RACHEL

AND

THE SEVEN BRIDGES

OF

CONSCIENCE-BERG
A Story about Bedrock Values

Based upon research from
The Conscience Study

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EPILOGUE
The First Bridge:  
MORAL ATTACHMENT

CONNECTEDNESS

"Why is Dr. Esse having a party anyway?" Rachel demanded of Cynthia as they walked together on the old towpath, which ran along the canal. The canal was a historical oddity on the north side of the city. The canal was built as part of a project to connect the nearby waterways. It had been started before the railroads caught on and when the railroads did catch on, the canal project was abandoned. Nevertheless, it was good to walk along when the weather was fine. Rachel always brought bread-
crumbs for the ducks that made the canal their home. Rachel, like her older sister Cynthia, believed that the canal never connected anything to anything. Rachel was about to find out differently.

"Is it her birthday? I bet she’s ancient."
"No, it’s nobody’s birthday," Cynthia said with the patience she had been practicing recently on her younger sister. "And hurry now or we’ll be late."
"Well then?" Rachel persisted.
"‘Well then’ what?" Cynthia said, her exasperation showing through as Rachel deliberately stopped to feed a duck waddling by.

"Well, if it’s not her birthday, is she going away or something-is it a going away party?" only after it was asked did the question suggest a real prospect that brought forth from Rachel something like glee and something like a grievance. "I wish Dr. Esse would go away! Because of her I had to spend last Saturday morning talking about my conscience. I really don’t like being a guinea pig for some experiment."
"Then why did you volunteer?"

It was Rachel's turn to be exasperated. "You know why."

Cynthia did know why. Rachel, like Cynthia, had been volunteered by Mom to be subjects in Dr. Esse’s research. Mom was pretty persuasive when she wanted her daughters to participate in something worthwhile.

Rachel went on, "When she explained the study, it didn’t sound too bad—nothing would hurt and it couldn’t be any more boring than school."

Rachel was still in elementary school, but she knew lots of kids from middle school who had already participated --including Cynthia. "You did it last year and, afterwards, you didn’t seem any weirder than usual."

"But of course," Rachel thought to herself, "with Cynthia it was hard to tell." Truth be told, Rachel had been at least a little curious about what all the middle school kids were talking about. They went to something they called the Conscience Club after school where they heard about the results of the study.

Cynthia had tried to explain it to her: "They’re the research findings --"

"Oh, like you’re a scientist already—as if—Cynthia, you couldn’t explain your way out of a wet paper bag. If I want to understand all this fuss about conscience, I’ll just have to participate in the study myself." 1

So she did.

"What I hadn’t figured on," Rachel raised an old complaint, "was spending weekend time to do it. That wasn’t fair! That was cruel! You got out of class to do your interview. I had to go over to Dr. Esse’s home on a Saturday. What kind of question is that anyway? Have you heard the word ‘conscience’?"

"Well had you?" asked Cynthia.

"If I didn’t then, I have now. Hello...all I hear anymore is ‘conscience this’ and ‘conscience that’. On a Saturday!"

"Well did you learn anything?"

"No and her questions made my head ache. Besides her house made me dizzy."

"You are really weird, Rachel. How did her house make you dizzy?"

"It’s the different levels. It makes you step up then step down. That’s what does it!"
Cynthia had no idea what Rachel meant and did not want to pursue it. “Anyhow, she’s not going away.”

“Too bad,” Rachel muttered under her breath.

“This party is because I asked Dr. Esse if, for the last meeting of the Conscience Club before summer break, we could have a party. She said we could but maybe it would be even better to celebrate conscience in everyone including our younger brothers and sisters.”

Rachel had not been sure about this party in the first place. Hearing what the occasion was made her stop dead in her tracks. “Conscience! Who wants to celebrate that old thing?”

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After all was said and done, Rachel did not have a very good time at the party.

“Hi, Rachel. What do you think of the storyteller, Rachel? He’s Ojibwa,” Mr. Moore whispered in her ear, conveying his enthusiasm and fascination as the teller illustrated a story with interlocking hoops. The hoops seemed seamless but the teller could string them around his body and pull them apart again and again. "It's magic the way he does that, don't you think?"

Mr. Moore was Cynthia’s teacher and helped Dr. Esse with the Conscience Club. He knew Rachel too, from times she had been with Cynthia at school.

"The storyteller's O.K.--as storytellers go," Rachel replied, admitting only to herself that he was better than most magicians she had seen. "What I like best about magic tricks is guessing how they're done and embarrassing the magician."

Mr. Moore laughed. "Say, I don't have a magic trick up my sleeve, but I do have a brainteaser. Do you like brainteasers?"
"I'm all about brainteasers," Rachel replied.

Mr. Moore sketched something on a small pad of paper he produced from his pocket. He printed something and handed the sheet of paper to Rachel. "Let me know how you like it."

"Thanks, Mr. Moore. Maybe this Conscience Celebration isn't a total waste of time."

But other things did seem to conspire to spoil the party for Rachel.

Things took a turn for the worse when Keith approached with his little sister Izzy. 'Izzy' was what Keith called his little sister, Elizabeth. Izzy had already found her favorite grape drink, she called "purpo" and was following her brother around, making appreciative grunts as she took gulps. For his part, maybe out of annoyance, Keith had been scaring the willies out of her.

"Izzy," Keith had cautioned his sister as earnestly as any grown-up would, "If you fall in the canal, you could be caught by the undertow and dragged under and drowned."

Then he had added as most grown-ups would not, "Then your body would turn up far away all lifeless and bloated, and half eaten by fish--"

So, Izzy was worried about falling in the canal and being carried away by the undertow. Only she called it the Under-toad². She said fearfully, "Watch out everyone. Keith says the Under-toad can reach out and grab you."

"That's absurd!" thought Rachel, but said nothing, wondering nonetheless if Keith's scare tactic would work on little Izzy.

"For goodness sake!" Cynthia scolded Keith. "A simple warning without the scare tactics would have been enough. Keith, you just say that stuff because you're mad about being suspended from school and grounded at home."

It was true. In fact, Keith was able to come to this party only because he promised to take Izzy. Keith looked sheepishly at Cynthia.

Before he could reply, Izzy recognized Cynthia and made a beeline for her. Cynthia was Izzy's baby sitter and Izzy just adored Cynthia- to Rachel's absolute amazement. Within a few feet of the sisters, however, Izzy stopped suddenly. Realizing she was heading straight for the canal, Izzy shouted out "Cynthee, Rachel! Behind you! Look out! The Undertoad!" and made an abrupt turn. Unfortunately, Izzy was still carrying her drink. The purpo did not make the turn with Izzy. Instead, the
Izzy was the first to realize what had happened. “Oh-oh. Purpo spill on Rachel. Bad Purpo.” When Rachel realized what had happened, she was furious. She chased Izzy until she caught her and then gave her a strong shove. She would have given her another but for the fact Izzy started to cry. Then Cynthia scolded Rachel for treating Izzy harshly. Rachel bit her lip: who did Cynthia think she was?

After so many revolting developments, Rachel decided to leave the party and head for home. She made her way to the bridge over the canal and started across. However, the day was fine, the weather warm and breezy, the sun bright and glinting on the water below. So Rachel tarried a while on the bridge. Then she remembered the brainteaser Mr. Moore had given her. Had it been spoiled by Izzy’s purpo? She drew it out of her pocket to see. There was indeed a stain in the corner but she could still make out the puzzle without difficulty. This is what Rachel held in front of her and pondered:
The town of Königsberg was built at a point where two branches of the Pregel River came together. Is it possible to walk around town, starting and ending at the same location and crossing each bridge exactly once?

Mr. Moore had explained the famous problem that fascinated a mathematician named Euler. "Once there was a city named Königsberg, which was built around and on an island in the water where two rivers flowed into one another. Naturally, the people in the city wanted to go to and from the island to visit one another and carry on their business. So bridges were built. Seven of them in all."

Mr. Moore had been in a storytelling mood. "Nobody knows exactly who it was. Maybe it was a child on an urgent errand to the haberdashery for her mother. Maybe instead of returning home directly, as her mother had bid her, she decided instead to satisfy her curiosity about the place in which she was living. Maybe, as the sun was settling into a quilt of orange and pink and rose colored clouds for the evening, her mother angrily muttered about the wickedness of her child. Maybe as the hours passed by still without any word from the girl, as the city rooftops earned silver under the moon, her mother became more and more fretful. Now she repented her angry thoughts in a surge of worry, not daring to wonder what harm had befallen her daughter. At last the distressed mother hurried from her home to sound an alarm that sent the neighbors frantically in search for the lost girl."

"Maybe," Rachel had said. "Maybe not."

Not in the least put off by Rachel's skepticism, Mr. Moore had continued, "Anyway, someone, whoever it was, decided to try starting out from a point in the city, cross each bridge once and only once, seeing if she could end up at the same place from which she started."

Rachel now decided to try it. She pulled herself up to sit against a lamppost set in the stonework that lined the bridge. She rummaged around in her pocket and found a stubby pencil. Then with her eyes closed, she let the pencil wander in circles over the
scrap of paper until she willed it to stop. She opened her eyes and made an X mark at that point. Beside it she put her initials then she started to draw a line to the nearest bridge. She crossed the first bridge, another bridge and then all the others, only to find herself unable to cross each bridge once and only once.

“That didn’t work,” Rachel muttered under breath. “I’ll try a different way.” And she did. In fact, she tried several different ways. None of them allowed her to end up on the same side of Königsberg as where she had begun-unless she cheated and crossed a bridge twice. “Forget about ending up on the same side I started from, I can’t even figure out a way to cross each bridge just once,” she felt herself becoming frustrated. She did notice, however, that she did not have to cross every bridge to tell whether her route would work or not. She could kind of think ahead and see how it would turn out. “Like mazes in the puzzle magazines Mom and Dad buy for me when we go traveling.” She thought to herself. “Of course, they only give them to keep me busy so I won’t fight with Cynthia.”

In fact, Rachel and Cynthia fought everyday. Mom was in the habit of saying, “I wish you girls could go just one day-JUST ONE- without bickering and quarreling.” Last spring when Cynthia was chosen by the science teacher to be part of the group that went to the Space Center, Rachel complained bitterly, “Why did Cynthia get to be the older one? She always gets to do everything first.” Not only that but Cynthia used to accuse Rachel of deliberately hiding her homework or distracting her so she would mess up on a project. That started with the Outer Space diorama Cynthia had to do as an assignment.

“Your project looks stupid,” Rachel told her sister, telling herself a frank opinion now might save Cynthia some embarrassment in class later. “That’s your opinion,” Cynthia retorted icily.

Rachel didn’t think there was much hope of salvaging Cynthia’s project but perhaps it could be improved a little by adding a moon to the Jovian system. She took a magic marker and started to show Cynthia where Io should be. Cynthia went ballistic and pulled the poster board away. Only Rachel did not quite have time to remove her hand, so--

When they were on speaking terms again, Rachel suggested that Cynthia make the stray mark into a comet tail like Halle-Bopp. Cynthia decided instead to call the splotch Planet X. “Stupid,” thought Rachel, “But it’s her project.”
Rachel was hardly ever yelled at by Mom and Dad and never by teachers. She cleaned her room, did her homework, took out the trash, and played QUIETLY with her friends. She also knew that noise was something that really bothered her parents. “Too bad, Cynthia just didn’t get it,” Rachel told herself. Mom always said Cynthia was too easily vexed. In Rachel’s opinion, Cynthia just didn’t know when to shut up.... “I mean can’t she hear Mom coming down the hall?”

But it was even worse when it was Dad coming down the hall. Talk about NOISE. And what he said was far worse than noise. He would say things like “Stop an argument before it starts”; and “Remember, Cynthia, Rachel doesn’t understand as much as you.”

“Yeah-right,” Rachel always thought to herself when Dad said stuff like that.

The absolute worst was when Mom and Dad scrapped the idea of a family vacation because they didn’t think they could stand being in the car that long with two bickering girls. It was true. No matter how many brainteasers and puzzles, audiotapes and art materials were brought along; Rachel and Cynthia would find something to fight about. Then Mom would say, “I grew up in a family of four girls, but it was never like this!” Dad said, “O.K., O.K., we’re not going this year. I don’t know what’s with you girls.”

“Were your sisters like our daughters?” Mom asked Dad a little bit accusingly. Dad replied a little bit defensively, “I don’t know. I was always outside building things. I don’t know what they did except talk all the time. Anyway my sisters have nothing to do with what we’re talking about right now.”

“You’re no help,” Mom said to Dad and became VERY QUIET for a long time. Oh, she and Dad eventually called a truce of sorts but too late to plan a family vacation. “You know maybe they didn’t want to be with one another,” was a thought that crossed her mind. “Well that’s O.K.,” Rachel soothed her disappointment, “There’s plenty to do here in summer.”

So she thought. Then Rachel’s pet rabbit died. As if that wasn’t bad enough--“Not fair,” exclaimed Rachel when she learned that Cynthia was on her way to Space Camp. Rachel sure hoped this coming summer would be better.

Now that Rachel thought about it, Space Camp may have been what made Cynthia so weird. First, there was that soupy letter Cynthia sent to say how sorry she was that the rabbit died. Then when Cynthia returned from Space Camp, she began spending more time in her room alone.

Rachel tried to get Cynthia to snap out of it. When Cynthia was reading, she would throw Barbie dolls at her. When Cynthia closed her door, Rachel would tack silly sticky notes on it or slip messages under it. No response. It was hopeless. Rachel even began making loud noises herself, to get Cynthia’s attention.

“What on earth is the matter with you, Rachel?” Mom and Dad had both asked.
Rachel could no longer keep all the lines emanating from her X mark on Königsberg from crossing over one another. She lost track trying to trace them. So she erased them all and tried again. And again. And again—until the paper tore. Rachel was certainly getting vexed with this stupid puzzle. Or maybe she was vexed with Dr. Esse, or maybe with Cynthia or maybe—

“Oh no, here comes someone,” Rachel looked dismayed. "Izzy and Keith!" The pair were indeed rounding the corner a block away. "Who's that with them? Well, they haven’t seen me yet. Maybe if I scoot back behind the lamppost—" There was a scraping sound and a sudden give under her. The next thing she knew she could not feel any stonework at all. She was falling backward. Before Rachel had time to panic, she hit her head on something. She did not even notice her own splash into the grimmish water.
The Bridge Where Rachel Fell

Oddly enough, the next thing Rachel could clearly recall was an entirely different splash in the water not far from where she was lying. Not her own splash, certainly. No, with a sense of deep relief, Rachel could feel the gritty soil of the riverbank beneath her body. "Dry" she thought. As she heard the splash, she had also had a glimpse of something plunging into the water, something green and brown, something webbed. Then she closed her eyes again and dreamt of her biology class. She was watching a dissection of a frog. It was at the same time horrifying and very interesting. Then, in her dream, she turned small and was being picked up by the teacher and put into a jar full of fluid with the frogs to be dissected. "I'm not a frog," she tried to yell out, but all that came forth was a croaking sound. Then she was drowning and flailing about in the jar until one of the frogs paddled over, dived under, and propped her up from beneath. "Don't worry," it said between croaks, "You won't drown."

A while later Rachel stirred again. This time it was because she couldn't feel the sunshine warming her back. A shadow had fallen across her where she lay. Rachel raised her head, blinked and peered through her bleary eyes. The shadow was cast by an odd and ungainly sort of creature who looked as if it would fall over at any moment but somehow defied gravity anyway. It carried an umbrella. The umbrella accounted for most of the shadow because the creature itself was not very big.
“Care to share my umbrella?” said the stranger. Rachel cocked her head up to get a better look at what or whoever was addressing her. She couldn’t quite make the face out because there was a sunburst just over the rim of the umbrella that blinded her. She had an impression, however, that the face, a very pleasant face, flickered. It was a little different on second glance and different still on third and fourth glance. Of course, being well brought up by her parents, Rachel was too polite to stare. She looked to one side and then the other, puzzled and groggy all at once. There wasn’t a cloud in the sky. Rachel spit some sand out of her mouth.

“Excuse me. It’s not raining,” she said as she squinted up at the stranger hoping to find some sign of confirmation that she was at least right that it wasn’t raining.

“But look at you, you’re dripping wet,” the stranger insisted, holding the umbrella over Rachel protectively.

“I am wet,” agreed Rachel. “That doesn’t mean it’s raining.”

“Has it stopped raining?” asked the stranger holding his hand out from beneath the umbrella.

“I don’t know. It wasn’t raining at all—at least I don’t think it was. I am wet because—because I fell in the water. Yes—that’s it. I fell in the water. I must have fallen off the bridge.”

“Ah, well then, I suppose I can put this umbrella away.” He made a show of twirling it. It spun around slowly at first. Rachel saw that the umbrella’s design was in four panels, three each of a different color. The fourth panel was the same size as the others but had three colors instead of one. The colors revolved hypnotically. Then the umbrella and the stranger holding it seemed to rise up like a helicopter. Did it really lift him a few inches off the ground or was that an illusion? Abruptly, he closed the umbrella and broke the spell. “A bridge you said. For goodness sake! Which bridge did you fall from? There are seven you know.”

“What do you mean ‘which bridge’? That canal bridge of course—right over there,” she said pointing to her left before she really looked. There wasn’t a bridge where she had pointed. Indeed, she stood on the bank of a river and not the human built canal so familiar to her. A curious smile played on the stranger’s face. “Wait a minute...wait a minute”, Rachel protested. “Where’s the bridge? This isn’t where I fell... That’s not the canal. Hey, where am I anyway?”

“Why, Conscience-berg, of course.”

“Cons—what, who—how did I get here?”

“Do you mean to say this is your first visit to Conscience-berg?”

“ I don’t know this place at all.”

"It will look more familiar as time goes on-"”

“How did I get here?”

“Hmm. You say you fell in the water? Well then, maybe the Undertoad brought you. Yet how would he have known you meant to come here, I wonder. A mystery! Forgive me but I enjoy mysteries.” The stranger’s face flickered. The new one was set off with a Sherlock Holmes style hat on top, a huge calabash pipe hanging from the mouth and a magnifying glass that made an eye look exceedingly large. The stranger hunched over and began looking all around them.
By this time, Rachel, already confused and flustered, was beginning to feel sick to her stomach. She was not at all sure she wanted to hear any more, but she managed to repeat "the Undertoad?"

"The Undertoad."
"Izzy's Undertoad?"
"Of course he's an undertoad. Strange to be named Undertoad if he weren't one."
"No-no-no. Is he Izzy's Undertoad?"
"Who's Izzy?"
"Never mind. You expect me to believe that I was brought here to-to-to-to Conscience-berg."
"-to Conscience-berg by the Undertoad?"
"That's my guess."

"Why? Why did the Undertoad bring me here?"
"That's the mystery I am currently trying to solve. Probably something made him think you wanted to come here."
"I didn't tell any Undertoad I wanted to come here—wherever here is. I'm pretty sure I would remember it if I had. I don't want to be here at all. Why would he think that?"

"Hmm. I haven't a clue." He searched in larger circles. "Eureka," he said as he spied a wet wad of paper on the ground. "I do have a clue! How clever of me to find it." He picked it up and unwadded it. "Hmm," he said as he looked at the paper.

"Well, you certainly gave him a detailed map to get you here!"
"Map—what map?" Rachel was getting more and more vexed with the mysterious stranger and her circumstances. That was probably a good thing because she found it hard to be vexed and frightened all at once and she didn't want to appear frightened.

He showed her the soggy piece of paper. "We are standing on the very spot marked by that X."

She looked for some time in consternation at the paper he held before her face. Then awareness slowly dawned on her. She laughed off the anxious feelings about to overcome her. It was her puzzler from Mr. Moore.
“No, no, Königsberg. Königsberg. Not Conscience-berg.” She showed him how the letters, some smeared by the water, others written where the paper was torn, were difficult to read. “You see there’s been a mistake. Anyway it’s just a puzzle, I didn’t mean to come here. I don’t belong here at all.”

“You don’t?”

“Not even.”

“The Undertoad made a mistake?”

“Big time.”

“It’s not the first time you know. I shall have to speak to him.”

“You do that--just tell me where I can find a telephone so I can phone home.”

“Home? Of course, of course, you want to go home, I’m not surprised—but there are no phones here in Conscience-Berg.”

“So how does everyone talk to one another?”

“Very properly and civilly, I think, well most of the time. Sometimes people around here listen before they speak. Sometimes they say kind and comforting things. But sometimes there’s too much ‘holier than thou-ing’ and ‘I told you so-ing’, if you want my opinion. Not that I mind an occasional demonstration of moral outrage, you know—”

“I meant—”

“Now that you’ve got me started, please let me finish. As I was saying, I don’t mind an occasional show of moral outrage— or courage for that matter— or generosity of the heart. Moral passion is fine by me. I don’t care for people joylessly going through their lives just following the rules—no, not one whit. But I don’t want anyone taking themselves all that seriously in Conscience-berg.”

“Just who exactly are you anyway?”

“I’m sorry—what an oversight—of course you were lying unconscious, so perhaps I can be excused—permit me to introduce myself.” He produced a card, seemingly out of thin air, and presented it to Rachel with a flourish of his hand. “My card.” The card seemed to go in and out of focus, the letters to swim across the surface. It was held before her eyes just a short while, during which it (sometimes) read:
"I.M.P. Huh... Whatever. What’s this word ‘Impresario’ mean?"
A pocket dictionary appeared in the air before him. He gave it to her. She read, “It says here an impresario is a manager or conductor of something like an opera. 2. One who puts on entertainment.... O.K. I know what mischief is. What about ‘pecadilloes’?” She thumbed through the dictionary. “A slight offense, a petty fault--from the Latin verb ‘peccare’ to sin.”
“Hereabouts I’m known as the Imp.”
“No phones, huh? Mr. Imp, you seem handy. Couldn’t you just conjure up a cellular? Internet? A fax machine?”
The Imp shook his head to each inquiry.
“Just guessing -no cabs or busses or airports here either, I’ll bet?”
“None of the above.”
“What is this- Mackinac Island?” On Mackinac Island there are only horses and bicycles to be had for transportation--but Rachel remembered they did have phones. She also remembered the fudge.
“No, Conscience-berg.”
“Right. So how do I get home?” Rachel asked, wanting to go home yet finding herself increasingly possessed by a certain wonderment about this Imp and the place she was in. She hoped she wouldn’t have her answer too soon- at least not before she found out more.
“One of the Seven Bridges, I should think would be where to start,” the Imp replied.
“Would you take me to a bridge? Please?”
“With pleasure, but I would like something in return.”
“What?” Rachel’s suspicions were fully aroused.
“I would like to be your tour guide.”
“I don’t want a tour. I want to go home.”
“Oh please, a short tour, I promise. I haven’t given a tour in ever so long.”
“Is that what you do?”
“It’s what I used to do--
“If I let you be my tour-guide on the way, you’ll show me the bridge I can
cross to find my way home?”
“Yes, I promise.”
“Well, O.K. I guess.”

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“Conscience-berg is divided into five domains,” the Imp was explaining as they
walked together towards some buildings built smack dab against each other on a
narrow cobblestone street that sloped steeply down a hill. There were vendors outside
and shops with bells that jangled or door harps that twanged as people went in and out.
There were wind chimes and colorful banners.
“Sort of touristy,” said the Imp, “don’t you think?”
“Is there some place to eat, Mr. Imp?” Rachel wanted to know. She was still
thinking of Mackinac Island. “I’m hungry.”
“Well, as it happens I know of a fudge shoppe nearby. Run by a strict
candytarian. Down the hill past the gardens.”
“Wow. Can we go? I’m really hungry.” To herself she thought, “Can Mr. Imp read
my mind?”
“No, of course not,” he said. Rachel was speechless. The Imp continued, “Now,
let’s be on our way. Make haste.”
spoke with the Imp. “Will you meet us today for a game of Billy Goats’ Bruse, Mr. Imp?”

“Yes, please, Mr. Imp, come play,” the youngest insisted, tugging at his sleeve. The Imp stroked his chin thoughtfully, “Well, I’m conducting a tour of Conscience-berg for my friend Rachel right now but perhaps later-” They all laughed and tittered. “Mr. Imp is giving a tour,” one exclaimed. Rachel glared at the Imp, “I thought you said it’s what you do.”

“What I did--before I was forbidden.”

“Why forbidden?”

“I suspect it’s all that nonsense about my leading travelers astray in the woods. I admit I sometimes took them off the beaten paths to discover more interesting things but I had nothing to do with those strange luminosities that led them into the bogs. That was swamp gas if you want my opinion. And that little mishap with the CEO’s wife-- It wasn’t my idea she should fall in love with a total ass -well, not total but he did have the head of an ass--”

“Oh put off the tour and come with us,” one of the umbrella kids interrupted. “Yes, you must come,” a middle child added. “If you come, we’ll let you be the Troll.”

“The Troll? My. I do love the Troll role.”

“Trip-trap-trip-trap went the bridge,” the youngest said coaxingly.

“Who’s that tripping over my bridge?” the Imp roared in his best Troll voice.

“Oh it’s only I, the tiniest Billy Goat Bruse, and I’m going up to the hillside to eat and grow fat.”

“Now I’m coming to gobble you up!”

“Oh, no, please don’t take me! I’m too little, I am; wait a bit; the second Billy-goat Bruse will come next and he’s much bigger.”

“Ah, hah, well off with you,” the Imp intoned, then broke character to join with the children as they laughed delightedly.

“Will you come?”

“Well, we shall see.”

Rachel was not in the mood for Billy Goat Bruse. The kids’ umbrellas also bothered her. So her general irritation found expression, “It’s not raining after all, you can put those away.” To her credit, she did try to sound more helpful than know-it-all. But she hadn’t the hang of it. They laughed again.

“Silly, we know it’s not raining. There hasn’t been a cloud in the sky all day. The parasols keep the sun from burning us.”

Rachel was embarrassed by their laughter. She thought the Imp had set her up somehow. She gave him her best glare.

“Ah”, said the Imp appearing just a little uncomfortable under Rachel’s withering look. A tour-guide materialized in front of him and he opened it. “We are in the Domain of Moral Attachment, right now,” the Imp informed her. You are here. And he showed her a foldout map of the domain with an arrow that said, “Rachel is here.”

“How do you do that?” she demanded.

The Imp smiled, shrugged and continued to read, “We are walking on Bowlby Boulevard, named in honor of John Bowlby who developed the theory of attachment...” Rachel tried to be polite and pretended to listen. It was not easy for her. She was never very interested when her parents or her sister would stop and read a plaque or an
explanation from a self-guided tour brochure. They droned on and on to make it more boring than it had to be. So while Mr. Imp talked, Rachel stopped to look at one of the shop windows. On display were art works and crafts from all over the world. Each was different but they also had something in common. One was a bronze statue of a mother and child. The note card in front of it said ‘From Israel’. The mother was balancing on her back as she raised the child up and supported him on her knees, holding his arms so that she could gaze into his face. Another was handmade in Kenya and showed three figures joined by their arms and knees in a circle. Then there was one from Santa Clara pueblo, a black wedding vase, with two spouts for pouring at the top joined by a handle. “Attachment,” said the Imp, “at different stages of life.”

They continued through an intersection, “You are here,” The Imp informed her. He showed her the foldout map again. The Rachel arrow now pointed to the intersection of Bowlby Boulevard and Ainsworth Avenue. “It has to be computerized somehow,” Rachel said refusing to marvel at the moving arrow. “Like those locator maps at the new downtown mall.” Still, it looked like an ordinary fold out map. The Imp gave a brief description of the sights to be seen on Ainsworth Avenue, “named in honor of Mary Ainsworth who devised the Strange Situation Test that enabled classification of attachment of young children to their parents as, for example, secure or anxious.”

“What was the strange situation?” Rachel wanted to know.

“Well, she would have a stranger come into a room where the mother and child were playing together and then have the mother leave. Then she’d see how the child would react-did the child seem pretty much O.K or a little worried and fretful or maybe very worried and fretful?”

“Well whatever strange situation she made up, it couldn’t have been as strange as taking a tour of Conscience-berg with an Imp.”

“Really, you’re absolutely right, Rachel. You’ve been a very good sport about it all. I think you must have enjoyed a very secure attachment to your parents. Are they also attached to each other?”

“I’m not always sure,” she answered in a soft, soft voice. She hoped he didn’t notice the quaver in it. To change the subject, she looked around. “Main Street,” Rachel read the sign above her head. “Well at least this street name doesn’t need to be explained.”

“-named in honor of Margaret Main who studied adult attachment,” the Imp made no effort to conceal his pleasure in ruffling Rachel’s feathers.

They walked on towards the garden. Only it was more like a small rainforest than a garden, full of exotic flowers and wonderful scents. “So what is this attachment business?” she asked. But before the Imp could answer her, their attention was drawn overhead to the rainforest canopy where they heard noisy screeching and jabbering. Monkeys.

They watched together as the monkeys swung about, nestled next to and groomed each other, bickered and disputed, and made temporary peace until they found something new to feud about. Rachel’s gaze was drawn to a high branch where a mother held her infant. The infant was adventuresome and curious, particularly about an older monkey nearby. The older monkey was a curmudgeon if ever there was a curmudgeon. Anyone who knows about curmudgeons knows just how crotchety and cross they can be and that they don’t abide babies pulling on their tails and jowls. So
this curmudgeon bared his fangs and snarled until the infant monkey was persuaded to beat a hasty retreat back to Mom. Mom did a little comforting and protecting and the infant was off again on a new adventure. "Well, that's attachment for you, right there," said the Imp.

There was also an adolescent female monkey nearby. She was exceedingly interested in the infant monkey and kept nudging the mother, as if to say "C'mon let me hold your baby!"

The Imp said, "Look, Rachel, that one wants to baby-sit."

"Yeah," Rachel laughed, "maybe her name is Cynthia." Rachel had a not-so-secret envy of Cynthia for getting to baby-sit. Rachel didn't like the idea of baby-sitting but she did like the idea of making money.

Now the Imp did a strange thing. In a little box he immediately produced, he captured the puff of air, which Rachel had made with her laugh. "Got it," he said, again quite pleased with himself. In a blink of the eye, he conjured up an elegant looking apparatus with multi colored tubes and flasks and beakers filled with shimmering liquids. He emptied the box into a flask and set it over a burner, which he ignited into flame. "The first fraction is distilling now," he said to no one in particular. "And now the second...Hm and the third... Wait there's more. Just a wee bit."

"What are you doing?"

The shimmering liquids changed colors and consistency—from being bubbly to being a tarry sludge.

"Distilling your inner states."

"What from just one laugh?"

"Naturally."

"Is this robbing me of my essence? Rachel asked uneasily. She had seen several fantasy films in which someone was always being robbed of essence. One of her favorites was Dark Crystal. In that film, vulture-like creatures distilled the essence from unsuspecting gelflings. She didn't want to end up without any essence of Rachel left inside her.

"Nothing of the kind," the Imp assured her. He was examining the distillates.

"Cynthia must be your sister," mused the Imp. "A laugh like that, with ridicule, anger, envy and familiarity and more than a hint of affection in the mix- Cynthia is surely your sister."

"Yeah, Cynthia's my sister-- I probably told you already. And it wouldn't be hard to guess, anyway. Big deal." Rachel didn't offer any comments about the sudden appearance- and just as sudden disappearance- of the laboratory equipment.

"Attachment theory is based upon observations of human beings and non human primates," the Imp was reading from a new book. He faltered a moment as he took in Rachel's deliberate effort to appear annoyed. "Well I won't read all of this, but the gist of it is that primate babies, including humans, are naturally meant to cling for safety and nurturing and primate parents are naturally meant to respond to the clinging infant protectively."

"Uh-huh," Rachel noticed it was becoming more difficult to keep from being interested. But she was determined not to give the Imp the least bit of satisfaction and so pretended not to listen.
“Here’s the sad part. An experiment was done on primates. In the study the primate infants were taken away from their mothers. They were raised apart.”

“I don’t like this experiment already,” Rachel protested. “How would you like it if you had been taken away from your mother and raised apart?”

“Hey, I’m just telling you what happened. Do you want to hear more?” Rachel wasn’t sure she did want to hear more, but she nodded.

“Remember these experiments were done a long time before Jane Goodall or the movie about Diane Fosse, _Gorillas in the Mist_, taught us how like other primates we are.”

“Well, I think we should have known as soon as Darwin told us,” Rachel said between her teeth.

“Very possibly we should have. Anyway, the infants were given plenty to eat and drink. But for cuddling, all they had was a monkey made of wire or a monkey made of cloth.”

“Did anyone call the SPCA?”

“I don’t think so. What they found out was that when the primates grew up, they had lots more trouble getting along with other primates.”

“No duh! You would too if you were taken away from your Imp mom.”

“Imps don’t have moms. There were other researchers like René Spitz who was interested in human children separated from their parents because their moms were put in jail. And John Bowlby who was interested in children who had to be evacuated from the cities being bombed during war.”

“I already know that war isn’t good for children, Mr. Imp,” Rachel had seen drawings and heard stories by children who lived in places like Bosnia and Northern Ireland.

“I know you do, Rachel. They wanted to know what the effects of infants being separated from their mothers would be. The effects were often terrible.”

“Like with the monkeys.”

“Sometimes even worse. Spitz found that some babies even died.”

“So that’s the story of attachment?”

“Not the whole story.”

“Well what else?”

“Bowlby thought that a person’s very first experiences with attachment became a model working inside her for future relationships all the way into her school age years, her teen age years and on beyond into adulthood.”

“Well O.K. But why is attachment such a big deal here in Conscience-berg?”

“No, yes I was getting to that. Just what is the connection between conscience and attachment?”

“I don’t know but I have a feeling you’ll tell me soon.” Indeed, confirming Rachel’s suspicions, the Imp now was attired like a professor one might see at a venerable old university like Oxford, settling himself down behind his lectern, composing his thoughts, ready to impart his knowledge—except that the tassel on his hat seemed always to tickle his nose and cause uncontrollable fits of sneezing.

“Take that musty cap and gown off, Mr. Imp, and talk to me.” In spite of herself, Rachel was feeling a growing affection for this most unlikely creature.
“Oh all right, if you insist.” And his cap and gown vanished. “At any rate, here we are at the fudge shoppe. My treat.”

They took their fudge and milk outside the shop and wandered into an especially beautifully landscaped garden. A stone sign at the entrance read: “The Gardens of Mencius.”

“Did Mencius do research on attachment, too?” Rachel asked her companion.

“Mencius? No, he was a philosopher who lived long ago in China. His idea of conscience was the four hearts, coming in seed forms when we are born. The first is sympathy for other humans, the second is our ability to feel shame, the third is being apt to show respect and the fourth is a sense of right and wrong. When these seeds have developed and fully ripened, the four hearts are in harmony with the moral breath of the universe.”

Here’s the funny part. Some Conscience-bergians say the Gardens of Mencius should have been put in the Domain of Moral Emotions, others say in the Domain of Valuation. They feuded over that for a while. But here it is in the Domain of Moral Attachment. Myself, I think the gardens belong here because moral attachment is what helps us form the security-empathy-oughtness link.”
They had resumed walking through the gardens, making slow but steady progress in an
uphill direction, enjoying a blooming, buzzing confusion of colors and a rich mix of
scents, some familiar as lilacs in season, some almost but not quite identifiable, calling
up early memories that wouldn’t quite form, others spicy and exotic calling up no
memories whatsoever but rather a sense of adventure. Always her eye was drawn to
floral patterns that emerged among the riot of colors. There were patterns like stripes
and patterns like stars and patterns like faces. At last they emerged at the far side of the
garden upon a bluff overlooking the river’s south fork. They walked along the rim of the
bluff.

“Here’s the idea, Rachel. In early childhood, a person develops a sense of
oughtness- a sense of how things should be- out of her need for being safe and cared
for. Throughout her childhood, she seeks out or is given clues about feelings and learns
to find and name those feelings in herself. She also gradually learns that following or not
following her parents’ rules is followed by her parents’ being pleased or displeased. In
Conscience-berg, people thought a parent and child’s pleasure in one another is a
good place to build a bridge. So they did. On one end of the bridge, set in bedrock,
there is her nature: being attached. On the other side, also set in bedrock, is the value
of connectedness.
He interrupted himself “I can scarcely believe our good fortune! How well timed and
smoothly this tour is going- so unlike all my others. We’ve arrived. Look down there,
Rachel, there is the first bridge of Conscience-berg. The Bridge of Connectedness.”

Rachel didn’t know what she had expected. Something
grand no doubt. What she saw before her eyes was anything but grand. It could
scarcely be called even a footbridge. It was a thick braid of wet and slippery looking
rope ending in immense knots around iron rings set in stone on either side of the river.
She could see that a person would have to cross it toe to heel like a tight ropewalker. It
didn’t even have a handrail. It was unadorned except there were posts with candy cane
stripes like those she had seen in pictures of the canals in Venice, sticking high out of
the water on either side, spaced pretty far apart,
knotted with other ropes that looped under the bridge
itself to keep it from sagging down. The waters
beneath swirled and eddied around the posts. From
their vantage point on the bluff, they could see the five
children with their umbrellas, crossing the bridge in
tandem, hand-in-hand as they sidled across. Rachel
marveled that they didn’t fall.
“You’re kidding,” was all she could say.
“Kind of takes your breath away to look at it doesn’t it?”
“Yeah, right.”
The Imp ignored Rachel’s sarcasm. He was reading
from the tour book again.
“The Bridge of Connectedness spans the river
between The Gardens of Mencius and Hoffman’s point,
named for Martin Hoffman who described the
development of empathy in children. It’s Hoffman’s idea that empathy- being attuned to what goes on inside someone else- is important for human survival. So it’s rooted in our inherited biology.”

“In our genes,” Rachel said.

“So, even babies respond to the stress of other babies.”

“I know. I know.” Rachel said with a shudder. “Once I had to get a booster shot. There were all these parents with their babies there to get their shots. Izzy was there with her Mom. When one baby had his shot, he’d start crying. Then Izzy would look at him and she’d start crying. Then all the babies started crying. It was awful.”

“Well that’s just the beginning. Later on when the child is 2 or 3, she can empathize with feelings in other people. And it goes on from there.”

“So does everyone have the same amount of this empathy stuff?”

“No, not at all. Besides that, usually there’s a limit to how much empathy-parents will allow a child to endure. Otherwise someone might take too much advantage of her.”

They had made their way down a path to the bridgehead itself. In front of it was a sculpture.

“What are these big loopy things and bulb-things all connected together.”

“Well that sculpture is the artist’s idea of a part of the brain called the limbic system.” A small bulb at the lower end of a loop began to glow as they approached the sculpture. That’s the **amygdala**.”

In spite of herself, Rachel sneaked a peak at the metal plaque on the statue. It read “Seat of Empathy. Dedicated to Leslie Brothers”. 10

Rachel decided not to read it aloud. The risk of the Imp launching into a boring explanation was too great. She looked up at the bridge, listening to the steady creaking and groaning of the great iron rings as the rope moved to and fro in the wind sweeping between the bluffs. “You don’t expect me to cross this thing, do you?” Rachel gazed across the divide, arms akimbo on her hips.

“I need to explain something about this bridge, Rachel-” the Imp started to say. He was interrupted when Rachel suddenly became excited and grabbed his sleeve, pointing to the opposite shore.

“There, over there- Look Mr. Imp. Look. Do you see them-?”

The Imp looked to where Rachel was pointing, “What is it?”
“It’s my mom. She’s walking on Hoffman’s point. She’s come to find me!” Rachel was startled at how her heart made such a powerful leap within her breast. Rachel shouted and shouted until she was hoarse. She jumped up and down and waved her arms frantically. But her mother seemed as if she were lost in a fog—all unseeing and unhearing.

“She doesn’t see me. Why doesn’t she hear me?” At first it seemed like Rachel would despair and crumple to the ground. The Imp seemed moved with pity and put a comforting hand on Rachel’s shoulder. But then Rachel’s face took on a most determined look. At once, she leapt to her feet and raced to the bridgehead.

“No wait, Rachel—"

She had scarcely started out on the rope when she began to totter. She twisted back and said “Mr. Imp I need something to keep my balance—please.”

“I have to tell you about—” But she gave no heed to his words, drowning them in her pleading. “Oh very well,” he said, “I suppose you must learn things the hard way. How about my umbrella?”

Rachel said, “Yes your umbrella! They use umbrellas on high wires, don’t they?” He extended the umbrella out to her.

Rachel reached and took it, “Thanks Mr. Imp, I’ll see you get it back.” She opened the umbrella, held it aloft and advanced cautiously across the bridge, step by slippery step.

The Imp settled down on the embankment to watch her progress. Every once in awhile when she took a misstep and seemed about to plummet into the water, he would groan and hide his face. Then when she would recover her balance, he’d shout ‘Brava, Rachel’ and wave enthusiastically. But, admirable as her progress was, he knew it couldn’t last. All the while Rachel bit her lower lip and tried to concentrate, but she couldn’t help glancing at the far shore from time to time to see her mother. Once she caught sight of her father embracing her mother tenderly. When was the last time she had seen anything like that? But she didn’t pursue the thought in order to concentrate on keeping balance. The next time Rachel looked up, Cynthia had joined Mom and Dad. They stood there together, trying to see, straining to hear. “They’re looking for me! I’m coming,” she whispered, her voice still hoarse. “Wait for me.” But they didn’t wait. They seemed to weary of looking for what or whoever they looked for, they turned their backs, and disappeared beyond a knoll. It was too much for Rachel. She stopped, fighting back a sob. At the same time, a sudden, violent gust of wind turned her umbrella inside out. Sheer surprise surged where the sad feeling had been. “Oh—oh,” she thought. “Here I go again.”
This time she definitely heard herself splash. She tried to grab one of the candy cane poles but missed it. Even so, she wasn’t swept too far down the river when she felt something tapping her on the shoulder. She thought “Izzy’s Undertoad?” but it was an oar being extended to her by an ordinary-looking man in a boat.

“Thanks,” she gasped and sputtered as she clambered aboard. “Thanks for rescuing me. Could you—could you take me across the river so I can find my family?”

“What? The far shore where the people value being connected? It makes me sick to think of it. No, that you can not ask me to do.”

“Please, just put me down by the bridge. I’ll find my own way from there.”

“Bridges. Bah. Everywhere in Conscience-berg, bridges. Fountains- that’s what they should put up. Fountains to speak in the night.”

“I don’t understand- why won’t you take me there?”

He ignored her. He recited, “‘Night has come; now all fountains speak more loudly and my soul too is a fountain.’ Thus Spake Zarathustra, part two,” As he recited he drew into the shore where the Imp was waiting.

The Imp greeted the man in the boat. “I don’t believe my eyes. Uber! Rachel this is Uber the Overman.”

“Good Day, Imp. Did you lose someone?”

“Yes I did. Thanks for recovering her.”

“No problem.”

“This man wouldn’t take me to the other side,” Rachel said through quivering lips.

“None of my business to do so.” Uber said. “I wouldn’t have fished you out of the drink at all except that I admired your performance.”

“My performance?”

“Yes, you reminded me of another passage from the greatest of all philosophers”. Uber recited again “‘Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman— a rope across the abyss. A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping.’ Zarathustra part 1.”

“Zara-who-stru did you say?” asked the Imp with a mischievous smile.

“I will overcome your mockery, Imp. I am my own bridge.”

“It’s a metaphor, at least I think it is,” whispered the Imp into Rachel’s ear. Rachel had learned about metaphors in school — figures of speech. Then to Uber, he said, “You’re downriver a bit today, aren’t you Uber?”

“Aye,” Uber said.

“I usually see you off the headlands between the Domains of Valuation and Volition.”

“Aye and don’t think I wouldn’t prefer to be there now even as we speak! You know I can scarcely stand to breathe the air in this domain. Connectedness- this must be overcome. But, later-later. Right now I am in hot pursuit of the Undertoad.”

“Oh yes. There has been some Undertoad activity reported hereabouts,” the Imp winked at Rachel.
“Have you seen it, then?” Uber asked urgently. By sheer coincidence, the Undertoad popped its head above the surface just behind Uber’s boat and waved to Rachel and the Imp. Rachel started to point it out but the Imp quickly pushed her hand down. “Is it brownish green with webbed feet and a long sticky tongue?”

“Yes, yes... that’s him to a tee.”

“Hmm. No I can’t say that I’ve seen him. But I promise I’ll keep an eye out, Uber.”

“Uber’s undertoad hunting again,” he said to Rachel. “But don’t worry. He’s been doing it for years without any success. The Undertoad’s much too clever and slippery to be caught.”

Just then the Undertoad took a big gulp of water and squirted it. The stream found its mark on Uber’s bare head. Uber turned around in consternation and, then, when he realized his quarry was not only in sight and but also mocking him, pushed violently away from shore. The undertoad taunted and teased him as he maneuvered the boat this way and that. Then Uber and his little boat began to spin. Faster and faster he spun as the Undertoad swam circles around him.

“Wait,” cried Rachel. “Won’t you at least let me use your boat?”

“No, I can not. I am in hot pursuit,” Uber cried out as he swung his paddle futilely at a spot in space, which the Undertoad no longer occupied. Then just when it appeared Uber was completely dizzy and about to keel over, there was calm.

“Mr. Uber, are you all right?”

Gasping a little to catch his breath, Uber waved at her impatiently, as if to say ‘everything’s fine, leave me alone’.

“Rachel, you must forgive Uber. He’s not content in Conscience-berg. He doesn’t like how the bridges of Conscience-berg were built.”

“Well I can see why-” Rachel started to say, thinking of her most recent experience on the Bridge of Connectedness. “They could be a lot more user friendly.”

“No, no I should make it more clear. Uber doesn’t want to use the bridges at all. He wants to cross the water where he wants and how he wants without using any of the bridges of Conscience-berg. Uber thinks conscience just gets in the way. Makes people
think and feel and value and make choices and act all alike. So he is a challenge to those who choose to be people of conscience."

"People of conscience. Community. Connectedness. Herd instinct, if you ask me,"

Uber muttered to himself, arms folded Grumpy-style, as the current took him directly under the Bridge of Connectedness. Rachel called out to him, "Well even if you didn’t take me to the other side, Mr. Uber, thanks again for rescuing me."

"You are welcome my dear, and keep in mind: you must have chaos in yourself to give birth to a dancing star- Zarathustra part one."

Then the Imp cupped his hands and shouted, "And you keep in your mind, Uber, you can't roller skate in a buffalo herd." Uber gave a disgusted wave of dismissal. "Is that Zarathustra part 1 or 2?" Rachel wanted to know.

"Neither, it’s Roger Miller," said the Imp, watching as Uber drifted aimlessly down the river, not quite ready to resume the hot pursuit. The Imp waved once more- this time with definite fondness. Uber waved back, also fondly, Rachel thought to herself. "I have to try to cross the Bridge of Connectedness again, Mr. Imp."

"Not a good idea. Rachel, you must understand what I've been trying to tell you- The Bridge of Connectedness is not a bridge a person can cross alone."

"It can't?"

"No, it can't."

"Well what about you? Can I cross with you?"

"I'm afraid not. Imps don't count."

"Then I'll just have to cross over on another bridge and circle back. That's what I'll do. What's that bridge where you were going to meet the kids with umbrellas? You know - to play Billy Goats' Bruse?"

"Ah you mean the Bridge of Harmony?"

"Yes take me there."

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1 For renderings of the research findings that Cynthia has explained to Rachel, see:


For the actual research findings see:


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2 After developing the theme of the Undertoad, which was drawn from familial and clinical lore, it came to the authors' attention that a similar childhood rendering of ‘undertow’ into ‘Under Toad’ had been previously developed by John Irving (1976) in *The World According to Garp*, Ballantine Books, New York, 1998. Garp's Under Toad is used as an important metaphor for perils and adversities that beset Garp and his loved ones. In *The World According to Garp*, The Under Toad is introduced in the chapter entitled *The First Assassin* (p.340 ff) and figures in a subsequent chapter, *Habits of the Under Toad* (p. 375 ff). In contrast, Izzy's Undertoad is intended to represent psychodynamic influences upon conscience formation and functioning, including what are sometimes termed drives and sometimes unconscious motives. As Rachel later discovers, Izzy's Undertoad engages in a perpetual 'struggle' with Uber, a caricature of Nietzsche's Übermensch, often translated as 'Overman'. Independent origins of- and different literary purposes for- Garp's Under Toad and Izzy's Undertoad, notwithstanding, Irving's contribution to the folklore is acknowledged in the text of our story in the Imp's tour book.


5 *The Dark Crystal*, directed by Jim Henson and Frank Oz, screenplay by David Odell, story by Jim Henson. The Jim Henson Company, 1999. Rated PG.


7 Footage of Rene Spitz's studies of children in institutions and Harlow & Harlow's studies of maternal deprivation in primates are difficult to watch and not advised by the authors for young children. For grown-ups who are engaging as moral educators with children, we recommend the documentary *Nova: Life's First Feelings*. Coronet Film and Video. Simon and Schuster. Northbrook, IL, 1985. Some of the contributors towards understanding moral development in children (e.g. Kagan, Zahn-Waxler, Izard), recognized elsewhere in Conscience-berg are featured in this documentary.


11 Uber's quotation here and those following are taken from Nietzsche, F: Thus Spoke Zarathustra. In: The Portable Nietzsche, W. Kaufman, ed. New York: The Viking Press, 1970, pp.126-127. Why represent Nietzsche's ideas in Conscience-berg? The challenge of Nietzsche's ideas for, and, by virtue of this challenge, the contributions his ideas make to, both moral philosophy and moral psychology cannot be denied. Uber's presence in our story reminds us that there are other than moralized ways of composing the psychological domains of conceptualization/imagination, attachment, emotional responsiveness, valuation and volition. Whereas it is possible to critically evaluate many moral philosophies from the standpoint of what justice they do to the moralized psychological domains of conscience, Nietzsche's ideas prompt us to step outside of moralization altogether to achieve a different critical perspective. It seems to us appropriate to include in our reflections on each domain the various counterpoints to the morally composed life explicit or implicit in Nietzsche's ideas, chiefly, his presentation of 'the doctrine of eternal recurrence of the same', the 'herd' morality, the revaluation of all values, the will to power and the idea of amor fati. The elements of Nietzsche's challenge to a life composed morally have been an abiding concern of author MG over the years, receiving initial attention in his 1975 senior graduating thesis in philosophy: Nietzsche contra Kierkegaard: the Socratic Legacy (unpublished manuscript). The authors are indebted to Professor Paul Eisenberg, Department of Philosophy, Indiana University, for general moral philosophical consultation to the I.U. Conscience Project and specific guidance in the world of Nietzsche's philosophy. A particularly excellent recommendation by Professor Eisenberg for reading on this subject is: Williams, B.: Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.
The Imp and Rachel proceeded in an easterly direction from the Bridge of Connectedness. They found themselves in countryside that leveled out and then gradually fell away into lowlands. The lowlands had been claimed over the centuries from the floodplains of the river, separated from it by many earthen work levees or dikes. Waterwheels and windmills were everywhere. What amounted to a small village could be seen down the road. A sign they passed proclaimed “Kochanska, a well-tempered community.”

“What can that mean, Mr. Imp? ‘A well-tempered community’?”

“A-hem,” the Imp drew out his tour book. “As the traveler approaches the Domain of Moral Emotions from the west, he or she will not fail to be enchanted by Kochanska. An
unincorporated village situated on the island side of Conscience-berg, Kochanska is named for Grazynska Kochanska who has studied the relationship of aspects of temperament and conscience in very young children.  

“O.K. So what’s temperament?”  
“Temperament? Its part of personality- let’s see - how best to explain? Well, when I first started being an Imp, human beings thought they had different mixtures of elements in them. In those days, long ago, they talked about how all of matter could be divided into just four elements-”  
“Oh you mean like oxygen and hydrogen?”  
“No, not at all like the elements children nowadays study on their periodic tables. They thought matter could first be divided into air and fire and water and earth. Each of the elements was supposed to have two qualities, air was hot and moist, fire was hot and dry, water was cold and moist and earth was cold and dry. Inside them, people thought they had these liquids called humours that corresponded to the four elements. But they didn’t have the same amounts of each. And if one was more abundant than the others, it gave the person’s personality a distinctive flavor. Some people had more airy liquid-”  
“Air-heads?”  
“Very possibly. Now where was I? Oh yes, others had more fiery humour called choler. Still others more of the earth-like humour- cold and dry.  
“Mom says Dad is too earthy sometimes-”  
“I suspect she may mean something entirely different. And then there are those who have more of the watery humour.”  
“Well, I know a boy in school and his nose is always running-”  
“Something like that. Anyway in those days, a person was well-tempered if the humours were mixed just right. Today scientists studying human nature don’t talk about humours. Instead they talk about dimensions of temperament. They think the dimensions of temperament come not so much from combinations of humours but from -  
“I think I know: from genes?”  
“Yes, from different combinations of genes. On a very different island than the one we are on- called Manhattan-”  
“I’ve heard about Manhattan you know, I’m not stupid-”  
“Stella Chess and her colleagues studied infants’ temperaments. Some were slow to warm up to their parents, some were easy to care for, and some were difficult -”  
“Like Cynthia?”  
“It depends upon your point of view. Was Cynthia a difficult child for your parents or just for her younger sister? It may depend on how your temperament fits with hers.”  
“You mean Cynthia and I could have different temperaments that don’t fit together?”  
“There may be a few rough edges. Yes. Another researcher, Jerome Kagan, says that among humans-among mammals generally- some are naturally shy, some are naturally outgoing. Most are in between.”  
“So, Kochanska was interested in how temperament is connected with conscience?”  
“Exactly. First, how much a person is able to experience discomfort, guilt and anxiety and connect those feelings with wrong-doing and, second, how much a person is able to control behavior -those two things go hand in hand.”  
“It’s getting dark, Mr. Imp.”
“You’re right. We will need to find a place for you to spend the night in Kochanska—Ah, I know just the place. It used to be the Inn of the Four Temperaments before it became a youth hostel. Then it was called Time-out for Children of All Sorts.”
“I don’t like the sound of that ‘Time-out’. ‘Time-out’ is what my parents used when I was a little kid. I had to find a place in the house where I would go if Mom or Dad thought I was going to lose it. They said I had to chill out there. I visited that corner of the house so often, I decided to decorate it.”
“Ahh, that would explain why the youth hostel wasn’t very popular. Anyway they guessed something about the name was putting people off so they changed it to “All Sorts Resorts. There’s a very nice kids’ clothing shoppe inside called “The Good-Enough Fit.” You should stop in to get some fresh clothing for tomorrow.”
Rachel yawned, “Where will you stay?”
“Outdoors. I don’t like it inside and I don’t do much sleeping. There’s a little nature preserve nearby. That’s where I’ll be. It’s called Lob’s Wood. Maybe you’ve heard of it?”
“No.”
“It’s a pity more people haven’t. J.M. Barrie, the man who wrote Peter Pan—”
“I love that story. Did you see Hook? Isn’t Robin Williams the best? I don’t know. He’s really—”
“Impish? Hmm. That other Robin. Anyway, back to J.M. Barrie. J. M. Barrie wrote several things besides Peter Pan. One play was called Dear Brutus. It’s about how a certain Imp has fun with love triangles and mistaken identities in Lob’s Wood.”
“Oh it’s another story about you, you mean? You love it when people make mistakes, don’t you?”
“Always have.”
“Anyway Lob’s Wood is mostly for grown-ups who are disappointed in their lives and loves. They go into the woods thinking ‘if only I could have been—’ or ‘if only circumstances had been different—’ or ‘if only I had chosen someone else to love—’ and other such things. The fun thing about Lob’s Wood is it makes ‘if only’ happen. The most incredible things occur. Often, grown-ups end up just as disappointed with their new lives and loves as they were with the old... After all is said and done, they find that their biggest mistakes about identity had to do with the most important identities of all—their own.”
“Do I know any grown-ups who have visited Lob’s Wood?”
“Don’t be misled about that, Rachel. There are few grown-ups who do not visit there at least once in their lives.”
“Mom and Dad?”
The Imp nodded.
“I thought so.... Does it change people—being in Lob’s Wood?”
“Oh, yes indeed.”
“Is the change any good?”
“Sometimes.” The Imp smiled kindly. “Listen Rachel, no promises, but I may be able to find out something about what ‘if onlies” your Mom and Dad encountered in Lob's Wood.”

“Can I come with you?”

“No, I’m afraid not. Now do you see down the road where you will stay tonight?”

“Yes, I see it.”

“I shall find you tomorrow. Here take my tour book for your bedtime reading.”

“Goodnight, Mr. Imp.”

“Goodnight, Rachel.”

“Mr. Imp?”

“Yes?”

“Could I have a hug?”

“Hugs just happen to be one of my specialties.”

Rachel had been too late to visit the “Good Enough Fit “before it closed for the evening. So she checked in at the front desk and dug into her pocket for the few coins remaining over from last week’s allowance.

The woman at the desk had a friendly face and smile. “Have you a reservation?” she inquired.

“No, I don’t think so,” Rachel said. “How could I?”

“Well, I’m sorry; we are completely booked for this evening. Are you sure you haven’t a reservation?”

Rachel felt her face become hot and tears begin to well up in her eyes. As friendly as the woman was, Rachel felt herself ashamed. Rachel became very self-conscious about her bedraggled appearance and her inability to pay. She was prepared to beg for her food and lodging- even though she thought it would be a humiliating thing to do. All of a sudden she thought, “So this is what it’s like to be homeless.”

“Everyone but one has already checked in for the night,” said the woman glancing at her book. “What did you say your name is?”

“My name’s Rachel, but-”

“Rachel?” Rachel- well why didn’t you say so in the first place? Yes, my dear, you do have a reservation.”

“But how-”

“Paid in advance. On the account of R. Goodfellow, I.M.P. I’m Mrs. Keeper, the innkeeper, dear. I’m afraid the restaurant isn’t serving anymore. Shall I have something sent to your room?”

The tears did come after all. In torrents. And if they could have spoken, they would have spoken of relief and gratitude and simply of fatigue. The woman at the desk patted Rachel’s hand, offered some tissue and escorted her to her room. Rachel’s room was sparsely furnished but, after a long cry, she settled comfortably into her bed. From the kitchen, hot soup, homemade bread, milk and a chocolate chip cookie were sent up. Rachel was careful to brush the crumbs off the bedding. The view from her window took in the river that ran wide and deep as it skirted the lowlands outside Kochanska. In fact the tour book called this part of the river “The Deepening,” and described strong
currents in the river as well as underground lakes that spread below the village itself, and hot springs that sometimes erupted in geysers among the great flat rocks that lay east of the village along the way to the bridgehead. The geysers made Rachel think of Mr. Uber and how fond he was of fountains. She hoped she would see a geyser erupting tomorrow. Rachel thumbed through the tour book, using the Imp’s business card as a bookmark. She looked at the business card again.

“Hmm, ‘R. Goodfellow’- I wonder....” She turned to the index in the back of the tour book and read, “Good-enough-fit, clothes for children, see advertisement page 20, Goodfellow, Robin, a brief account, see page 118.” She turned to page 118.

One impish character figuring prominently in the folklore of Conscience-Berg is Robin Goodfellow. Robin enjoys the same notoriety in Conscience-Berg, as does Sasquatch in the American North west or Nessie in Loch Ness, Scotland. Sightings are exceedingly rare and, of course, impossible to verify. He is also known as Puck, or sometimes Mr. Imp. Like the character Puck in William Shakespeare’s play *A Midsummer Night Dream*, Robin is described as an ironic trickster and mischief-maker who makes people uncomfortable and thrives on their foolishness. He is said to call upon magical fairy powers as well as the quickness of Mercury to lead travelers astray. He can shape shift, throw his voice as well as Peter Pan and talk to or take the form of animals. Some Conscience-bergians identify him with ‘The Undertoad’ a strange creature first popularized by the novelist John Irving in his book *The World According to Garp*. Other folklorists insist the two legendary characters are distinct but on the best of terms with one another. While he makes people uncomfortable, it is usually in a worthy cause so Robin is also widely regarded as a good fellow whose mischief usually teaches important lessons. Scholarly accounts of legendary characters such as Robin Goodfellow and the Undertoad explain their persistence in the folklore and our imaginations as answering to our deep-seated psychological need to avoid becoming too serious, particularly about moral matters. Of course, many establishments in Conscience-Berg catering to tourists capitalize shamelessly upon these altogether fictitious beings. Caveat emptor: let the buyer beware. One final point, Rachel, don’t believe everything you read-especially about what’s real and what’s not!!

“How does he do that?” Rachel muttered to herself between yawns. Sleep was rapidly overtaking her as she turned her faltering gaze skyward. There were no stars to be seen, either fixed or falling. Nor were there once-in-a- lifetime comets or spectacular alignments of planets. But there was a full moon with a circlet of wispy clouds rimmed in lunar glow. Rachel was reminded of nothing else so much as a dime store pearl stuck on black paper with smears of paste. “That’s what Cynthia used to make her space diorama,” Rachel thought as she yawned one last time and fell asleep.
A sudden flash of lightning awakened Rachel. Heart beating a rapid tattoo in her chest, she raised herself up and drew her knees under her chin and began to count ‘1-1 thousand, 2-2 thousand, 3-3 thousand....’ as her father had once suggested she do. Rachel’s eyes were wide open and her hearing entirely attuned to the sound, which came next-, a rumble of thunder. Doubtful that Kochanska had sirens, she was alert for warning signs that the severe thunderstorm might spawn a tornado. Rachel had lived all her life in the Midwest and had made many a trip in the midnight hours to the basement in weather such as this. There was a rat-a-tat-tat from beneath the eaves of the inn. Rachel went to the window and peered out. It was as if the dark night had been churned up with eggbeaters in a mix master. Then wind and hail came riding roughshod over the trees, compelling them to rear up their branches and buck like broncos. In the glare of a second flash of lightning, Rachel saw an amazing scene illuminated upon the river. Amidst the spray and mixmastered darkness, poised like a conjuring magician between waterspouts, was The Undertoad. In the time it takes to blink an eye, Rachel was out the bedroom door and halfway down the hall, heading towards the stairs, hoping the cellar wasn’t too hard to find. Just then she collided with another object trying to occupy the same space. Both Rachel and the other object took a spill backwards with yelps of surprise. After they both sprawled and groaned a little, the other object pulled itself up to a height that pretty much matched Rachel’s own and said in a boyish but breathless voice, “Sorry,” “Are you all right?” and “I didn’t see you coming,” and “I hope you aren’t hurt.” All of these words issued from somewhere under the poncho he wore. Rachel couldn’t tell from where exactly because the poncho had become hopelessly twisted about his head and trunk. Just now, he was struggling to disentangle himself.

“Here, let me--” Rachel said as she put the boy’s poncho to rights. “It wasn’t your fault- the storm- shouldn’t we get to the basement?”

“I think the worst is past us”, he said as he poked his head through the hole in the hood of his poncho. Rachel thought he was kind of cute for a boy. “I was on my way to help on the levee. They say the river will crest soon and the levee may not hold against the water.”

“Can I help too?” Rachel found herself asking, as she dismissed her recent desire to find the cellar.

“Yes, of course! We’re filling sandbags and stacking them up to prevent flooding.”

Rachel followed the boy, who said his name was Tov, down to the levee. Many of the town folk were there already, all hastily attired in raingear and organized into different work parties. One group was filling sandbags from a pile of sand, some other people were tying and loading them on pushcarts, while still others were unloading them and passing them up a line to the top of the levee. She recognized Mrs. Keeper who waved and said “Rachel, darling girl! I meant to let you sleep, you looked so tired—we can manage.”

“Thank-you. I’d like to help, if I can. I’ve rested enough.”

“Well then grab a shovel, Rachel, and start filling sandbags.”
Rachel and Tov took up positions near the levee itself, not far from a dedication stone which, Rachel could see in the flickering torchlight. Rachel read the engraving:

**These earthen work defenses**
**constructed by**
**The Department of Public Works**
**are dedicated**
**to**
Freud, Bond, Vaillant, Steiner and others who have studied the defenses of the unconscious mind and how they mature.


As they worked side by side, filling sandbags, Tov said to Rachel, “There were waterspouts earlier, I saw them. Clear up to the sky.”
Rachel was impressed, “Cool.”
Tov then leaned close to Rachel’s ear, “I’ll bet the Undertoad’s in the storm’s eye-just delighted as he can be with all the commotion. But no one would believe me, if I told them that.”
“I believe you.”
“You do?”
“Yes I do. I’ve seen the Undertoad.”
“You have? Tell me what you saw.”
And as they worked together, Rachel told Tov all about her arrival in Conscience-berg, Mr. Imp and Mr. Uber and, of course, her encounter with the Undertoad. Tov was amazed. “I’ve lived here all my life. I’ve had a glimpse or two of the Undertoad’s webbed foot or maybe its back- at least I think I have but, in my whole life, I haven’t seen the Imp even once--I never thought he was really real like the Undertoad. ”

“Undertoad. Twaddle,” said a man, contemptuously. “Pure fiction. Probably El Nino, if any explanation is needed. Where I come from in the Domain of Volition, we don’t look to fend off the Undertoad, thinking it’s somehow to blame for our own mistakes. No sir, if we have our troubles, we take responsibility and bull our way through them--”

“Bulling through something is all very well and good,” interjected someone else, “but where I come from in the Domain of Attachment if we’re in trouble and can’t manage it, we seek out help from one another. Still I agree with you about this Undertoad business-so much nonsense if you ask me. ”

“Saw and heard and touched what I saw and heard and touched,” Rachel directed her remark in a whisper to Tov. She couldn’t help being testy and defensive. “I know that you Conscience-bergians deny the existence of the Undertoad and Mr. Imp. I read it in his tour book.”

“Whose tour book?”

Rachel felt a surge of vexation." The Imp’s, of course. Haven’t you been listening to me?" Then under her breath but, unfortunately overheard by Tov, “Stupid boy.”

Tov fell silent. And the silence grew uncomfortably louder with every passing moment. Rachel sneaked a sidelong glance at Tov from behind the shoulder she had drawn up to conceal her face. Tov was hurt. She could easily tell from his face.

“Now you wee ones, more filling sandbags with sand and less filling each others’ heads with nonsense. That’s the ticket,” said the first man with a nod of approval from the other.

“It’s O.K. Rachel don’t let them get your goat, you have every right to your imagination,” Tov said.

At that moment Rachel became too angry to disguise it. “Don’t talk down to me, you --you clumsy geek.” She absolutely hated it when people-especially her father--wouldn’t take her seriously. Like she didn’t have a head on her shoulders or something! Like she was still a dumb first grader or something! Then she remembered her father telling her all about the jackalopes out West, trying to fool her with faked postcards, showing jackrabbits with antlers and almost getting her to believe they existed. Cynthia pointed at Rachel, scarcely able to contain her mirth. It made Rachel crazy. Then and there she decided she wouldn’t be anyone’s fool again.

The men were laughing again and the words, “tourist” and “gullible,” passed between them as they shoveled sand. That did it. Rachel raised her shovel, brandished it, and then threw it down and stomped away.

“Now stay off the levee, child. Do your sulking away from the river--it’s dangerous in this storm.”
“I don’t care!” she shouted back. Tov looked worried, and started to follow her. “Stay away,” she warded him away with her fist. “They’re right, Rachel-- about the danger I mean.”

The words that Mom used in an argument with Dad came suddenly to mind. Rachel wasn’t sure if she was using them correctly but she was grateful to have something strong to say: “I won’t be placated by you or anyone else!”

She ran into the shadows beyond the work site. Tov ran after her but she was by far the faster. She loved to run at school and prided herself on being the fastest in her class. Tonight she was especially delighted to outrun that stupid, clumsy boy, Tov. At last he gave up the chase. Nearly out of breath, he stopped and said: “Please be careful”. Rachel smiled to herself and began walking. Before long, however, she realized she was in unfamiliar surroundings. To encourage herself she began whistling in the dark.

Further on, she passed the stairs to a high wooden boardwalk built on top of the levee, leading to a dock. The swirling rain made it difficult to see much of anything, but she thought she could make out a glowing light, just about where the dock left the boardwalk and extended into an inlet from the river. She climbed the stairs and immediately felt a chill and forceful wind. Now that she had climbed above the levee wall and only she could fully appreciate how it had protected her from the stinging rain and pelting hail. But she was determined to draw closer to the glowing light, even if that meant drawing closer to a river enraged. She pulled the poncho Tov had given her close around her neck and wished for a sweater or two beneath it: "Why am I always getting drenched in Conscience-berg?" she muttered into the poncho.

As Rachel approached the glowing light, she thought the shape from which it emitted looked vaguely familiar— all loops and bulbs— "That’s what it looks like," she thought remembering the sculpture of the limbic system she had seen at the Bridge of Connectedness. But there was more to this sculpture. Some of the loops were connected to something that hadn’t been in the first sculpture, something newly added. "The front part of the brain," Rachel made a guess. And in this sculpture, the loops glowed different colors— red and green. “Like Stop and Go.” Rachel thought. At the base of the sculpture, she read “B.I.S” in the red illumination from the loops. But when the letters changed to “B.R.S.” the loops glowed green, instead. “What does it mean?” Rachel said aloud. Below the shifting letters, she read “Gray’s Hypothesis”. She looked
about the dock for additional clues. All she found was an engraved plaque, which read, “Quay’s Quay”.

She was curious enough to pull out the Imp’s now dog-eared tour book, and curling up beneath the sculpture in order to use its light, looked up “Gray” first and then “Quay” in the index.

Rachel read about how Gray thought a person uses the brain to make herself stop and think before acting. Then she read how Quay took Gray’s idea and applied it to children. She read her name again....

“Rachel-” by this time she simply said ‘Weird’ and kept on reading-

“..... Another part of your brain called the **hippocampus**, because in cross section it’s shaped like a sea horse, tapped into long term memories of what happened when you used to hit people with objects like shovels--mostly toy shovels in the sandbox, which you wouldn’t share with Cynthia. You decided not to use a very real shovel you had in your hands to wallop the man from Volition. Your brain used its special chemicals to send messages between nerves that make up his **behavior inhibition system** (that’s where the letters B.I.S. came from). Inhibition is like forbidding something to go on. The behavioral inhibition system is also called the STOP system. Still another part of your brain just behind your forehead is called the frontal lobe. Through its connections with the limbic system, the frontal lobe takes part in the behavioral inhibition system. Our frontal lobes are important to us in making critical judgments and in controlling our urges. Your frontal lobe was active in helping you control that urge to hit someone with your shovel. What do you think happened to the fear of punishment, the shame or the guilt emotions you might have had before your behavioral inhibition system kicked in and forbade you to act on your urge?”

Rachel answered out loud, “Well I didn’t do anything, so I don’t have anything to be afraid of or ashamed of or guilty about,”

“Right,” she read in the tour book,
“... and what a relief not to feel fear or shame or guilt. Relief from distressing emotions is a pretty powerful way for conscience to work on preventing bad behavior. In fact, your brain used other special chemicals to send messages between nerve cells that make up your behavioral reward system. It’s also called the GO system. Your brain rewarded your good judgment not to hurt someone.”

“Yeah right, then why am I still angry at those jerks? Tov, too...well, he’s not so bad I guess.” She recalled his hurt look when she called him a stupid boy. Rachel marveled at how readily he expressed his feelings. Most kids she knew had learned how to disguise their emotions at least to some extent. If they didn’t, they were taunted with “Cry baby!” or some such thing. Even Dad advised his daughters to control their emotions. Did he mean disguise them? Rachel was clever at that.

“What else do you have to tell me in your tour book, Mr. Imp?”
She randomly flipped back a few pages and read:

“... When suddenly stressed like this, stress hormones are released in your brain and your sympathetic nervous system. You then have what’s called a fight or flight response. Your body is prepared either to stay and fight or to runaway-to take flight. Rachel, in this case I strongly recommend flight.”

Rachel felt the hairs on her neck stand out even before she saw the webbed shadow fall across the page she was reading. “I’m outta here,” she said, closing the tour book, and she was out of there, running her ‘personal best’ speed back to the work site on the levee --without once looking behind her.14

Rachel’s legs stopped racing before her heart did. Tov asked if she were all right. She was winded but managed to nod. Then, without another word, she took up her shovel again. The hard work went on through the rest of the night. Rachel never knew how exhausting filling sandbags could be. The two men, who had teased her earlier, now praised her endurance. By dawn, the people in charge judged that the strengthened dike would hold against the floodwaters.

“At least for now,” said the innkeeper skeptically. “It seems like I’m down here sandbagging a lot. Well, the devil take the hindmost. Come on Rachel, come on Tov, come on everyone, back to the inn, clean yourselves up and I’ll fix pancakes.”

That was most agreeable to all invited-and that was everyone on the levee.

§
“Is anyone in Conscience-berg ever hungry or homeless?” Rachel looked up from her second stack of pancakes.

The innkeeper nodded, “Rachel, conscience and hunger and homelessness are not strangers to one another. But it’s also true that people of conscience are put to a severe test by hunger and other unmet needs, and by warfare and earthquakes and other catastrophes, as well.”

The man from Volition, also pausing in the middle of a second helping, chimed in, “Some folk believe that those are challenges that make consciences grow faster.”

The man from Valuation was quick to accept the challenge of an argument, “At what cost? Some folk in the Domain of Valuation say human survival values have to be satisfied before other values can flourish—even if eventually the other values can lead to making a very great sacrifice-like giving up your own life to save someone else.” Tov looked at Mrs. Keeper for confirmation of what the man had just said.

“I wouldn’t know about that, Tov,” the innkeeper said. “I’ll bet the Volition folk wouldn’t be so very glad about it and the Valuation folk wouldn’t spend their time on highfalutin’ explanations of self sacrifice, if either folk were sorely in need and scrambling for food or clothing or shelter.”

“Maybe that’s the point,” Tov said while holding out his glass for more milk. “Maybe, we should make sure that everyone has enough food and other stuff because people won’t be so worried about surviving. Maybe we should respect their challenges but also make sure their challenges don’t mean suffering terribly or suffering alone. Then maybe we’ll have more people of conscience.”

“As truly spoken as if it was intoned from The Bridge of Oughta Worth, itself,” the man from Valuation said and patted Tov on the back. The name of the bridge caught Rachel’s fancy—she thought she heard him say ‘The Bridge of Otter Worth.’ She admired otters.

“Well, I’ll have to mull that one over,” the innkeeper said at last. “But only because Tov thinks the idea has merit.” She directed a playful sneer and stuck her tongue out at the men from Valuation and Volition. “Meanwhile, Rachel, you and Tov can help me finish cleaning up—”

Just then a woman in heavy raingear and hip-high, mud-streaked boots came in and said, “Bad news, everybody. Harmony Bridge was damaged in the storm.” Groans went up all around the room.

“Again?” the man from Volition said with more disgust than surprise. “Third time this week. Well what can one expect from this Domain?”

“Don’t recall asking you to stay,” said Mrs. Keeper, then she added with a wink, “It was your choice to be here.”

Everyone except the man from Volition laughed. Rachel must have seemed to him the most sympathetic person at the table—because he whispered confidentially to her: “Isn’t she the saucy one? I get that ‘it was your choice’ stuff all the time—just because I’m from Volition. Get’s old after awhile.”

Rachel nodded, but wanted to return to the subject of the bridge. “Not a very sturdy bridge, I guess—” Rachel started.

“The Bridge of Harmony is the best bridge in Conscience-berg,” Tov protested.
“That’s not saying much,” Rachel couldn’t resist the taunt. Her fall from the Bridge of Connectedness remained a vivid memory.

The innkeeper interrupted them. She was carrying a violin case. “Well, Tov, the best bridge in Conscience-berg needs repairs again. So here.” She handed him the violin case. “Take Rachel with you—you’re both excused from doing dishes. Rachel, do you play an instrument?”

“What?” Rachel was confused, thought a moment then said uncertainly. “Well, beginning oboe.”

Mrs. Keeper opened a closet adjoining the dining room, entered it and noisily began rummaging. Rachel exchanged a puzzled glance with Tov who simply shrugged his shoulders as if to say ‘whaddya expect?’ Mrs. Keeper emerged from the closet, a triumphant smile playing on her lips. “An oboe,” she said and handed the instrument case to Rachel. Rachel accepted the oboe in spite of her bewilderment. “Tov will explain on the way to the Bridge, dear. Now, off with the both of you, a bridge needs mending.”

Rachel gasped, “Mr. Imp was supposed to meet me here this morning—”

“He’s not the most responsible Imp, you know. But don’t you fret, he’ll find you in his own good time.”

“The tour book— I left it upstairs—“

“Here it is Rachel, I brought it down for you. Now after the dishes I have to get the rooms ready for the next visitors.”

“Thank-you for everything, Mrs. Keeper. I don’t believe how kind you are to strangers.”

“Bless you both. Rachel, give my regards to your family when you find them—and to that impish Robin Goodfellow, too.”

§

Tov and Rachel ambled through Kochanska, directing their steps past the shops and bed-and-breakfasts, down towards the riverside. They had come this way last night with a sense of urgency that did not permit gawking or window-shopping. Now, the village street scene looked as pretty as a postcard picture, freshly scrubbed in rainwater, puddles glistening, sidewalks with plumes of vapor, and the amber light of dawn drenching the storefronts. It would have been a shame to make the pace any faster than leisurely. Something caught Rachel’s eye, “Wait, Tov! Look at that store.” She pointed across the street.

Tov read the shop sign aloud, “‘That Quilty Feeling’-so?”

Wait, I’m sure it said “That Guilty Feeling. It wasn’t a ‘Q’ it was a ‘G’. C’mon let’s look.” Sure enough, the letters changed back and forth while they watched. They had to keep themselves from blinking to appreciate the transformation.

Tov started to object that they had a job to do, but decided he was curious, too.

A sign in the window said: “Special: Chamois Shame Shirts”. Another sign said “Quilted Guilt Comforters.”
the comforters was on display in the window: a patchwork quilt. The center patch was a circle with the word ‘Forgiveness’ stitched round. Other patches radiated out from the center and depicted scenes. Rachel gasped, one of the scenes showed her mother, face taut with anger, slapping her father. She had never seen that happen. How young they looked! Maybe this was before Cynthia and she were born. Another showed Cynthia trying to wash some color marker scribbling off a wall in a closet Rachel didn’t recognize. Still another showed Rachel pushing Izzy very hard. The last showed Tov. He had the exact same expression on his face as last night on the levee when she called him ‘stupid boy’.

They passed through the center of the town, a kind of rotary with turnouts to go in different directions: Rachel stopped to read the signs giving directions: Darwin 12 km, Tomkins 4.5 km, Izard 3 km. And Zahn-Waxler 2.3 km. “I know Darwin, but I’m not sure why his name is here. Who are these others?”

Tov shrugged, “You have the tour book, don’t you?”

Rachel opened the tour book to The Domain of Moral Emotions. She read:

Postcard depicting the Village of Kochanska
Reproduced by permission Conscience-berg Chamber of Commerce

In the center of Kochanska is a circular park called The Discrete Emotions, in honor of the theory of discrete emotions and those who have studied them. Charles Darwin was one of the first to observe that human beings share with other primates facial expressions that accompany feeling states. But, for a long time, emotions were thought to be much too messy to study scientifically. Then Carroll Izard devised a way of using a puppet theatre to arouse emotions in infants. He created a picture book of how infants’ faces look when they are sad or mad or disgusted. Other researchers showed how these emotions look the same on people’s faces across the world. The experience of a discrete emotion, biologically, is much the same across cultures and ethnic groups and even species. However, what makes one person joyful or sad isn’t always the same for
everyone. It is said that everyone has the same biology but a different biography of emotion.

It is important to note that the discrete emotions can be numbered on the fingers of both hands. But they also come in many, many hues and shades and combinations-something like a rainbow. And they aren’t all present from the very beginning of life. Among the discrete emotions, some are more often associated with Conscience-berg than others: fear of punishment, shame and guilt. Local inhabitants are quick to point out that this is a grave error. Virtually all the emotions are moralized, including excitement when a person engages in a moral adventure, like yours, Rachel.

Rachel looked up and scanned the streets around her for some sign of the Imp. She discovered none, sighed, and returned to her reading.

As noted by Carolyn Zahn-Waxler, William Damon and others, Guilt is a later appearing social or moral emotion. Guilt is too often maligned. At its best, it motivates change in attitude or behavior. It is helpful to think of it as empathy for someone whom you yourself have hurt or wronged. There’s no guilt without empathy.15

“I get the point, Mr. Imp.”
“Who you talking to, Rachel?” asked Tov.
“Oh, no one, Tov...Say, listen, I’m sorry I called you stupid last night. I was wrong. I call people stupid much too much, I think.”
“ It’s O.K., Rachel. Anyway we need to get going-we have a bridge to repair.”
“Which way?”
“Follow me.”

§

An hour later, on the road passing through rolling, rocky countryside, Tov and Rachel felt a funny feeling in their feet. The funny feeling turned to a definite rumble that moved rapidly from their toes up through their bodies, even setting their teeth to chattering.

“W-w-what is it, T-t-tov?” Rachel said grabbing his hand.
“I-I-I'm n-n-not sure.... it's l-l-loudest over there. L-l-let's go see.”
They made their way to off the road to a hilly area, strewn across with great craggy rocks, all of which were visibly vibrating.
“It's an earthquake, Tov!” said Rachel who really knew more about tornados than about earthquakes.
“I don’t think so”, said Tov “--wait a little.”
The rumbling suddenly subsided and was replaced by an eerie calm. Then there was a growing roar. A huge plume of steam and a fount of water rose together from behind a cluster of cairns, and arched high into the sky, intent on meeting the nearest clouds.

“Geyser!” said Rachel in a whispered exclamation.
“Geyser,” agreed Tov.
“It’s beautiful.”
“Yes...beautiful.... we’re very fortunate to see it, Rachel.” Tov said almost reverently. “I think this is one of the geysers of joy.”
“Geyser of Joy,” Rachel said, “Well, it’s wonderful.”
They watched until the force of the natural wonder was spent, a fine mist shifting in the breeze its last remnant. Reluctantly, they turned back to the road.
Rachel said, “That was really neat, Tov. It was cool.”
If Rachel’s passage from words like ‘beautiful’ and ‘wonderful’ back to words like ‘neat’ and ‘cool’ troubled Tov, he showed no sign. In fact, he smiled and said: “You betcha.” They laughed.

They came upon a rest area with picnic tables, roundabout were hillocks covered with birches, some mere saplings, others having matured and attained considerable girth. A brook cascaded over a mossy prominence. There was a trailhead nearby, marked with a wooden post, “Gilligan’s Isle” 6 km. Moderately Rugged.
Rachel laughed. “I’ve seen re-runs of that show.”
Tov looked up, “What show?” He was rummaging in his backpack.
Rachel said, “Oh I forgot you don’t have T.V. It’s a show-a sitcom- called “Gilligan’s Island”: it’s about these silly people who are marooned together on an island-well sort of like I am. You know- a comedy.”
Tov said, “Oh sure, I’ve seen comedies before. We have an outdoor theatre, here.” Tov found what he was looking for, two brown paper sacks. He surveyed the contents: “Sandwiches and bananas and cookies and juice boxes almost thawed. From Mrs. Keeper.”
“Really? I’m pretty hungry.”
“Me too.”
“On vacation, my Dad always gets upset because someone’s always hungry--or needing to find a bathroom. He says ‘The chief limiting factors in making progress on our vacations are empty stomachs and full bladders.’
“That’s funny,” Tov said.
“You know, it is funny in a way--but when he says it I always think he’s unhappy with me--or someone.”
Rachel took out the tour book and thumbed through the index. “Handy thing, an index,” she said to Tov as he was munching his sandwich, “They’re in all kinds of books, along with glossaries for words I don’t know. I wonder why I’ve waited until now to start using them. I guess I always asked someone else --Mom or Cynthia or Dad. I ask Dad a lot.”
“Is he unhappy with you for asking him questions all the time?”
“No, not usually, not at all, really.”
“That’s good, I guess.”
“Yeah, I guess.... Wait one sec-here it is Gilligan’s Isle, pages 37-39.” Rachel read:

Named in honor of Carol Gilligan, who wrote *In A Different Voice*. Gilligan challenged the idea that all people of conscience strive towards a single highest moral principle, justice. The idea was that consideration of justice governed the outcome of moral reasoning. Gilligan thought this idea was not always true, especially of girls and young women, whose contours of conscience might be shaped more by caring and responsibility. Scientists who study moral development now think there are many possible contours of conscience. What stands out as a highest principle in different persons of conscience is not easily attributed to gender alone. It is therefore fitting that the isle named for Gilligan is not a true island. Gilligan’s Isle is located in the fjord that cuts from the north coast to the heart of Conscience-berg. During high tide, Gilligan’s Isle is indeed surrounded on all sides by water, isolated from the rest of Conscience-berg. During low tide, however, there are several land bridges, composed of great flat rocks that can be crossed with ease. It is this feature that has established the island as the ideal location for the Annual Festival of Caring, held in the first week of August. Only recently opened to men and boys, in former days, the festival admitted only women and girls who awaited the high tide to begin their retreat together.

“I’ve been once-it’s fun, lots of face-painting. Someone has her face painted, and everyone else has to guess what emotion is being shown. The artists who paint the emotions compete for all kinds of prizes, and the people who correctly guess the most also are given awards. Then everyone joins a group led by a storyteller who helps them tell the story of the emotions they have had painted on their faces. Sometimes it’s folk musicians instead of storytellers- sometimes it’s both.

“Do they have acoustic guitarists? I’d like to be there for the Festival of Caring.”
“I’d like to go with you someday, Rachel. Right now--”
“I know -we should keep going.”

§

It was midday when they came within sight of the Bridge of Harmony. Rachel had already learned from the Imp’s tour book that the person who designed the bridge was inspired by a Navajo sand painting called “The Whirling Rainbows.” Like all sacred sand paintings, this sand painting was not to be kept after the ceremony in which it had been used was done. As David Villasenor informs us: “The rainbow represents the most powerful force of the creative spirit of evolution. It is the first visual manifestation of light and air, momentarily suspended in condensation of the water vapor...that brings forth
the crystal liquid....” The sand painting tells of moisture in the air and bounty on earth, and new growth from the hearts of seeds moved to life by the rainbow colors. “The Whirling Rainbows” looks something like a pinwheel contained by the encircling figure of the Rainbow Guardian. The rainbow is considered a good sign, a reward for those who walk the Path of Beauty.17

Looked at from the sky, The Bridge of Harmony did indeed look something like a pinwheel. “Or maybe,” it occurred to Rachel, “a galaxy in Cynthia’s diorama.” It was set, horizontally (instead of vertically like most pinwheels one sees at the county fair), on top of a great post rising from the middle of the river. And like a pinwheel it was spinning. Rachel thought it was spinning incredibly fast. So fast that colorful vapors were thrust forcefully outward in every conceivable direction. Only after traveling a splendid distance, did the condensations slow and allow gravity to pull them downward, transforming them during their descent into a gentle rainfall above the river. For several moments, Rachel, too, was transformed—perhaps transported in her memory to another time. She remembered being quite young, cuddling on her mother’s lap, where she had sought refuge during a thunderstorm. The storm was over but the cuddling continued while her mother described her father’s and her honeymoon trip to Hawaii. “Incredible rainbows there—sometimes double or triple arches over impossibly lush fields of sugarcane—and raindrops sparkling in the air all around. Magic.”

Rachel sighed. Her practical nature could not be long denied. “That can’t be a bridge,” Rachel shouted her protest over the whirling sound. “It’s turning too fast for anyone to cross it!”

“I know,” Tov shouted back. “We have to slow it down.”

“How do we do that?” Rachel couldn’t guess.

“That’s what the instruments are for—if we play the right music, the bridge will slow down so that you can cross it—”

“Aren’t you going across with me?”

“I really want to, Rachel, but I have to stay here so other travelers can cross, too. It’s what I’ve promised to do. This is where I belong.”

“Then I will stay and help you—unless you’d rather I didn’t.”
“If you stayed, Rachel—to help repair the bridge—and to keep me company for awhile—that would be really wonderful—I mean, it would be cool. But you must promise to cross the bridge before sunset.”

“Why? Will I turn into a donkey like Pinocchio’s friend on Paradise Island?”

“I mean it. You must not stay on this side another night, if you wish to return home. I will explain before you leave.”

“All right, all right, I promise.”

The rest of the day was spent more in music than in words. A graceful and haunting violin piece that Tov played succeeded in slowing the bridge down. Not to a dead halt but enough for travelers to make a jump. And really, they were obliged to make no more of a jump than you or I could easily make to get off a carousel when the ride’s over but the merry-go-round still has a revolution or two left in it. Of course, on a carousel, we would wait until the ride comes to a complete halt because the barker tells us we should. The rules are different for a bridge of whirling rainbows. Late in the morning, an elderly man and a very young child—about Izzy’s age, perhaps—were afraid to cross. It was then that Tov asked Rachel to play her oboe. Now Rachel was indeed a beginner at oboe, but she practiced daily. And that combined with the special quality of air that can only be found in Conscience-berg might explain why what she played was so indescribably lovely that the Bridge of Harmony itself came to a full stop just to listen. It was so lovely that Tov had to tap the old gentleman on his shoulder to rouse him from his reveries and bid him cross while the bridge was still. All the rest of that day, Tov and Rachel played music they made up together.

The sun, however, would not remain still in the sky, no matter how lovely Tov and Rachel played their instruments. Let it be known, nonetheless, that the sun was not completely heartless. In tribute to the young musicians, it shed its beautiful robes of the most royal purple and imperial crimson hues, all embroidered in silver and gold, and left them behind to recognize the work composed and played that day.

“You said you would tell me why I can’t stay after sunset,” Rachel finally said.

“Because I would lack the courage to let my good friend go tomorrow.”

She saw the tears threatening to spill over from Tov’s eyes and wondered what they would tell her if tears could talk. Then she stopped wondering because she felt the tears on her own face.
The bridge had begun to revolve again, slowly at first, but ever gaining in speed. “Hurry Rachel, before it spins too fast”. She turned to go. Then she suddenly turned back, and kissed Tov on the cheek. Her choice made, she ran to the edge of the bridgehead and jumped. The whirling rainbow took her all too quickly to the opposite shore. In the gathering dusk, she could no longer clearly discern Tov’s shape. Even so, she waved to the shadows now enclosing the riverbank where she and he had so recently and so long ago been together. She jumped off the rainbow bridge, its colors flaring one last time before submitting to the dark. Then she was running, though she could not have said why-no Undertoad or anything else menaced her. She ran and ran and ran until she could run no longer. She found a copse of birches, leaned against one and, exhausted, lowered herself to the ground. At the threshold of merciful sleep, the last thing she heard was a single note from a violin-serene and sad and loving.


Also mentioned in this part of the story is the work of Chess and Thomas, suggested reading for which is: Thomas, A and Chess, S: *Temperament and Development*. New York: Brunner /Mazel, 1977.

13 Both *Peter Pan, or the boy who would not grow up* and *Dear Brutus*, may be found in *The Plays of J.M. Barrie, in one volume*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948. Rachel's reference is to Spielberg's fantasy film sequel to J.M. Barrie's play, *Hook*, directed by S. Spielberg, starring Robin Williams, Dustin Hoffman and Julia Roberts, Tri Star Pictures, Inc, 1991, Rated PG.

14 To explain Conduct Disorder appeals have been made to Quay’s elaboration of Gray's hypothesis (Rogeness, Javors & Pliszka, 1992, also see: Quay, 1993, Rogeness, 1994). In brief, primary brain systems are identified. These include the Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS), and the Reward or Behavioral Facilitatory System (BFS). The BIS
acts as a comparator and inhibitor of behavior. It responds to nonreward, punishment and uncertainty. The Behavioral Facilitatory System (BFS) is action without restraint (examples: extraversion, sexual behavior, aggressive behavior) and mobilizes behavior so that active engagement occurs. Quay's Hypothesis is that severe and persistent undersocialized conduct disorder has its biological foundations in an imbalance between the BIS mediated by NE and serotonergic neuronal pathways and BFS mediated by dopaminergic pathways.


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15 Suggested Reading:

16 Suggested Reading:

THE THREE BRIDGES OF WORTH:

ELDERWORTH
What is that awful noise?” Rachel muttered through a yawn. She thought, “Cynthia has that Weird Al C.D. on too loud again. Just when I’m trying to sleep--she’s probably trying to get even for when she wanted me to turn down the T.V. so she could study--”

She reached for the pillow to press around her ears to keep the buzzing-sort-of-humming noise out. But what she felt against her ears was not her comfortable down filled pillow. “Ycch, wet. Wet leaves.” Rachel sat up and looked around the birchwood copse. It sparkled, here and there, as the sun turned light frost into morning’s meltwater. She breathed and saw her own steamy exhalation join with a plume of the river’s mist to wind in and out of a latticework of branches. She shivered and stood up stiffly. Her stretching movement and the groan that accompanied it launched a small flock of finches from a nearby birch tree. She watched as the golden birds made a cross-stitch on the blue sky.

“Still here, I guess...Conscienceberg....” She consulted her tour book. “At least I’m across the river. Now if I backtrack to Hoffman’s Point near the Bridge of Connectedness, I can finally find my family and go home.”

The buzzing-sort-of-humming resumed. It was coming from just beyond the copse. She went to investigate, following the path that had taken her off the road into the trees the night before. “Mr. Imp?!” Rachel exclaimed to herself.

There before her, gathered in a circle around The Imp, were the five Umbrella Kids with hands full of instruments that Rachel didn’t recognize. Some of the instruments were strings and some were reeds, some were drums. Off to the side umbrellas were tossed carelessly into a pile. “How will they ever sort out whose is whose?” Rachel mused before turning her attention again to The Imp. He was showing the Umbrella Kids a small mouth instrument. And then he pointed to his t-shirt. It read: **Mr. Imp and His Mystical Casuistical Kazoo Band.** Then he lifted his kazoo to his lips and produced the very same buzzing-sort-of-humming sound that Rachel found so annoying just a few minutes before. The Umbrella Kids, on the other hand, were clearly delighted and clamored for a chance to use Mr. Imp’s kazoo. He held it just beyond the bouquet of their gimmee-gimmee fingers and admonished them in vain to take turns nicely. Rachel made her presence known during the commotion by waving and calling to Mr. Imp.

He looked in her direction, smiled, and called out, “Look! It’s Rachel.” Seeing the Imp thus distracted, one of the kids seized the opportunity to grab the kazoo--none too careful of how the Imp’s finger joints actually worked. “Ow,” the Imp cried with a wince. The much- if only temporarily- prized kazoo already claimed, the two youngest Umbrella Kids looked to Rachel then ran to her side, “Come see and hear our instruments, Rachel.” They urged as they took her by her hands. Rachel accompanied them, a little embarrassed that she still did not know their names while they clearly knew...
“Of course there were fewer of me than them,” she thought to justify her lack of social grace.

“Now kids, let Rachel have something to eat--She looks famished.”

It was only then that Rachel noticed the tidy campfire and saw the pan of hot cereal steaming and bubbling invitingly, and the pot of hot chocolate, and toast and butter and brown sugar and--“Where did all this come from? It wasn’t here before.” She thought but didn’t ask. Instead she nodded and said, “I am very hungry and your breakfast smells very very good.”

“Then join us for some,” The Imp beckoned her into the circle of smiling faces.

At breakfast, between mouthfuls, Rachel learned the word 'casuistical' (itself a mouthful) which she read on the Imp's shirt. Casuistical had to do with casuistry, which meant a process of reasoning that focuses on moral problems as they arise in a specific case. Casuistry begins with the case. The casuist asks, "In this case what is my responsibility?" She recalls other cases that came before that most resemble the one she's now facing. And she asks and remembers in the context of the moral community of which she is a part. Rachel liked the idea of starting with each case on its own merits. More importantly she began to learn the names and something about the instruments each of the Umbrella Kids had with them. There was Xuan who played a Vietnamese string instrument called a dan ty ba, and Addie with her dulcimer. There was Mahesh who could play tabla and make mouth music, too, and Ingrid who had exchanged her balalaika for Mr. Imp’s kazoo. “Virtuosi all,” Mr. Imp laughed.

“Virtuosi?” inquired Rachel.

“Well virtuoso if it’s a boy and virtuosa if it’s a girl, virtuosi is the plural.”

“O.K. But what does virtuosi mean?”

Out came the dictionary.

“ Well it says here it could be someone who is interested in the pursuit of knowledge or, hey, listen to this: it could be someone devoted to virtu--v-i-r-t-u without an ‘e’ at the end -- which means productions of art, especially art of an antique or curious nature (I love the part about antique and curious). It can mean someone who excels in the technique of an art.”

“Anyway these virtuosi are on their way to the Bridge of Harmony to see if they can help with the repairs.”

“Tov will be glad to see them, I’m sure.”

“Tov?” The Imp asked, innocently enough perhaps-- but to Rachel, The Imp seemed entirely too innocent to be believed. Then she remembered that Tov told her that he had never met The Imp. She trusted Tov.

“Tov. A good friend I met in Kochanska. He plays violin.”

“Well good, repairs are already underway then--better send reinforcements though--that bridge requires constant care. ‘Once more into the breech, dear friends!’” he intoned as he hastily shooed the Umbrella Kids down the road.

They left, instruments in hand, giggling and laughing and calling back “Good-bye, Rachel. It was good to see you again. Good-bye, Mr. Imp.”

“So where have you been?” Rachel demanded. “You promised to meet me yesterday.”

“I’m sorry, Rachel, I was unforeseeably detained in Lob’s Wood-”

“Did you see my parents there?”
“No, but I did learn they’d been there and made an appointment to come back.”
”What? Do you need an appointment to visit a place full of ‘if onlies’?
“Sometimes it helps to have an appointment. Anyway, you won’t find them at Hoffman’s point or anywhere in the Domain of Attachment.”
Rachel looked crestfallen. “Then, how will I ever find my way home?”
“Rachel, I promise you, I will do everything I can to help you find your home.”
“You mean like you promised to meet me yesterday-?”
“You’re right. You’re absolutely right. A promise is a promise is a promise. Well I can’t turn the clock back. All we can do is go forward, but maybe we can go a little faster than we have been. How about a mountain bike built for two? I call it my Life-Cycle.”
Several hours later, they were biking on ever rougher and higher terrain dotted with cholla, reminding Rachel of desert plateaus she had visited with her family in the four corners area of the United States. Their trail took them along the rim of a small canyon composed of pink rock she recognized at once as formed from volcanic ash and called ‘tuff’. There had once been gases trapped inside the tuff and when the cliff wall eroded a little, numerous caves were left behind, giving the canyon walls a Swiss cheese appearance. She could make out wooden ladders and pathways between the caves.
“It’s like Frijoles Canyon where the Anasazi lived,” she cried out to Mr. Imp who was thoroughly enjoying riding at break-neck speed way too close to the edge. “I guess he knows what he’s doing,” Rachel thought between the involuntary whoops that came out of her while she clutched her handlebars. Nonetheless she decided that she would be much more respectful of the edge than Mr. Imp when it was her turn to lead. Mr. Imp carelessly turned his head and nodded vigorously. Rachel said in a voice as calm as she could make it, “Mr. Imp, please keep your eyes on the trail.”
He craned backwards to look at her and nodded again, “I see it. I see it. Hang on! Here’s our turn.” And turn they did, right off the canyon rim. “You can stop pedaling now,” he said. “We can coast the rest of the way down.” She opened her eyes only after the sensation of the bottom falling out of her stomach failed to make itself felt. They really did coast-- all the way to the canyon floor. But due to the Imp’s inexpert deceleration, they did not come to a gentle stop. Aware they were approaching the ground too fast, he applied the brakes abruptly and vigorously. As a result, both he and Rachel were hurled inauspiciously off the Life-cycle. The poor bike took the brunt of the landing on its tires, which blew-out simultaneously. Then the spokes bent and popped as the force of impact progressed up. Then the frame itself shuddered and the entire apparatus fell apart in a metallic heap.
Rachel had nonetheless made a soft landing in a mound of loose dirt below a roadside sign. The Imp had suffered the indignity of landing among some prickly pear. He was still extracting sharp spines from his bottom well into the afternoon.
The sign before them read “Virtuous Living From the 600’s”
“ That’s way too expensive for almost anyone,” Rachel whistled.
“ Oh no, no, no- from the 600’s Common Era.”
“Oh.”
“Want to look around? There are different walking trails we can take.” The Imp already had a park map unfolded in front of them. “Let’s see-- the community trail takes us to the plaza of the village and the long house -"
“The long house. That’s an Anasazi condo—”
“Then there’s the trail to the big kiva—”
“The kiva. That’s an Anasazi religious school where stories were told and prayers prayed and songs sung. And they believed that their ancestors came into this world from another world below through a sipapu. That’s a hole in the floor of the kiva.”
“You know quite a bit about the Anasazi—”
“My mother made me read the trail guide when we visited the ruins. But nobody really knows very much about them. The Navajo sometimes call Anasazi the Ancient Ones, you know. But we don’t even know what they called themselves. They’re the ancestors of some pueblo peoples living today. But these aren’t ruins. This is way cool. Somebody must be working really hard to keep this up. See there’s a whole village like pictures of Tyuonyi—it had hundreds of rooms. They needed ladders to get in because the only openings were on the second floor. They used their rooms for cooking and sleeping and working but most of the day they were in the plaza together making pottery, stone tools and bows and arrows. They didn’t have much stuff—way different from our malls. And they didn’t have much water, you know. Life was really hard but they found time to make beautiful pottery and rock art—carvings called petroglyphs and paintings called pictographs. They liked zigzags.”
“What kind of petroglyphs would you leave for people to see on the trail?” The Imp asked nonchalantly.
“Well, for example, the Kinship Trail we’re on now.”
Rachel said, “I guess they would be symbols of family life. In Anasazi times, maybe even great great grandparents and uncles and aunts and cousins would be included. Everyday would be like a family reunion. Perhaps circles inside circles inside circles—like ripples spreading out from a pond where a stone has been thrown.”
“And in Rachel times...?” the Imp drew out the question as they arrived at the first petroglyph. It showed circles too, but they weren’t arranged concentrically, one inside the other. Instead they were small circles, some in pairs connected by a little line. Some looked like this:
But others looked like this:

And others in still different patterns.

“What do they mean?” Rachel wanted to know.

“Well, the squares represent males and the circles represent females. If there is a line connecting a circle and a square, it means the man and woman have mated. And if there is a line going straight down from the line that connects a man and a woman, ending in either a circle or square, that’s the child, a daughter or a son, they have brought into life through their union.”

“I see. And where the line going straight down from the line that connects a man and a woman forks into two or more lines—that must mean brothers and sisters.”

“Right.”

“O.K. So what are all these slashes everywhere?”

“Well, a slash mark across a square or a circle means that person has died. But a slash mark over a line means that the relationship has come to an end—like divorce.”

“Yes. Like divorce.”

“There sure are a lot of slash marks on these petroglyphs.”

“See the difference between circles within circles within circles and how these shapes are grouped?”

“Each is outside—I don’t know how to put it: everyone is outside everyone else even if they are connected by lines.”

“The basic pattern of biological connection. See the other colors overlaid on the basic pattern? The first represents emotional connections, the second represents moral connections.”

“The emotional and moral connections don’t always follow the biological connections,” Rachel observed.

“Here’s a new trail, it heads to the big kiva. And here are the petroglyphs that show Rachel’s time—”
“Let me see,” said Rachel pushing in front of him. The carving split up into three trails. “A school bus. A metal detector. Police. Yes, that must be the School Zone.”

“School Zone? I would have guessed a war zone, Rachel. What’s this?”

“Looks like a mall somewhere—with lots of shops and squares and circles looking and buying things or just hanging: Is this the Community Trail? Diamond traffic signs that say “church”, “temple”, “mosque”.... The Religious Trail. Look the trails in my time go the same way, up this hill. Wait there’s a trail sign: ‘Bridge of Elderworth- 1.5 km.’”

Underneath the words a colorful zigzag could be discerned. Rachel mused. “Hmm. ‘Elderworth’--elders, my elders include my parents, don’t they?”

“Yes, your parents and your grandparents and your great-grandparents, among others—”

“Well, what are we waiting for? Let’s go--Mom and Dad may be on the other side of that bridge.”

The trail they followed brought them by turns and twists back to the river. The river made its course in leisurely loops across the canyon floor. The greys and oranges and reds of the surrounding rocky terrain were relieved once in a while by a cholla or a cactus or, at the river’s margin, a willow or a cottonwood. Rachel marveled at the landscape and at the odd corkscrew shape of a hardy evergreen, which had found a purchase in an unlikely crevice between boulders. But it was the color of the sky that most astonished her. She thought through the names of her crayons--the ones that come in a deluxe box. “Cerulean Blue,” she spoke aloud.

“This valley is called “the place of sky-blue,” or in Latin: locus coeruleus. There’s a part of the brain that has the same name. It is in the locus coeruleus where nerve cell bodies that make noradrenaline live. They send their branches to all parts of the brain. Some say the noradrenaline system is very important in how an elder’s values find a new home in a child’s conscience. Of course there are other systems involved too, but the noradrenaline system is early to mature.”

“Look, Mr. Imp. What are those?”

Rachel was looking in the direction where sandy mounds gave way to fanciful red rock formations: great hobgoblins of rock mustered together like a crowd in Times Square on New Year’s Eve. This one with a bishop’s mitered hat, that one with a balding pate. Over there an assembly of figures like the pawns captured in a game of chess. They were altogether silent and motionless, some aloof and regal, some frozen in vague mockery of mortal folk.

“Hoodoos,” The Imp said at last. “Some say that an elder race of giants was turned to stone here. Others say that these are the effects of erosion. I do not profess to know.”
“Hey, Hoodoo! Who do you think you are?” Rachel suddenly shouted. And her shout reverberated through the canyon. When the echoes faded, she and her companion moved steadily away from the river and ever more steeply upwards to the top of a mesa. Their ascent, which was by way of switchbacks, took the rest of the morning and part of the afternoon. Sometimes Rachel, like so many others before her, would try to shorten the journey by cutting off the loop of a switchback. But this required considerable exertion. Often her efforts went unrewarded.

Rachel could be seen losing her purchase on the slope and sliding amidst a small avalanche of pebbles back to the trail below. “Like chutes and ladders,” the Imp quipped, “only with real bruises.” Eventually Rachel gave in to the rhythm of to and fro on a steady rise.
The mesa itself had, with eons of erosion, acquired the shape of a castle tower, complete with parapets and cinder-colored crenels and even rock formations that might have passed for gargoyles shaped from native stone. As much like a castle was this mesa top as Shiprock is like a ship at sea. It held such fascination for those pilgrims and wayfarers whose chief aim was to cross Elderworth Bridge that many tarried and admired the keep and the throne room and fancied themselves brought a heraldic banner, always flew from these ramparts did not valorize symbols were chosen to represent the kinships or, as was also the custom, close relationships. More traditional fortitude and magnanimity, peace and charity, generosity, elevation of mind, and signified power and authority, strength symbols were added and sometimes-but how values had changed within the more the appearance of patchwork quilts than banners. Others were smart flags snapping in the winds that came in gusts or gales out of the canyon. But among the crests and blazons of arms there was one especially, to which Rachel was drawn. Though it would take many years for her to recognize her calling, she had her first experience of being inspired by ideals as she gazed at that banner: it depicted an open hand and a family of rabbits. The Imp produced a guide to heraldry and read “The good servant’s hand upheld in a field of gratitude—Stewardship.”

The level top ended in precipices on two sides, but on the far side it came to an upward sloping promontory which, on either side, fell away in breaks of imposing pinnacles and palisades of the same stone. These could be discerned receding into the near distance and, from where they stood, effectively obstructed an advantageous view of their surrounds. As Rachel and the Imp approached the far edge of the promontory, however, a view emerged that took away what little breath Rachel had left after the climb to the mesa. A layered vista spread out below them in every direction, overwhelming the furthest horizon.

Those who have seen the Grand Canyon describe a wordless wonder that overtakes them and from which it takes some time to recover. But, as they recover and their eyes become more accustomed to the surrounding majesty, they seek certain shapes, landmarks they have learned about from videos or photos or postcards sent to them by friends or relatives who came before, and attempted to communicate their awe. Or, after years of talking and postponing and dreaming, having finally arrived at the rim trail, they are entranced and confounded by their first encounter with the canyon. But the enchantment loosens its hold enough that they cast about for some way of putting it all in a familiar structure or context. They eventually cluster together in a dim observation station and file past a panoramic photograph matching the canyon as seen from that very same perspective with points of interest individually labeled—Zoroastrian Temple, Isis Temple, Tower of Ra, and Woman’s Throne. Then the enchantment begins
anew. As the contours are named, they become places to which a person could actually go, if only she had a magic carpet or else her own wings, or could summon a bridge of living rock that would arch and zigzag across the chasm below, visiting each dreamt-of destination. Such a bridge of living rock was the Bridge of Elderworth, which spanned this Conscience Canyon.

“I’m afraid I’ll fall,” were the first words Rachel spoke as she drew back, trembling, from the ledge where the bridge began. The river was far too far below to be believed a river. A ribbon or string perhaps—but not even a creek let alone a river. Then she bit her lip, took the Imp’s hand, and took the initial step on the bridge.

The journey over Conscience Canyon was a long one. There were fellow travelers Rachel could espy on farther segments of the great edifice, but the persons they actually met were few and far between. From temples to towers to thrones of fluted and polished limestone the bridge spanned an immense space. It pierced through larger buttes by way of tunnels. The tunneled trail spiraled upwards in and out of caverns like a slinky set on the floor and pulled straight up. At length the companions arrived at a point where the trail traversed a span of bridge. The natural bridge rose high above the butte from which it emerged. Above them, they could see a pinnacle continue its heavenward aspiration only a short ways before it ended in a spout shape. It was joined to another spout shaped pinnacle at the opposite end of the butte by an arched twist of the same shimmering black schist of which the entire formation was composed.

“Where have I seen this before?” Rachel wondered aloud. “Of course it is like the wedding vase from the pueblo we saw in the shop.”

A tunneled passageway descended steeply through the core of the pinnacle but ended not in a cavern at all. Instead it led into a caldera, which had left the interior of the butte hollowed out into a bowl. They had entered the bowl near the bottom and were following the coils of pathway upwards toward the next span of bridge, which began at the opposite pinnacle. Unlike the caverns they had been through, the light streamed down from the sky above and serene clouds cast shadows among the rock formations in the center. If the interior of the butte was like a bowl, the contents of that bowl which they could walk around were like several scoops of ice cream topping layer cake. At the bottom of the bowl they could see only granite and schist— but these were represented in fanciful and sometimes lovely forms sculpted by erosion. As they approached the top there opened before their astonished eyes a pageant of colorful rock at play with light and shadow.

“There are only so many bedrock colors to be seen,” said the Imp. “Here can be traced the course of the bedrock values in human history.” Embedded in the strata were human artifacts typical of cultures long gone succeeded by those more recently known. The Imp pointed to one or another and, reading the tour book, interpreted the values that that culture in that time were thought to hold most dearly. There were definite differences in the shape and content of each layer, but there were some values that were repeated in most every stratum.

They took their time to see how values had changed with time. Or perhaps it is better said that they learned a little how values were put into the practice of virtuous living in different times and places. They also noticed how, in turn, the everyday practice
of virtuous living led to shifts in what was most valued. Sometimes these shifts were subtle and the trace of a certain value, which had been hardly noticeable before, became gradually more pronounced until it was as rich and robust a vein as the famous Comstock silver lode. Then as it inclined upwards it might dwindle or even vanish for a while before reappearing. This was a pattern they found with the Value of Connectedness and the Value of Autonomy. The excavation showed how people put into practice being together and standing some ways apart. Another pattern could be discerned with the Value of Harmony as put into practice of expressing moral emotions and the Value of Moral Meaning as put into practice by reasoning. Other patterns emerged among the Three Values of Worth, themselves. Sometimes the continuity of a vein they were tracing was abruptly dislodged as if an earthquake or a sudden settling on a fault line far below them had put part of the rock wall askew and at odds with another part. Here a way of practicing one value would run smack up against a different way of practicing the same or an altogether different value.

“Oh -oh. Cultural value conflict,” the Imp clucked his tongue. Rachel was reminded of the man from the Domain of Moral Attachment and the man from the Domain of Moral Autonomy, of competition and cooperation, of being herself and belonging to a community.

“Look here,” the Imp pointed beyond an outcropping of limestone sculpted fancifully by the passing waters of long ago. “This is the record of Conscience-Berg itself. See how, for a while anyway, what was made most important about conscience was how a person thinks and reasons. Then, later, what was important included how a person feels.” Rachel saw how the practice of moral reasoning dominated the rock wall almost exclusively at first but gradually made way for moral emotional responses.

“But wait a minute,” Rachel said. “I don’t know how to say this just right, but making something important like thoughts or feelings makes me wonder exactly what making something important is-- is it thought or is it feeling?”

“Ah, there’s lots of stumbling over that question in Conscience-berg. Personally I don’t think that making something important --valuation-- can be reduced to either thought or feeling. But it is always found in the company of thoughts and feelings and choices as well. Imagine four rubber stamps, one stamp for thinking, one for feeling, one for valuing and one for choosing. Each stamp is different in its way and no other stamp or combination of stamps can substitute for it. But now imagine that they are all held together in one big handle so that they can only be used together. So when you stamp out a thought, feeling and value and choosing are stamped out too. Still we talk as if value were thought or feeling or a combination of the two.”

This philosophizing during their steady upward climb made Rachel aware of being worn out--The subtle argument of light and shadow upon the rock's many faces, the ceaseless dialogue of earth and sky and water were profoundly persuasive-- deep calling to deep. And now ideas as well as sensuous impressions were at play in her mind. Exhilarating but also exhausting. She craved a distraction. The Imp must have read her mind, or he knew the limits of a young person’s endurance in matters philosophical, because he stopped and smiled and pointed. At the rim of the caldera, at the base of the spout-shaped pinnacle, which marked the end of this day’s journey, there was a sign: “The Inn of Conscience Canyon, bed and breakfast.”
Wearied from the climb, Rachel was deeply grateful for the sign and what it signified. She wondered where the Inn could be. Then amid the purple hues of dusk, she saw lights blink on one by one in inset windows spiraling up the obsidian pinnacle that towered over them. She was too tired to marvel. “All I want is a nice, warm bed—that’s what’s most important to me right now—that’s my number one value”, Rachel said, leaning on the Imp, who smiled fondly at her. Ah, but Rachel surprised even the Imp with her sudden revival and just as sudden shift in valuation. The Imp scanned the environs to see what had occasioned Rachel’s marked change in attitude and energy level. Still puzzled, his glance returned to Rachel and followed her own gaze outward. Rachel’s gaze was lustfully locked on a smaller sign, just inside the tunneled entrance to the Inn. “Souvenirs,” the sign read.

§

As might be expected, the shop was chock full of trinkets like key chains and pins and figurines and postcards and mementos, posters and reproduced paintings and books for all ages—more or less having to do with Conscience Canyon or Conscience-Berg. There were videos with titles such as “The Legacy of Conscience Canyon” and compact discs with titles such as “Conscience Moods”. Other videos were copies of a Nova program entitled Life’s First Feelings and one film, from a series, entitled Childhood: Life’s Lessons Among Equals, featuring Jerome Kagan, a name she recognized from earlier in her journey.

An entire aisle was devoted to plush animals: one that must have been very popular looked a little like an octopus, only it’s tentacles numbered 7 instead of 8 (so it really must have been a septopus) each labeled for a domain of Conscience-Berg. Owls were likewise in abundance. Otter pairs-dubbed “Ought-er and Ought Not-ter” inspired by the otter colony near the Bridge of Other-worth were new offerings. Among the figurines could be found Pinocchio dolls, complete with a set of noses of various lengths that could be screwed into the face to show how many lies were told by the wooden puppet who wanted to be a boy. Jiminy Cricket was sold separately. 19
Umbrellas were offered and Rachel found several in the style sported by the Umbrella Kids.

The books included many of the coffee table kind: “A Values Genealogy: Tracing the Family Tree of Values” with its competitor, “Valuation across Time and Space: values in historical and cultural perspective.” Rachel flipped through photos of churches in Hyde Park in Chicago juxtaposed with photos of Hindu temples in India stopping at a table adapted from cross-cultural researchers, named Shweder, Mahapatra and Miller which listed candidates for “Moral Universals”. It listed virtues and vices that had been found among people in India and people in Chicago. She paused to read the list of virtues: promise keeping, respect for property, fairness, protecting the weak or vulnerable, returning kindness and gratitude, and the vices: incest, attacking others without cause, favoring kin in business and government over others better qualified, and prejudice. Books of virtues for children and for adults were displayed, as were various copies of Aesop’s Fables. Rabbi Kushner’s book How Good Do We Have to Be? caught Rachel’s eye. She liked the rabbi’s question an awful lot and was glad at least one person besides herself—and a grown-up at that—was asking it too. Achieving Moral Health, an exercise plan for your conscience by Dr. Charles Shelton was on the highly recommended reading shelf. There were several “be good/feel good” barometers mounted on the wall above the bookshelves. A few abridged versions of Aristotle’s book of Ethics, which he had named for his son, Nichomachus, were available, entitled “The Love of Friends.” Cynthia and her friend Jamie suddenly came to Rachel’s mind. Jamie had a sister who had died of leukemia. She had been through a hard time during which she and Cynthia had drifted apart. But lately they seemed to be spending more and more time together. Rachel was glad about that. She liked Jamie. Another book caught her eye briefly but she did not leaf through its pages: "Bed and Breakfasts In Conscience-Berg." The title held no particular interest for Rachel, but the cover drew her attention: it showed a wonderful old manse, light and airy, with plenty of glass windows and skylights, nestled
in thick green foliage by a cascading waterfall. Underneath in small letters was written: “The House of Liminal Images”. Rachel’s remarked to the Imp: I’d love to see this place sometime. What does ‘liminal’ mean?

The Imp replied, “It means ‘at the threshold’.” Rachel was about to pursue the subject but the Imp turned abruptly down another aisle.

Some of the posters on display had heroic themes: Socrates given poison to drink in Athens, Frederick Douglas speaking out against slavery in America, Nelson Mandela in prison in South Africa, Jane Goodall calling for protection of her beloved gorillas, Elizabeth Cady Stanton standing at the forefront in the early women’s movement, Gandhi on a hunger strike in India. Some had deeply disturbing themes like Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah. Many showed very ordinary people—parents with their children in day-to-day activities, helping, comforting, nurturing, protecting, teaching, correcting....

There were china plates inscribed with the Ten Commandments, and The Greatest Commandment given by Christ, authentic reproductions on imitation parchment of “The Serenity Prayer” and “Desiderata Found in A Church Ruin” and even parts of “Hammurabi’s Code”. “The Beatitudes” were represented and, plaques with The Oath of Hippocrates, with a sign that suggested they would make elegant gifts for relatives graduating from medical school.

There were several versions of the Golden Rule, variously engraved. Rachel recognized her favorite version, the one Cynthia’s friend Aaron had shown given her sister. It came from Rabbi Hillel. Aaron had said to Cynthia that the rabbi had been asked by a non-Jew to teach him the entire Torah while the non-Jew stood on one foot. The Rabbi replied “What you dislike don’t do to others; that is the whole of the Torah. The rest is commentary. Go and learn.” There were several paintings by local artists depicting sights she had seen: The Gardens of Mencius, the heraldic banners upon the mesa, and hand crafted miniatures of the Bridges of Conscience-Berg. She recognized the bridges she had already encountered and was about to look at the replicas of the ones she might see tomorrow, when the Imp tapped her on the shoulder and reminded her it was time to get something to eat and find their bedrooms.

On many family vacations, the last stop was the souvenir shop. Souvenirs were part gift and part reward for good behavior and part Mom’s or Dad’s desire that there be a little something to remember the family vacation by. Souvenir hunting is serious business. Among her earliest memories, Rachel harbored several of Dad looking more and more impatient and cross as she and Cynthia made their selection. There was always a limit placed on how many souvenirs could be purchased and how much they could cost. There was always bargaining with Dad about getting one that cost a little
more than the limit or getting two at a lower price than one would be if it were bought instead. Then there were always Dad’s complaints about the kids “upping the ante,” by which he meant they tried to get more than was originally agreed. But the phrase struck Rachel as odd and made her think about her Aunt who always had a crisp 5-dollar bill for her and Cynthia at every visit. Dad sometimes caved under the pressure of the girls’ beseeching and pestering, in which case Mom would scold him for spoiling his daughters yet again. Dad’s usual response was to set his jaw and impose an impossible limit on the time remained looking for the souvenir. Then the girls’ pleading shifted away from how much money to how much time could be spent. “Thank-you” afterwards helped smooth ruffled feathers. And being quietly absorbed in the souvenir while Mom or Dad was driving to the next stop was generally considered good form and much appreciated.

After today’s trip, Rachel wanted a souvenir badly and, unlike her parents, the Imp did not offer much resistance to the idea. He did say “A souvenir. One,” but he did not rush her to the counter like Dad did. His reminder was not especially impatient. At least she did not detect any foot tapping or watch glancing. Come to think of it did the Imp even have a watch? In fact he was regarding her closely—apparently very interested in what she looked at, handled and what she ignored. “Oh look, Mr. Imp she cried excitedly, these are like those sculptures we’ve seen. They were snap tight model kits called “Conscience and the Visible Brain.” An assembled floor model highlighted the loops of the limbic system and its connections with the right prefrontal cortex. The kits declared, “Glutamate not included.” Rachel was puzzled.

The Imp laughed. “Glutamate is one of the neurotransmitters. Some people think it is especially important in letting the different parts of the brain act together as a network. Glutamate-glue-get it? Glutamate not included.” He guffawed.

“Oh. Whatever,” Rachel said with mild annoyance. The Imp’s amusement subsided as her tone registered. “You have a weird sense of humor.”

“So sue me,” the Imp shrugged and walked over to the next aisle.

Rachel didn’t hear his last remark. She had found the jewelry counter. There were the duty charm bracelets and moral mood rings, which turned colors to show fear of punishment, shame and guilt or pride and something called moral passion. She was drawn however to a particular pair of old and tarnished rings, which seemed to emit an aura of magic, an indescribable allure like Aladdin’s Lamp. “Glacon’s Rings,” the card read. “You must be 16 or accompanied by an adult to wear them.” That was enough for Rachel. She had chosen her souvenir.

“Glacon’s Rings?” exclaimed the Imp. “No way! No how! No sir!”

“Why not?” Rachel demanded.

“You’re way too young-”

“Not if you’re with me-”

“I’m an Imp not a grown-up-”

“The woman at the counter doesn’t know that and probably wouldn’t care anyway.”

“No.”

“O.K. O.K. I won’t wear them until I’m 16. I promise I won’t and you promised me a souvenir.”
Now if Rachel’s Mom had been there things would not have gone so far. Even if only Dad had been there, Rachel would most likely have ended up at best with a mood ring or a septopus. But, truth be told, for all his talents, the Imp had little experience parenting, or maybe—just maybe—he really didn’t mind Rachel having those rings for awhile. In any event he relented and presented the cashier with his charge plate. “What’s your return policy?” he whispered.

At dinner, Rachel listened eagerly to the Imp’s story about the rings of Glaucon. “Long before J.R.R. Tolkien wrote about Bilbo and Frodo Baggins and the One Ring, long before Wagner’s Siegfried made his Rhine Journey, long before the Nieberlungenliad had become an epic poem, there was an Athenian named Glaucon who challenged another Athenian named Socrates to imagine two rings. The first ring had the power to invest its wearer with invisibility—but not only invisibility. Glaucon’s first ring enabled its wearer to act in any way he or she wanted—”

“Any way at all?” Rachel marveled that she now possessed these replicas of these rings in the little paper sack at the side of the table.

“Yes, anyway at all for good or ill, rightly or wrongly—anyway at all without punishment.”

“You mean if I wore the first ring, I could be invisible and go into Cynthia’s room and try on any of her clothes or use her nail polish or look at what she was e-mailing her friends and she wouldn’t get mad?”

“Yes, yes, exactly. But that’s not all!”

“What? Tell me.”

“Not only would you not get into any trouble but you would be admired and praised and rewarded for having done good deeds. Your fine reputation would precede you wherever you went.”

“Well, how bad could the wearer of the ring be and still not get into trouble?”

“No limit. Glaucon told Socrates that the wearer of the first ring could act altogether immorally with no penalty: he could rob, murder or rape without being caught or punished.”

“Wow.... and he’d even be rewarded for the evil stuff he did?”

The Imp nodded.

“Wow.... O.K. O.K. What about the second ring of Glaucon?”

“The second ring of Glaucon casts an entirely different spell. Anytime the person who wears the second ring of Glaucon does something good or right, he or she is treated with contempt or scorn and is blamed and shunned or suffers some indignity.”

“Doesn’t anyone know the truth: that she was being good not bad?”

“Not according to Glaucon.”

“Well I believe God would know.” Rachel had taken the rings from the bag and was examining them.

“I’m not sure what Glaucon would say to that—anyway Glaucon told Socrates to imagine the rings because he wanted to convince Socrates that people can’t be counted on to avoid wrongdoing without fear of punishment and that people can’t be counted on doing good without some kind of reward.”

“So there never were any Rings of Glaucon.”
“Oh, I wouldn’t say that. There are usually times in life when a person finds a
Ring of Glaucon on his or her finger. The rings you have there for example are quite
authentic—”

“You mean they look just like the rings Glaucon described to Socrates?”

“Yes, but I also mean they do exactly what Glaucon said they would do.”

Rachel jumped back in her seat. When she found her voice again, she pointed to
the rings and stammered:

“Wh-which is which?”

The Imp picked up a ring and examined it casually. “I should think this is the first
ring and that is the second. Or have I got that right? You know, truth be told, I don’t
know which is which. Anyway, you promised not to wear them until you’re 16.”

“Well, I’m wondering since you are here with me—”

“Oh no you don’t, Rachel. In fact I’ve put a spell of my own on these rings. Go
ahead try one on.”

“Really—I hope it’s the first ring. I have a fifty-fifty chance it is.” She slipped the
first ring onto her ring finger. Or Rachel thought she did—actually it seemed to pass
right through her finger and fell with a clink on the table. “O.K. You win. It’s like parental
controls on the Internet—hmm, there might be some way around them.”

“You’re right. Parental controls, on or off the Internet, can be foiled. You might
say kids can go looking for Glaucon’s first ring—some do it pretty often, I guess. But
others don’t go looking. And even when they stumble upon the first ring and try it on—
well, they take it right off again and give it to the nearest grown-up. Like when you tell
on yourself when you’ve done something wrong even though you know there wasn’t
anyone else who saw you do it.”

“Mr. Imp? I think it’s really past my bedtime now. And I have to brush my teeth.”

“Well good night, Rachel...” Rachel started to leave the table and headed for her
room. “Rachel—” the Imp called after her, “There’s apt to be some magic in those rings
even if you aren’t the one wearing them. They have sort of unpredictable effects on
dreams. Not scary monster filled nightmares or anything but sometimes odd or
unsettling effects. I don’t think they would cause you any serious harm, though.”

“Thanks for the warning. I’m too sleepy to worry about it.”

At first Rachel put Glaucon’s Rings on the bedside stand. She wriggled down
between the flannel sheets and smoothed the quilt comforter around her body thinking
idly that it must have come from the shoppe in Kochanska. That reminded her of Tov
and the music they played at the Bridge of Harmony. She very much wanted to see her
friend again. What would he do if he wore the first ring or the second? She sighed and
blew out the lamp. As tired as she was, she thought surely she would drop off to sleep
instantly. Perhaps she did. But the glow-in-the-dark from the argent rings made her
more restless than any gibbous moon could have done. So she turned her face into her
pillow and closed her eyes tightly. All of her maneuvering to keep those rings out of
sight did nothing at all to diminish their allure, their urgent call. So she took them up in
her palm, felt their heft and hardness, closed her fist around them and fell asleep.

She dreamt of her parents. But she dreamt of them separately not together. In
her dreams, it was as if she had put on Glaucon’s first ring and became invisible but
was not otherwise empowered. She thought the ring was not working and lifted her
hand to her face to examine it. There was no ring there. She was merely invisible. Where was she anyway? Not home. Not school. But someplace not altogether unfamiliar. She was gazing over a city from high up. It was late and the lights of offices and streets and cars were twinkling with a kind of hesitation below. She realized that she was inside, looking out a window, which she recognized for the view it afforded from her mother’s office. She had often visited Mom there during the day, but only on the Fourth of July had she been there at night. Mom’s office building commanded a wonderful view of the skyscraper downtown where they launched the fireworks each year. The whole family would take advantage of this ‘perk,’ as her mother called it, and walk up a fire escape to the rooftop where they would spread a blanket and empty the contents of a festively prepared picnic basket and wait for the pyrotechnical wizardry to begin.

Rachel always thought to herself with pride how important her mother was to work in an office so high up. Her mother would laugh and say wistfully "I’m an executive secretary, a good one, but I hope my daughters go farther and make the most of their talents". This particular night was not the Fourth of July, Rachel reckoned. She could make out the skeletal shapes of trees and could hear and feel the glass windowpane give a plaintive moan with each gust of the chill autumn wind. With a thrill she heard her mother’s voice, speaking in low tones. Rachel turned to see Mom at a dimly lit desk, cradling a phone between ear and shoulder as she typed on a computer keyboard.

“ I’ll be pretty late tonight,” she said. “... No I didn’t have time to fix anything for dinner.... I’m sorry.... You’re going to get fast food? Again? I know you will. That’s all Cynthia and Rachel eat anymore when I’m not there to cook...What do I want? Nothing. Don’t worry. I’ll get something here. Be sure Cynthia gets to her math homework first thing after she eats. I talked to her teacher. She’s not doing so hot. No. No T.V. What? O.K. O.K. They can watch it if they finish homework first.... O.K. See you later.... Yeah I guess it will be tomorrow, if you are going to bed at the usual time.... Honey?.... I just- I ... Never mind. See you in the A.M.” A momentary unhappiness captured her mother’s countenance. It only seemed to pass like a shadow over her face, only seemed to disappear-- actually it sank below the surface to be absorbed and stored away somewhere close to her heart. She returned her attention to the computer.

Rachel automatically knew she couldn’t talk to or touch her mother. The magic of Glaucon’s ring followed certain rules, which she understood and accepted immediately in the context of her dream.

It was only then that she saw the silvery glint of the ring on her mother’s hand. “Which ring?” Rachel wondered. “ Mom’s working hard.... And I guess Dad’s not helping out much back home.... Mom’s doing something good and not being appreciated. Dad could make the dinner, he’s not helpless. Neither is Cynthia for that matter--or me, come to think of it. It must be Glaucon’s second ring.”

Someone entered the room. He carried several cartons of Chinese food and chopsticks under his chin. “ Hey,” he said “ How about some takeaway Chinese?” “Hi, Brian,” Mom smiled. “ In America we say ‘carry-out’.” Brian set the cartons of Chinese down on the desk dropped the chopsticks from his chin into Mom’s lap and reached into his coat pockets for two bottles of Irish amber beer.

“ This looks good. Thank-you for going out in the cold for it.”
"No problem." Brian glanced out the window. "It’s a brilliant city, no doubt, but frightfully cold this time of year."

"You get used to it, after awhile."

"Well, I won’t be here much longer. The company is sending me back to Waterford in a week, you know."

"I try not to think about it, Brian-- You really brighten up this place a lot. Everyone loves your accent and your tall tales. I’ll miss you."

"Likewise."

Rachel noticed the ring emitted a different glow now—in fact it wasn’t the same ring anymore. "The first ring", she whispered to herself.

§

Like a silent film clip that had been edited to show the most important scenes, the evening that Brian and her mother shared in their office unfolded before Rachel’s eyes. In the course of watching, she experienced so many feelings she could never have described them all—or the way they changed so quickly and piled up on one another. It was as if a rug had been pulled out from beneath her legs while, at the very same instant, she had been tossed something—like a precious vase—and something else, and again and again something else equally precious and fragile. And she was responsible for the safekeeping of them all. It occurred to Rachel that this sudden loss of balance was not only hers but also her mother’s. There was first of all disbelief that her mother could look that way at anyone but her father. A sense of betrayal and hurt and anger accompanied her disbelief. Then there was awe at how blissfully her mother smiled in the arms of this stranger and surprise turning to delight at how her mother and he danced. She could not ever remember her mother dancing. It was lovely. Then there was overwhelming sadness when her mother’s eyes filled with tears as, ever so gently, she pushed Brian away and shook her head. What had he asked her? To spend the night with him? To go away to Ireland to live? To allow him to remain and stay near her? Whatever the question, Rachel could tell Mom’s answer was ‘no’ uttered in bittersweet yearning and regret. Brian nodded, wiping tears from his eyes as well. "He is a handsome man with a kind face," Rachel said to herself, "and he’s hurt, too." Rachel let her tears run off her cheek unchecked by the back of her hand or her arm. Rachel found herself glad when they embraced again and kissed, but relieved that the embrace and kiss came only after Brian put on his coat and moved his lips in the shape of ‘good-bye.’ Then her mother took his hands in hers and stepped back. How like a bridge were their joined hands over the space between them. On her mother’s hand, now loosed from Brian’s, Rachel saw the first ring of Glaucon flicker out and disappear.

She longed to put a consoling and proud arm around her mother. She could not. Rachel was bound by her dream to follow Glaucon’s ring and Glaucon’s ring wouldn’t be satisfied until another person wore it. Still invisible, Rachel found herself in the hospital clinic where her father worked. He was a physician’s assistant. He was looking at a chart that had been handed to him by the head administrator for the big practice in which he worked with many doctors. The man was pointing to a note in the chart. Rachel recognized her father’s handwriting. The man said, "Look I don’t see anything
wrong with adding a line to your note, saying he saw the patient with you and authorized that procedure. After all, he did authorize it. And, what the hell, it worked. It was the right thing to do. So what’s the big deal?”

Dad said, “He authorized it. Yes. And it worked fine. Yes. But he wasn’t there—he staffed with me on the telephone.”

“Look if he were here, he’d put a notation in the chart himself—but he’s away on vacation. I’d wait until he returned but we have a site visit tomorrow. I want these charts to be in good shape.”

“ Well, the progress notes are accurate as they are—”

“As is, they don’t cover us—”

“I don’t understand—”

“ Let me explain it then. The government agency has changed its policy—it says it hasn’t but it has. Anyway, now, the docs in the practice can’t bill if there isn’t evidence that they personally performed the service—that means that the doctor was present at the time the service was rendered AND there’s a note on the chart saying so.”

Rachel had heard many dinnertime conversations between her Dad and Mom about documentation—Mom would say, “If you provided the service, then the patient’s insurance should be billed for it.”

Dad would say, “Yes but if it isn’t documented, they don’t care. They act like it never happened.... Not only that the diagnosis has to be one they think is right for that kind of treatment. If it isn’t they won’t pay. And maybe you think a different treatment would be better but they won’t pay for it in that case....”

Mom said, “It doesn’t sound right to me—you’re trying to give the patient the right treatment and the insurance company won’t pay for it. What do the doctors do?”

“Well, you know Paula Gallahue?”

“Paula—yes. I like her.”

“ She just gets absolutely irate every time she has to talk to the people in the insurance company about it. They are always denying her what she bills.”

“ Michael Gardiner picks a diagnosis that he thinks the insurance company will cover but he admits to fudging—”

“You mean he lies about it?”

“ Not exactly—he says to himself medicine isn’t perfect and the patient could have the condition even though he doesn’t really think so. But if he doesn’t bill it the right way—which is really the wrong way to think about what condition the patient probably has—then the insurance won’t pay and the patient will wind up being billed for the procedure.”

“ Well at least he’s thinking about the patient’s welfare and not his own—but he isn’t being exactly honest with the insurance company, is he?”

“ No, I guess not, it’s called gaming the system.”

“ Have you had to do the same thing?”

“ Well, since I’m a physician’s assistant, I pretty much have to bill by the diagnosis that the doctor makes even if I disagree. Of course, the doctor tells me what he really wants me to do even if he writes something else in the chart for billing purposes.”
Rachel could tell that Dad was now, himself, being asked to write a false document. And it wasn’t even for the patient’s good—near as she could tell. Dad was supposed to write that a doctor had actually seen the patient when he hadn’t. Why? The answer came from the man Dad was talking to. “Now this was billed for Dr. Carlisle—” 

“—even though he wasn’t there.”

“Yes, because that’s how it was always done before they changed the rules. As long as the case was staffed with the doctor we would bill for the doctor—”

“I see. But the rules have been changed—well surely they will understand if you tell them that you’ve not been able to change the way you bill to follow the rules—”

“No. They won’t buy it. They say that the rules have always been the rules, even if we interpreted them differently once. According to them, we’re still responsible. And if they find we’ve been billing for services not provided directly by the doctor, they’ll fine us for fraud. And believe me they’ve already done it to another group. That group folded. So anyway, all I want you to do is beef up the documentation a bit. Fortify it. You’ve only been here a few months but already you’re gaining a reputation as a good physician assistant. In this practice you also want to be a good team player. Look it over and see if there isn’t something you can do with that procedure note. Thanks.”

The man walked out of the room. Dad looked at the chart. There was space between the last line of the procedure note he had written and his signature. No one would really know if he wrote something extra, maybe something vague like “Dr. Carlisle assessed the patient (can’t a doctor assess a patient without actually seeing him?) and agreed with the procedure that Dad had proposed.” Someone reading that might believe that the doctor had actually seen the patient, but Dad couldn’t help what other people believed. Dad just kept looking at the chart. The first ring of Glaucon was glowing with golden intensity. Dad picked up his pen and put it down on the paper. Then with a look of determination Rachel had never before witnessed in her father, he drew a line through the empty space so that nothing more could be written. “There,” he said. “I should have done that when I wrote the note in the first place.”

The man who had given Dad the chart returned. Dad handed him the chart and returned to dictating a note. The man walked towards the door while leafing through the chart. He stopped abruptly. “Hey, thanks for nothing, man—I’ll remember this—”

Dad didn’t look up—just kept dictating. The ring had changed from gold to silver. Rachel worried just how the man would make life miserable for her father. In fact she worried so much, she awakened from her dream altogether and could not return to sleep the rest of the night.

The next morning, after bathing Rachel had breakfast with the Imp.

“You look tired,” he said as nonchalantly as can be imagined.

“I didn’t sleep very well, I guess,” Rachel responded. “You were right about the dreams—”

“And what did you dream?”

“Well I don’t remember—but they were so vivid, I remember that—”

“Ah,” said the Imp and concentrated on his breakfast.

Rachel went to her room to brush her teeth. Then she returned to meet her companion at the checkout desk of the Inn. He said, “Well I’m ready to go. How about you?”
“Yeah, I guess so. But may we stop at the Souvenir shop on the way out, please?”

“Rachel, I said one souvenir-”

“I know. I know. Just want to stop for one second.”

“Oh sure—one second-”

“You sound like my father. Please I promise I won’t be long.”

The shop was just opening. Without going in, Rachel handed the Rings of Glaucon to the shopkeeper. “I just wanted to return these,” she said.

“Well we have a strict exchange policy and no refunds.”

“I don’t want any refund or any exchange, either, thank-you.” Rachel said.

“Hmm. This happens with those rings all the time,” said the shopkeeper. “Well at least let me give you a free ticket to the House of Liminal Images.”

Rachel was hesitant.

“Take it Rachel,” urged the Imp. “We’ll be very near to it. And the visit there will do you some good.”

Rachel took the ticket, thanked the shopkeeper and followed the Imp back to the Canyon Trail.

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Although the content of every set of moral standards is tied to some time and place, the desire to believe that self is ethically worthy, like the ability to understand language is universal. Humans are the only species that applies a symbolic evaluation of good and bad to actions, thoughts, feelings and personal characteristics and tries continually to choose acts that make it easier to regard the self as good…. A moral motive and its attendant emotions are as obvious a product of biological evolution as digestion and respiration… (p.155).


22 The interested reader is strongly encouraged to read Shelton CM: Achieving Moral Health, An Exercise Plan For Your Conscience, New York: The CrossRoad Publishing Company, 2000, which offers sustained and academically informed reflections in combination with practical advice based upon a seven dimensional view of conscience. There are substantial overlaps of Shelton’s seven dimensions, which are derived from his general and clinical observations as well as his comprehensive view of the field of moral psychology, with the domains of conscience interpreted from semistructured interviews of children and adolescents.
In Achieving Moral Health, Dr. Shelton, qua psychologist, achieves for his conception of conscience, already accessible in several titles to pastoral counselors, spiritual guides and religious educators, new stature in secular moral psychology. In the years in which I have been privileged to collaborate, correspond and converse with Dr. Shelton, I have witnessed his conception of conscience, in its manifold dimensions, become richer and more refined. However, at the same time, I would reflect with a measure of disappointment that his previous titles were apt to be regarded as too snugly and securely lodged in Christian tradition and so might be overlooked by persons of conscience in other faiths or conditions of unbelief. Achieving Moral Health remedies that problem admirably, achieving and sustaining a secular perspective, fully informed by Dr. Shelton’s formidable understanding of psychological depths and dynamics. Secular but never losing itself in a misguided bid for value-neutrality or absolute moral relativism, Achieving Moral Health identifies seven dimensions of human nature that persons who would be persons of healthy conscience are beckoned to appreciate, nurture along, and exercise for moral fitness. Through and through it retains what has become the hallmark of Dr. Shelton’s contributions to the conscience literature: a wonderful mix of reflection and practical application for the world of work and the world of relationships. When accepting the invitation to “Let your conscience be your guide,” this book can become-merits becoming- any adult reader’s companion to conscience, a gentle and non-judgmental guidebook to just how and by what he or she is being guided. Author MG.

THE THREE BRIDGES OF WORTH:

SELF-WORTH

The first signs giving directions to the Bridge of Self-Worth did not become apparent to the twosome until they had passed far beyond The Bridge of Elderworth over Conscience Canyon. Indeed the canyon itself and the last breaks at the margins of the high desert plateau (out of which the canyon had been patiently carved over the ages) fell almost completely away from view. But not so entirely away from view that Rachel, looking backwards and steadying her gaze on the horizon behind her, could not at once summon up the memories of the great heights and depths, of vistas and vantage points that lay just beyond.
For the next stage of their journey The Imp and Rachel had secured the use of a horse drawn vehicle called a jaunting car. They could have as easily rented a cyclette, a bicycle with seats for passengers in the front such as might be seen in Indochina, but, recalling the harrowing experience on the mountain bike built for two and considering the additional prospect of the Imp now propelling a vehicle from behind her so that surveillance of his antics would be impossible, Rachel opted for the jaunting car. This mode of conveyance is much in demand among tourists in Ireland, as they visit the Gap of Dunloe or Killarney National Park, for example. A jaunting car is little more than a box with a door in the back and buckboard seats inside upon which passengers and driver sit together, the driver angled to the front and holding the reins. An essential feature of the jaunting car experience is the driver who must excel in telling tall tales.

The Imp relished this role and regaled Rachel with his biggest lies, rendered in his best brogue. Sometimes Rachel asked for further details to catch him in his contradictions. But he offered no more excuse for the vagaries in his accounts than to say, as storytellers have said from time immemorial, "Too wondrous to be pictured.... too marvelous for tongue to tell." In her dreams in later years, Rachel made fewer and fewer distinctions between the passages of Impish fantasy and their real passage to the next bridge. Both seemed after all too wondrous to be pictured.... too marvelous for tongue to tell. Not such a bad thing, perhaps.
What was a little disconcerting, however, was the appearance of “detour ahead” notices affixed over the more permanent signs directing travelers to the next bridge. These were succeeded in turn by flashing arrows and lanes narrowed by lines of orange cones and then “This Exit Ramp to Self Worth Closed Take Alternate Route.”

“Inner States!!” exclaimed the Imp in annoyance, knocking over several cones as he ignored all the efforts to reroute traffic and urged the horse onto the exit ramp.

“Don’t you mean ‘Interstates’?” laughed Rachel. She could not disguise the mounting excitement she felt about ignoring the boundary markers.

“Always under construction, never finished—”

And that is what Rachel also gathered from the apologetic signs at the base of the Bridge of Self Worth:

“Forgive the Mess”

“Your taxes at work”

In addition there were other signs such as:

“Give them a Brake”

“Bridge Under Construction”

“Hard Hats Only”

“Well, is this a holiday or something?” Rachel asked the Imp.

“Holiday? No... no, it’s a regular workday.”

“Well where are all the workers?”

“Right here.”

“Where?”

The Imp pulled out two hard hats, “Here.”

Rachel understood all too clearly, “I don’t know anything about building bridges.”

The Imp pointed to another sign. Rachel read it slowly. She had seen those words before—but where? Then she remembered it was at the Bar Mitzvah of Cynthia’s friend Aaron. He had invited Cynthia and Rachel and their parents to come to the service and the celebration dinner and dance, afterwards. Aaron had gone to Hebrew school in the evening three times a week in order to read from the Torah. His parents and the rabbi and the cantor sat together on the bimah and responded as he read and chanted Hebrew prayers. Rachel was glad there were translations in the book she shared with Cynthia. Rachel thought that Aaron must be relieved to be finally done with his religious education. She herself had many more years of Sunday school to go to. Ever since her parents had enrolled Cynthia and Rachel in public school, religious education had been extra. Rachel hadn’t minded so much when it was part of the regular school day, in fact she liked religious studies but when it came to school—enough is enough. But she went to Sunday school because her parents insisted. How she envied Aaron—he was done.

Or so she thought. As the service proceeded, Aaron quoted a rabbi-Rabbi Tarfin. It was an assignment. Aaron’s class had been asked to interpret what this rabbi meant. What the kids had to say about the rabbi’s words were printed in the program for the service. The sign to which the Imp pointed was that same quote:

**Although you are not expected to complete the task, you are not excused from engaging in the work....**
Several kids had taken issue with what the Rabbi said. They said their Moms and Dads had taught them that if they started a project, they should not leave it undone: finish what you begin, they said.

In near despair, Rachel looked at the ramparts where the bridge could be built; she looked at the latticed panels and girders stacked on the embankment. They reminded her of how her father would tell about his life in the army as a medic for an engineer company. The engineers had to bivouac--camp out in the snow--and then drive their trucks out to a river in a hilly area. Their mission was to construct a bailey bridge. The Bailey bridge was named for Sir Donald Bailey who invented it in 1901. It was a bridge that could be rapidly constructed to allow troop movements. Dad said it was like a giant erector set that could be snapped and bolted together in a hurry. “Not much to look at but it does the job.” Dad talked about having to stand by with his medical kit in the freezing cold New England weather while the engineers assembled the bridge and thrust it over the river to the other side. They could accomplish their mission in 7 hours--longer if there were mock attacks that had to be fought off. Dad said he sometimes wanted to help but he wasn’t supposed to. So he watched and waited in case anyone had an injury while building the bridge and hopped from foot to foot to keep from freezing. Mom had been listening. Dad knew she was. He said “There’s a saying, ‘They also serve who only stand and wait’--and it’s true I guess in some situations. But when it comes to things like school and work I hope that you girls won’t just be onlookers waiting for something to happen--”

Mom stepped into the room, coldly eyeing Dad but addressing her daughters, “That goes for household chores too, come help me put the laundry away.” Rachel and Cynthia got up reluctantly and followed their mother. Dad did not.

Rachel shook her head. “Couldn’t you use some of your magical powers to help build this thing?”

“Well? What’s the hurry?"

“Well, maybe I’d like to get to the other side or something?”

“Oh. I see. But this bridge is for you to build and for others to cross.”

“You mean--I don’t get to cross it ever?”

“I’m afraid not. That’s just the way it is.”

“So I have to stay here the rest of my life working on this stupid bridge?”

“No, you actually do much of the bridge building when you least expect it, when it seems you’re furthest away from yourself. Look at what you’ve accomplished so far--and you’re not quite 10.”

“You mean, I’ve brought all this bridge stuff here and made the foundations? But there’s so much left to do- I know I’ll never finish it in time--”

“Don’t have to--at least that’s what the rabbi said. Come on. You look like you need a change of pace.”

“I’d better not waste anymore time if this bridge is going to get built-”

“Rachel, you’re not listening to what I’m saying. Occasionally you need to come here and do work on the bridge. But oftentimes what’s really needed is leisure--sometimes being deeply inside yourself and sometimes being open to what’s around you. In fact those times aren’t really work at all. On the other hand they may be much
harder on you than work, the way they transform you I mean. At other times what’s
needed is celebration.”

“How can you celebrate when the bridge isn’t even done?”
“Well don’t you celebrate each time you travel around the sun?”
“What...oh I get it when it’s my birthday--yeah, sure. O.K. O.K. So where should we go to celebrate?”
“Hmm. You still have that coupon from the souvenir shop?”
Rachel reached into her pocket and read the ticket “Good for one free admission to the House of Liminal Images”
“Well, what are we waiting for?”

There was no line in which to wait at the entrance to the House of Liminal Images. Rachel would not have minded in the least if there had been. The home had been set within a forest glade, topped by a canopy of mottled green and grey layering. Like aspen leaves, this foliage seemed to wave to (or perhaps even to applaud) the newly arrived visitors. All around them were small hillocks covered over with the dense verdure of mosses and liverwort. Rachel spotted a perfect fairy ring of mushrooms on one slope. As the path descended they came upon marsh grasses, reeds, rushes and cattails, which gave way to a lovely view of a water garden. It refreshed Rachel’s spirit just to stand, watch and listen to the breeze. It made scarcely a noise but seemed in one moment to be held fast in the crown of one tree then in the very next moment to behave like an invisible and mischievous child swinging from the lowermost boughs of another tree across the way. Everywhere the breeze made itself known. Leaves were overturned in a triumphant show as if they were a winning hand of cards in a game with indecipherable rules. And when the play of moving air and leaves tumbled into the shafts of afternoon sunlight penetrating the glade, the effect was to dazzle the eye with glints and glimmers in a magical sleight of hand worthy of the Imp himself.

“A different kind of celebration than what you are accustomed to having at birthdays and New Years and the American Fourth of July--but still a celebration I think, don’t you?”

Rachel nodded. Vowing to return to the water garden on the way back and to take yet another walk in the woods another time, Rachel ascended the porch steps behind the Imp and entered the house. It was a house with high vaulted ceilings, generously sized skylights and arched windows, which occupied nearly the full length of the walls. Rachel thought to herself, “People living in this house shouldn’t throw stones.” Everywhere the light poured in, as did the shadows of the moving forest. But from one window to the next the glass varied considerably in thickness and curvature. Sometimes, through these different lenses, the light was refracted into rainbow colors, and the shadows of the foliage outdoors were rendered into shapes as fantastical as the hoodoos Rachel had seen in Conscience Canyon. These were cast on the curved unadorned wall opposite them. There was music too. Rachel could not quite make the instrument out. Had she remembered last year’s music appreciation class when the teacher played an old recording of The Carnival of the Animals by Camille Saint Saens with Leonard Bernstein telling about the musical instruments that were used for each animal, she might have realized she was listening to someone playing watery notes on a glockenspiel much like what the composer chose to represent his idea of an
Aquarium. She watched the images appear and melt away again. She saw shadow shapes of a family at dinner: a younger girl sitting across the table from an older girl who was pointing, appealing to a parent, and leaving the table in a huff. Rachel didn’t need to hear the words being shouted. The shadowy shapes shifted and showed a family hug. When had they last had that in her family? Yet again there emerged different shapes, unfamiliar to Rachel, shapes that might come later, she thought. There were shades of a young woman in a canoe with a girl and a boy about Cynthia’s age. “Could this be Cynthia and Aaron looking for me on the canal?” The girl hadn’t Cynthia’s shape and the boy was way too short to be Aaron, but there was something familiar about the woman. She had stopped paddling the canoe for a moment. She had a way of soothing herself by cupping her hand behind her head and drawing it down her neck that made Rachel think of--

Rachel became very, very self-conscious in that instant of recognition. She suddenly realized her own hand was cupped behind her head and she quickly removed it to the front of her body where she contained it with her other hand. She now watched the young woman in the silhouette with keen interest. What was she doing in a canoe? Who were those kids? Hers? Stand up shadow, how did I turn out? What do I look like? What are those kids doing rocking the canoe-- oh--“The shadow melted away. “Imp did you see what I saw? What does it mean?”

“Oh I never see what other people see here. They all have different experiences. As to what it means, most people see glimpses of their past.”

“Does anyone see glimpses of the future?”

“Oh yes, sometimes. Why what did you see?”

“I think I was in a canoe with some kids who deliberately overturned it.”

“You mean you fell in the river? Well, I do believe it must be you in the vision. Who else has your affinity for rivers? You certainly don’t seem to stay dry for very long, do you?”

“Very funny. This time I was deliberately dunked.”

“Shall we visit the inner room?” The Imp said. It’s an old camera obscura. You go in and wait till your eyes get adjusted to the pitch dark. There is this huge lens in the ceiling and a concave dish for a screen on the floor. You look at the screen while the lens is being rotated. You’ll see.”

The camera obscura showed the glade through which they had come. It paused for a moment at the water garden. Rachel fancied she was standing there with Tov. Then the camera moved on, seemingly increasing its purview. The river came slowly into focus and just before it did, Rachel thought she had a glimpse of a finned extremity plunging below the surface. The camera panned over and there vigorously plying the waters was Uber the Overman. He paused amid his efforts and looked about him uncertainly then faced Rachel squarely smiled and waved. Rachel waved back. Uber was pointing at something just out of range. The camera panned further over. Rachel recognized the Bridge of Selfworth. Only there was more to it than before.

“Look someone has been building the bridge since we left it--”

“I know. Looks well crafted too,” the Imp smiled at Rachel.

Rachel smiled back.

The camera now showed a bustling community rich in differences, both cultural and ethnic. Among the throngs, Rachel thought she could discern some familiar faces.
Yes...the camera focused and confirmed her suspicions. Xuan, Mahesh, Addie, and Ingrid were threading their way single-file though the crowd. Where were they going?

“That's our next destination,” the Imp pointed to the screen.

“The next bridge?”

“Yes.”

“Why it looks like Golden Gate Bridge! In San Francisco.”
THE THREE BRIDGES OF WORTH:

OTHER WORTH
Not San Francisco and not Golden Gate,” the Imp said to Rachel as they approached the great suspension bridge. “Golden Rule Bridge, yes--some call it that. Locals nickname it ‘The Bridge of Oughtworth’.”

“Yes, of course, that’s what the man from Valuation called it at Mrs. Keeper’s,” Rachel recalled. I thought he said ‘Otterworth’. I was hoping there would be otters.”

“Well there are otters from time to time and harbor seals and sea lions on nearby rocks, too. But the formal name of this bridge is ‘The Bridge of Otherworth’.”

“So why is it called so many different names?”

“Because each applies to it in some way. Before crossing this bridge, a person has to make a rule.”

“What kind of rule?”

“Well a rule about living, maybe, for example, about how persons ought to treat one another.”

“That’s how it was nicknamed ‘Oughtworth’, I suppose. Well that’s easy enough. I could just make a rule that everyone ought to do what I want when I want.”

“You could try something like that--in fact many who have crossed this bridge have made a rule like that. When this bridge was first put up, some ruled that they would be richer or more powerful than anyone else, or even adored by others. Nowadays people are subtler. They rule that they will be treated specially in some way because of something they already have or something distinctive about them.”

“Does that work?”

“Hmm. How’s the weather today?”

“Bright and beautiful, with clear blue skies.”

“O.K. Let’s have a snack and wait until someone is ready to cross.”

They hadn’t long to wait. Several people, arriving from different directions, came into view, one skate boarding, one rollerblading, one running at a rapid clip, and still another biking to the bridgehead. They stopped, eyeing each other coolly and assembled in a single file.

“The Umbrella Kids!” Rachel exclaimed. “Let’s go down and say ‘Hi’.”

“Later,” said the Imp. “For now let’s just watch. They’ve been having trouble with one another. It’s all about how the bridge is to be used. They all agree that no jaunty cars or carriages be allowed on the bridge. I don’t know that I like that idea. Now one of them is trying to exclude bikes. Another is trying to include skateboards and one wants only roller blades allowed on the bridge.”

“That’s Mahesh on the skateboard. He’s going to cross first.”

“He’ll have to stop at the turnstile first and state his rule.”

“Look the attendant is letting him through. Does that mean his rule is O.K.?”

“No, it just means he made a rule.... watch.”

They watched as Mahesh propelled his skateboard towards the other end of the bridge. He showed off some of tricks that made Rachel think of her sister’s friend Aaron
back home. Rachel was pretty impressed with his skill and was about to say something complimentary about his style when the Imp drew her attention to the horizon.

"Fog’s rolling in," Rachel said. Then her jaw dropped. She had heard of fog banks moving into harbors very rapidly. But she had never imagined such a thick and roiling cloud of mist. “Thicker than pea soup,” Rachel remembered her father had once said of the vapors clinging to the road and limiting his visibility. “So thick you could cut it with a knife,” he had said and whistled under his breath. That was nothing compared to the misty blanket that now swallowed the entire middle section of the Bridge of Otherworth. And there was Mahesh at its edge-- a figure rendered shadowy and indistinct before it was enveloped entirely.

“The Veil of Ignorance...." 
“What? Is Mahesh going to be all right?” Rachel was alarmed.
“Yes... Well I think he will be. He’s a good lad.”
“What is happening to him?”
“Mahesh has entered The Veil of Ignorance. That’s what the fog is called.”
“Why?”

In answer, the Imp produced the guidebook out of thin air and levitated it into Rachel’s hands. This is what she found:

The unusual properties of the fogbanks that typically invest the Bridge of Otherworth and its vicinity have led to its being dubbed the ‘Veil of Ignorance’-- A term used by John Rawls in his work on Justice Theory (see appendix).

Rachel flipped to the appendix and read:

**THE VEIL OF IGNORANCE**

IMAGINE DECISION-MAKERS ARE SITUATED BEHIND A VEIL OF IGNORANCE. THEY ARE COMPLETELY SELF-INTERESTED. THEY ARE ENTIRELY RATIONAL. THEY HAVE FULL ACCESS TO GENERAL KNOWLEDGE.

BUT

THEY DO NOT HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF ANYTHING THAT MIGHT MAKE THEM DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS. THEY ARE IGNORANT OF THEIR OWN CLASS, SOCIAL STATUS, OR WEALTH, THEY
DON'T KNOW THEIR LEVEL OF INTELLIGENCE OR STRENGTH, THEIR AVERSION TO RISK, THEIR OPTIMISM OR PESSIMISM. THEY KNOW NOTHING OF THEIR OWN SOCIETY. THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW THE GENERATION TO WHICH THEY BELONG.

WHAT PRINCIPLES WILL THEY USE FOR DECISION-MAKING?²⁴

“Do they know if they are girls or boys?”
“I'm afraid not.”
“Cool. Mom would love this.”

It was not long before Mahesh emerged from the fog at the very spot where it first engulfed him. He was limping a little and his shirt was torn and he had smears of dirt and sweat on his cheek. As he made his way to the bridgehead, the Umbrella Kids crowded around him, offered him a drink of water and stroked his head, which he was shaking as if he were trying to get his bearings. Whether by some acoustical trick of the wind and terrain or by the Imp’s magic, Rachel could hear the words that passed among them.

“What happened? Tell us-”
“Yes tell us everything-”
“Mahesh! Where’s your skateboard?”
“What rule did you make, Mahesh?”
“Yes tell us the rule you made.”

Mahesh answered, “I made a rule that only skateboarders were allowed on the bridge.”

“So?”
“So then I found myself in the middle of the bridge with everyone buzzing around me doing their fancy tricks, only I couldn’t join in the fun.”

“Why?”
“Because I was in a leg cast and on crutches. I had a broken leg!”

“But people didn’t stop or slow down for me, they whizzed right by and yelled at me: ‘Don’t you know you aren’t supposed to be here if you aren’t on skateboard?’ I guess I didn’t make a very good rule.”

The children talked earnestly among themselves and then Xuan approached the turnstile, declared his rule and began to walk across the bridge. Xuan fared only a little better than Mahesh. An angry crowd chased him out of the fog. Some were throwing broken parts of roller blades and skateboards and even bicycles in his general direction.

“I don’t understand it,” Xuan said in a daze. “I made a rule that anyone on roller blades or skateboards or bikes or even just on foot could use the bridge as they liked. But they all crashed into one another!”

Finally it was Ingrid who said “We need a whole set of rules that will allow people to use the bridge with roller blades, bikes, whatever--but so they won’t hurt each other.” There was much discussion among them about how this would be best accomplished. They had to take into account such things as relative velocities and risk of falling from different heights and ability to stop or slow down and what mode of conveyance was most popular. They had to decide whether people using different ways to travel should
have different times of day when only they could use the bridge, or whether there should be different lanes for each kind of mode of conveyance, or just for different speeds, no matter which mode of conveyance was chosen. Needless to say it took the kids several more trips into the fogbank to find rules that everyone could accept even if no one was altogether happy about them. And no doubt there will be several more trips into the fogbank when some new contraption for getting around is invented and becomes popular.

Later on, Rachel tried a few rules herself. Mostly having to do with who was entitled to what, for how long within her family. She tried rules that favored the youngest, the smartest, the hardest working, the cleverest and even the best-dressed sister in a family. Of course she had herself and Cynthia in mind. But in the fogbank she found herself in different family situations- not only ones in which she was the oldest instead of the youngest but also in single parent families with all boys except for one girl, for example. Or blended families with a step-parent and step-sisters, or ones in which she had been adopted, or sent to live as a foster child or in a group home. She found her liking of the “Youngest Rules, Oldest Drools” rule depended a lot on the circumstances. Taking different perspectives gave her a lot to think about.

“Does everyone make up rules that are most fair to herself and least fair to others?” she wondered.

The Imp and Rachel walked along the waterfront, each lost in his or her own thoughts. Before they knew it they were enveloped in a carnival atmosphere all
along the wharf. Several colorful kiosks and glitzy booths had been set up. Hawkers wearing striped shirts, straw hats on their heads and garters on their arms, called to the Imp and Rachel. “Try your moral luck,” one cried.

“Is it chance or is destiny?”

“Come on lassie, test your strength of will—” one said sweeping off his hat in a mock-respectful gesture. With a wink he proffered Rachel a mallet and pointed to the gong at the top of something that looked like a thermometer. “Lay it into. Give it all you have and knock that old bell right off!!”

“Not interested,” said the Imp to the hawker.

“Say, aren’t you that Imp fellow? Then being such a great magician as you are known to be far and wide, perhaps you would indulge your colleagues less famous but no less skilled than yourself?”

The Imp seemed mightily offended. “Colleagues, is it? Why all you and your kind are capable of are cheap thrills and carney tricks.”

Now it was the hawker’s turn to seem offended. “To a person, we are artists. And you fault us for trying to provide a little pleasure and amusement to the public. Do you begrudge an honest carny the means to making a living, however meager that living may be?

“‘Honest Carny’? An oxymoron, if ever I heard one,” the Imp said in an aside to Rachel. Rachel had heard her Dad use that word before—it meant two ideas put together that didn’t make sense or fit with one another. The Imp was saying that Carnies and being honest didn’t fit together. Rachel thought the Imp was being prejudiced against carnival people and was about to protest that some were surely honest. But before she could say anything at all, Rachel noticed that one of the carnies had overheard the Imp’s words intended for her ears alone. Just now the man seemed to bristle at what he had heard.

“Here now. We heard that, Mr. Imp. Just because you’re a high falutin’ impresario or whatever you call yourself, you’ve no call to look down your nose at us. And you’ve certainly no call to refer to us as oxs and morons.”

“Sorry,” said the Imp. “I suppose you do the best you can. All we are interested in is finding the Bridge of Choosing. Can you direct us to it?”

“Maybe we can and maybe we can’t. And maybe if we can, we choose not to—ain’t that so lads?”

“That’s so—right as rain.”

“You took the words out of my mouth,” another agreed.

By this time, many more men and women had stopped hawking and gathered in a group around one they seemed to regard as their spokesperson.

The mood of the crowd was turning a little too ugly for Rachel’s taste and she tugged at the Imp’s sleeve, urging him away. The Imp resisted her. He was, perhaps, in an impish frame of mind, which rendered him impervious to insults and disposed to match wits with the carnies.

“Ah. You would like a demonstration of the finer points in the art of moral legerdemain and legerity?”

“Huh?” said Rachel.

“Nimbleness, dear,” he explained in aside.
“We’re game if you are, Imp,” said a carny.
“Very well. I accept the challenge. Observe there is nothing up my sleeve.” And the Imp rolled his sleeve up past his elbow -or rather past the point where his elbow should have been if it could have been seen- but either his arm was invisible or there was in fact nothing up his sleeve. However Rachel could still see his hand covered with an immaculately white glove gesturing with a flourish. She was impressed. The carnies evidently were not.

“ If that’s all you’ve got, you’re wasting our time. I’ve seen as good or better from my apprentice. You call that magic?” a voice rose derisively from the carny mob.
“Tough audience,” the Imp spoke in aside to Rachel.
“ I’ll say,” said Rachel. The carnies in the rear bringing out pots of tar and bags of feathers were beginning to make her nervous.

“ I’ve got to come up with something that will really stump them---wait a minute, I have it! Rachel, did you know you would make a great judge?”

“No, I don’t think I do know that, Mr. Imp.”
“ Trust me. You will make a fine judge. Now here’s what I want you to do....”

Somewhat later after explaining the scheme to Rachel, the Imp faced the crowd.

“ My esteemed colleagues-

“ Now that he sees what we have in store for him, we’re his ’esteemed colleagues.’ Bah! I say we tar and feather him and his assistant too.”

“ A moment please, I have not had a chance to perform my magic.”

“ He’s right about that.”

“ It’s the law of the carnival life. He should have a chance to do what he boasts he can do.”

“ Thank-you madam for your forbearance, your tolerance, your inestimable mercy and graciousness--”

“ Get on with it Imp.”

“ Yes, of course, where was I?”

Rachel, who had reappeared in juridical garb and a powdered wig, told him her costume itched something terribly and he should get on with the trick.

“ First I shall need from my esteemed colleagues two volunteers.”

Two carnies near the front were pushed by others behind towards the Imp and Rachel. “Here are your volunteers, Imp,” someone in the crowd jeered while others turned their attention to the tar they were warming over the fire.

“I challenge these two fellows, hale and hearty lads, to resolve a dilemma I shall pose to them. But first we must make the experience real to them.”

Exclamations of surprise erupted from the two as they found themselves in two separate single cell jails facing the crowd. Snickers came from the audience. “Well I knew it wouldn’t be long before Ol’ Tom was put back behind bars,” one carny guffawed.

Rachel gestured for silence and intoned solemnly: “ These two prisoners stand before you accused of a grievous offense against the Domain of Volition.”

“Tell us what they have done that is so bad that you’ve locked them up, Yerhonner.”

Rachel looked at the Imp uncertainly and whispered, “What did they do?”
The Imp shrugged, thought a moment. “Say ‘they stand accused of conspiracy’.” Rachel told the crowd, “Conspiracy!”

The crowd gasped, then one or two asked “Conspiracy to do what?”

Rachel looked back at the Imp, who was frantically searching through several tomes of local laws. The crowd was getting ugly again. Finally the Imp whispered his suggestion in Rachel’s ear.

“These two prisoners stand accused of conspiring to loiter and jaywalk on the Bridge of Choosing.”

Almost instantly the ugliness in the crowd was redirected to the hapless prisoners. Rotten produce and even pieces of brick-a-brack were hurled at their cells. They hastened to remind the crowd that they were volunteers for demonstration purposes only and had committed no real crime.

“The judge will determine that!” Came the reply from the crowd. Now all eyes were on Judge Rachel.

“The prisoners have only been accused of the misdeed. The case has not been proved against them.... yet. But the prosecutor (Rachel motioned to the Imp who had also dressed himself as a barrister) believe it is only a matter of time to develop the case—”

“Lynch them now--it will save the taxpayer money.”

“The court is mindful of the expense of trial, and is disposed to offer the prisoners each two alternatives.”

TO CONFESSION OR NOT TO CONFESSION.

IF ONE PRISONER CONFESES AND THE OTHER DOES NOT, THE CONFESSOR WILL BE RELEASED AND THE OTHER WILL GO TO PRISON FOR TEN YEARS.

IF BOTH CONFESS, BOTH GO TO PRISON FOR FIVE YEARS.

IF NEITHER CONFESES, BOTH GO TO PRISON FOR A YEAR. 25

“Now prisoners, do you or do you not confess?” Rachel asked.

There was silence at first. First one and then the other prisoner started to speak up but did not after all break the silence. They regarded
one another at turns warily or puzzled or pleadingly. Then the advice started coming from all sides. “Big Eddie, go ahead and confess then Ol’ Tom will have to spend time in the slammer. While you go off scot-free.”

But Big Eddie appeared more thoughtful. “Ol’ Tom might have the same idea, thinking I won’t confess, he’ll confess. Then, if I confess too, we both get five years.”

“If we just keep our mouths shut,” thought Tom, we would only get 1 year each. A year is practically nothing. I can do that time with my hands tied behind my back. But how do I know he won’t confess after all, even if he promises not to? Then I wind up getting 10 years and he goes off free as a lark. I have to think about this more.”

Many in the crowd also had to think about the prisoner’s dilemma more and took to arguing their points with one another. Could anyone be trusted to keep his promise or were the stakes too high to trust one another?

Rachel was pondering the same thing when the Imp pulled her away and said, “Come on. This is a good time to get out of here.”

“What about the prisoners—the volunteers, I mean? They’re still locked up in their jails? We can’t leave them in jail forever.”

“Don’t worry those are time released jails. They’ll disappear after we are safely away.”

“O.K. O.K. I’m right behind you.”

They hurried down to the river. The Imp said, “We’re almost there, I think.”

“Almost where?” Rachel was perplexed.

“The Bridge of Choosing.”

“Well where is it then?”

“I don’t know exactly—”

“Why not, Mr. Imp?”

“Because it must be chosen before it appears.”

“So how do you choose it?”

“You just choose it—you tell yourself which way to go across the river and you step on out.”

“Just anywhere at all?” Rachel said. But the Imp was distracted by angry voices coming up from behind them and before he could give her an answer Rachel jumped out onto the river in what amounted to a leap of faith.

“No, not every choice will work.” The Imp replied finally looking back around at Rachel. Rachel plummeted into the river with a splash and came up soaking wet.

“Like that one?” She spluttered.

“Why, Rachel. Are you in the river again?”

Rachel made several more choices that left her drenched. The voices from the search party were getting louder.

“About the prisoner’s dilemma, Mr. Imp?”

“Rachel I think you must choose faster—”

“I’ve been thinking—”

“Rachel, hurry up—”

“I’ve been thinking about real people who have been prisoners of conscience, like Nelson Mandela. He chose what was right and went to jail for his beliefs without letting the number of years in prison ever change his mind. He held tight to what was
important. So I guess you’d say that some people choose the good of others or a principle they hold dear—"

“Yes Rachel and in so doing transform the bridge. A person of conscience changes from just being and asserting herself to being a moral person empowered to choose. She changes again from being an agent to being a caring individual who advocates and even sacrifices for others. Now, Rachel, please make another choice.”

This time the leap Rachel took out into the air and over the river did not result in another soaking. A good sturdy bridge appeared, one she and the Imp could cross—which they did in the nick of time before the carneys found their way to the river’s edge.

THE SEVENTH BRIDGE:

A CONSCIENCE CONCEIVED
It was drawing towards late afternoon and the air was still and hot. Rachel wondered why she wasn’t grouchy. All the necessary ingredients for grouchiness were present. She was certainly exhausted from keeping company with the Imp and participating in all his escapades—or was it, after all, that he participated in all of hers? To her way of thinking she should be thoroughly demoralized about getting back home. None of the bridges she had been on—not even the Bridge of Choosing—had brought her home. The heat was intense if not quite unbearable. And the Imp was engaged pedantically in discourse on the subject of stages of moral reasoning. As if to illustrate his points they were passing by hillside paddies laid out for planting crops on terraces. He said the area was known as Kohlberg’s Terraces and named after Lawrence Kohlberg, a pioneer in developmental moral psychology. Kohlberg followed the lead of Jean Piaget in studying how children develop moral reasoning abilities. In fact, the Imp informed her, they were in sight of Piaget’s Peak a snow capped alpine mountaintop in the distance. The Imp said that Kohlberg believed that the stages of moral reasoning were hierarchical and invariant. He explained that like steps on a staircase, a person had to climb the stages of moral reasoning one at a time.

“Now myself, I’m a little too rebellious to accept hierarchies lock stock and barrel, and I’m a little too fond of spontaneity to accept invariance,” said the Imp. “So I am glad to point out to you the other side of things.”

They had by this time arrived at the crest of the terraced hill. As she looked where the Imp pointed down the far side of the hill, Rachel could still see paddies on terraced slopes. But they were not so much like steps on a staircase. Some of the terraces were almost parallel to one another but separated by gaps. There were several with switchback paths going from one to another. Others did not seem quite flat or horizontal. It was as if the hillside had told the terraces how they could be arranged and the terraces had told the hillside how it would behave.

“Pardon me, Mr. Imp. What’s that you said?” Rachel had lost the drift of what the Imp was saying in the midst of her reveries.

“I was explaining how people used to talk about nature VERSUS nurture. The real questions are what part of human nature do we wish to nurture and what about the way we nurture one another becomes part of human nature? You see what I mean?”

“You know, Mr. Imp I think I do see what you mean.”

Oddly enough, looking at the hillside and listening to the Imp, Rachel was reminded of how Cynthia had tried to explain the gravitational motion of celestial bodies in outer space: “Rachel, it’s really very simple—space tells the bodies in it how to move,
and the bodies in space tell space how to be shaped.” At the time, Rachel figured Cynthia had been watching too many Nova’s on PBS. But now, looking at the hillside and listening to the Imp talk about stages of moral development, Rachel wondered if the way conscience formed and functioned in human beings wasn’t a little like how celestial bodies moved in space. Conscience needed the brain to tell it how to do its work but the brain was in some ways- certainly not all ways- shaped by conscience. Then again, looking at the paddies and the tender green stalks in them that lent the hillside a patchwork of pale green hues, Rachel thought about what it takes for something to grow. The seed with all its genetic blueprints and the soil with all its nutrients and the rain and the cultivation. Seeds. Rachel remembered the four hearts Mencius had said come in seed form: sympathy for other humans, an ability to feel shame, being apt to show respect and having a sense of right and wrong. When these seeds have developed and fully ripened, the four hearts are in harmony with the moral breath of the universe. The Imp had said the Conscience-bergians had been in a dispute about which domain should have the Gardens of Mencius. Rachel didn’t know which domain was most entitled. *Sympathy* or *empathy*-that sounded like something you would hear about in the Domain of Attachment with its Bridge of Connectedness. You might also hear about *trust* and *being trustworthy*, about *love* and *loyalty* and being obedient to elders or just getting along with others. You would probably hear about *gratitude* and once in awhile you would hear about heroic self-sacrifice. Ability to feel shame was just one of so many emotions that could become moral emotions. That was a lesson she learned in Kochanska. In the Domain of Moral Emotions she also learned of being emotionally responsive, of peace and *peace making*, of *caring* and *compassion*, of *reparation* and *reconciliation*, of *forgiveness* and of *courage*. In the Domain of Valuation with its three Bridges of Worth, Rachel learned of showing *respect* --for authority, for law, for tradition, for others, for property--and a good deal else as well: the virtue of being orderly, following rules and procedures, of being honest, helpful, generous, of taking turns and being fair and finding ways to resolve conflict and of maintaining a personal reputation. It was at the Bridge of Selfworth and later at the Bridge of Choosing that Rachel learned the importance of respecting and keeping her own life safe and sound, of having fun and finding leisure, of taking time to be with and evaluate herself in *solitude*, a kind of being alone without being lonely. Rachel thought that some of what she learned came from more than one domain: *tolerance* seemed to have something to do with connectedness but also with knowing that her self worth and the worth of others outweighed all their faults and mistakes put together. And *lovingkindness* fit into at least a few domains.

But Mencius also said all the hearts of human being would be in harmony with the ‘moral breath of the universe.’ Rachel didn’t know what to think about that. She wasn’t sure how something deep down inside her could contribute even a small puff of air to the moral breath of the universe. The universe reached so far away, outside and beyond her. Its moral breath-- and its moral breadth too-- called for wonder and piety. Well maybe there would be more time for all that when she was older.

Right now the really interesting thing to Rachel was the network of ladders and slides that joined the separate terraces. “Like chutes and ladders,” she thought. Then she heard laughter, lots of laughter, like laughter coming from a crowded swimming pool--or maybe a water park with water slides!
“Just the thing for a hot afternoon,” said the Imp pointing to the umbrella kids climbing up a huge slide. “Want to join them, Rachel?”

“That would be wonderful, Mr. Imp but what about the seventh bridge?”

“Well that particular water slide is the seventh bridge, see how the river flows under it?”

Rachel studied the Seventh Bridge. Not only did the water flow under the bridge it flowed over it—around it—across it. In fact the water seemed itself to have become a bridge. A magnificently strange loop like a puzzler she had seen before—like a—”

“Have you ever seen a one sided piece of paper, Rachel?”

“Yes. Yes. But I forget the name—”

“It’s called a Möbius loop.”

“Yes I tried to color one side of the loop red and the other side green—”

“And?”

“And the green ran into the red.”

“Well, that’s odd.”

“Because even though there looked like there might be an inside and an outside of the loop, there was really only one side after all.”

“Well the seventh bridge is like a Möbius loop.”

“A one-sided water slide? Cool.”

“Way cool. Why don’t you join the Umbrella Kids for a ride down? Or is it up? Whatever.”

“May I? May I go?” she asked. The Imp nodded ever so slightly. Rachel required no further urging. She ran towards the one-sided water slide. At its foot she turned excitedly towards the Imp and waved and then took her place in line for the ride.

The Imp waved back and said in a whisper, a little sadly, “Good-by, Rachel.”

Rachel climbed the ladder to a dizzying height and her excitement mounted with each step. She could see the Umbrella Kids racing down the incredible torrents of water. Like a wave in the air, like a waterfall that plunged up as well as down. Like a wet wonderful roller coaster. Now it was her turn. And Rachel decided the only way to go was headfirst. At first she was riding the crest of the wave that traveled the looping bridge. From that vantage point she could see all of Conscience-berg. Then she didn’t know how but she was traveling back along the river reversing the way she came. It all happened so fast: she passed under the Bridge of Choosing and through the fog investing the Bridge of Otherworth. She caught a glimpse of some new construction on the Bridge of Selfworth and she smiled. She saw the great canyon lands rise above her to be joined by the great bridge of Elderworth. In the next moment she was in a vortex. As she spun around the whirling water she saw a flood of rainbow color. Was that the image of Tov smiling and waving? If she had had any fears of drowning, his smile made them disappear. He raised his violin and played for her a few sweet notes before she was propelled on her way. She almost knew what would happen next. She felt the finny grasp on her foot and the firm tug of the Undertoad. As he pulled her under she could see the candy cane poles coming up fast. And who was that on the Bridge of Connectedness? A little girl! Too young to swim! But didn’t she know she would fall in the water if she didn’t have someone to help her cross? Rachel lost her breath in a burst of bubbles, closed her eyes but with a determined smile, held out a hand to touch the little girl above her. As the last of her awareness left her, Rachel felt something—a candy
cane pole? No. Something very unlike metal.... something quite different, something that she could hold onto, and something that could hold onto her right back. Like someone else’s hand....


Rachel had many visitors and a few surprises in her hospital room. There were the people from the news who wanted to do a story about near drowning. Her father shooed them away. She vaguely remembered an early visit from Mr. Moore. She couldn’t recollect just what he said but she was pretty sure she told him “A person can’t cross the bridges just one time each. But who wants to cross them only once anyway?” Slipping back among her fragmented dreams, she wondered what she was talking about. Bridges. The puzzle Mr. Moore had given her. Yes that was it. But there was something else about bridges--what was it? When she had recovered a little more she had a visit from Keith and Izzy and Cynthia. Rachel wanted to know how the little girl was--the one who had tried to cross the river alone, the one she had caught by the hand before she fell. She was surprised to learn that she had not helped anyone keep from falling in the water. On the contrary, Izzy alone had witnessed Rachel fall into the canal. Izzy had raced across the street without her brother, Keith. Keith was alarmed at Izzy’s carelessness and chased after her. Cynthia, who had been walking with them from Dr. Esse’s party, towards home ran to catch up. It had taken a few moments to decipher what Izzy meant when she said “Undertoad grabbed Rachel!” Keith was in the water before Cynthia quite understood what was happening. When she did understand, she held onto Izzy and shouted for help. Keith needed all the help he could get. He located Rachel but it was a struggle to keep her head above water. He was glad to feel supportive arms around him and to be told he could let go of Rachel. Someone else had her. A perplexed Keith told Rachel, “It’s been quite an experience going from being the school geek to being notorious-and suspended- for carrying a weapon to school, to being acclaimed a hero for helping to save you.” Hearing all about this in her hospital room, Rachel was very grateful to and glad for Keith. But it was Izzy’s hand she couldn’t make herself release and she couldn’t stop looking in Izzy’s eyes. From Cynthia there was a long embrace and a scolding: “Shame on you, Rachel. You had me scared to death!”
Rachel's parents were there almost constantly from the moment she first regained consciousness. While they thought she was resting, they murmured together and sometimes cried a little and kissed and hugged. But, later at home, there were also some angry words, kept toned down but still noticeable. Mom and Dad started going to see someone, a marital and family counselor Dr. Esse recommended. Dad had been reluctant at first. "It means time and money," Dad complained to Mom. "And it’s a pretty long drive out to the office building in Lob’s Wood." Rachel had an odd feeling about it all—but she couldn’t put her finger on it. First Mom and then Dad admitted they were getting something out of the counseling.

"Mr. Robin was right about me wanting the kids to do better and go farther than I did in school," Mom said.

"Yeah, and about me feeling bad about not being more involved with the girls when they were younger."

"He’s a pretty good therapist, I think. Good sense of humor—kind of impish at times—"

"Yeah, he’s a good—"

"-Fellow!?" Rachel exclaimed involuntarily as she entered the room (she was supposed to be concentrating on her homework—not listening to her parents discuss their therapy).

"Well, yeah, I’d say he’s a pretty good guy—"

"No I meant --" then Rachel seemed confused.

"What honey?"

"Nothing... I just thought...never mind."

Mom and Dad exchanged a worried glance. Cynthia later confided to Rachel that right after her mishap—Dad brought home stuff to read about brain damage from near drowning.

"My brain’s perfectly fine, Cynthia. I can still outsmart you," Rachel retorted, but then softened. "It's just that once in awhile I think I should be able to remember something that happened when I was in the water."

"What? You weren’t in all that long."

"Yeah I guess not. But it seemed a long time. I can almost remember—"

As time went by the last tiny remnants of Conscience-Berg faded from Rachel’s waking memories. There were some odd things though. Neither she nor her parents could account for her newly found dedication to practicing her oboe or her newly acquired interest in violin concertos or her absent-minded habit of fashioning one-sided pieces of paper out of the perforated strips that Mom or Dad or Cynthia would zip off to open ice cream cartons or boxes of breakfast cereal.