

September 6th

Dear John,

This has been a happy day - for no particular reason and with such general force that even the serious parts of your letter and the parts that belong to an antagonistic philosophy take the color of my mood. Tomorrow we go to Pocono for a brief six days. Perhaps that is the ground of my happiness - or the Clarinet Concerto warbling up the stair well.

I am very glad that you did not answer my letter point by point. Thank you for such self-restraint. Or was it weariness? I think I agree with most of what you have written. There are minor differences which are probably only a matter of semantics, of definitions, but for the moment not worth arguing. There is also a major difference; I cannot accept your philosophy of inevitability. I am not even sure I understand it.

As to whether I believe what I wrote of you and your ideas: I think I said that I was aware of confusion and innaccuracy - even more than my philosophy, which makes no fetish of arithmetical logic, would tolerate as a complete summary. Do you remember what Hans Castorp said of the climate of his mountain: that to get used to it for him was to get used to not getting used to it.

In that way, I believe I understand you and other people. I am trying to get used to not understanding. I used to think I understood; because I ^{thought that I} understood, I expected behavior to conform to the patterns of the personality I had constructed in my mind's eye. And I was mistaken and got hurt. The pain was not the suffering which purities because it came from an error of judgment which I could not acknowledge; I was proud of my understanding and judgment - an expert spectator of life. So I invent hypotheses to explain your actions. I believe my hypotheses to a limited extent, but they will be thrown overboard if a better one comes along, and they will be very little ^{recognized} trusted as guides for my own responses. There is a difference between the image in the mind and the reality; Thus I write to you as "John"; you answer as "Jochen" - a small symbol of the discrepancy. What I understand of you is less a matter of hypotheses than some chance discovery which is forgotten almost as soon as it is found. Perhaps it could be called an intuition. No, I cannot express it any more than I understand and can measure the difference. Yet I believe that it is possible to understand better than I do and still not expect. Oh dear, what confusion! How illogical! I keep thinking of that sentence in your article: "He gave him of the flexibility of a woman's mind." What relationship is there between this confusion, lack of logic, and flexibility?

Much has happened since I wrote to you last. Most of it was only busyness, but there was some beauty and anxiety too. We brought John Sebastian, as well as Peter, home and stopped for two days at Great Barrington en route. Enge disquieted me by urging political issues. My uneasiness and helplessness made me wonder if I had changed at all in the last three years. I stopped in New York to pick up my thesis, see a friend and her new baby, and say goodbye to my Aunt and her Russian husband. They are sailing for "home" on the 23rd or thereabouts. When we parted we both said: "I hope I will see you again" alluding to my possible return to the city before the 23rd. But we meant something else too.

This house is very busy. Janet and Teri are here, and the Marshes are so energetic that they seem to be more than two people. There is much joking, loud music, and moving about. ~~about~~ ^{the} people seem to have a sense of the drama and they play well. Janet is quiet, a little difficult. I find I must still be very careful lest I say or do what I regret even before it is complete. Patterns of behavior continue so long after one perceives their stupidity and inadequacy. Now I know my reactions to be wrong, meaningless and unsatisfactory to me as well as everyone else. Yet I do not feel the attraction to draw me into another role - in fact, I do not feel the attraction which could make me forget the old role and surprise me when I find myself in the new one. Sometimes I wonder if my

reaction to her is not simply a response to a suspicion that she is profoundly bored by me. How can one accept a person, when one feels rejected? Intellectually, I know that is possible; emotionally, I cannot conceive of it.

Pocono

Thursday, September 8th

The morning is sunless, after, and perhaps before, the rain. We have breakfasted late and gaily, ~~with~~ ^{- then} a conversation about the nature of sacraments and the identity of pride and original sin. Papa read a part of something he had been reading, something from Douglas Steere - having first interrogated Tommy Todd on the personality of Mr. Steere. Tommy doesn't like him; he is "too good", "too anxious to please". It was a good passage and related to your argument about thankfulness except that here the argument was concerned with gift and sacrifice - that food, which is necessary to life, ~~represents~~ is the product of death and that giving is also death and sacrifice. The end of your argument is particularly true - that thankfulness should be to God and not to the agent. Yet I do not agree with all the stages of your argument - in particular that love is, of its nature, mutual. But perhaps I mean something more general than you do by the term.

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There was argument and discussion after Papa had read the passage. I went upstairs, ostensibly to straighten my room, but really because I sometimes find myself so embarrassed by discussions about religion. And I am ~~embarrassed~~^{annoyed} by my embarrassment which is common to our age and culture. I have been in groups where sex and the mechanics of psychology were discussed without embarrassment or bravado - intelligent groups of intelligent people. And yet when one changed the subject from the Kinsey Report to the Bible, conversation languished and it was difficult to meet the eye of the one or two who tried not to be lame and embarrassed. Is our silence the expression of the sense of lack? It is not simply the expression of reserve.

We have also talked about the people who own this camp and who have so kindly, and with such simple graciousness, lent it to us. Do you remember ~~the~~ Mr. Potts, the presiding elder of the Meeting. He has a moustache and speaks in abrupt and candid monosyllables and yet with formality. The house is beautiful, comfortable and simple. We seem to know and like them very much better for the night which we have spent here. I tell myself sternly that happiness is more than,

and really not related to things, but I am so delighted by the casement windows which I can "throw open", the grass-colored Indian print bedspreads and the bark-colored curtains. I would like always to feel the pleasant agitation of the wonder and pleasure of this visible and tangible beauty.

Last night I finished "The Magic Mountain". Janet had already read two-thirds of it and is now trying to finish. So I cannot go back over it and try to put together my fragmentary concepts. I cannot talk about it now but when I see you again — will that be soon? Will you come up two or three days before you go back with Alex to Cambridge? This is not simply my individual ^{invitation} ~~request~~. Papa has been asking whether "anyone has written to thank John for the wire recorder and when is he coming?"

Come, if you can, on the 21st or 22nd. Mother and I have discussed where we will put you. It will probably not be elegant, but no one will be uncomfortable.

Until then,

Margaret