and New Zealand are also enviably rich countries, despite slavery never being a feature of them. Europe itself is a very attractive area for many immigrants, and no one denies that Europe is mostly populated by Europeans... China is currently much poorer than Europe,

but it is still a great power in its own way, and is developing quite nicely. Who lives there? Well, er... not Europeans, that's true, but a people who, as I mentioned, have a significant amount of Nandi genes... And they're not black-skinned either. The same is true of the people of Russia, and even more so, because I tend to think of them as essentially European.

It would be hard to name any other country other than these a "world power". Maybe in the "runners-up" category could be India, but as I have written, the Hindus who dominate there originally came from the Northwest, so it is suspicious that they are essentially European themselves (as evidenced by their language, since they belong to the Indo-European language family). The present civilization is therefore all the work of groups of people who contain Nandi genes, and mostly the result of people with a definite EUROPEAN ORIGIN. In the case of China alone, the "bar is being raised", but at the moment China is not even at the cutting edge of technology, it's more of a "copycat". But even in their case it is true that they are "white-skinned" and therefore have Nandi genes.

And now that I've provided AMPLE grounds for being declared some kind of latter-day promoter of racism, let's get into the question: does this make "blacks" an inferior, dumber ethnic group? Let's be honest—can we then be justified in regarding them as some kind of atavistic barbarians left over from the ancient past, who are only fit for inferior tasks, if any?! I have to explore this issue too, because I know in advance that many people might like to use my book to support this kind of reasoning. And it's better if I get ahead of such (mis)interpretations!

It would seem to follow logically from my above discussion, as a sort of "working hypothesis", that my view that those with more Nandi genes are generally better suited to "scientific" work, or at least work that requires analytical thinking. An extreme form of this is being an Aspie... A person with more of these genes is more likely to make some great scientific discovery. Of course, being an Aspie in itself is not enough to make such a discovery, many other conditions are required, but having more Nandi genes is certainly an advantage. A good example is Albert Einstein: there can be no doubt that he was an Aspie! It is very likely that Newton was an Aspie as well, but many other scientific celebrities are either known for certain to be Aspies, or are at least very likely to be Aspies. As far as I know, they are all "European" in the sense described above... or at least white... (including Jews, don't forget!)

But does it follow that "blacks" are worthless?! NOT AT ALL! Not even that they are unnecessary! And this is very easy to see. Let's consider the extreme form of this, that the World is not only solely filled with "white" people, but they are all so abundantly endowed with Nandi genes that all of them are Aspies! And therefore (white-skinned) geniuses, of course. Would the world be a good place then? Would it be better than it is today?! Would it be nice to live in a world where everyone is such an outstanding GENIUS?!

NOT AT ALL! In fact, I dare say that the world would be a HORRIBLE place! Virtually all work would cease, except for the most complex fundamental research and perhaps certain arts, but that would only continue as long as the stock accumulated from the predecessors of the Aspie population lasted (until they died out). Since an Aspie not only doesn't like to bother with strictly physical jobs (such as gardening, hoeing, weeding, house painting, potato peeling, plowing, animal husbandry, road building, toilet cleaning etc.), but even with jobs that are organizational and managerial in nature! Of course he doesn't like them, when he doesn't know how to do them...

So if the World was made up entirely of Aspies, it would be doomed to total destruction within years, or at least decades! The Aspies would just sit around, enjoying the fact that no one would bother them while they developed their latest programming language or operating system on their laptops; they might compose some beautiful new music, write some exciting novel series, or even invent some physical theory that would dethrone relativity. They might even invent the warp-hyperdrive!

That's all great stuff, right?

Well of course, but unfortunately it doesn't occur to anyone that the laptop only works as long as there is electricity in the outlet... And that requires someone to maintain the hydroelectric plant... Or feed the thermal power plant... The starship would be invented in vain—no one would be able to build it, because that would also require workers, as well as to make the special steels and other such things... and besides, the whole population would starve to death long before it was even finished...

So for an Aspie group to be effective in harnessing its talents, and even to STAY ALIVE (let alone enjoy doing so...), you inevitably need people who are NOT Aspies! To do all the things that an Aspie doesn't like doing, and doesn't even know how to do... and these tasks are not only those that might be called "menial", but also includes the whole MANAGEMENT process. Therefore not just the "servile" jobs, but also the jobs of manager, secretary, salesman, broker, manager, president, MP, anything related to politics, and even the ancient profession of KING...

An Aspie is quite simply UNSUITABLE for these tasks. Not even for being a king... I'm very sorry to have to write this because I've formed a (condescending) opinion of myself as well, but that's the way it is. Of course, even the truest Aspie could be an excellent king... for a few days or weeks. In fact, he would be a PERFECT king, because his genetically encoded honesty would make him unselfish and try to treat everyone fairly. But his efforts would be in vain, because "treating everyone fairly" is something so complicated that it requires much more than merely good intentions...

So for a few weeks or perhaps even months an Aspie would make a great king, but only as long as he has the resources accumulated by his predecessors, which he can distribute on an "equitable basis"... However, as soon as something really serious arises, something that requires him to resolve the conflicting interests between groups of people or create a compromise, the poor thing would immediately go under...

Now, everything I said above about Aspies is also true for non-Aspies, as long as they are neurotypical people who have some of the Nandi genes. There is obviously a HUGE difference between a true Aspie and someone who only has some Nandi genes. But the difference is not qualitative, just quantitative. An Aspie cannot organize and control large groups of people because they have a lot of Nandi genes, genes that make it preferable to live in small, intimate groups of friends. The more of these genes a person has, the less suitable they will be to live among large crowds, to fit in with many people, to manage many human relationships effectively and successfully at the same time... which implies that the more Nandi genes they have, the less suitable they are to be a leader, manager, politician, president, or king! They may, I repeat, MAY be better suited to being a scientist, and in that sense "smarter". However, can it be said that a person who is less suited to being a scientist, but more suited to being (let's say) a PRESIDENT, is dumber?!

Obviously NOT...

Nor can such a person be said to be unnecessary, atavistic, backward and primitive... Such a person is DIFFERENT. They are suited to something else... But that's fine, if he gets a suitable position in a suitable place...

It can hardly be doubted that Barack Obama, who recently served two terms as President of the United States, did not have many Nandi genes, even based on the color of his skin. He is likely to have very few such genes, if any at all. But I would by no means say that he is stupid, that he's a primitive barbarian! In fact, he was quite obviously one of the most successful presidents of the USA. He was even extremely popular. And one of the finest orators of our time. Whereas, if everything I have speculated about in this book so far is true, he is indeed one of the most "pure-blooded" HS, with barely a trace of Nandi genes! It's true that I'm not aware of any scientific discovery made about him. But is that a problem?! He was still a very useful member of society, and not in some "servile" or "menial" capacity either: as far as I know, before he became president he was a lawyer... typically a role that requires a great talent for DEALING WITH PEOPLE!

So in sharp contrast to what I know many people will try to explain from my book, that Negroes are stupid, primitive and useless, I say: ON THE CONTRARY! The world would be a better place if we would just acknowledge that NOT EVERYONE IS EQUAL, in the sense that not everyone has the same talents. Those who have a lot of Nandi genes will obviously be more successful in research and scientific careers, so it would be fair to give them an advantage in these areas (by way of "positive discrimination"). It would be quite easy to recognize them, because they are distinguished first and foremost by their white skin, and even more so by their "European" appearance. I'm not saying that all Europeans are excellent scientists... but the chances are higher, statistically speaking.

On the other hand, it is the BLACKS who should be "positively discriminated" in LEADERSHIP POSITIONS. So I'm not at all saying that I think blacks should only be cleaning toilets or doing menial tasks... Well, obviously there may be stupid people among them who are suited to that sort of work, but the same goes for stupid white people too. However, I deeply believe—again, only STATISTICALLY—that a "black" guy would be more suited to being a president, king, pastor, politician, ambassador, CEO, stockbroker, hotel manager or general manager than a WHITE guy.

This is particularly true for Aspies. Aspies should not be allowed anywhere near these professions, even as much as the average "white" person. On the contrary, they should be doing their utmost to create/research in their field of interest, because there is a good chance they will come up with something brilliant and mind-blowing! Even if this isn't true in 99 out of 100 cases, the one that does will amply reward the effort invested in the other 99...

At the beginning of this chapter I raised the question of why the prevalence of Asperger's syndrome seems to be higher today than in the past. My answer is simply that these days the interbreeding of humans on Earth has accelerated, thanks to better transport facilities, so there is a greater chance of Nandi genes that were previously distant from each other 'meeting' in a newborn baby.

I still have to answer the absolutely legitimate question of whether I can propose any studies or experiments that can be used to verify and/or falsify my theory. Of course I can! In fact, experiments

that can easily be carried out by today's science, and therefore be solved at the current level of scientific development.

What needs to be tested? I'll tell you. First of all, we need to compare the genome of current Mankind with the Neanderthal one. That is, what can be reconstructed from their surviving bones. Even if the complete Nandi genome cannot be constructed due to all the difficulties arising in doing so, I am absolutely certain that at least their mitochondrial DNA can be reconstructed, because mitochondria are in great abundance in all cells, that is, they are more prone to survival by sheer quantity than the DNA of the cell nucleus. Now, this mitochondrial DNA can be quite telling for my theory, because if you remember, I claim that the interbreeding between the Nandis and the HS primarily took place on the part of WOMEN, because they were less likely to be killed during the fights. So they more often became captives who were then mated with: as wives or sex slaves. (Admittedly, at the time the distinction between these two concepts was rather blurred, if there was any distinction at all...) And the mitochondrial DNA is exactly what is passed down the MATERNAL LINE... In other words, present Mankind—at least the part generally referred to as "white people"—may contain a particularly large amount of Nandi genes, precisely with regards to this MITOCHONDRIAL DNA!

Now that this has been investigated and it is proven that the HS did interbreed with the Nandis, and that the "white man" as such is basically a hybrid race, then a more specific investigation can be done, essentially a statistical study: because if my theory has at least an iota of grounding in reality, it should turn out that people who are Aspies have statistically (i.e. on average) MORE genes that can be considered Nandi heritage according to the aforementioned study. However, this test must be done with care, because it is by no means certain that even if two Aspies contain a lot of Nandi genes, they are THE SAME Nandi genes!

It is also possible to examine whether, among the genes responsible for skin color, those that are responsible for the development of "white color" are identical to those found at the corresponding gene loci in the Nandi gene chains, or at least whether they can be considered not too distant relatives of those genes. After all, I claim that white skin is Nandi heritage!

It is also possible to test, without the need for an expensive genetic laboratory, whether my suspicion that Asperger's syndrome is significantly less common among people who obviously cannot be considered "white" is true. That is, those who look "black" to the eye, or Dravidian, or Australian Aboriginal. Theoretically, if I am right and Asperger's syndrome is a consequence of the accumulation of Nandi genes, Asperger's syndrome should not occur in these groups at all. It couldn't be possible, since they don't have any Nandi genes! Yet here again we must be very careful, because even if this theory of mine is true and there aren't any people with Asperger's syndrome among them, it is still possible for there to be a number of "ordinary" autistic people in their group, who are wrongly diagnosed as having Asperger's syndrome. So this study should be done with great care so as not to deceive ourselves. It is also important to remember that no matter how pure black someone may look, it is still possible that they have a Nandi gene here and there, which was introduced into their ancestors' genome several generations earlier when they were intimate with an explorer from Europe, or worse, when their ancestors were raped by a slave hunter... However, I strongly believe that even with these distorting factors, a statistical analysis would show that there are far fewer Aspies among "blacks" than there are among other races.

I also predict that a similar—slightly weaker—correlation will be observed in the tendency to depression. The obvious reason for people with Asperger's being more prone to depression is because of their failures, lack of appreciation, lack of success and humiliation. So in populations with fewer Aspies, the de facto incidence of depression is lower (although by no means zero, because depression can also be caused by many other things, such as consuming a lot of foods rich in carbohydrates).

Psychological experiments can also be carried out to find out which race is more resistant to the harms of prolonged isolation; that is, when someone is locked up somewhere alone. In my opinion, this experiment should not be conducted in a simulated prison environment, but by locking the person up all alone in a very comfortable apartment; one without windows, but containing a comfortable bathroom, kitchen, a huge library, lots of digital media like movies, music, etc... therefore he can have all the fun he wants, even in luxury! But there is to be absolutely no REAL, PERSONAL company at all. Not a single person! And, of course, they would not have a phone or internet access. He could have a computer, and it would be an advantage if he did have one, because then he could create something if he wanted (write programs, or novels), but the computer must not be connected to the Internet. He should be told that he can stay there as long as he wants, and he is free to leave the apartment at any time. But the moment he does, the experiment will be over for him... which would be a problem for him, because until he leaves his "solitary confinement", a sum of 100 USD will be put into his bank account every day... And it should be observed which race of people can last longer in there. Of course, one experiment isn't really an experiment: there can be huge individual differences within a race. However, I claim that if this experiment were conducted with, say, 100 randomly selected "white" and "black" people, it would show that "whites" can withstand isolation significantly better than non-whites. Not because of skin color, of course, but because they have more Nandi genes, which makes them not a big fan of company anyway. And a detailed genetic analysis of the test subjects should specifically show that those with more Nandi genes are more resistant to isolation. As for the people who specifically have Asperger syndrome, well... come on, no one can defeat them in these kinds of isolation experiments! As for me, I dare say I would financially ruin the people funding such an experiment, because even after five full years I wouldn't want to leave my comfortable little cell, in fact I would probably stay there until I retire (or even longer...). An Aspie like me, for example, would be perfectly suited to being put in a space rocket and launched into space to do some long-term research, say, to orbit Saturn, and then return with it in 30 years... Nothing would happen to the guy, he wouldn't go crazy. Others would, but not him. Not if he's an Aspie. Especially if he still had enough contact with Humanity to be able to radio them occasionally, even if he had to wait hours for a reply.

I would also argue that the more Nandi genes someone has, the more they are suited to the now increasingly popular "ketogenic diet", or even the "carnivore diet", which in essence is a diet where you can only eat foods of animal origin. And veganism is even more inappropriate for them... The reason is obvious: the Nandis lived much further north than the ancestors of the HS race, so they are more accustomed to eating meat and less accustomed to eating plants...

So there you go, I have given plenty of experiments that can be done to verify and/or disprove my theory. Go ahead and do them!

Evidence to support my theory so far

I started writing this book quite a long time ago. I interrupted its creation from time to time, so it was slow and took me a long time to finish. Fortunately this procrastination has had the advantage of providing me with some evidence. Most importantly, it now seems to be accepted among geneticists that Homo Sapiens interbred with Neanderthals. This provides excellent support for my views; although I admit it is not conclusive evidence.

In any case, fortunately I was in a financial position where I could afford a genetic test. I had it done by a company called 23andme.com, and I will publish the most important results here. First of all, let's look at the data in the "Ancestry composition" section: It shows that genetically I am 32% "Eastern European", and that this 32% is most likely to be Polish, followed by Czech, and only after that "Hungarian"... In other words, although my native tongue is Hungarian, there probably isn't a single gene in me that can truly be called "Hungarian", especially if we narrow down the term "Hungarian" to the concept of the former Hungarian occupying forces (and their successors) who were brought to the Carpathian Basin by their ancient leader, Árpád... But even if these 32 percent were all "Hungarian" genes, it is still less than one third of my gene pool. Hmm, no wonder I could never really integrate into Hungarian "culture", into that semi-feudal system of customs, where people were never judged—and given jobs, positions and opportunities—on the basis of their talent, diligence or any real individual values, but on the basis of who was "related" to whom, or rather who was their "vassal", their "liege"...

Now, let's look further. I am 18.4% German... And 18.6 percent Ashkenazi Jewish. (So the family oral tradition was true: I do have Jewish "blood" in me, and almost as much German!)

- I have 2.6 % British and Irish genes, and there is also 1.1% Scandinavian.
- In a broader sense (i.e. more precise localization is impossible) I have 8.8% Northern European genes.
- 1.7% of my genes are Greek and Balkan, and 1.3% are Italian. Southern European in a broader sense: 1.6%.
- European in a broader sense: 12.1%.
- Northwest Asian: 0.6%. Anatolian: 0.6%.
- Central Asian: 0.3%. Northwest Asian in the broad sense: 0.2%.
- "Native American": 0.2%. This was the most surprising thing for me, that I had any in me at all, even if only a little! I suppose one of my ancestors from whom I inherited the British/Irish genes may have crossed the "Great Water Beyond" and had a romance with a pretty Indian girl... From which a descendant was born, who later returned to Europe (or one of his descendants)... Or my British/Irish ancestor himself returned to Europe, and brought with him the Indian girl so dear to his heart, then had a child on this continent...
- Finally, unidentifiable genes: 0.5%.

As for the haplo-groups:

- maternal haplogroup: U5b2b
- paternal haplogroup: R-L1029

Now, I have only noted all this for the sake of order and scientific accuracy, so let's move on to what is more important in terms of the subject of my book—the issue of Nandi genes!

First of all, the most important fact is that I DO HAVE Nandi genes! That is, one of my direct ancestors was a Neanderthal, roughly my two thousandth "ancestor", and from him I inherited certain traits. Some more, others less. It's really exciting to think about!

According to the genetic test, I have 263 Nandi genes—at least for now... Is that a lot, or not many? In all honesty, I would be much happier if I had far more Nandi genes. Because this amount means that—at the time of writing these lines—roughly 67% of the clients of the genetic company 23andme have MORE Neanderthal genes than I do!

At first glance, all this seems to suggest that my theory about the link between Nandi genes and Asperger syndrome has failed miserably! Fortunately, however, this is not the case at all... My theory would have failed if it had turned out that I had ZERO Nandi genes. Because the central core of my theory is that anyone who is an Aspie MUST have SOME Nandi genes. How much, we don't know yet. But there must be SOME! So if I had no Nandi genes at all in me, even though I am an Aspie: that would equate to a total refutation of my theory! But that's not the case, is it? I do indeed have Nandi genes, and 263 doesn't seem like a small number... Well, it's true that I'm not 23andme's record holder in this respect, and I admit that I'm really not happy about that. I'd have been PROUD if I had more of the Nandi genetic heritage... But the point is, I do have those genes!

Of course, don't forget that even with this amount I am still only in the lower third of the scale. Some of my Readers might suspect that something is not quite right, because it is hard to believe that about 60% of the clients who use 23andme's services (i.e. all those who have more Nandi genes than me) would all be Aspies!

Naturally I have no intention of saying such a thing! Let's take a closer look at what's going on here...

First of all, genetic testing as a service available to the general public only really started recently, and is still a relatively expensive affair—it cost me \$200, which, let's face it, not many people can afford, but even for those who can, it's still a rather mind-boggling amount of money, even in the US, to spend on that, rather than something else. In other words, who will use this service for the most part? Those who are:

1. richer than average *and/or*
2. much more interested than the average person in the natural sciences in general (since genetics is also a natural science).

Now, it has to be admitted that people who are richer than average, are, if not without exception, mostly members of the WHITE RACES. This may be considered an injustice, but it is still true. In other words, they are EUROPEAN people, or people living in the USA and Canada (or in other, predominantly Anglo-Saxon countries), whose ancestors—at least the majority of them—were European. These people naturally have a lot more Nandi genes than the world average... In such a field,

where the vast majority of participants can be assumed to have Nandi genes, it's not such a bad result that I only reached 33%...

More importantly, as I said before, those taking the test can be reasonably believed (due to its high cost) to be more interested in science in general than the "average person". And my book is precisely about the fact that an interest in science, a spirit of inquiry, is primarily characteristic of those who are richly endowed with Nandi genes... This means that now, in the early days of genetic testing, people who HAVE these genes, and lots of them, will be over-represented in the percentage of people who use this service. With that in mind, this is more a POSITIVE PROOF of my theory than a refutation!

One more thing. Let's see what the geneticists say about my Nandi heritage in detail:

Markers tested for Neanderthal ancestry: 1436

Markers where you have two Neanderthal variants: 19 x 2

Markers where you have one Neanderthal variant: 225

Your Neanderthal Variant Total: 263

So according to the above, there are 19 sites on my gene chain where EVERY allele is Nandi. So in these places I am fully Nandi! This is important because I imagine that for certain traits, Nandi genes are not dominant. That is, their effects are only manifested if all the alleles are Nandi. However, if there is a gene from Homo Sapiens in one place, then the effect of the HS gene will show up there. I don't know if this is the case, but at least it's not inconceivable, because we know that there are many genes that work in this way. Therefore this needs further research. However, if what I described above is the case, it would not matter how many Nandi genes are present in total, but how many "markers" there are where all "variants" are due to Nandi ancestry.

So then the 1436 "markers" means that there could be a maximum of 2872 Nandi genes in anyone—at least from those that 23andme is even looking at in this respect. Of these possible 2872, no one has all of them—the person from 23andme's clients who has the most, has less than 400. And from the point of view of being an Aspie, it is more than likely that the presence of *certain* Nandi genes is far more important than the presence of other Nandi genes.

We can analyze the issue even further. As described above, 23andme analyzed only 1436 "markers" (whatever that word means) for "Nandianness". Which is no coincidence, because the gene pool of Neanderthals is unfortunately not yet fully mapped (given that it has not survived in sufficiently good quality over the long period of time that has passed). Specifically, this is what they have written in this regard:

It can't tell you the precise portion of your genome that comes from Neanderthals or about genetic variants of Neanderthal origin not tested by 23andMe.

That is, later, with the help of more advanced technology, or if better preserved Nandi bones are found (perhaps a fully preserved Nandi carcass frozen in ice... how fortuitous would that be!), it may be

possible to do a much more thorough comparison with the Nandi gene pool, and it may turn out that I have many more Nandi genes (and not just me, but many others as well, especially Aspies).

In any case, the results so far seem to me to PROVE rather than disprove my theory, although I again admit that I cannot claim to have actually proved it, in the strict mathematical sense of the word.

And one more thing. The company 23andme wrote that the Nandi genes in me make up less than 4 percent of my gene chain. Now if that's true, that means they make up MORE THAN 3 PERCENT of my gene chain... Which means that the amount of Nandi genes I have is a BIG deal! It's considered a lot because I've read in several places that the gene pool of human species and apes differ from each other by less than 2%... In fact, there have been sources of information that this difference is only one and a half percent or less. ***But even if we stick to the 2 percent estimate, the fact remains that those with that many Nandi genes, like me, are MORE DIFFERENT genetically from "ordinary" humans with no Nandi genes at all than those "ordinary" humans are from apes!***

This is NOT to say that they are monkeys or inferior or anything like that. However, it is clear from this that this amount of Nandi genes is a VERY SIGNIFICANT quantity, that is, it could easily be the cause of Asperger's syndrome or whatever else!

In conclusion, I will reveal the big secret: on the cover, I intended the image to be a silhouette of a Neanderthal caveman's head, with the date 1965.03.26 (my date of birth) in the binary numeral system.

End