

THE TRACTATUS OF MORDECHAI PEKARSKY

A fiction by Michael Picardie

A CAVE IN BELARUS

It was the summer of 1939. They had somewhere to take refuge, a safe place which would be a shelter for them. Mordechai, who was 9 years old, wondered if God was really out there in the world. Could God be in the same world as Hitler and Stalin? If He was anywhere He was in a person's "heart". To him "heart" meant not only the thing he could feel in his chest, pumping the blood round his body, keeping him alive.... It had something to do with *spirit... or soul...* His father told him the ancient Greek for soul was *psyche* – the same word as for *butterfly...* Which metamorphosed from a chrysalis. His father Eliezer sympathised with the boy's religious doubts. He believed in metamorphosis through reincarnation, as in Hinduism. The *psyche* mated and laid eggs which became caterpillars which became chrysalises.... And so on.... Plato and the ancients believed in the development of the soul, in Hebrew, the *neshama*, or *ruakh*. Eliezer was a farmer but loved philosophy. When Mordechai was fifteen years older he called it God immanent; the essence of the human being who is able to visualise the "God" in him influencing the free will apparently granted to even monsters of inhumanity like Stalin and Beria who would order the killing of tens of thousands of Polish, Jewish, Ukrainian officers and intellectuals at Katyn and in prisons in Russia itself in 1940. Religion had to become political. What Hitler was doing was unspeakable. He was killing – had killed God. The *Einsatzgruppen* led by the Nazi SS and their local supporters would shoot hundreds of thousands of Jews in pits in Poland and the Baltic states.

When they were still at home in the farmhouse near Milejczyc, he had overheard a family conference making plans to find a refuge from Hitler's imminent onslaught on Poland. All the Oshrys were there: Rabbi Oshry, his mother's father, was there, and his grandmother Rosa Oshry, a trained midwife originally from Vienna, his aunts, uncles and his other grandparents, the Pekarskys. His paternal grandfather Pekarsky was the Count Lubliniewski's farm manager – his bailiff. Count Lubliniewski was, untypically for his class, sympathetic to the Jews. He had friends in high places and was, unusually, married to a Jewish woman by whom he had a child. Joseph Pekarsky's wife Feyga was a trained teacher from Warsaw. Their contribution to the community counted for less now, in 1939, than the mega-politics of central and eastern Europe.

There was a non-aggression Nazi-Soviet pact over Poland, the real unstated motive being to give both sides a chance to re-arm and at the same time for Russia to "liquidate" the Polish gentry and officer class, and for the Germans and their local Nazi allies to start the wholesale massacre of the Jews. The pact was signed by Molotov and Von Ribbentrop in 1939 and lasted into 1940. Then the Nazis would strike eastwards and the Russian forces, being temporarily weaker would have to withdraw. One knew that Hitler was already killing Jews in Germany. His plan was for a "Jew-free" world dominated by Germany.

Mordechai's father, Eliezer Pekarsky, a liberal Jew, was educated in Germany before Hitler became chancellor in 1933. Eliezer had seen slaughter in 1918 when he was 19 in the last year of the Great War when he served in the German army's ambulance corps. He had seen men whose faces were blown away, limbs shattered and then amputated. Outside the army infirmary there were literally piles of arms and legs that had to be burnt.

Mordechai couldn't be told this as a small child. It only emerged later when Eliezer gave his son his Great War journal to read. In the eleven months before the armistice in 1918 Eliezer suffered for Germany. Now, he knew, bitterly, this was his reward. Germany had turned on its own Jews. He was Polish and his family lived in Poland and Lithuania, but he had taken up residence in Germany to study. In those days one could have, in effect, a dual or a trans-border kind of citizenship – two or more passports or diplomatic papers. Besides Poland was part of and had been divided between the three empires, Austro-Hungarian, Prussian and Tsarist, now Bolshevik Russia. Eliezer admired Russian, German and Austrian music, literature and philosophy. He wanted to help the wounded servicemen of his temporarily adopted country amongst whom there would be other Jews. The Pekarsky-Oshry families was scattered over eastern Russia and western Poland, and further afield in diasporas including South Africa, Britain, the Americas.

Eliezer had lived in Freiburg in Bavaria as a student in the 1920s. And now, since 1933, a German chancellor was threatening to kill him and everyone he loved. True to their origins, Eliezer and Minna, Mordechai's father and mother, a farmer/amateur philosopher, and a pianist, taught Mordechai prayers not only in the traditional Hebrew, but in their mother-tongue, Yiddish, a medieval German which the Jews brought with them to Poland and Lithuania in the 13th century when evicted by Dominican friars, indebted nobility and the mob from places like Speyer and Würms where the Jews had lived since Roman times or at least the Dark Ages. They were initially welcomed by the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania which later became domains of the Tsarist Russian Empire. The Tsarist regime had confined most Jews to a Pale of Settlement on its western border – a vast ghetto comprising *shtetlach* – hundreds of little Jewish villages and towns where Jews would work as shopkeepers and merchants, small farmers if they were lucky enough to own or rented land, tailors, dress-makers and scores of other trades, tax collectors for the authorities, bailiffs managing estates for the nobility.

And the Jews would provide useful scapegoats when the poverty and fury of the serfs and peasants needed an outlet, which would be focussed by the Church, the military, and the police in medieval and modern times - on the Jews. These persecutions often happened at Easter when the Gentiles' love of Christ and sympathy for his suffering – suffering attributed to the Jews 2000 years ago in Jerusalem – thousands of miles away - mounted to a climax with the crucifixion and the resurrection. In this way, Christ's passion and the Christians' sympathy for his passion could be assuaged.

These ethnic or religious murders of Jews were called in Russian by the word *pogrom*. But the Poles were also persecuted by Hitler as Slavic *untermenschen*. Russian-Poland, the east, would be invaded by German -Poland in the west when the Hitler- Stalin pact came to an end. Mordechai's family needed to take urgent action because, as one of the adults observed in English, "all hell will be let loose." Mordechai uttered a prayer in Yiddish – his mother-tongue:

"Danken Ir, Gott, far di tog. Dank Ir far di gute zakhn az mir hobn getrafn tsu mir haynt, aun tsu di ikh libe...."

"Thank You, God, for the day. Thank you for the good things that have happened to me today and to those I love...."

They, the original founders of the Abrahamic religions were in Russia labelled "rootless cosmopolitans" by Stalin and the USSR's Communist Party propaganda machine.

Historically when they moved on to other cities and countries because of persecution and absorbed new cultures and languages they were still hated as the Other.... Again "rootless cosmopolitans".... Persecuted, thrown out again.... And so on, again and again, seeming to their new neighbours always as Other *thus becoming more Other* with their foreign ways mingling with yet new, "foreign" native customs accumulating and being assimilated into these cultures without – until now – changing their core sense of identity... And so on – a vicious circle: the more they accommodated themselves the more hated they were because they were seen as sinister aliens behind a native mask... But Mordechai, at 9 years old in 1939 never gave up on God and prayed again and again:

"Danken Ir, Gott, far di tog. Dank Ir far di gute zakhn az mir hobn getrafn tsu mir haynt, aun tsu di ikh libe...."

"Thank You, God, for the day. Thank you for the good things that have happened to me today and to those I love...."

"Good things have happened to me and those I love." He thought of adopting that as a family motto. At least most of the Oshrys and the Pekarskys were hidden away in an ancient cave in Belarus. In 1939 AD –enumerated *anno Domini* after the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, whom Eliezer his father said was a Jewish healer, not the Son of God, capital letters notwithstanding. His mother, Minna, the

pianist who had studied in Vienna and London, and his maternal grandmother, Rosa, the mid-wife who could use their four-wheel drive Mercedes to negotiate the muddy roads to a score of Jewish towns and villages to deliver babies, kept silent about the number of Christian babies she had been called out to deliver. Her son-in-law Mendel Bloom was a doctor who would never refuse to help with difficult deliveries whatever the religion of the mother. They would charge nothing if the family was poor, making up for it with other families who were well-off. That world, the real world of peace and charity in inter-communal affairs, was disappearing, had disappeared.

But perhaps, after all, the Hebrew God or some such force in the real world *was* protecting them. At least they knew from their communication technology what was going on. Perhaps technology was to become the new God. Or the industrialisation of death in the concentration camps of which they had read reports in European newspapers and from relatives. Eliezer, ever the scholar, said *Thanatos*, the god of death had overcome *Eros* the god of love. In Kabbalah *Gevurah*, force, power had overcome *Hesed*, lovingkindness; without the mediation of *Tiferet* the beauty of compassion, *Gevurah* was corrupted into evil.

On the radio, on the count's two-way transmitter/receiver charged by car-batteries, in the cave, they had actually heard the voice of evil, Hitler in Nuremberg fascinating tens of thousands in a stadium, and distantly, millions in his Bavarian-Austrian accent. They heard a rumour that Hitler had taken theatre acting lessons. It was both monstrous and absurd that this First World War corporal whom Charlie Chaplin was to caricature would be responsible for the life and the death of millions and he was obviously an insane psychopathic character.

But they could also, at least, tune in to London and could hear Churchill refusing to surrender. Not to protect the Jews, whom, people said, he didn't like particularly, but to protect the British Empire which represented decent British values. It had been the greatest empire the world had ever seen, inspired, naturally, by ideas such as justice, fair play, and, regrettably, the meting out of punishment to those whom Rudyard Kipling, the great poet of empire, called "lesser breeds without the law," whilst profiting Great Britain – the imperialists and local white colonialists.

Others - a few selected natives, such as Rajahs, indigenous merchants, railway engineers, local civil servants were educated or trained just enough to "keep the whole show going" and so they helped to foster a "better class" of Middle Easterners, Indians, Africans and Afrikaners. The Jews in British Palestine had skills few Arabs had the opportunity to acquire given the relative backwardness of this obscure corner of what had been the Ottoman Empire.

In the morning the larks sang in the summer sky above the forest's canopy in Belarus, on the border of the new joint colony of Stalin and Hitler – Poland divided in 1939-1940 - and

Mordechai prayed again: "Thank You God for this new day and help me to use it well. *Thank you for the beauty of the world....*" His father Eliezer suggested that perhaps, translated into Latin, that should be his motto. "*Gratias Deo pro mundi pulchritudinem.*" Should it be in Latin or Hebrew: "*Todah l'El al hakhain shel olam*"? |

Other refugees in the cave-refuge, previously proud Jewish Poles, proud Jewish Lithuanians, Jewish Latvians, Jewish Germans, Jewish Austrians, even the Jewish wife and daughter of a gentile Pole, a count, got up to face another day in a long period of insecurity in 1939 and 1940 wondering if they would have to engage with a Nazi death squad or the NKVD, the Soviet secret police, in the event of their pre-historic refuge being betrayed to the German army or the Soviet authorities. At least the count on whose land the cave was situated had obtained arms and ammunition for them from a Polish army arsenal somewhere secret so they could resist and not go like lambs to the slaughter.

Slaughter. The Jewish ritual slaughterer, the *shochet*, performed his work on Eliezer's and Minna's farm near Malejczyc a village near the historically shifting Polish-Belarus border. Mordechai wept when the calves were taken away from their mothers so that the cows could produce milk for the dairy. He heard the cows' and the calves' distress. Why all this suffering? To earn a living. He asked if he might have water with fruit juice instead of milk. But, bright boy that he was, living with liberal Jews educated in central and western Europe, he already knew human beings were not descended from Adam and Eve, Cain, Noah, Ham Shem and Japhet. Humans were animals, *homo sapiens*, so called "wise" humans, naked apes with special senses, a highly developed mentality, including an infinite capacity for stupidity and cruelty. He was beginning to know at first-hand, at 9, in 1939 what *Soviet communism*, *capitalism* and *national socialism* entailed and he knew about money, because without it, they said, nothing would work. Uncle Jeremiah with his cherubic smile quoting the English said: "Nothing is for nothing, nothing is for free." His uncle was a vegetarian but supported Vladimir Jabotinsky's right-wing Zionist Revisionist party, Herut, which had links to a group prepared to wage war in Palestine against the British and the Arabs. Of course, Jeremiah had the right to advocate violence for a homeland in the context of mass-murder of the Jewish people *and* to spare animals the brutality of even a Jewish abattoir and the ritual slaughterer, the *shochet*, since other proteins were available. Jeremiah was a generous, kind person, married to Mordechai's older aunt, a violinist and violin teacher, Hannah Oshry. (Two of the Oshry sisters kept their maiden names.) He was a conductor and a composer of Jewish liturgical music. His brother was the first modern Jewish ethnomusicologist, a professor in Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College, who had researched the synagogue music of the Yemeni and the Iraqi Jews whose similar traditions but geographical separation for between 1500 and 2000 years suggested they used melodies, keys, harmonies, instrumentation and vocal styles similar to what one might have heard in the ancient temples in Jerusalem.

His father's special prayer resonated: "Thank You God for this new day and help me to use it well. *Thank you for the beauty of the world....*" *The beauty of the world: "Di sheynkayt fun di velt....*" The Yiddish language felt like honey in his mouth.

Sometimes Goebbels was on the radio in Berlin telling the world that the Jewish conspiracy against the German people would be utterly crushed, wiped out, destroyed. The news from Moscow (Uncle Jeremiah originally from Latvia could speak Russian) referred to a conspiracy against the Soviet state. All the Jews on the Politburo of the Bolshevik party were put on trial by Stalin and shot for treason or Zionist cosmopolitanism or some such evil, racially-motivated accusation. There were no rich, powerful Jews in the cave who could or would conspire against the Russians or the Germans. Just a rabbi, Mordechai's scholarly maternal grandfather his mother's father, Dr Philip Oshry, who had also studied in Germany and who gave some of his salary to the poor, Jewish and Polish.

Now Grandmother Rosa Oshry was in hiding with them and Dr Mendel Bloom, her son-in-law, there would be that much less care for the dying and the newly born.

But his father Eliezer Pekarsky, the philosopher / farmer could go on cogitating whether on his farm or in a cave. He had been a student in Freiburg and at Cambridge before returning to his patrimony, a farm on fertile land. He had inherited wealth from a rich industrialist uncle in America which enabled him to leave his farm for periods of time and study and travel. Mordechai's mother and aunts worked as musicians and were married to modestly distinguished men. At least his paternal grandfather, Joseph Pekarsky, the count's bailiff and his paternal grandmother, Feyga, a teacher who had a house on the count's estate until 1939, had something to do in the cave, teaching the count's daughter, the same age as Mordechai, Hebrew and modern languages and Joseph could teach them arithmetic, and later algebra and geometry. Estrella spoke Ladino, Judaeo-Spanish with her mother, and Polish with her father Count Stanislaw Lubliniewski.

His other extended kin, reacting to the *pogroms* of the 1880s and the early 1900s and the abortive revolution that occurred in Russia before the Great War (in 1905) had emigrated to South Africa, to Britain, to the Americas, to Australia.

Now his immediate family were appalled by the news that the Nazis were on their way to exterminate the Jewish race after the period of the Pact. As early as 1939 a death camp called Auschwitz was being planned and started to be built in Poland. What were they to do, without arms? They relied on Stanislaw to get them to the cave, obviously at some risk in transit. They feared both the NKVD and the Soviet army and the Nazis. The count brought rifles, ammunition, machine-guns, hand-grenades and showed them how to use these weapons. The Polish army rifles could be used with fixed bayonets. They set up old, stuffed pillow-cases and sewed them up as bodies for target practice and hand-to-hand fighting. You had to shout vile imprecations whilst you stabbed the bayonet into the pillow-cases! Unrepeatable exclamations of hate had to be practiced in the unheard depths of the forest whilst you practiced killing.

That is why they went into hiding. The hated had to learn how to hate back. Otherwise you yourself would die in agony and humiliation like Jesus on the cross. It was historically inevitable like the laws of physics and chemistry and astronomy. Everyone was given free will – by God! Limited only by the laws of psychology and the rules of ethics – how brave could and should you be?

As for ethics, it depressed Mordechai – he and Estrella read it under “History of Science” in the encyclopaedias - that science had a negative effect on people’s belief in the Hebrew bible’s God – and that Uncle Mendel the doctor read Spinoza rather than the Torah and the Talmud and regarded the bible as - much of it - *mythical*. There was no such thing as a Jewish *race*. Historians were aware of how much Jews had intermarried specially with originally non-Jewish converts to Judaism – otherwise how was it that the Ashkenazi Jews were white like Europeans not brown like Middle Easterners? The exiled Spanish Jews were browner because there was a more direct link with their ancient Israelite ancestors and brown Arab and indigenous Iberian converts.

They were neither a uniform religion or a “genetically” marked race. What united them was the sense that they shared an identity which others wanted to destroy because of a long history of anti-Jewish hatred starting with the lie that the Jews betrayed and killed Jesus Christ – this idea had to be mentioned again and again because people forgot the origins of anti-Semitism. According to the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* which Eliezer, Minna, Luna and Stanislaw taught him to read in English - English was the *lingua franca* of the enlightened Jewish world in the West.

The Jews, forced into usury by usually being barred from owning land and from the guilds and the professions until the Enlightenment, were accused of exploiting the people. They would be damned to hell. Whereas those who at certain periods of history *hated* Jews – whether as crusaders for Christ or supporters of a holy war for Allah - would be granted the *reward of eternal life in return for killing the enemies of God*.

Abraham was the founding Hebrew patriarch to whom God spoke because, as Mordechai learned much later, in the days before widespread writing, orality was everywhere in the human environment and orality was projected onto the natural world - the sky and earth, the animals - all spoke, and thus the patriarchs and prophets established the Jewish religion (and indirectly the other two Abrahamic religions) by what seemed to the rarely-writing people, to be *divine voices*. The whole cosmos was one interacting whole: you might call it divine, or miraculous, or just a fact.

Once you submitted divinity to the logic of science which came with writing, religion became myth, powerful and instructive legend.

Mordechai was prone to repeat *important thoughts* in his head and at nearly 10 to write them down. Such as: his father, Eliezer, unlike most Jews in eastern Europe, *owned land*, partly because he had *inherited money* to buy it, but also because the *local count had married a Jew* and this wealthy land-owner was well disposed to Jewish people and would risk official disapproval by *selling them land*.

Their whole circle was influenced by *Enlightenment ideas*. (Mordechai and Estrella made notes from the encyclopaedia as to what the philosophers defined as human rights and what they couldn't understand, the adults explained.) Count Stanislaw Lubliniewski *sold* fertile fields, and hills where sheep and goats grazed, wild forests in which he retained the right to hunt boar, bison and deer, and cull wolves when necessary, *to Jews which was, more or less officially prohibited by the ruling powers long before the Bolsheviks and the Nazis arrived*.

Much of Belarus and Poland was still wild. There were still wolves and, of course, foxes which were usually kept out of the fields and hills with fencing. But Jews had difficulty in obtaining guns and ammunition. If they were recruited into the Tsar's army sons, brothers, husbands could be gone for five, ten, even twenty years. That's why they had to adopt subterfuge. That's why the stereotype of the wily Jew arose. That's why they kept their knowledge, their politics, their philosophy, their science always uppermost in their minds. In case they had to move to get away from oppression. Like Gypsies, the Roma.

Eliezer studied at Cambridge in the 1920s and had written to and became a friend of the half-Jewish Ludwig Wittgenstein in 1921 when the famous *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was published in German by the subsequently famous logician. He went to the lectures and seminars of Martin Heidegger at Marburg in the late 20s and was impressed by the idea that "the essence of *Dasein* [being-there as human] is *existence*".

Mordechai, when he was much older, understood Wittgenstein's words: "The world is everything that is the case". Jew-hatred was the case, it was in human *existence* everywhere in Christian and Muslim countries just as the sun and the moon and the earth existed. In the anti-Semite the essence of existence, at rock-bottom, might very well be hatred of Jews. Because, in its crudest formulation it was the opposite of the love of God-as-Christ. Or respect for the Prophet or Allah. It was a necessary and a sufficient binary opposite.

Perhaps a million or more Arabs of Palestine hated a hundred thousand Jews of Palestine in the 1930s because it was *their* holy Muslim land, just as the Temple Mount in Jerusalem was the scene of Mohamed's ascent into paradise and the near-sacrifice of Isaac. Palestine was another pawn in the battle between the big powers. Al-Husseini, the grand mufti of Jerusalem hated the British for

promising a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Hitler saw obvious strategic advantage in providing hospitality for Al-Husseini in Berlin during the war, acting on the principle: “My enemy’s enemy is my friend.”

After the war, despite all their sufferings and disappointments, Mordechai still had a sense that one *had* to believe in a Jewish formulation of God. Later he understood that God was a necessary metaphor - because in a symbolic and imaginary way, the whole of the world and the cosmos was thereby joined up together through *the idea* of God. But it was just a metaphor. The *belief* that God existed made Him / Her / It *subjectively* real. *The problem was free will*. There was no way of knowing if things happened because of the interconnections of things (they had to happen) or if they were an accident. Or that he had free will as part of the accident.

How did it come about that what was the case, became the case? Natural science couldn’t explain the social world. Wittgenstein was wrong about the world being all that was the case as if it were a property of a scientific law. How could such an eminent logician not know that the social world was *negotiated*?

So, the world being the case, changed every millisecond? Yes, Wittgenstein later changed his mind: people play power, organisational, religious, scientific “games” (not fun games, but they engage in rule-governed processes with *language* to evoke fear, conformity, identity, courage, creativity) so that what is the case *does change* as *existence* changes every tiny fraction of a millisecond.

He had to put it into simple words. “If I don’t want to let it happen to me, if I take action to avoid it – death at the hands of Hitler’s or Stalin’s followers when the count helped us take refuge in a cave in the forest on his land - I have changed what *might* have been the case *from being the case*.”

That is not natural science or metaphysics but common sense. Individual fate (luck), will, talent, social class, ethnicity intervene. On that point the *later* Wittgenstein would agree.

Because of the horror one could not go on feeling that the world was always still beautiful. The forest was beautiful but their enemies were hateful – at least the anti-Semites were. Everything spiritual and neighbourly was suddenly broken, destroyed, violated, abused, wasted.

But the other Jews and a gentile like the Polish count cheered him up when he was depressed or at least sad. So, whatever happened, he felt more or less safe.

He and Estrella could still lie in bed and pray; in their case, on a Polish army stretcher under a pile of blankets lovingly woven on a loom from their own sheep wool. It had been sheared, washed, spun and dyed by Dunyasha, his old Belarussian nurse and Ivan her husband and their now grown up children Anya and Fyodor. They helped with the farming as he, Mordechai did, even as a child, riding slowly on Soos and Soosa holding onto the pommel and with his own stirrups with Minna or Eliezer in the saddle or with Dunyasha and Ivan the farm-workers. The Belarussians made an additional living from their folk-craft, like the home-made blankets, keeping the profits, with Eliezer donating the wool free as a gift or additional salary to Dunyasha and Ivan.

Mordechai, when he was 10 in 1940, talked to the sheep and the milking goats and calves who had names like Dorabelle. The ram was – for some reason Rasputin, the evil genius behind the last Tsarina.

It was dangerous to mock, even though they were temporarily under a post-Tsarist Russian communist government. There was a billy goat called Trotsky! Trotsky? It was dangerous to even utter Trotsky's name – so people said. At first, he didn't know why.

So, he asked, why did the Russians now rule over them, and who was Trotsky? Trotsky was a Russian Jew called Bronstein who rivalled Stalin in power. Stalin wanted to get rid of him. That's what Mordechai learned when he pursued the matter. Even though Trotsky had created the Red Army.

The others misunderstood or simply hated the Jews who were leaders in the Russian revolution just as they misunderstood the Jewish attitude to Jesus the Jew as the messiah. The gospel of the evangelist John must have misquoted Jesus when he supposedly called the Jews, *the children of the devil!* How could the person they believed was the Son of God who was a Jew called Jesus the Christ, which was Greek for "messiah", hate his own people?

Perhaps the Gentiles *themselves* - some of them - secretly hated God who stopped them stealing, lying, fornicating – which, his father explained to him with surprising frankness, meant making love for the fun of it, and they blamed the Jews for this terrible God, and for not believing in the gentle Jesus who had a transformative effect on his Father, the now-Christian-God-Father.

When he grew up he believed that ultimately one should perhaps regard God as *immanent* in the form of ethics and aesthetics, goodness and beauty.

The Hebrew and the Christian bibles were full of the most amazing *myths*, which as he grew older he knew were *parables*. Like Eve in choosing the knowledge of good and evil. Was she choosing to disobey God *on principle*? Or was it the animal in her working against the *spirit* of God. Was she really seduced by the serpent's words? The snake must have been something like a human being in snake form to be able to think and talk. Much, much later he realised that people *personified evil* and *good*. They couldn't deal with evil and good as abstractions, as principles. To be spiritual was to be ethical not numinous. But rather phenomenal.

When he was older he read in the Jewish mystical book, the *Zohar* by Rabbi Moses De Leon of 13th century Castile, that the serpent was *personified* by Samael a fallen angel with whom Eve *mated* after the expulsion from Eden, and Cain was her first son, by Samael, not by Adam at all.

Samael was her *second mate* but the *father* of her *first* child. So, Adam was her *first mate* but *not* the *father* of her *first* child, only the father of her *second* child Abel. Besides it was just a story.

A lot of religion was all just a story. But it established ground rules through fiction. Cain killed Abel out of jealousy. By contrast the Nazis were not just a story but were *murderously* jealous of the Jews, originally members of a theoretically brother religion, Christianity but now vulgar Nietzscheans, because of a *story in their Nazi heads deciding* that the Jews originated Bolshevism which had signed a temporary treaty in the form of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 with Hitler giving him time to make a more murderous war against Russia.

They hated Jews above all because they perceived the Jews as rich, and super-powerful. Nazism – National Socialism – would remedy all inequality and would rule in the German *Reich* for a thousand years, but only after Soviet Russia and the Western world had been destroyed or neutralised but above all the Jews eliminated.

Churchill, Roosevelt, the British and the American people would rally to the cause of democracy but kept shutting the door to mass Jewish immigration. The Allies would die fighting Hitler, Mussolini, Hirohito, but the British were now ambivalent about breaking a promise to the Arabs of Palestine concerning *their* self-determination.

They would more or less reluctantly support a Jewish state in Palestine. *As long as the Arabs could be accommodated.*

But *some* Arabs were finally evicted – 700,000 of them in 1947-1948 – although *many* were allowed to stay as long as the Jewish people could eventually build up a majority in Palestine and a logistically contiguous state. Both sides rejected the two-state solution offered in 1947 by the United Nations at Lake Success. Later when he looked back on his childhood he was astounded. Some of them were kept going in conditions of extreme danger as a preparation for *Aliyah* – *going-up* to *Eretz Yisrael*. A *cave* for civilized people. The *Holy Land*, a *past and a future* battle-ground for a deadly war. How many more contradictions could a small group of people contain?

It was not as if they were Neanderthals. Estrella had told him in simple terms so he could understand her father's, the count's archaeology work.

Neanderthal cave-dwellers were not savage and stupid but they were hunter-gatherers competing for territory. They may have had smaller brains but brain size wasn't everything. In a way they were preferable to *homo sapiens*. Neanderthals were also humans. They were less aggressive than *homo sapiens*. *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals could breed together. Until *sapiens* wiped them out. Like Nazis wiping out Jews whom they blamed for competing against Germans for wealth and security after the disaster of the Great War. Except Jews had very good *homo sapiens* genes. History had caused them to breed clever and intelligent and wise people. As did their cultures.

Estrella's father Stanislaw tried not to disillusion his ten-year old daughter in 1939-1940 when they were faced by the Nazis and the Soviet Union. But she knew from her father and his encyclopaedias that the Neanderthals were gentler than the *homo sapiens* who wiped them out. Gentleness wouldn't work against the Nazis who were humans, *homo sapiens*, but immensely hateful. Was He or It - God - hiding the divine Face in shame? And was all *homo sapiens* aggressive, potentially murderous, massively so?

Wittgenstein was a mystic as well as a logician: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence." The sense that the universe had a meaning – *that* was mystical. Wittgenstein could have said, "cultural" not "mystical." Or the meaning of the universe was a function of the *history* of science and astrophysics which had an interface with philosophy. He had to wait till adulthood to full grasp this.

It was a fact what later research hypothesised: – the "singularity" – a single atom, perhaps the end product of collapsed space, time and matter, exploded in a big bang about 13.5 billion years ago – that was not mystical. The fact that life originated on earth, even if it was an accident - that was not mystical. That we were accidentally alive and conscious, able to love more than to hate - that surely was wonderful but not mystical – perhaps primitive life-forms and water came from asteroids which hit the earth by accident.

Another planet hit the earth and split off the moon which stabilised the earth's angle of axis by mutual gravity allowing for a stable cycle of seasons. Things fitted into logical spaces linked like a chain. Being Jewish, being at the cross-roads of many "civilized" worlds, 2000 or even 3000 years ago in Palestine, being chosen by something higher than oneself – call it YHVH or Elohim – a symbol perceived as God.... One repeated it as a mystical story that had become embodied in ritual prayer. It *became* like eating, breathing. It was identity-politics; for some a matter of life and death.

Moving south-west in his mind to Greece, Eliezer's story-telling enlarged Mordechai's knowledge, *logos*: Zeus allowed the terrible sphinx of Thebes to be outwitted by Oedipus. That was also just a story. He understood much later that Oedipus was not really tragically fated to kill his father and marry his mother except in Sophocles' play.

The riddle of the sphinx was nevertheless a rational question... The sphinx may have been a mystical symbol but the riddle she asked was a rational question with a rational answer although couched in metaphorical terms. "What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs in the afternoon and three legs in the evening, and can fly?"

Answer: "The human being: a baby in the morning of life when it crawls on all fours as if its arms were also legs, an adult in the afternoon of life when it walks on two legs, and with a stick (metaphorically another – third - leg) in old age, the evening of life. Humans can "fly" when they dive off high cliffs or rocks into the sea or a lake or the Greek "gods" can transport them through the air.

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What were Hitler, Goebbels, Goering, Himmler, Frank, Rosenberg, Heydrich, Eichmann – compared to the loving-kindness of Abraham, compared to the trusting love of Isaac, compared to Jacob redeemed from sin in his struggle with the stranger in the night? Only now that he was an adult looking back on his life did he realise what it meant to be proud of being a Jew even if the patriarchs were mythical. The ideals were there. But then, in Palestine after the war, he met Jews who felt compelled to drive Arabs out of their homeland just as the Hebrew bible advocated war against the other non-Israelite tribes. But not into death camps to be murdered. Into refugee camps because other Arab countries couldn't or wouldn't rehouse them.

Stanislaw and his wife, Luna, even the rabbi and Eliezer in Marburg were taught by, or at least read Heidegger – before he joined the Nazi party in 1933, yet he had already waxed eloquent in his book *Sein und Zeit – Being and Time* - about *conscience*! At least he said "authentic conscience." Proceeding from silent internal discourse. Free from idle talk and free from the discourse of the

“They” – the masses who behave like what they are: a conglomeration of everyday-ness. We are also sometimes part of the masses. It was only years and years later that Mordechai learned philosophy and found that he could not forgive Heidegger his behaviour even whilst reading his philosophy – say concerning anxiety – even though he knew what it was like to be in a similar position to Kierkegaard and Heidegger standing on the edge of the cliff of reason, looking down into the abyss of doubt. This threat of nihilism fuelled totalitarianism. But Heidegger accepted Hitler’s totalitarianism. Later, Mordechai learned about Hannah Arendt, Heidegger’s Jewish lover. Mordechai pitied her. In New York her Jewish neighbours called her a Nazi bitch. She who had anatomised totalitarianism – a classic in the foundational texts of political science.

But after all who was Heidegger? He came from rural Bavaria, was destined for the Roman Catholic clergy, but was gifted with insight that encompassed two-and-a-half thousand years of Western philosophy which he genuinely “deconstructed” in the 1920s. At least, like the ancient Greeks, he talked about ontology, the study of being. That was important, instead of idle talk, superstition. But “being as care” without Kant’s ethics – “try to act as if for mankind” - was hollow.

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Dunyasha, Ivan, Anya and Fyodor stayed on to look after the Pekarsky/Oshry farm when his parents and grandparents and Mordechai had to go into hiding. The grandparent Pekarskys had to leave the bailiff’s house and fields on the count’s estate. The reason was – he had to keep repeating this because it sounded so extraordinary to distinguish between human beings who were the same species but of a different religion and whom he loved - Ivan and Dunyasha were orthodox Russian Christians: – they weren’t going to be rounded up with the Jewish family and sent away to be killed like animals.

He couldn’t believe what he heard. What crimes had his beloved parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins committed? Farmers, rabbi, midwife, teacher, doctor, musicians? He was in his 10th year after August 1939, after they went into hiding. He was still a child, but he knew that adults could procreate and he prayed that he would live long enough to have children perhaps with Estrella, or if not her, some other girl, perhaps from South Africa, to where they knew, if they survived, they would want to emigrate because close friends and relatives were there who would help them start their lives all over again.

Part of him thought he must be living some kind of story, which would have a happy ending, like the blessed arrival of the wood-cutter who would chop Little Red Riding Hood’s granny out of the wolf or a South African hyena. His whole family were being eaten up by the Nazis. When he was older he laughed at the naivete of himself as a child. Wouldn’t the granny be hurt by the axe that did the

chopping? At 10 in 1940, the same age as Mordechai, Estrella knew more common sense and logic. But if he lost Estrella *would* some South African girl, be waiting for him in *her* imagination, there in the sunny south of Africa?

Who knew how things were connected together? Things which added up, things which you could imagine happening in the real world? But being only 9 to 15 during their refuge in the cave from 1939-1945 he still lived partly in his dreams and stories: he knew that the impossible could be imagined and when he overheard the others saying that the European world was “doomed” it seemed like another fantastic story. Maybe after the war Europe would recover.

He relied on his father and his mother, his uncles and aunts to keep celebrating the lives and loves of all the great classical composers and writers, to establish the boundary between the real of the actual music and the imaginary visualisation of their lives. But surely there were wonderful music and books in South Africa too? Children would be born whom grandmother Rosa Oshry would deliver, and grandmother Feyga Pekarsky would teach?

“Please God, keep the Nazi wolves away!” was his prayer. “Especially chop the Jews out of Hitler”.

“Bite Gott, haltn di Natsi velf avek! Spetsyel, tsehakn di Yidn fun Hitler”.

Much later he learned that a person *took in* others’ behaviour believing it to be a source of nurturance; or if you were a daredevil fascist, a dangerous source of strength or a poison which, mysteriously, would strengthen you. You took in hate. It explained a person’s feeling of identity or his feeling of wanting to die fighting. It was introjection. And projection. You spewed the dangerous hate-poison out in the form of racial killing and ideological torture. Then you introjected Jewish ethics or German nationalism, the story of God, or the myth of *Blut, Volk und Boden*, or vulgar Stalinist-Marxism in as an antidote. It could be unconscious. One did not know what the mind was doing. As regards the masses. But the elite could manipulate the hate of the masses.

Later in 1942 when he was 12 although he could barely grasp it except intuitively – he came to an understanding of what his father explained to him about Einstein. He understood the words in themselves but not how they were strung together as concepts. You needed more complicated language – flashes of intuitive thought - to grasp it. As a highly educated adult the older Mordechai grasped something of Einstein. All his father could do was to show him with his hands and drawings that space-time was invisible but connected the universe. It could be bent, crushed, folded into itself.

Most people in that part of the world – the middle of the Polish and Belarus countryside - were not well educated and couldn't understand that Einstein had dethroned the absolutes of what turned out to be the relative nature of time and space which was *bent* according to the formula $E(\text{nergy})=m(\text{ass}) \times (\text{multiplied by}) c (\text{the speed of light}) \text{ squared}$: so that not only the Jew and the Nazi lived actually in different space-time capsules, *but that each individual occupied a different position in Reality*. Not completely so, for purposes of everyday society, but absolutely so, as a statistic in the absolutely Real. In everyday life, we were not subject to complete relativity.

Only later did he understand it somewhat: the energy of mass multiplied by the speed of light squared meant that space-time was unique from an individual consciousness's point of view. Each person's mass, energy, position in space-time and consciousness, was different. Space-time was expressed by the totality of the formula, perhaps. Einstein thought there was also a cosmological constant – perhaps the whole formula $e=mc(\text{squared})$ was bracketed: space-time = { $e=mc(\text{squared})$ }.

Because there were unique masses in the form of stars and planets pulling and pushing on each other ($e=$ energy, $M=$ mass) at the speed of light squared, space-time was folded

and indented into and out of itself. You only had to split the atom to release the energy which undid the containment of space-time to create a great and terrible explosion by means of a chain reaction as a result of one split atom splitting another atom and so on cumulatively and exponentially in a highly fissionable material like weapons-grade uranium or plutonium. For this you needed a centrifuge or a nuclear reactor.

As the scientist who helped do it in about 1944 in Nevada in America said: "I have become death". Mordechai was 14 in 1944 and understood these *words* and *something* of the concepts, but not the full science or the engineering of applied atomic physics.

Later he thought with pity about the Japanese of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Was God henceforth still all that was? God could never die? But he, Mordechai, had, psychologically, *inside himself a symbolic, godly person, not outside himself*. His Son might die (if what the Christians thought was true) but He, Jesus Christ, who was literally procreated by God, would be resurrected – for them – mythologically.

But we, the Jews had to wait for the true messiah, who, although he might tarry, would come – so the Jews said, sadly, as if they were tired of waiting. In the meantime, we should, he thought, act as if God was in us, not outside of us. As if your consciousness could contain space-time.

His father Eliezer read a book by Jean-Paul Sartre brought into the cave by an unexpected visitor which spoke of the *pour-soi* - the “for-itself” – transcendence. Which only a hypothetical God could combine with the *en-soi* – the “in itself” – objects, things which only the fully *pour-soi* could know infinitely. To us, mortals, objects secreted the unknowable even when we analysed them by breaking them down into chemical and physical and biological components.

But, Eliezer countered this by positing consciousness of objects and transcendent understanding which could be happy if seen through the eyes not of the unknowable Other but trusting in the knowable immanence of a happy faith in the loved Other and the internalisation of God and philosophy and its application in the world.

Yet Mordechai sometimes thought he could hear the wicked thoughts of the Nazis as if the radio was secreting a disgusting and frightening echo independently in his mind. Hitler and Goebbels spouted propaganda but Goebbels, people said, had an IQ of 150 or more.

Forgetting about Goebbels, later he realised that true and false geniuses were undermining the fixed universe of Descartes and Newton, and the 1940s, horrifyingly, was the time according to the Nazis to cleanse the world of Jewish and communist and other subversives who had, by the way, *killed God!*

Mordechai, again and again asked his father about the killing of God about which the adults often talked. Eliezer told him that Nietzsche came from a long line of German Christian ministers. Nietzsche didn't kill God. His *madman* announced that *by their actions, mankind* had killed God. When it suited them, the Nazis slipped into and out of any ideology. Aryan man would anyway replace God with the Fuhrer – according to these extremists. So, Nietzsche was truthful. Why propose a universal God in the cosmos in the first place? Matter in the universe just *was*. *Yet unless it was a priori potentially good on earth, what was the point of going on?*

Everything he learned at his mother's, his father's and his grandfathers' and grandmothers' knees and from Estrella and the count and the countess may well have been true, but what if they were all going to be massacred by the Nazis? What, then, would be true about Jewish religion or Polish nationalism? Perhaps Zionism was truer than Judaism. Perhaps they *had* to fight for a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

He felt he was cursed with an intelligence enabling him to overhear and understand through an uncanny, frightening instinct, that the world was not the secure, happy, uniform, distinctly coherent place it appeared to be, as stated, less so in the Hebrew bible, and more so in the synagogue prayer-books translated from Hebrew into Yiddish and Polish.

His grandfather, the rabbi, and his grandmothers, the teacher and the midwife, liberalised the orthodox discourse, thus upsetting the orthodox congregants who believed in the whole mythology that the Hebrew Bible *and* the Talmudic commentaries – the *Mishnah* and the *Gemara* – *and* certain sacred books like Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* *and* the Kabbalistic *Zohar* – *all* were disclosed by God through His mouth for forty days on Mount Sinai to Moses *in advance of their advent in time about 1250 years before the Common Era!* Well, God, if there was a God, could do that! His paternal grandfather, Joseph Pekarsky, the count's bailiff-manager, believed in that sort of biblical God.

Zionism and a modernised Hebrew on the other hand was only fifty or a hundred years old. Surely if everybody else had a nation state and national language, the Jews whose state in Palestine was destroyed by the Romans in about the year 72 of what they called the common era (Jesus was born about 4 years before the common era) – Jews should have their state and a modernised Hebrew language.

But what about the Arab Palestinians some of whom were probably Israelites forcibly converted to Islam by Mahomed's armies in the 6th century of the common era? They were Muslims now. What would become of them? These thoughts went around and around in his mind. Now he was writing about them, years and years later, he was compelled to reiterate them in the hope that, if published, the world would take heed.

It wasn't true that Palestine was a land without a people. It had a majority of Arab people, perhaps a million or more, and only about a hundred thousand Jews and Christians *now*, during the Second World War, when Britain was ruling Palestine by permission of the League of Nations. The adults kept talking about Zionism over and over again. It was understandable. They were facing mass-slaughter. Would the slaughterers take up slaughtering to get to become the new Jewish rulers of the holy land? Mordechai had seen the very orthodox Jews call on God to curse his grandfather Rabbi Philip Oshry with hell for preaching sermons on understanding the Torah as partly "stories" – myths the metaphorical meaning of which was important.

But then, even on Shabbat and Jewish festivals, they, the "Enlightened" like the count and the rabbi and Eliezer and the *educated* grandmothers talked about Nietzsche! Perhaps the Oshry sisters, his mother and his aunts, didn't like Nietzsche because Nietzsche had a brutal view of women.

Later, he came to the conclusion that Nietzsche had started a spiritual revolution. His father, Eliezer Pekarsky, tried to reassure him that God was not dead. It was an exaggeration! His father taught him a new word: *hyperbole*. Although, when he was older and writing his story, he had to repeat it: a God could not be killed. He couldn't sleep as a child or even years later as an adult unless he could convince himself that Nietzsche wrote that only a *madman* proclaimed the death of God. God had to be assumed in the wondrous silence *a priori* in the higher mind of Plato, Moses, Descartes, Newton, Spinoza.

The Milky Way and the full moon almost blazed upon them and seemed to awe the wolves in the forests of Belarus some of which could be heard very, very distantly.

At least Nietzsche could be *propagated intelligently*: what the earth needed was not even good *ubermenschen*, "overmen" (and "overwomen") - of course not cruel, murderous Nazis, but intelligent people who could redeem a now *divinely empty* universe. God was now only *in your heart, some idea to which to aspire. That was enough.*

Before they moved into the cave, when they were still on the farm in Malejczyc when he was aged 9 in 1939 he wandered out holding Dunyasha's hand to look at the stars of a summer's night. For a moment the wolves, the owls and the crickets were quiet, but the question remained – when he looked at it retrospectively as an adult: was it also empty of the transcendent God, suddenly, now that the little corporal with his brutal haircut and square moustache had become chancellor of Germany and the National Socialist German Workers' Party was going to attempt to destroy the Jewish people and the whole world of the Others in the name of *Blut, Volk and Boden*? Blood, people and native earth.

But they, the Jews had been living in Poland and Lithuania for 800 years! Had they no right to a sense of common peoplehood, a land they could call their own? There couldn't be a God who would tolerate a state of affairs where the People of His Book, the Chosen, the descendants of a legendary Abraham had to wander the world like vagrants, could there? When he looked back at it now from a rational adult perspective one could see how Zionism would seem to be a solution.

He was 10 in 1940 and Estrella, his friend was also 10. He had, repeatedly, like a reassuring ritual, to enumerate their ages and their birth-years. She was the one who listened and understood more of but not all of the adults' talk and explained as much of it to him as she could. Dashing backwards and forwards from the mansion to the cave with her mother or father with the same stirrups as Mordechai used holding on the pommel on Soosa's or Soos's saddle, avoiding all human habitation and roads, she scoured her father's dictionaries and encyclopaedias and journals. She simplified for Mordechai the latest in politics, archaeology and science – for her bright little brother-substitute.

Because she was also an only child, living under terrible, life-threatening stress, she, like Mordechai, had to reiterate who and what she was. She, the daughter of the local Polish count who had married, most unusually, a Jewish wife, a Sephardi (which meant an originally Spanish Jew) from Bulgaria: Luna.

The Sephardim had been expelled from Spain 500 years ago – 1492. Estrella's mother, Luna, was a doctor and Stanislaw a great landowner and an archaeologist. They were modernists and Estrella, although still pre-pubertal, knew the facts of life. Mordechai and she played father and mother, hidden in a forest glade. Their favourite spot was by a little river shaded by poplars and birches where salmon jumped and dragon-flies hovered and the deer foraged for grass and young shoots, whilst stags patrolled, each his own herd of does, and fought off other males with antlers, roaring like elephants, inflicting deadly wounds. Even the deer had produced Nazi type *gauleiters*. Perhaps *homo sapiens* was after all just a ferocious naked ape. Where had civilization gone?

The two children would swim naked in the stream and afterwards, would dry on a towel in the summer sun. One day, she announced proudly, in a few years' time he would be able to make a baby with her. One day, in a few years' time, she continued, when he was about 15, he would be able to make sperm in his testicles and fertilise an ovum which she would produce *every month*, in a cycle which was like the phases of the moon. That was why, like the ancient Israelites, they should commemorate the beginning of the Hebrew month because then the goddesses of love and the moon, Diana and Aphrodite, Astarte, Isis, the *Shekhina*, the holy female spirit of God cast spells on lovers. Because he was broadminded and educated the Polish count tried to pass onto his daughter a sense of the relative commonality of goddesses and even to relativize the Hebrew God of his wife and, by Jewish law, their Jewish daughter. God was ethical being-in-the-world.

Mordechai's mother, Minna Oshry taught Estrella the piano in the count's grand mansion before they became refugees hiding in the cave. Minna had studied in Vienna and Berlin in the 20s and had become something of a feminist and a bohemian. Two of the Oshry sisters kept their "maiden" names but Iris called herself Bloom, because she was proud of her eminent medical husband, Mendel Bloom, who with all the Jewish doctors, had to leave the hospitals of Vienna after Hitler's *Anschluss*, the annexation of Austria in 1936.

With Estrella on the piano they used to play versions of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Mendelsohn, and Brahms sonatas. At 8 in 1938 Mordechai had to stand on a box to see the music and just about managed to play most of the notes in tune although he would stop if it got too fast or too complicated. Luna had a sweet mezzo-soprano voice and sang German *lieder* by Schubert and Schumann. Opera excerpts from Verdi, Gounod and Puccini but not Wagner the anti-Semite. Italian and German musical culture was being celebrated and yet in Germany itself their deaths – their genocide – was being plotted by a jumped-up ex-corporal from World War One and his gang of

murderous racists who had got the German *haute-bourgeoisie* and the poverty-stricken, inflation-ridden working class by the throats.

As if their cultured world up to 1938 would go on forever - which in some form it did – elsewhere in the renascent capitals of the post-war world - the count and Luna played the viola and the cello in a chamber group with Estrella and Minna taking it in turns on the piano and Mordechai joining in next to his aunt Hanna, also on a violin, with her husband Uncle Jeremiah Edelstein on the viola, and the third sister Aunt Iris Bloom on the flute or clarinet.

They would give chamber concerts in aid of both the church and the synagogue's welfare funds attended by very superior Poles and the local Jewish bourgeoisie wondering how in God's name they had got invited by the local nobility and looking suspiciously at the canapes in case they were being offered – God forbid! – bacon.

Good God! thought Mordechai years later, pigs now in modern times with their sties scrubbed out and disinfected – the visiting vet could even vaccinate the farm animals – bacon and pork were not dangerous. They were just a taboo, a symbol dating back to ancient Israelite times when pigs were riddled with parasites. But that's how people lived: not scientifically but guided by tabooed and sacred symbols.

Secretly, from an encyclopaedia that Estrella showed him, he saw the anti-Semitic picture which early some modern and medieval German Christians believed: the *Judensau*. The central Christian taboo even now – there it was, an etching, in all its fine detail. Jews sucking the teats of an enormous sow and eating her faeces. He was shocked. One day, surely, such - what was the word they used about Goebbels? Propaganda? Yes, propaganda should be banned. On the other hand, everyone seemed to use propaganda. If you banned it the propagandists would tell you it was the truth. The state monopolised propaganda in Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany. But all around him – and on the radio – and in the newspapers – all that hate – against communists – against capitalists – against the sick and the mentally ill, although they didn't specify these exactly....

Later, much later, he came to the conclusion that the human mind itself conjured up hate against anything that was Other. The Same were Other to the Others. And yet the Same were always the Same to themselves Did they not realise it was in everybody's interests to treat all as more Same than Other? People don't think.

And yet there was music not only made by humans. He heard about the music of the spheres. When they took refuge in the cave during the Pact in 1939 he made a point of not just going out at night

and looking at the stars but listening. Was there not a very faint harmony at work? Soon enough the wolves and the owls broke the silence. In Africa it would be the hyenas and the lions breaking the silence of the night.

Mordechai thought how terrible it would be if he and Estrella had to be separated... If the Pekarsky/Oshry family went to Africa and Stanislaw, Luna and Estrella went to Palestine.

Mordechai, taught the violin by his aunt Hannah Oshry knew that Hitler was the relentless anti-Semite he was, when Hannah, previously in a German orchestra in Baden-Baden, was dismissed because it was now closed to Jews. So, crushed, and humiliated and angry, Hannah moved back to be with her sisters in Poland and Lithuania. Her husband Jeremiah Edelstein a Latvian-Jewish composer, conductor and choir-master for synagogues in Germany, witnessed the attacks and burning in sympathy with the Nazi's campaign on *Kristallnacht* in 1938 – of Jewish shops and synagogues.

Jeremiah had formed a popular *klezmer* band playing at dances and weddings, giving classical concerts too, playing the viola and conducting what few synagogue choirs were

left in Poland, Lithuania and Latvia now that the local Nazis had arrived and were smashing everything Jewish.

The Lubliniewski-Cordeveros and the Oshrys were Zionists and some of them wanted to go to Palestine but now with the Russian-German Pact, the borders were closely controlled, and visas and passports and letters of sponsorship difficult to obtain. All the post was censored and letters were stored in intelligence archives in Minsk, Warsaw and Berlin. Everyone was being watched, or *even worse, thought* they were being watched by neighbours, their own relatives, ostensible friends.

Mordechai's father Eliezer now couldn't get his articles published in Russian, Polish or German journals. Mordechai had to get into his head: – this political-geographical abstraction - East Poland was controlled by Soviet Russia and West Poland by Nazi Germany. Mordechai's grandfathers, Philip Sachs and Joseph Pekarsky, could not even phone their relatives in South Africa and the Polish and Belarussian post-offices would now accept no foreign mail.

An understandable paranoia based on real persecution boiled up at a crisis meeting in the synagogue in Malejczyc about the Soviet-Nazi pact in 1939 and what was to be done now that even God had apparently veiled His face from the on-coming horror. Everyone had to find refuge or join up with Jewish or Polish – and even pro-Russian partisans when the Pact ended and Hitler invaded

eastern Poland turning the whole of Poland into a territory of the Reich government. The rabbi, Mordechai's grandfather, argued rationally from the pulpit: it was no longer the case that Moses or anybody else could hear God speaking through nature and political events *now*. So, he put it into religious terms that the orthodox would understand: Nazism had to be regarded as the Amalekites were by God and Moses *then*. They should remember to blot them out of historical memory. You had to remember to forget? Yes, not to forget, to remember, what you had *also* to forget?

Wasn't this schizophrenogenic? That was a word Mordechai learned when he was much older. Like the mythological Amalekites, the real German fascists and their east European allies would attack women and children without mercy, and the old and the sick to satisfy Hitler and Goebbels' nightmarish fantasy of the Jews and other supposed degenerates and ill or handicapped people who, in this ideology, constituted an anti-Aryan world conspiracy to weaken the biology of the *herrenvolk*. Sexual intercourse with Jews became an offence. This was to project Hitler's *own* paranoia and megalomania onto the Jews as the masters of capitalism and Bolshevik collectivism but transmitting an ideological parasite.

It was ridiculous. Rockefeller was descended not from Jews but from Dutch people in New Amsterdam (New York) and Lenin wasn't a Jew, although he looked Slavic! Trotsky created the Red Army but Trotsky was in exile in Mexico where Stalin had him assassinated by an agent with an ice-pick driven into Trotsky head. Yet every Jew was a potential Trotsky: by being homeless the Jew was naturally a traitor to his own country.

Where, indeed was God? Rabbi Dr Philip Oshry reassured his frightened congregants that God was not hiding his face. God was immanent in all of the good gentile nations and in the Jewish people themselves preparing the land of Palestine as a refuge for the Jewish survivors of a mass-murder already begun in Germany.

Mordechai, next to Estrella upstairs in the segregated place for the pre-barmitzvah boys, in 1938 when he and she were 8, with the women and the girls in the synagogue. Mordechai touched and stroked Estrella's shawl as if it was a talisman, it's fine texture a source of animal comfort. No one noticed, so transfixed were they by the horrors they saw and read in the press photographs and articles cut out of the German, Austrian, Polish and Yiddish papers being passed round the congregation.

Privately to people he could trust in the congregation, the rabbi gave the position of their refuge, the cave, as co-ordinates on maps showing the Belarus-Polish border and urged the utmost secrecy. The very orthodox said it was tempting the Adversary, Satan, who overheard such panicky talk. But the rabbi had a duty to tell the human truth: something terrible was coming.

Secretly, the rabbi said to known and trustworthy sympathisers that they should bring tents, warm clothing, weapons – guns and ammunition if possible – if not they should sharpen and bring along kitchen knives, crockery, cutlery, pans and dishes. Tools and utensils for digging and gardening. Disinfectants and medicines. Portable stoves running off paraffin. Healthy and hardy farm animals. Books, wind-up gramophones, records, musical scores, paper, pens and pencils. Radios which could run off batteries. Electric generators running off petrol. The vulnerable in the congregation shivered in terror.

A few, a very few leading congregants denounced their rabbi as lacking in proper faith in God and advocated *Kiddush HaShem* - martyrdom. The rabbi insisted: there were already *Einsatzgruppen* – euphemistically named “project groups” – death squads ready to murder Jews, socialists, gypsies and the old: village by village, town by town. City-suburb by city suburb. In 1942 there would be fully functional death camps where thousands could be murdered every day. Auschwitz was already being built in 1939. This fact had to be reiterated. It wasn’t true, said the rabbi, that God didn’t seem to care. Hitler and the Nazis had free will. What mattered was that something should remain of them, the Jews, who tried so hard to give something to the world.

Mordechai thought it was all senseless that this was happening.

His father Eliezer who had studied the philosophy of Wittgenstein suggested that meaning had to lie outside the world of facts. It came from logic, the world of pure reason: later, much later Mordechai learned about Kant and Hegel and Plato. When he was 17 he at last knew what *a priori* meant. What you ought to do depended on what the word “ought” meant and “do” meant, and what the function was of, say, Kant’s categorical imperative: behave as if you were behaving on behalf of mankind. Wittgenstein was different from Kant. “If a thought were correct *a priori*, it would be a thought whose possibility ensured its truth”, and to save a section of mankind from the Nazis you had to fight fire with fire. In theory you could treat the individual and the collective of Nazis as if you were acting for mankind as a whole.

But was there such a thing as a common mankind? Was it true that you either knew right from wrong, intuitively, from first principles, or you didn’t? Obviously, a world organised along Hitlerian or Stalinist lines was *against* much of German and Russian and world humanity: the lunatics were running the asylum. A man called Eric Blair whose pseudonym was George Orwell wrote a book published in England after the war called *Animal Farm*. The pigs wore suits, shirts and ties, walked on their hind legs, enslaved and sent the poor horse who believed in their revolutionary theories to the knackers’ yard– and abused the other animals who had collectivised the farm in the name of the most illustrious animal hero of all – Karl Marx. His father said Marx would turn in his grave if he could see what Stalin was doing in Russia.

Mordechai found the comrades in South Africa years later were annoyed with him when he mentioned the labour camps in the USSR. The Ministry of Truth in Orwell's other book, *1984*, purveyed lies just like the apartheid government depicted segregation as separate and (eventually) equal or what Dr Verwoerd called a policy of good neighbourliness.

They packed Mordechai's violin and Hannah took her priceless Amati with all the valuable things they could get into a wagon drawn by the farm tractor which in the summer could just about manage to get through the forest tracks to the cave in which they would find refuge. They had to leave the four-wheel drive Mercedes car with Dunyasha and Ivan, who came to fetch the tractor and the trailer because it was needed for sowing and harvesting. Mordechai wept at the thought of leaving Dunyasha and her husband and their grown-up children behind in the farmhouse and fields where he had been born and grew up. She taught him Russian and told him stories about the witch Baba Yaga and how goodness and kindness defeated evil, greed and cruelty.

It was obvious – the difference between good and evil. But how could you teach it to men and women who were worse than animals. Animals after all hadn't the power of speech and the complex intelligence of *homo sapiens*. "When I hear the word *Kultur* I reach for my gun," said Goering. Like an animal snarling. Worse. Intelligence traduced and corrupted.

Much later, when he was a university student, not being a specialist in logic, he tried to fathom how one could describe the Nazis, propositionally. "A proposition possesses essential and accidental features", wrote Wittgenstein. So, what to make of: "The Nazis are murderous racists"? Or "Some people are good and some are evil." Good and evil in Wittgenstein were "transcendental" which meant they existed above and beyond everyday reality. These qualities "make themselves manifest". At this point surely the *a priori* makes itself inherently clear. It was *essential* to Nazism that it has a programme of genocide. It was essential to all political movements that they have policies. But if incidentally, the programme was one of wiping out Jews, communists, gypsies.... The list could be added to "accidentally" dependent on the SS commander in charge of an *Einsatz* – a project – communists, Slavs, the handicapped. *Later much later he went back to Kant and concluded that in trying to act for mankind one had to recognize both the evil and the good in mankind, the persecutors and the victims. But these qualities were drawn down from the ideal world or the fundamental world from before – a priori. In theory. In practice people didn't practice all the a priori propositions.*

It was possible for the civilized to hide from the barbarians. That was the only language to use. They would live for nearly five years in a cave, which was in the process of being bricked up to cover its mouth and camouflaged with re-planted trees and bushes. One half would be for people and the other half for farm animals: Para and Katana – the cow and her calf, and Soos and Soosa the horses

and all the impedimenta including the indispensable tractor, petrol and trailer and other animals their kin and congregants would bring. Kelev their wolf-hound would sleep on Mordechai's stretcher bed and Mordechai would cuddle the animal in the night if the forest wolves or the owls' hooting disturbed him. Estrella and Mordechai would sleep in each other's arms if the dog was restless and had to be put into the animals' half of the cave. No one thought anything of 10 year- olds, a boy and a girl, sleeping in each other's arms. The Oshry sisters and the equally feminist and bohemian Luna rejected the repressively orthodox Jews and the Catholic gentiles with their puritanical views on sex and God. Stanislaw had been rejected by his Catholic family for marrying a Jew. Pope Pius in Rome would placate and appease Mussolini and Hitler. At least they knew that, now that Halifax and Chamberlain had gone, Churchill and Atlee would fight the Nazis, resisting the Blitz on London. Then came Pearl Harbour and, thank God, Mr Roosevelt would bring America into the war. As for the French surrender, *mon Dieu – c'est catastrophe! The Germans occupied much of France. General Petain would be in charge of Vichy which was a Nazi puppet state. General De Gaulle was in exile. Even he would lead the fight for the whites, the pied-noir French colonists, to stay in Algeria after the war. Until it was politic to give way to the FNLA.*

The regular concerts at the count's mansion stopped for the duration of the war. To take his mind off the Nazi wolves, in the summer sun in front of the bricked-up cave Minna would gently invite Mordechai to play through one of their favourite violin sonatas, based on a theme by Mozart, with his mother singing the piano part – of course when in hiding in the cave there was no piano. Although they could have fetched it from Malejczyc with the tractor and the trailer. What a ridiculous idea. It was already dangerous for Dunyasha and Ivan to be connected to the cave-dwellers. Contact had to be limited as much as possible. Stanislaw had installed a radio receiver-transmitter in the Malejczyc farm-house and his own mansion for emergencies.

Mordechai would go into the forest after dark, if all was safe and quiet, not just to hear the stars, but in search of a nightingale's courting song to which he could improvise a reverent accompaniment on the violin. It was an extraordinarily dangerous if romantic thing to do. It was *Yom Kippur, Kol Nidrei*, the evening before the Day of Atonement. Softly, so as not to alarm the nightingales or attract the Belarussian and Polish woodcutters of whom, by now, they hoped there were none in the area now that the Soviet Union had occupied eastern Poland and everyone was at home looking after his own family in the face of, by all accounts what would be, a terrible, savage, anti-Semitic, anti-Slav, anti-communist invasion when the Soviet-Nazi Pact ended and the German army swept in from the west, he courted the sweet bird of youth.

The music and the search for the songbird soothed him, made him joyous, freed his body, made him want to dance and laugh to the music – the instrument responding almost of itself to the variety of timbres, tonal and harmonic textures of the marvellous, insignificant little bird. About which John Keats wrote an ode which, one day, he would learn off by heart in English.

The count on whose land they had taken refuge had planted deciduous trees and shrubs and cleared away some of the indigenous pines so that the summer sun in the south would encourage grassy meadows full of wild flowers to attract insects, larks and nightingales, swallows, swifts, martins, and other migrants like ducks and geese, as well as the indigenous badgers and otters, salmon jumping in the rivers and streams, wolves, bison and bears.

Time would stand still. They would be happy. "But the world is independent of my will. Even if all we wish for were to happen, still this would be a favour that would be granted by fate... There is no logical connection between the will and the world..." Wittgenstein.

But if you were powerful, there *was* a connection between you and the world. They would have to live in the cave, where food could be stored and cooked, where they would be safe, where they could relieve themselves hygienically – they had dug a latrine at the back deeper in the forest lit by paraffin lamps at night. They could comfort the sick and the old and the anxious in the cave. Where they could sleep.

It was amazing that years later Mordechai discovered that the post-1933 Nazi party member Heidegger back in the 20s made *care, cura* in Latin, the central concern of Being-There. How could he live with himself as a Nazi party member? Opportunism. Survival. Hannah Arendt had to flee. Karl Jaspers, another world-famous philosopher was dismissed from his post and hid his Jewish wife in their house and relied on the decency of neighbours and delivery people not to betray her.

His father, Eliezer Pekarsky, the one who constantly acknowledged that he corresponded with Wittgenstein, spoke, read and wrote in six languages and thought philosophically in every one of them, and before the war, still had time to see to the ploughing, sowing, harvesting and milling of grain, the milking the cows, the sheep-shearing, the making of cheese and butter, as well as writing his articles for learned journals.

Except now. Only the Jewish-Palestinian and American periodicals would countenance his attacks on Nazism. They had to be smuggled out by foreigners with passports giving no indication that they were Jews. The Russians wouldn't let Jews out of eastern Poland, people whose passports had names like Oshry and Pekarsky on them, and whose religion was given as Jewish. It was dangerous trying to cross the border with the Russians very sensitive to Jews spreading bad news about Stalin's pact with the Nazis.

By the middle of the war, after the Russians had retreated and the whole of Poland and much of Belarus was in German hands, whilst hunting and gathering in the forest, they found ditches in

clearings where hundreds of Jews, communists, the old, the handicapped were buried: a decaying or frozen hand or foot or even a horrified face eaten down to the skull could be seen sticking out of a mound of earth like a signal:

“Here I am – here I was – do not forget me!” Around this ghastly signpost, fructifying deeper down in the earth, there was the organic, fleshy decay of bodies, half a metre deep.

The Russian prisoners of war couldn't care less. As gravediggers for Jewish bodies, Jews were as remote from them as their beloved mother-country was close to them, although at this terrible moment, Russia was alienated from them under the jackboot of a barbarous enemy. Mordechai was 13 in 1943 when he saw this mass grave into which he and Estrella had wandered whilst gathering mushrooms, nuts and berries in the Belarus forest.

In these ditches, mass-graves, the uttermost of death existed in between verdant and colourful weeds, pink, yellow and purple, willow-herb, ragwort, cow-slip and morning glory. Uranus the great, horrific, rapist husbandman of Gaia, mother earth, haunted Jewish dreams in the guise of Satan, the Adversary of God who took on a bet with Elohim that the misfortunes he visited on Job would cause His faithful servant to curse the Lord and ask to die. Prehistoric myth had come true, the Ur-god was Hitler who ate his native and alien children. He was the Adversary of God, a combination of Satan and Uranus.

Back in the late 1890s, in Lintz primary and junior school in Austria, it was not known if Adolf Hitler was put to shame by a fellow pupil who would revolutionise linguistic philosophy: the half-Jewish Ludwig Wittgenstein whose parents thought him backward. Imagine the feelings of the grandson of a single mother, the son of a customs official adopted by the Hiedler brothers, confronted by the son of one of the richest Jews in Austria, the steel baron Wittgenstein who had three palatial houses in and around Vienna.

Ludwig in the trenches of the Great War was able to start his *Tractatus* with the words: “The world is all that is the case. The world is the totality of facts, not of things.” And he would conclude, penultimately: “There are indeed things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest...*”

Like an accident of fate confronting thousands of Jewish scientists and philosophers of proud descent with one Adolf Hitler, self-educated dictator of Germany, paternal grandfather unknown: and his party, unspeakably horrible, built on Jew-hatred.

And then finally: “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence”. That must mean the a priori -which Mordechai learned about when he was 17 in 1947 when they were in Palestine. It was not the case that there was a God-in-the-external-world – whatever the Christians and the orthodox Jews said. It was ironical that the Nazi member Heidegger regarded care as an a priori. You couldn’t stretch the meaning of cara – care – to include racist mass-murder. After the war lecturing in Bremen in 1949 Heidegger equated factory farming with killing non-militant Jews in gas-chambers and the atomic bombing of the Japanese in order to bring the war in the Pacific to an end. Categorical mistakes in logic? Or impartial assessment of the consequences of technology for a now machinated mankind, of which Heidegger was an active member posing as a critic?

Despite Heidegger, the a priori of Kant’s categorical imperative – “try to act as if for mankind” - that Mordechai learned when he was a young man, was a representation of God inside one, metaphorically, the immanent God, in theory.

Was it typical of the Germans and the Austrians, who swung wildly between elitist *Kultur* and hatred after the humiliation of the Versailles treaty of 1918, that an implacably evil nobody, became the god of death? Gassed in World War One by the allies, whose armaments were allegedly funded by Jewish capital, Hitler was awarded the Iron Cross by his unit commander for his gallantry running messages from 1914 to 1918. God forbid – this honour was pinned on his uniform by a Jew called Gutmann.

When Hitler saw bearded, poor Jews with ear-locks in Vienna, grotesquely oriental, and rich Jews in the opulent suburbs who dared to look and live like patriotic Austrians, Hitler felt he could smell their alien Jewishness and determined that they too, the deicides, corrupted with syphilis and Bolshevism, should be “held under the gas”. Besides, their perceived representatives in the Vienna school of art had rejected him and his nondescript paintings of cityscapes. He, awarded the Iron Cross, had to live in doss houses like a tramp with other gassed and mutilated veterans of the Great War. Good God! Charlie Chaplin personally caricatured him with his by now well-known square little moustache between nose and upper lip! The Great Dictator made a fool of by Chaplin, a Jew from Lambeth, where proletarian and middle-class Jews lived across the river from the mother of Parliaments – polluting Anglo-Saxon democracy. Hitler would redeem German pride and glory. Public spending and investment would lift Germany out of the Great Depression. If Halifax and Chamberlain had their way Britain might have already capitulated and Hitler would have tried to put his friend the Duke of Windsor back on the throne as King Edward VIII and Mrs Wallis Simpson as Queen and Hitler himself or a regional *gauleiter* would take up residence in All Souls College, Oxford. For Hitler Berlin would become the centre of the 1000-year *Reich*. The Gestapo had their gallows there. In 1944 he would watch films of conspirators like Count von Stauffenberg ‘s brother being hanged and revived and hanged again, some said with piano wire. This was the sadism of monsters.

Years later Mordechai would mentally rehearse the names of second cousins, great-uncles and great-aunts who could not – or would not – hide from the killers and ended up being shot by Belarussian, Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian Nazis, commanded by the SS section of the *Wehrmacht* and dying in a ditch: “There are indeed things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest...*” wrote Wittgenstein. Still even if God could not be in the world, *a priori*, he was immanent, unspeakably so.

*

When he was still 8 early in 1939, before the Nazi invasion, before they sought refuge in the cave, he would beg Dunyasha and Ivan, their Russian employees in the farm house, to take him and her own children to the woods beyond their wooden synagogue with its signs of the zodiac painted on its ceiling, beyond the God of the prayer-books, beyond their farm of cows and vegetables and fields of grain. From clearings the count had made deep in the forest they could see wonderful predatory birds like kestrels, hawks, eagles, and in the evening, owls, with their weird ghostly faces, gliding on the thermal currents, hovering, then plunging onto their prey.

Nature was sometimes not blissful. It was sometimes hard and brutal. Before the Nazis invaded, whilst the cave was still being organised as a refuge, still at home in the farmhouse, he would wake up at midnight and go to his mother’s or Dunyasha’s and Ivan’s room to hear not nightingales singing joyously for a mate, but cunning, raiding foxes out for their chickens, ducks and geese (the vixen had an eerie call). He could hear packs of wolves who, unlike humans, only killed when they were hungry and bonded with each other like a choir, howling in harmonic pitches which blended with each other, and bears that roared defiance. The Nazis of the animal world? His father would go out and check the chicken and geese coops and get Kelev their wolf-hound to follow the fox and leave the fox, the vixen and the cubs a chicken whose neck they had wrung near the den where Kelev found the scent ended. Even foxes had to eat and live in the world which God and the *Shekhina*, God’s holy spirit had made - through the evolutionary process - which went back millions, billions of years.

They were educated people with university degrees and musical diplomas from Austria and Germany. Their hatred and contempt for Hitler would finally be vindicated in 1945. But at what a cost.

“There are indeed things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest...*” The unspeakable cruelty of fate.

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Whenever they came across what was ghastly, Mordechai's anxiety would be allayed like that of Orpheus when he would play violin duets with Hannah and sonatas with his mother singing the piano part. They and Estrella were his Eurydice figures.

His father read him the myths of all the civilisations of the world, perhaps to "inoculate" him for his descent into hell to seek out his Eurydice: Estrella, his mother Minna and his aunt Hannah and his other aunt, the flautist Iris Bloom and his uncle Jeremiah Edelstein on the viola all taught him to play Bach, Mozart and Beethoven, in simplified passages at first. All four of his grandparents could sing in Hebrew, Yiddish, German and Polish when they got together at Passover time. Until the *Bacchae* tore him to pieces: meaning he was mortally vulnerable without a Eurydice to follow him. He was not to look back on her – on them – his grandparents and Minna and Hannah and Iris and Estrella and Luna - otherwise he could not free them and himself from death and hell. Yet in retrospect he had to reiterate their names and kinship with him. Especially Estrella.

"There are indeed things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest...*" That there was a meaning in the universe, in the world, there was, in the world, love. These things could be put into words *after* they make themselves manifest.

Hell was many things including the inability to be alone and yet the need to be alone in communion with – whom? – Demeter looking for her daughter Persephone...? And free from the unmitigated brutal nature of the Nazis ready and waiting to dismember all of them with Hitler sitting on the throne of Hades? Through fate perhaps they would escape Hades.

They had to gradually play through the whole classical chamber music repertoire and to look forward to Palestine and Africa where their lucky relatives had established themselves before the rise of the Nazis. He feared, feared terribly, he would lose Estrella if they went to Africa.

Taking refuge from the Nazis in a cave on a hill surrounded by the Novagrudak Forest of Belarus.... It was as much as they could do, to just stay alive although their music kept them from disintegrating emotionally. That was their resistance. And to fight the monsters whom, he suspected, later, when he was a studious adolescent, fearfully, could, most of them, defy faith in an immanent God. All the killers were baptised Christians. He was eventually sure that immanent ethics were only *intuitively* part of the totality of facts, including the facts concerning which Wittgenstein determined were the case and were not the case. For example, the Von Stauffenbergs approved of the colonisation of Poland and Hitler's early military brilliance. Later, much later, he became aware with Wittgenstein, that states of affairs can be quite independent of one another. Who would have thought that the

Von Stauffenbergs would conspire against Hitler, that the bomb plot would fail because someone moved the briefcase containing a bomb in a way that shielded Hitler from the blast?

What did one do in the case of brainwashed or psychopathic or cynical exponents of the political and historical facts: economics, war and totalitarian ideology provided the driving forces behind the history of rival empires? This was a state of affairs in which objects, subjects, stand in a determinate way to one another.

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His maternal grandfather, the rabbi Philip Oshry - for the duration of the war - became a Nazarite like Samson and John the Baptist. He vowed not to cut his hair till Hitler and the leading Nazis were brought to justice. He avoided wine and spirits – even the sabbath sacramental wine – but he made an exception of the third Nazarite vow: as the only rabbi in the cave, he would have to touch and help carry and bury the dead. Some were already old, frightened, sick, traumatised by the removal into a cave.

A cave? Middle-class and working class and rural Jews living in a cave, like the prophet Elijah? Except they were not fed by ravens, but by the cheese they made in the cave and what they could shoot and gather in the forest, the meadows, the streams, and secretly transport from their farms.

They made a point of being neat and clean – to avoid seeing each other as homeless, persecuted Jews reduced to living in a cave like animals. Except for the rabbi, under Nazarite vows, they cut their hair but he also washed in buckets of hot water boiled on the wood-burning stoves heating the two halves of the bricked-up cave. Camouflaged by newly planted trees and bushes.

They dug a field latrine. They disinfected it. They had gallons of disinfectant which would last years. They had medicines. There was Uncle Mendel Bloom, a distinguished doctor, who had to flee the Vienna University medical school where he knew Freud.

Uncle Mendel and his wife, the third Oshry sister, Iris Bloom, a flautist, had been with the Palestine Orchestra and the Hadassa Hospital before coming back to help their parents to emigrate to Jerusalem. But they were trapped when Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany put a stop to Jewish emigration during the Hitler-Stalin pact.

When they were happy they had to be quiet to go on feeling safe. The violin and flute concerts had to be muted. They were joyous on Shabbat. Except for the Nazarite grandfather Rabbi Philip Oshry with his shoulder-length hair, they drank wine from the estate of Stanislaw the Polish count with the Jewish wife and therefore by Jewish law, a Jewish child. The cave was on his forest land.

They celebrated the festivals. They nevertheless had to do this in front of a pre-historic wall-painting of deer, wild cattle – aurochs - bison, boar, eagles, embodying the spiritual beliefs of Palaeolithic or Neolithic *homo sapiens* on the back wall of the cave, perhaps 10,000 or 15,000 years old or more.

The count, Stanislaw (36 in 1940), was an archaeologist and he gave them insights into prehistoric hunter-gatherer religion which Mordechai only fully understood when he became an undergraduate after the war when they got to South Africa and then Oxford.

Many of the Orthodox died like the martyrs they believed God required them to be. Mordechai admired his grandfather, the rabbi, who had studied what was called Enlightened Judaism in Germany (the *Haskalah*) although the little village (*shtetl*) synagogues were ruled by sternly Orthodox congregants who feared modern science and, tragically, put their faith in a transcendental God who knew in His wisdom what was the meaning of the Holocaust: *Kiddush ha Shem* – the Sanctification of the Name (of God) – martyrdom.

In return for the agonising death of the orthodox who let themselves be captured and killed, other Jews could now return to the Promised Land? The world would feel sorry for the Jews, and according to the Balfour Declaration, would help to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine, now under the mandate of Britain? If not by the power of God, that was the logic of the situation? Under the guise of the moral calculus of the *a priori*, the other European and American powers would be able to keep their doors shut against Jewish refugees: let them go to Palestine? But what of the promises made to the Arab Palestinians?

This was duplicity. In politics Machiavelli the author of *The Prince* a textbook of statecraft argued:

“It is better to be feared than loved, if you cannot be both”.

“Whosoever desires constant success must change his conduct with the times”.

“Men judge generally more by the eye than by the hand, for everyone can see and few can feel. Everyone sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are”.

By the time Mordechai and Estrella were 14, in 1944, his friends, the countess Luna hiding with the Oshrys and the Pekarskys in the cave, explained to the children from the encyclopaedias they had carted from their houses and the count's mansion to the cave with the help of Soos and Soosa, the horses, that there was a bad theological meaning, a forbidding historical meaning of anti-Semitism – a meaning that appealed to priests corrupted by the narrowest dogma about Judas the Jewish “betraye”. The four grandparents and the childless aunts were pleased that their only grandchild and only nephew and his Jewish girlfriend were now bonded together lovingly.

Mordechai as he grew older and absorbed a lot of knowledge through his own and Estrella's researches in the encyclopaedias and found no difficulty going back in their minds nearly two thousand years.

Everyone in a political or military or priestly position in Jerusalem knew who Jesus of Nazareth was including the Roman soldiers whose job it was to keep an eye on agitators and subversives, so it was pure anti-Semitism to have Judas supposedly identify Jesus for silver with a kiss. Judas, Yehuda, was quite a wealthy man.

Why would he, a favourite of Jesus, want to betray him? Yet, here it was, historically, or pseudo-historically: the fundamental and ultimate cause of anti-Semitism, punishment for the Jews for betraying the Son of God. This was the picture of the Jew in the pseudo-logical space, constructed for him by the anti-Semite.

*

In 1944 when Mordechai was 14 they thought they would all be killed by a Belarussian police battalion which had heard of their secret existence. The police battalions were the ones, under the control of the SS, who formed the *Einsatzgruppen*, who killed the Jews and others falling foul of various nationalist/fascist ideologies.

His mind, obsessively, compulsively, went back to this terrible time: the local Nazis got Russian prisoners-of-war to bury the martyred too shallowly in ditches from which ghastly and blessed hands, feet and faces arose to remind the forest animals what human flesh tasted like. On the whole the wild carnivores avoided this rotten, sacred flesh, blood and bone – which is why these signs remained pointing to heaven as gnawed skeletons.

He could not get this recurring image out of his mind.

Over and over again he debated in his mind the issue of fate: the Jewish resistance had machine guns from the Polish army stolen for them by the count. They had boxes of ammunition and hand-grenades. Alerted by their wolf-hound Kelev, the cave-dwellers sometimes thought they heard the Belarussian police and their dogs in the forest in the middle of the night. All the able-bodied reassured the old, the sick and the handicapped they left behind in the cave. The young and able-bodied were now partisans and would hide in the long grass in the clearing around the cave. The count on whose forest land the cave was situated and Mordechai's grandfather Philip distributed hand-grenades and rifles and set up machine guns. They waited for the dawn.

Grandfather – the rabbi – showed Mordechai how to remove the pins of the grenades, hand them back to him, for him to throw like a cricket ball into the enemy (he learned about cricket later in South Africa).

But by now – 1944 – aged 14 Mordechai was tired and angry about why his unconscious mind was making him remember and re-remember the torment. Angry about God. Angry about his father, a philosopher/farmer who even now had his nose stuck in a book although he knew how to use their armaments. Why? What had secular and religious knowledge brought them? Knowledge of *why* they suffered? What good was the *a priori* to the dead, the murdered dead? Was it not cruel that his philosopher father kept *teaching* him this hard doctrine when he wanted to enjoy his childhood with Estrella without a care in the world? The dead did not know they died for Palestine to become a Jewish homeland. Or perhaps they did, in their last few moments.

It was 1944. He was 14 years old. He had to make a conscious mental note of how young he was when terrible things happened in case he lost his bearings when he grew up and had to face what was overwhelming because his neurotic phobias were once real and deeply imprinted in the brain's amygdala.

Was it thanks to the *Shekhina*, the female spirit of God, that the Belarussian police realised Hitler had lost the war? Mordechai dreamed about the *Shekhina* who had four faces like the vision of Ezekiel of the creatures pulling the divine chariot: a lion, an eagle, a bull and a woman – not a man like in the Hebrew bible, but a woman looking like Estrella.

When 1944 and 1945 came the cave-dwellers had to hide away from advancing Russian troops seeking revenge against the fascists and Nazis *and the Jews their fellow victims* whom the most naïve Russians hated on traditional religious grounds despite communist atheism. Or misinformed by vulgar Marxism that the Jews were “essentially” capitalists?

There was no predicted raid from the Nazis or later from the Russian communists. The hunters and the hunted lived in different states of affairs, as Wittgenstein put it. None of their enemies had the full picture of where they were. That is what thoughts were: pictures of reality or pictures of abstraction, which you could announce and interrogate until you got the whole picture minus what could not be pictured because it was too horrible or too abstract.

Pictures put out feelers like insects which touched reality and gave states of affairs within reality, time, space, colour, a structure of logic, even space-time folded in a fourth dimension back on itself.

Whilst he guarded his supply of hand-grenades Mordechai involuntarily recited the *Kaddish* and other prayers for the dead and dying. In 1944 at 14 years old, he was familiar with Torah and prayer-book Hebrew, and Yiddish.

He would not have his bar-mitzvah in the cave. The others spoke and exercised their minds by speaking English, Russian, French, Ladino and German which they already knew and the multi-lingual countess encouraged the adults and children in the cave to perfect their languages from text-books she brought with her from the count's and her library. In the cold, the ice, the snow, when the old and the sick were dying, they had a picture in their minds of Jewish and European civilisation at the very time it was being destroyed by the sadistic little corporal with his square moustache and his wheezy gassed lungs, with a totally different picture as his model of reality.

The strain was such that Mordechai was affected by fits of vomiting, even when the hunted, cooked deer-meat and frozen vegetables boiled on the stove were apparently perfectly healthy foods for the others.

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At 22 in 1952 in South Africa he could say it more fully: "The human race is still savage. Tens of millions have died. Is this enough for what you call God? Is God satisfied that He has enough martyrs?" This irony was a picture of a world with the transcendental God dead as Nietzsche's madman lamented, but an inner symbolic God all the more alive.

The old transcendental God, in this day and age was a mythical picture whose meaning was this: the splitting of sex from divine love leading to this resultant: *the availability of libido for work and aggression and creativity.*

He thought: this state of affairs, this structure of situations was why we are still hated. It's obvious. Because we, the Jews, together with the intellectuals, demystify as well as perpetuate religion. The Gentile middle class and the disadvantaged working class require scapegoats for imperial and personal greed and colonial power and to explain plain ordinary human misery so – anti-Semitism exists – blaming the Jews for both the mystification of religion and its de-mystification.

His father Eliezer, endlessly aware of having been Wittgenstein's student at Cambridge in the 1930s, when he was able to take a holiday from the farm, wife Minna and baby Mordechai, went on being endlessly patient and logical. Years later Mordechai understood him through Wittgenstein: the facts in logical space are the world. Even God is in the logical space of only the inner world of faith and the outer *mythical* world of *Eheyeh "I am" or "Yesh" – "Being"*. Being is transformed into a creative force in the inner world of faith but cannot be put into a logical proposition other than the "is-ness" of "is": "God is that he is" just as "a presumed omnipotent, omniscient subject is-in-the-world if ethically projected by the speaking subject".

But, first of all we were in the *illogical* space of Hitler's and the Nazis' minds as projected into an illogical picture of society. As capitalist demons of greed and the diseased bacilli of Bolshevism we are *not* in *their logical* space, because they do not picture logical space. Real Jews were murdered so that Hitler's and the Nazis' minds would be *subjectively* cleansed of possessive Jewish demons and Bolshevik bacilli and the real world would thus have *lebensraum* for healthy Aryan Germans - after all the Jews and the Russian communists were wiped out. But, logically, this could not be because the rest of the world could not, would not, accede to this state of affairs.

It was another Ur-myth. Once the *illogical* space in the German mind was cleared of pre-Christian demons and imaginary bacilli and the Third Reich had been destroyed they no longer had to hide in the cave. But in the process their world had been destroyed.

He read and re-read Wittgenstein when he was much older: until 1945 the cave was in the *logical* space of the *forest*. There was a logical reason why they were there: to conceal themselves from monsters. The forest was in the logical space of Belarus. This too was logical: they *had* to hide in what was a friendly territorial home ground which became a *logistical* background.

Mordechai clung to the *Tractatus* desperately although he only *first* understood it when Estrella or his father explained it carefully to him: Belarus was in a logical space patrolled by Nazi collaborators and subverted by Russian communists and Polish and Jewish partisans, and it would *have* to have a logical structure: it was a *state of affairs* with a potentially logical but also a potentially *absurd* structure. What he and Estrella didn't understand Eliezer explained.

At times things did not add up, illogicality reached mammoth proportions.

About Wittgenstein – until he realised that language was not only the vehicle for logical propositions, but also was used in a “game” of power-relations. Language concealed motives as much as revealing the inner situational structure of motives.

Later Mordechai wrote in his memoir of the war: “We were Jews hated by Nazis more than by communists, who suspected rather than hated Jews. The communists at least didn’t just gas Jews on principle. They put Jewish Bolsheviks on trial as enemies of the people in the 1930s show-trials - the Jewish members of the central committee of the Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party which organised the Bolshevik revolution and shot them in the cellars of the Lubyanka Prison.”

“And Stalin laughed when he heard that they fell on their knees and recited the prayer hallowing God, the prayer for the dead, the *Kaddish*.”

At this point existence had to face the limitations of Wittgenstein’s logical propositions. The world is everything that is the case including the fact that the absurd, the cruel and the monstrous is the case – a whole set of facts quite different from logic based on ethical suppositions that are unspeakable and only imaginatively transcendental: it was mad logic proceeding from the mad unconscious of the political mystique of the times.

From 1940 to 1945 the impossibility of a fully logical response to a mad logic faced them every waking moment. The totality of facts that was Real, had to include the inability to state what was mystical or horrible: in their culture, they could not give up hope that *Eheyeh Asher Eheyeh*, I am that I am, I am what I will be – Being - the burning bush that was not consumed, would help them save themselves. “*Yesh*” - *Being was potential ethics.*

They were in a logical space where the idea of God was killed by us, *mankind*, and Nietzsche’s madman may also have been, metaphorically, in their logical space at the back of all their minds singing requiems for the dead God.

Many of them believed that Elohim did not share their logical space. He was dead, but the *Shekhina*, the holy spirit was alive, metaphorically. They could see the holy spirit symbolically alive in the Palaeolithic or Neolithic paintings on the cave wall which asked forgiveness from the animal spirits

for *homo sapiens* killing and eating their bodies, begging them to resurrect their animal and human ancestors to help them give birth to their successors, to inspire fertility in this world. It was less a true belief than a symbolic, imaginary belief that through constant prayer had become Real.

As well as Wittgenstein there was, explained Eliezer, Heidegger, who, although a nominal Nazi, had deconstructed metaphysics. Through our contemplation of our death, our finitude, we develop a conscience which causes us to feel we must have concern about the Others. When some *Wehrmacht* deserter, Robert Wagner, a friend of the count, tracked them down and joined them in 1943 he brought the book he obtained during the western campaign against France by J.- P. Sartre *L'Être et le néant* which Eliezer took a few weeks to read and thereupon to announce that thenceforth philosophy had taken a new turn.

Yes, philosophy had been born again. As if they didn't know it: they were free because of the *pour-soi* and the *en-soir*: the transcendental and the empirical. Only God was perfectly transcendental and perfectly empirical about everything. But only our *factitude* about being human not our *finitude* about death stopped us being freer than we were.

The world, despite, or rather because of Auschwitz, Nagasaki and Hiroshima, didn't stop in 1945.

Despite horror, atrocity, the Imaginary was subjected to the "phallic" (or vaginal/clitoral) erection of the Symbolic which became Real in the form of say, a liberal ideology, or a feminist ideology. One had to live with hope: the love and sex which would generate the future. Robert Wagner was like Mercury, Hermes, the messenger of the gods. He had come across a shrink in Paris during the Nazi occupation called Jacques Lacan, quite young in 1943, and managed to get out of his newly published book a French Freudianism which he transmitted to Eliezer who stored it in his every encompassing memory for future use and present morale. The women and children looked on proudly as the men kept up the atmosphere of a continuous seminar. Luna butted in and said Plato had got there first 2000 years ago: we women are the keepers of the cave, in that we manage to make it like a *chora*, a sort of womb for the hurrying and scurrying entries and exits of.... She didn't want to talk about sex in front of the children but Estrella explained to Mordechai what the hell they were all driving at. Sex and the womb echoed thought.

By the meadow by the stream where the salmon jumped to go spawning, Mordechai in 1945 was 15 but Estrella was 15 and menstruating. Luna, a doctor trained at Freiburg, had to be told and had to advise them. The cave-dwellers had been joined by the *Wehrmacht* deserter, Robert Wagner who as soon as the German army crossed into the USSR evaded his medical unit and drove an ambulance through the forest to his old university friend Stanislaw's country mansion only to be told by the servants where Luna, Estrella and he were hiding.

When they did get to Palestine in 1948 it was shocking to Mordechai to realise the arbitrary nature of reality. The world divides into facts, said Wittgenstein. World-political facts. The count Lubliniewski had in the early 1940s been saved from the Katyn massacre of Polish officers, a mass murder conducted on the specific signed orders of Stalin and Beria to promote their vision of a post-Fascist communist Poland without a traditional ruling class. Twenty thousand Polish officers and intellectuals including Jews were murdered on Russian soil.

Mordechai could not free himself from his obsession with the cave even when they got to the safety of Palestine. It had been his childhood womb. The count owned the cave. He could easily have been killed at Katyn, but then Luna Cordovero his Jewish Sephardi wife originally from Bulgaria and before that – pre-1492 – her ancestors came from Spain - may have offered them refuge in the cave and everything would have been the same. That was the state of affairs – a combination of things – an alliance. It was essential to them as Jews that they recognise that the cave as a secret refuge and source of food, warmth, comfort, arms and ammunition, medical supplies: it was the only thing that stood between them and certain death. Every day spent alive was not an accident but was contingent on absolute secrecy, silence, hidden-ness.

From the very beginning of Christianity, the life and death of Jews, the alleged killers of the Son of God, was written into the tolerance of Israelites by other Canaanites, by ancient Egyptians, Christians, Romans, Greeks. Jews could renounce their faith, convert, change their names, fight to the death, but never live down the fact that Christ the Jew could not be *the* Messiah since his presence in Jerusalem did not bring about a messianic apocalypse. Thus, they would always be guilty of rejecting God.

Or the followers of Jesus, the Christ, such as Paul could reconstruct Judaism so as to accommodate Jewish Christians. But internally *they* knew they were the people of Being, *Eheyeh Asher Eheyeh*, the existential representatives of Being, *Yesh* or, more naively, God. One cannot be just a Jew. To be a Jew one has a relationship with *Eheyeh Asher Eheyeh* – that which speaks Being.

Estrella Cordevero, very bright but at 10 in 1940, still needed the adults' help to understand and to explain to Mordechai about the rabbi's and his father's Eliezer Pekarsky's books on mysticism, Kabbalah, about talking to Being. As much as they could understand. The adults did indeed help them understand the bare outlines of the rabbi's and his father's mystical books in Hebrew, Yiddish, German and in English as well as those in the Cordevero's native Ladino, Judaeo-Spanish. You needed to fast, pray, remember the special names of God and His or Her 10 emanations whilst doing the Kabbalistic breathing exercises and visualisations. Biblical characters like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Rachel, Leah, Rebecca, David were internalised by being mapped onto the body in

Kabbalism. Then Estrella and Mordechai would bathe in the stream at the bottom of the valley until the voice of Being began to speak to them as it did to Moses. They knew they were not going mad.

Coming back to the Belarussian Nazis' raid that didn't happen: it was an old woman, whom villagers called a witch who lived in a woodman's hut in the forest who traded in terrifying rumours.

She saw Estrella and Mordechai bathing in the stream and told them that the following Shabbat evening the Belarussian police battalion, an *Einsatzgruppe*, which, going from *shtetl* to *shtetl*, (the Jewish villages and little towns) had already killed tens of thousands of village Jews in 1941, was reassembling to attack their cave – in 1944.

She said God - she wasn't sure which aspect of him, Adonai or Elohim or YHVH spoke to her (she may have been an ostracised "mad" Kabbalistic Jew) - but she had seen all their murdered relatives in the afterlife asking for revenge. She asked them to bring her fresh or smoked venison and she would tell them God's plan for their continued survival (which she later did after the non-battle with the *Einsatzgruppe*, because as it happened, and as they never ceased reminding themselves, the Belarus police battalion did not after all discover or raid them that Friday night in 1944. They must have known from the retreating German armies that Hitler had lost the war.)

She had talons for fingernails and toe nails, but not a witch's nose and chin, and no broomstick or conical hat or black cat. Maybe she was beautiful once. She spoke in a mixture of Yiddish, Russian and Polish, which to a psychiatrist must have sounded odd. She must have been an herbalist and lived as a hunter-gatherer because she had a dead rabbit hanging from her belt and a bag for plants, flowers, roots, fungi. In exchange for the "secret intelligence" which at least put the cave dwellers on their mettle, she got her venison and she gave them sacks of mushrooms and fungi and edible roots, flowers and leaves. She had no firearms for hunting but they noticed the strings and nets of snares for catching wild rabbits drooping out of another bag. Rabbits were not *kasher* because they were thought to chew the cud (they didn't) but they had no cloven foot.

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As an archaeologist, the count had written only privately not in scientific journals about the cave, and its location was otherwise a secret, about which not even his servants knew the details, only the location. It was a mysterious place, forgotten for thousands of years, but undoubtedly connected with the earliest *homo sapiens* in that area, a branch of autochthonous mankind emerging from an Ice Age, and then rediscovered in recent times by other fugitives. The count's father, an amateur archaeologist had re-discovered it in the Great War and it was possible that Polish patriots may have

hidden there from the armies of the great powers which historically had annihilated Poland as an entity. Even if this knowledge had become part of local folklore it was literally buried in the forest, and, without the count's maps totally inaccessible. In a sense their very existence was dependent on the cave as a *thing*, as well as a *fact* for other people. But it did exist for them, as Wittgenstein might have put it, in infinite space, on a grid on an obscure, ancient map. Without it they were as good as dead.

The count wanted to help them save themselves and his Jewish wife and child. That was the basis of Mordechai's family's own survival because without the secret, hidden cave they would not have been saved. Later the older Mordechai suffered agonies of mental pain trying to reconcile the logic of logic, and the logic of fallible, absurd historical reality.

Others in the annals of the Holocaust had been helped by righteous gentiles like Stanislaw Lubliniewski. One could only attribute salvation to the arbitrariness and the intelligence of Being, which would come to them as a "divine" revelation as it might have done to Wittgenstein, "out of the blue" like a newly created piece of art as Rudolf Carnap put it describing a struggle in his inspired lecture-meditations through which Wittgenstein tried to create philosophical logic without resorting to a speak-able ethics. There was an element of the unpredictable, other people's exercise of free will, which was linked to the logic of facts by situations with structures.

So, the world is determined by the facts, and their being all the facts which produced the compound structure of situations. All the facts suggested that God or Being had hidden Her face from the Jews, or as an entity never existed. But mysterious redemptions occurred strangely and rarely like the "witch" warning them of the Belarussian attack the following Friday night, which simply tempered them like steel. Heaven knows how this "witch" of the forest must have heard some gossip from another supposedly secret source. It didn't happen not because it wasn't planned, but because by then even the Nazis in the Belarus police must have known that the Nazis' Russian campaign was a colossal failure. Yet that didn't save Jews in concentration camps from ultimately hopeless and determined death marches ordered by the mad exterminator in chief, the lunatic Hitler and his fellow madmen and madwomen. Such as Goebbels and Frau Goebbels who ultimately poisoned all their children and shot themselves in the Berlin bunker of the Fuhrer.

Having subdued central and western Europe by means of mass-murder and terror, the motorised, technologically sophisticated savages who swept through eastern Europe and into Russia were finally repulsed after the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk. By comparison mankind's Neolithic and Palaeolithic ancestors were benign.

If you had been living 30,000 years ago and been a Neanderthal, *homo sapiens* would have made you extinct, although *sapiens* acquired Neanderthal genes in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Mutations occurred and the “fittest” – often not only the most intelligent but the most brutal - were able to make war and peace, and the most intelligent of the fittest would not only allow but stop the most horrible of the “fittest” going on with their ghastly “evolutionary” struggle. And wise, good, witches survived, as anachronistic survivals of ancient times.

The world divided into facts. With their Axis allies, Italy and Japan, the Nazis and their coalition spread their mass-murder into the Far East and the Pacific. “*Deutschland uber alles*” turned out to be the politics of race-hatred far worse than the genocide suffered by the Neanderthals at the hands of *homo sapiens sapiens*. The Neanderthals *had* less brain-power, but at least they mingled sexually with *homo sapiens*.

Not all Germans were Nazis. As Wittgenstein had already put it: “States of affairs are independent of one another.” Field-Marshal Rommel did not go for the Jews. And when the Afrika Korps lost, Hitler forced him to commit suicide or be executed.

That is what they lived through, they and their relatives. By the end of the war at 15 Mordechai could pray to :”*Eheyeh Asher Eheyeh*” “*I Am That I Am*” because Being was all that was left. This was the substance, the form and content of Mordechai’s world which contained music, the love of his relatives and of Estrella, Luna and Stanislaw. And Kelev the wolf-hound. This was the sum total of the Symbolic and Imaginary Reality of his world.

Each one of them had a mental picture of every other one of them.

The German deserter with them, Robert Wagner... He was a descendent of Richard Wagner but there the resemblance ended, although he could sing the arias from the operas which the others in the cave could accompany by ear on their stringed and wind-instruments. He was a friend of the Polish count. They knew each other as students. When the *Wehrmacht* came near the Polish/Belarus border he knew that he might conceivably desert and get away with it. When he first arrived driving a *Wehrmacht* ambulance, they, thinking he was a Nazi scout – nearly opened fire with their hunting rifles and their Polish army machine guns acquired by Stanislaw - before Stanislaw recognised Robert. Stanislaw pictured him as a friend. Estrella, Luna, and the rabbinical grandfather Philip pictured him as a friend. A thought was simply a picture. Unless it was also part of a strategy, a language-“game”.

But others were afraid of his presence. Perhaps the Nazis or their surrogates the Belarus police or an *Einstazgruppe* would come looking for the deserter and the stolen ambulance, suspecting Jewish partisans. His trail or theirs here could be followed by their Alsatian dogs. They could all be killed in a siege situation. Perhaps he *was* a Nazi scout, a spy who would betray them even when the war was nearly over.

But Robert was good and honest. He was also a philosopher. The place was crawling with philosophers, like ants, or hopping frogs croaking out their wisdom in the face of the insane psychopaths ruining the world of humankind and nature.

By the end of the war, when Mordechai was 15, the rabbi, Robert, and his parents had taught them, including Estrella in terms they could understand, simply, what was right and wrong. They were educated beyond their years because they faced discovery by the enemy every day and had to keep the light of learning ablaze – or succumb to hopeless apathy. Local anti-Semites might kill them even when the Nazis had lost the war. They had to keep civilization alive in the midst of barbarians. Their books, their professions, their faith, their ritual observances, their hunting and gathering, their use of the count's supplies brought by the horses Soos and Soosa in saddle bags from the big mansion... All this was vital to them staying alive.

Mordechai's grandfather, Rabbi Philip Oshry converted Robert to Judaism although to make it official he would have to go before a panel of rabbis called a *Beth Din*. Robert had found them through the Polish count's servants who were still keeping his mansion going and would not collaborate. Rabbi Philip, Uncle Mendel, Uncle Jeremiah, Robert and Eliezer his father had all studied at Freiberg University in the 1930s and had all influenced each other. Robert was such a fervent proselyte that he anaesthetised and circumcised himself with a surgical knife in the ambulance camouflaged in the trees, hobbling around in pain for weeks although the wound was antiseptic. Just to make them laugh, he would groan and scream, pretending he had made a terrible mistake and hated the Jews.

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Afterwards they travelled overland in jeeps gifted to them by welfare organisations from their displaced persons' camp in Vienna through south-eastern Europe and the Middle East to what was then British Palestine and encountered more war.

His mother, father, his grandparents and Lothar fought for the *Haganah* and the *Palmach* or supported the Zionist cause in its welfare work. They watched or took part in the destruction of Arab

villages and saw 700,000 refugees flee what had been their homeland for two thousand years and longer. Many of the Palestinian Arabs were descended from ancient Israelites. The cave-dwellers were devastated that, after themselves being victimised by the Nazis, the Palestinian Arabs were being driven from their homeland too by desperate Zionists.

They were, to all intents and purposes, Europeans alien to Israel, but, after the British left in May 1948, as Jews they had the right of return to what was regarded as their ancient homeland. Some of their family stayed on in the new state of Israel in 1948. Robert couldn't stand the fervent Zionism and decided to go and work with Albert Schweitzer in Gabon and then join up with some of them again in Southern Africa.

The substance of the Arab-Israel war was about possession of the land and the only form it could take was military hostility. Arab nationalism and Jewish nationalism totally dominated the internal lives of Arabs and Jews. Internally Ashkenazi Jews were different from Arabs, but not necessarily from Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews except that the latter, although Arabised, were evicted from Arab lands in retaliation for the driving out of the Palestinians. Jews and Arabs were both attached to the land of Palestine. The Arabs should, ethically, have been able to overcome the Jews in defence of their homeland, but politically, ideologically, economically, culturally, religiously, this was impossible even though Islam and Judaism were sister faiths equally rooted in Palestine.

The war was not driven by saints but rather by soldiers, ideologues, Zionists able to raise large sums of money from wealthy fellow-Jews to help the justified Zionist cause. The Arabs in some of the Gulf States and Iraq and Iran theoretically could draw on vast sums of money from the sales of oil, or borrow the money from the wealthy oil companies, but what business-men would want to hazard such a political risk? Ardent Zionists would want to back the other, the Jewish side. The Palestinian Arabs evidently were not organised or united enough to defeat the Zionists. Liberals, intellectuals, *did* help to win wars and might even establish peace settlements, but internally and fundamentally the two sides were not composed of liberal-intellectuals but of persecuted and persecuting people who if necessary would fight to the death. Zionism was just better organised than Arabism.

So, the Arab refugees could not return. Arabism had poisoned relationships with their ancient Israelite co-religionists who in the 7th century may have been converted from Judaism to Islam by Mohamed's armies at the point of a sword. Now the Jews knew and the Arabs knew the internal properties of the Jewish object and the Arab object: those who live by the sword die by the sword, or, in the Jewish case, at least in 1948 - have victory by the sword.

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After getting to Palestine overland and fighting or doing welfare work during the war of 1947-1948, the Oshrys and the Pekarskys left the Lubliniewskis behind in Israel and sailed from Haifa and,

changing ships several times, eventually arrived in Durban in 1949 where they were met by ecstatic relatives who regarded their survival as miraculous. Mordechai was 19. It was heart-rending for Mordechai and Estrella both 19 to say goodbye on the hills above Kinneret, Lake Galilee. What would Jesus think as he preached a doctrine of love from a boat on the water to a great crowd gathered on the quayside to know that a doctrine of hate (and love) had brought two young Jewish people together 2000 years later? They vowed that the 5000 miles which would keep them apart would eventually be bridged since a bond such as theirs forged by terror and passionate need could never be broken.

Mordechai saw Estrella, Luna, Stanislaw again ten years later. They, the Poles, stayed on in Israel / Palestine on a kibbutz. Robert went to Gabon to work with Albert Schweitzer and then established work-camps for liberal students in the border territories of South Africa – the British Protectorates which later became Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho.

So, this was Mordechai's picture of reality in logical space: he was Mordechai in relation to Estrella, Luna, Stanislaw, Lothar, his parents, his grandparents. He was a being-in-a-different-world, depending who else was in it. "I am that I am" was the prerogative only of God. The absurd *external* absence of God worried him. But Mordechai too in his small way partook of being as being. He would keep making a leap of faith since Being had guided them through the adventitious intervention of a fate which was in the philosophic sense, arbitrary, absurd.

From the totalitarian hell of Nazism and Stalinism to the Jewish-Arab conflict to apartheid South Africa. How was it that they should have gone from one hell into another hell disguised as "white civilization"? It was not just expediency. The rest of the family were there but they were not, strictly, whites. Jews of an ancient lineage couldn't possibly just be whites. You had only to look at their faces: Semitic, Slavic, even Nubian/Egyptian faces.

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It turned some of them into philosophers. In logic nothing was accidental: God or absurdity was written into what the existentialists called the illogic of the world. Logic allows for God and absurdity and in allowing for God or absurdity logic is suspended. God is a subject-object who in His / Her own mind is both *for-Him / Herself* – all-powerful – and perfectly-knowing – omniscient and transcendental in the universe. She or He is also totally being *in-Herself just Being as Being in a totality of the universe*. Sartre knew that. This is what Mordechai called "*Eheyeh-Asher-Eheyeh*" – "I Am That I Am". He prayed to the *Shekhina*. She was just presence, writing and speaking, the giving forth of her body.

Or He/She/It did not exist, in which case only logic, reality and absurdity existed. That became Mordechai's problem.

Why should the *Shekhina* have saved them from the Lithuanian and German and Polish and Ukrainian killers, saved *them*, rather than the six million others?

Their good luck and ingenuity had enabled them to live a post-war life in the vitality of Africa.

They happened to know a Polish count in the Polish army who was saved from the Katyn massacre by an accident of fate – a Russian officer thought he looked too young to die. He happened to have a Jewish wife and a therefore Jewish child. The count happened to have a Palaeolithic cave in an ancient volcanic or glacially carved hill in the remotest part of the Novagrudak Forest on his estate.

There was no absolute impossibility about God or Her contrary – absurdity. Random chance as much as the possibility of good was written into the logic of the world. Written into the logic of absurd or random chance was that there could be no world at all one day: when the sun ran out of nuclear fuel and exploded into a red giant in five billion years' time: it would burn up and render extinct its nearby planets.

Someone, somewhere was here to conceive of this as the outcome of the laws of physics. It could be that human life might be transferred to another planet in another galaxy although the light years away seem to make it an absurdity for this to happen since no spacecraft could travel at the speed of light in a universe still held together partly by gravity. We should have to spend many generations in a spacecraft to get to another humanly viable planet in a star-system, light-years away. Perhaps the moons of Jupiter would be more feasible. But not without a sun.

However, the singularity outside space and time from which our universe originates seemed to be a sort of accident, or if you like, Symbolically, the Imaginary *is* God who with Her *Shekhina* exists within or outside space and time and must be conceived of as encompassing the singularity from which the universe came into being. And there may be other universes so far away that their light, strong and weak nuclear forces, gravity and electro-magnetism will never reach us. Perhaps some universes oscillate and bounce from Big Bangs to extremities of space until they burn out. Other universes entropically contract into a singularity destroying space and time until the next Big Bang. Or just expand forever until they disappear as entities. But if there are an infinite number of universes, there must be intelligent life somewhere. So Being prevails still.

Mordechai suffered from an obsessive-compulsive neurosis: he could not stop returning in his mind to the reasons why they of all the six million Jews who were murdered, survived. Only history and philosophy saved him from going completely mad, being sucked into the hideous and transforming, beautiful and ugly memories of their salvation. They knew that they were all on the cusp of total annihilation or miraculous salvation. In 1939-1940 they understood that the Soviet-Nazi Pact was a prelude to massive rearmament on Stalin's part and Hitler's part. The Russians took advantage of it to occupy eastern Poland and kill perhaps twenty thousand of the Polish officer class at Katyn in Russia itself: the Polish gentry, intelligentsia and Polish Jews as well. Stanislaw Lubliniewski looked so young at Katyn that the Russians let him go free. Near-miracles can occur. They knew that compassion is a human possibility. Mordechai, going back to Wittgenstein, saw that Katyn for Stanislaw was a point in infinite space, as it were. All the other officers' spaces were closed down in death. The exact point at which a Russian officer let him go free entailed not only a place in infinite space, but an argument going on in the Russian's mind.

They knew from the vicious looks of their neighbours as to what was going to happen to all of them. They knew them as subject-objects obsessed by Jew-hatred as projections of self-hatred - as repressed Christians: Lithuanians, Poles, Ukrainians, Latvians, Estonians, peasants and urban workers they *could*, partly through the influence of the Catholic Church, unrestrained by Pope Pius, *would* indeed freely volunteer to murder them, man, woman and child, communists and bourgeoisie alike. The Jew killed Christ. Not Christ was a Jew, and therefore save the Jews in the name of Christ. The Jew for two thousand years generally speaking, had no land, on the whole had no entry to the professions and the guilds, was perceived as the enemy of God and therefore was pushed into trades that could move about: banking, money lending, even radical ideas. The Jew is capitalism. The Jew is Bolshevism. The Jew is the Other: a disease. The substance of anti-Semitism, its form and content, was the same however differently it manifests itself in what was the case.

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So even in South Africa, his mind went back obsessively to their lives in the cave - although vulnerable and dangerous - full of interest and vitality and ingenuity. They had blocked in the mouth of the cave with bricks and cement and had wood-burning stoves. They had bored holes for chimneys through the roof of the cave. There were forty survivors in one half, with the cow Para and her calves Katana and eventually Khalav, and their horses Soos and Soosa and their hunting dog Kelev and some other friends' goats and sheep in the other half of the cave, warmed by another wood-burning stove. They lived off milk and cheese and hunted deer and boar in the forest. For festivals they might slaughter a goat or a sheep. They learned how to find wild berries, wild spinach, wild garlic and preserve these products. The count made secret journeys to his orchards and fields on Soos and Soosa loaded with saddle bags to bring fruit and grain for bread. Stanislaw knew the forest-paths intimately and could avoid the communist and Nazi patrols. He brought farming and carpentry implements, hunting rifles, ammunition and medical supplies.

Not even the Soviet partisans sabotaging the railways and attacking the Belarussian Nazi collaborators knew of their existence. The “witch” knew but in her own interests she kept quiet and traded rabbits and fungi and edible roots for venison.

The Polish count had a two-way radio so they knew how the war was going. Lothar filled them in on who the generals were in charge of Hitler’s armies.

Their Polish, Belarussian and Lithuanian neighbours, some of whom volunteered for the death squads, the *Einstatzgruppen*, had simply occupied their houses, shops, and offices and redistributed their jobs assuming they had been massacred like the rest of the six million Jews of Europe. The Pekarskys’ and the Oshrys’ Russian servant, Dunyasha and her husband and children kept the invading looting anti-Semites at bay with a gun and stocks of ammunition. When the cave-dwellers finally left, not totally impoverished, because they had savings in Swiss bank accounts, they gave Dunyasha and her family the house, the tractor, the trailer and the animals.

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Mordechai never forgot Kelev, Para, Katana, Khalav, Soos and Soosa. When he was a young child, 7 years old in 1937 his father Eliezer visited his relatives in British Bechuanaland who ran a store near Ghanzi on the edge of the Kalagadi Wilderness. Eliezer came across the first orthography and ethnology of the /Xam, the Cape Bushpeople, the San, by a German linguist and anthropologist W.H.I Bleek and his collaborator Lucy Lloyd, *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* and bought the book in Cape Town and brought it back with him to Poland.

Inspired by Bleek and Lloyd, Eliezer told Mordechai about the Bushpeople’s mythology when they were still in the cave in Belarus:

Once we were all like the moon who never died, just waxed and waned. Lived and slept and lived and slept forever alive. It seemed to suggest, as Mordechai later understood it, that at the deepest level we are perhaps still ruled by ancient archetypes built into our psychology and biology. That is why in the safety of the ancient cave surrounded by painted spiritual representations of the animal-world there was peace, safety and a sense of infinity.

But that did not alter the fact that for nearly five years they were under sentence of death passed on them by a nation that produced Mozart, Goethe, Beethoven, Lessing, Kant, Hegel, Marx and Freud, now ruled by gangsters, posing as Aryan *ubermenschen*.

Mordechai dreamed: he was back in the days of the less dominant Neanderthals now that homo sapiens sapiens had turned into a ravening beast.

Or he was with Australopithecus or the San the first homo sapiens in Southern Africa watching the sacred Rain Bull who took a Rain Maiden on his back.

Or that he was Mantis making a baby eland by a lake.

Or that he was resurrected as was Ostrich.

Or he was the young man who was taken by a lion and pressed into the fork of a thorn-tree whilst the lion went for a drink.

Mordechai ran away. But his hunter was a sorcerer-lion immune to the spears and arrows of his villagers. Mordechai woke up in the cave afraid and went next door to the animals' den and slept amongst them – with Kelev their wolf-hound sleeping with his head on his lap – next to the cow, the calves, the horses.

It ended and most of them, except for the very old and the previously sick and handicapped whom they couldn't medicate, survived. Lothar and Uncle Mendel saved morphine in the ambulance to help them die painlessly.

Hitler, Goebbels, Goering, Heydrich, Frank, Rosenberg were dead and Germany in ruins.

Thousands, tens of thousands, millions of our persecutors returned to Germany, from Russia, eastern Europe, the Baltic states and were never brought to justice.

Jews had gone through this experience for 2000 and more years in cycles, but not like this with the killing on an industrial scale.

They weren't necessarily all exiled from Canaan, they simply emigrated, and looked back to Canaan as their spiritual origin, no less and no more than medieval Spain and Lithuania.

Rabbinical Judaism replaced temple worship of JHVH/El/Elohim/El Shaddai/El Elyon. The Shekhinah – the female partner of God emerged with Kabbalah in 13th century Spain.

But what did not change was the structure of the anti-Semitic facts. The whole of the non-Jewish world was relieved that the homeless Jews who had no sponsors to support them in British Commonwealth countries, in western Europe and the Americas could be dumped in Israel/Palestine.

Who in their right minds would want to welcome Jews, Jews who, unlike us, had not the means to deposit savings in Swiss banks?

*

After the war when they left their animals (except for Kelev) with their servant Dunyasha they said goodbye to eastern Europe forever.

800 years of their civilization had come to an end. As a concession his parents allowed Mordechai to take Kelev the wolf-hound whilst Dunyasha and her husband and children kept Para the cow, Khalav and Katana (the calves) and Soos and Soosa the horses, the trailer and the tractor and the family car.

They had to travel third-class in trains and in illegal, unregistered ships flying under Panamanian and other obscure flags and bribe immigration officials so as to keep Kelev who made it first to Palestine and to Durban in 1946 when Mordechai was 16 and the dog 14, still struggling gamely to defend the family from what were no longer openly hostile forces. Just the world.

When he said goodbye to Estrella in 1949 he was 19 and she was 19. He promised never to forget her and she reciprocated. "There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. The *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical."

*

Mordechai buried Kelev in Johannesburg on Observatory *koppie* (Afrikaans for *kopje* in Dutch) when the beloved dog was 17 in 1949 and Mordechai 19. Kelev was now too old, sick and weak to go on. After the vet had called to put Kelev down, Mordechai who was used to death and graves, with his parents astonished permission, cycled with the body to that hill and buried his friend near a monument commemorating a British regiment's gallant stand, killed during the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902.

With a mason's chisel and hammer Mordechai engraved his name "Kelev – 1932-1949 -hero" on a large piece of slate he bought with his pocket money from a hardware shop in Yeoville, marking the burial next to the British memorial. It was above Steyn Street which ran off Urania Street near the old Observatory.

At last Europe had rooted itself in the Africa from which Europe originated. Every year on the anniversary of Kelev's death he would go and put another stone on the dog's grave and look out over Johannesburg and remember the nightingale in the Belarus forest he accompanied on his little violin which he would keep for his own child and tell her the story of the tormented and liberated Jews who were filled with the logic and illogic of a 20th century like no other the world had ever known.