

Christian Fries

The Hatter, in a private capacity

an extract from the short novel ***The Reichian Approach***

translated by Stefan Tobler

By way of explanation:

Wilhelm Reich: an apostate disciple of Freud's, who substituted breathing and the manual release of muscular blocks for therapeutic conversation. Bioenergetics and other modern corporeal therapies are based on Reich's theories.

Separation

It all happens so fast. My siblings aren't even informed. At least I've been forewarned when I hear from the neighbours that my parents have separated. As they couldn't come to an agreement over some of their possessions, I hear, they have destroyed them together. That's a good solution, I think. My dad could rescue the books for himself (of course!). My mum, I also hear, got the pickling jars. Nobody was going to fight her for them.

I wasn't worried about my mum.

My dad on the other hand is old, and surely he won't be daring enough to marry Mrs. T!

I'm often on the toilet, these days. I don't know what it is. Sometimes I just shit away, brown streams flowing out of me, or the meals haven't settled in my stomach for half an hour before I puke up the whole stinking, sour mess. It's not exactly appetizing. Sometimes both things happen at the same time. For those times I have a plastic bucket at the ready. Being an acting student and experienced in therapy, I should be better able than I am to face these attacks from the voiceless soul! I think of all the good advice I've given in my life – and now?

Anastasia, who like me studies acting and like me is a follower of the Reichian approach, is sitting opposite me, remarkably erect – a queen! – and with her eyes lowered to the side.

She's waiting for me to say something.

'Well,' I shrug my shoulders and smile embarrassedly, 'it's interesting, isn't it?

That a grown man with not inconsiderable experience of life would be so affected by his parents' separation.'

Anastasia screws up her mouth in offence.

I know why.

She'd rather go to bed with me, theorizing is a poor substitute. But I can't do anything about it, Anastasia isn't my type.

'It's interesting, isn't it?' I say again. 'We could talk a little about that, couldn't we?' From a Reichian point of view there are no objections to my suggestion, so she nods against her will. 'After all it's almost a proof,' I say pleadingly, 'for what we always knew, but maybe didn't want to see, that the ego is just a thin crust, and quickly destroyed when circumstances change.'

Anastasia starts to cry.

I stop talking.

A Shooting Star

The changes that are occurring in my family's living conditions make it scarcely possible for me to take care of my own (career) interests.

Nonetheless, I seem to be having a lucky streak.

I get invited to a number of castings.

The directors are enthusiastic about my acting. 'Mr Hatter,' one says, 'if we could have you working in our theatre, we'd be able to consider doing more difficult material. Unfortunately intelligence is not the most prominent characteristics among the actors who come knocking at our door.'

'That's just prejudice,' I say sharply. The status I have earned through my work allows me to act as my colleagues' protector.

'I take off my hat to you,' says the director, impressed.

I find my hotel.

Immediately I fall into a deep sleep.

'I'll sleep with you now,' I say to a young woman.

'Only at a distance,' she says.

I use a stick with a little rubber plug and from the desired distance I open her vagina. There's a limit to our lust. No wonder, I think.

'That's already too much,' the woman says suddenly. She undoes her womb and holds it out to me.

I throw away the stick, annoyed. I masturbate in protest. As I do I think, I'll ask her mother (or mine) why sexuality only works at a distance. They must know, they got up to it!

'Oh heavens,' I hear the young woman say when I wake up. (Without having come.)

The plane is leaving in an hour.

Acting School

They hate me in acting school.

Scarcely back from the casting in *W.* and I discover that my locker has been broken into. Notes from the lessons are missing. I suspect it was Kai, who wants to write a book on the uses of Reichian groundwork for acting. He'd love to nick my essential arguments on the topic! Luckily I copied the notes long ago, so we'll see who writes the book first . . . The other thing that's missing is the packet of condoms I've had stashed there since the start of our studies. The packet had been opened. But it would be a mistake to conclude that I'd been involved in sexual activities. I gave two condoms to the acrobatics teacher, one to the janitor, and I was so sad I used one when masturbating. Anastasia will get hung up on asking me which female students – for example, from the stage design course – I went under the showers with.

I can see her rage-distorted face before my mind's eye!

My fellow students' rejection (envy!) of me just makes me contrary. So I reject – yes, from contrariness! – the various offers from quality theatres and instead sign on for a second-rate but very well known TV series, as well as two feature films that are just as second- (if not third-) rate.

I say magnanimously, 'Now we're rolling.'

However, I still carry on attending lessons.

What can I say?

I'm completely aware that I'm a con artist (as an actor). The sudden boost to my career really is completely inexplicable to me. And Anastasia, who in spite of everything, is still the only person I share personal things with (which means I'm kind of dependent on her), doesn't waste any opportunity to raise her eyebrows and remind me that in our job there are many *who've got to the end of the line*, even among the youngest of the new talents. So it's absolutely essential, she says, to always continue your conscious development. Yes, to regularly expose yourself to the critical judgment of experienced teachers, particularly when your own powers of judgment are not sufficient to give you a realistic picture of your own abilities – I flinch (and nod) . . .

But our lessons are like running the gauntlet for me now.

If I act a scene (badly), then without fail I'll hear someone say: 'We should all work in television, you really learn stuff there.' Whoever it is, people laugh with them.

Crisis Session

My siblings and I sit around gloomily.

My sister has invited us over to her place.

At regular intervals the slices of toast spring out of the toaster. My brother spreads each one with butter and cheese spread and scoffs them. My sister eats nothing but chives. I'm waiting for her to offer me rice pudding. She always does that when I'm at hers (seldom enough). Today she forgets to. Or perhaps she thinks that by now I'm too old to enjoy rice pudding. I think I am. But that doesn't stop me still enjoying rice pudding.

I'm not offered rice pudding.

My niece comes bawling into the room.

'Go to sleep,' says my sister, 'and shut up!'

My brother-in-law has stolen away out of my sister's life. Because my niece resembles him, she has to put up with quite a bit from her mother. She doesn't

know why and has decided to be a difficult character. I feel sorry for her, but I don't like her either.

'To do something!' my brother says. 'Not got the drive.' He's talking about my father, but at the moment it fits us better. We can't reverse our parents' separation. We're more hopeful about getting our father remarried.

'You could spy on her a little,' my brother says into the silence, listlessly. Hardly an exhilarating task. 'Why me?' I say grumpily.

'You've got the time.'

The cheek of it! My brother thinks that actors have it easy. Standing on stage in the evening, lazing about all day and putting your back out from fucking.

I carry out the others' demands and sketch Mrs. T's character (which I unfortunately know only too well). 'She likes to be in control, she's like our mother there . . . Where she's different, is in her feeling of guilt. When Mrs. T drops her trousers, she falls on her knees in humility too, and not because our old man can get closer to her better like that. And, like all of God's children, including the sinners, nor is she free of arrogance. Yes,' I nod grimly. 'Humility is arrogance. Apart from that, I only know that she has stopped smoking, that she drinks red wine and that she regrets having been born a woman.'

My brother takes notes.

'We must,' I say suddenly, wringing my hands compulsively, 'block this new relationship at any cost.'

Because my sister has arranged it like that, we contact my mother by phone. The receiver is standing on the table. (Like the male organ, I think.) We have switched to Loudspeaker and are listening to her words. 'If he thinks,' we hear her bark into the phone, 'that I can live off the crumbs he sends me as alimony, then he's mighty wrong. Luckily for me I've done career training these last few years.' She can't seriously mean her social work for the Protestant church? 'You'll all get a surprise.'

My sister ends the connection carefully.

We are silent.

'Sometimes I understand our father,' says my brother.

'Probably,' I say, 'she was doing a distance learning course, while we thought she was sitting in her room counting matches.'

My sister asks if she should make me some rice pudding.

I shake my head.

A slight earthquake makes itself felt.

We are briefly dumbfounded, then we remember that the shocks had been forecast by the Meteorological Institute. We go to the window, as if there were something to see there. My brother goes to stand under a lintel. 'Just in case the effects are more catastrophic than have been predicted. In that case, you have the best chance of surviving if you're under a lintel.'

My niece comes in, crying.

I pull her leg. 'You don't have to be afraid,' I say. 'If the house collapses, we'll all bite the dust together.' My sister laughs. Today she's just merciless. That will be because no one shows any mercy to us.

Suddenly my older siblings' eyes are trained on me.

'How much of a pension will you get?' I hear.

I'm baffled. What's got into them!

I name a number at random. I know that it's more than I can realistically expect. I know that it's lower than anything my siblings can imagine.

Their faces turn white.

I explain how much of my studies I've done (neither of them have ever taken any interest in that!), what the prospects are in our current times, that culture is one of the undervalued, and so underfunded, areas of society, that theatres are merging nowadays, vacancies seldom arise, that you really have to *make a fool of yourself* (that's what I say) if you want to hit the jackpot and get a job in one of the urban entertainment companies that go by the name of *City Theatres*. It isn't really my aim, I continue (to be mean and to see if their faces can go any more pale), to become a *member of the troupe of a city theatre*. 'I'd prefer, I say, 'experimental theatre projects, which might not be financially remunerated, but are all the more satisfying for it.' Perhaps our mother could (the devil was in me!), when she took up a position of some influence in the near future (she seemed to suggest as much), create a janitor's post. That would give me time to think, would suit my laziness, and probably it would give me access to rooms which, after discussion or even without permission, could be used for play rehearsals. 'I will have the bare minimum needed to live,' I say misty-eyed. 'But

that doesn't mean,' I add, 'you need to worry that one day I'll be standing at your door.'

My brother says in a brittle voice: 'Even you have to adapt to the circumstances.' 'I realize that,' I reply frostily.

For a moment the conversation ebbs.

Now I pull the film contract out of my pocket, the one I signed the day before.

That turns the tide.

My sister, whose enthusiasm turns her cheeks red, opens a bottle of champagne. She had had it in the fridge, because when her husband left she had wrongly assumed that he would one day return in remorse! My brother orders pizza, it is his favourite dish after all! My niece is woken up. She doesn't understand exactly what it's about, but she thinks my signature on the contract isn't very swish. Only when they tell her that I'll soon be a *star* does she understand. Now she sees her uncle in a quite new light, and all evening I can't get her to leave me alone.

Mockingly, I name the (imaginary) estimated pension! 'You really took us for a ride with that!'

I should (and would like to) be more vengeful than I am. But the good mood is contagious. I say: 'I'll buy the experimental theatre, from my TV series' fee.' Even my brother agrees, he'll come and see what we put on stage here, 'in the back yard!' A willingness to experiment is in no way a guarantee of success, but – I can't believe my ears! – it is certainly the seed of all human development.

We've forgotten our parents. Good, I think briefly, and stuff a piece of pizza down me.

In front of the museum

I creep up. I can already see him from the street corner near the Karstadt department store. He's sitting in the little sentry box in front of the museum, completely absorbed in his reading. I could of course just head off again . . . I'm wearing sunglasses. The crime series gets a 17% audience share, one in every six could recognize me. As my fame is so new, I wouldn't find that unpleasant, although it depends on the situation.

'What are you reading?' I say quickly and push my way into the box next to him.

'A beautiful place,' he says.

I nod.

'As long as no one throws me out. But why should they do that – an old pensioner like me . . . The museum director has already talked to me. I was able to surprise him with some knowledge of his specialism. That made him amenable, I think. Naturally he didn't want to give me any guaranteed right to stay, but they'll see what they can do . . .'

'What is his specialism?'

'The happenings in the sixties.'

'You know about that?'

'I bluffed it, as I always do.'

He had a look of pride. That's his mischievous side. But then he's serious again.

'Only in these matters,' he points to the book, 'is there no bluffing. Everything will be asked in detail. She knows no mercy!' He reaches for the package in his lap and takes a sandwich out. 'That looks rather delicious,' he says, visibly cheered. 'Do you know,' he continued, 'I'm not even sure that it really helps me, being a teachable student. When I'm able to present Kant's deduction of the a priori categories without any mistakes, then she's actually annoyed, and I have more chance of,' he blushed, 'sex, when I'm badly prepared. That's astonishing, don't you think?'

I don't say anything.

My father lifts his index finger. 'I'm amazed at all the things that have been thought, they're starting to interest me. I never took the philosophers completely seriously.'

Probably, squeezed next to each other as we are in the sentry box, one of us with a sausage sandwich between his teeth (and breadcrumbs on his coat), we look like a real pair of comedians. I haven't sat this close to my father for a long time, and I enjoy it like a little child would.

I would never have suspected these feelings!

'Stuck into a book, you can feel so good, so secure,' my father says.

The inner city traffic pushes its way past us.

'I'll soon move on to the disciples of Kant. There's a whole bunch of forgotten names. Jacobi, Fries . . .'

Without thinking, I've taken my sunglasses off. A woman stops. 'Aren't you . . .' I play the man of the people, I present my father. 'He's an educated man: art history as it happens. To feed his family (us children and a demanding wife), he took on the heavy burden of a life in teaching. Now he's starting to work in the field of philosophy. There are private reasons why, and we will let you know about them at length on another occasion.' I mention the talk show the following Sunday. My father is amazed, he had no idea I was a shooting star in the acting world. 'The last time we saw each other, you were still in doubt as to whether you shouldn't – instead of becoming an actor – decide on a career as a Reichian therapist.'

A young man hears the words 'Reichian therapist' and starts crying, while at the same time – as he simultaneously recognizes me – kissing my hand for my acting accomplishments (in the crime series). Of course I find this all a little exaggerated, but it's a nice feeling that he's having, and I don't want to disturb the flow of energy. Moments like this can change a life, even if no one understands.

My father warbles a song, suddenly happy about who knows what, and rhythmically waves the closed book around in the air. It is, if I have deciphered the dancing letters correctly, the *Critique of Practical Reason*.

Not exactly a bestseller, I think.

Now a dozen people are standing around us. My father has started to talk about the tectonics of Greek vases. 'It's just the field I know, which I'm competent in, it feels much better,' he murmurs to me. For my part, I repeat many times the gesture with which I shooed the chief of police from his chair, that's what everyone liked most. The passers-by are increasingly cheerful and start to show each other the goods they have bought. They compare prices and find out about each other's motives for buying. There's a hive of happy activity, and not even my father notices when I put my sunglasses on again and sneak away.

'Three cheers,' I can just hear, but I don't hear who it's for.

Mrs. T. will never, ever marry my father.

Sudden Lurches

The coordinates of my life have shifted completely.

I'm still unsteady on my feet.

What demands are made on me!

Although my fellow students hate me, one or the other of them – generally one from the lower years, those in my year don't quite dare – will pull me aside to ask if I could give them the private number of Jaroslav Kauz. As everyone knows, he pulls the strings on the series *Willie would know!* I always say, 'I'm not contractually allowed,' and shrug my shoulders. Yes, even the teachers are suddenly not shy of pretending they were close to me. I look at them in a completely new light now. Are our teachers actually good actors? Who knows. Anastasia can't decide whether the new situation is cause to intensify her wooing of me, or to play the role of the betrayed queen.

Once I sleep with a girl from the beginners' class. (Seriously!) I'm embarrassed about it, particularly because I didn't exactly burst with sexual energy (as I'd masturbated in the morning), but it's also exciting (so that makes up for my weakness somewhat). It happens when I tell her in the School's corridor how the casting in *W.* went, and that K., the actor, who had been watching (and whom she thinks is pretty special) gave me a hearty hug after I played Lund from *Narrow Minds*. I don't want to exclude the possibility that I look particularly attractive this morning. Success makes you attractive, everyone knows that. But the actual situation is clear enough. So when we do it standing up (which is not my favoured position) in the janitor's little cubbyhole, which she pulls me into, and (no doubt *because* of this position) her orgasm just won't happen, then I have to tell her a second time, whispering into her ear, my mouth on her cheek, how the actor hugged me. When I mention that he had hair growing out of his ears, she comes.

I let things run their course.

Some things give pleasure, they just do. There's no getting around it, however regrettable it is!

When I meet her again in an assembly of all the students, she is effusive in her greeting and makes me tell the story about the actor for a third time, in front of a group of friends from her class. I do her the favour, but add somewhat spitefully, 'that's an actor whose mere name makes some women come,' provoking a wave of indignation. Even weeks later it will be held against me during the conversations with the student body . . . Anastasia is indignant too, when I (myself!) tell her about it. For my part, I can't rid myself of the thought that she too has trouble with orgasms – otherwise surely she'd have just shrugged about such puerility!

I feel that developments are seriously jeopardizing my inner stability, that they are *gnawing, tugging and sawing* at my foundations. My parents' divorce, the sudden success! Nothing is now as it once was. Where have those times gone when Wilhelm Reich gave me security (and meant something to me)? I'm lost, lost, lost . . .

What will become of my father?

Anastasia asks me why I am so intent on stopping my father from marrying Mrs. T. She insists that I must clear up this (murky) point. What is at stake is my own ability to have relationships based on feelings. Of course her question is not unselfish. But as Anastasia's circumstances in life aren't rosy right now, I'd like to do my bit where I can, without denying my nature, to improve her mood. So I do what's long been planned and have an hour's session with the experienced Reichian therapist (to Anastasia's joy). When I explain to him (in somewhat bored tones) why I'm here, he's impressed. 'Normally clients come with undefined stomach aches. You, in contrast, have a clear question and want a clear answer.'

I breathe – he says: 'Breathe, just breathe . . .' – and at the end of the hour the following has been ascertained: Children want to dominate their parents forever and can't bear their parents' having their own lives.

Now it's me who's impressed.

What proprietorial exaggeration!

But (I ask in my mind) doesn't the wish to keep my father from carrying out this *act of whimsy*, not also arise from my concern for his wellbeing? What will become of my father if marriage to Mrs T. really chains him to that chair of philosophy! Will we still be allowed to tell a joke? Will he still *come out with impossible things*, and – one example! – ask the parish priest what one is to imagine actually happened when David beat the Philistines. Whether, as the Bible suggests in 1 Samuel 18:25 ff., sacks of cut-off foreskins were lugged across the border, no less than two hundred, and whether Saul counted them, after all it is the price he had agreed for his daughters, and whether the foreskins were eaten afterwards in a communal meal to the glory of God?

No, I fear all that would be well and truly over!

His familiar (and personable) character was at stake!

TV

One of the following days . . . in a middling mood, I eat my supper, zapping through the TV channels, testing the quality of the new widescreen TV which Anastasia has brought into the flat, paid for with my money, obviously. After all, I think spitefully, she's just studying acting, hasn't graduated, is 'poor as a church mouse!' I say out loud (and once again realize – with inner annoyance – how much I have given in to Anastasia's wooing, the TV isn't the half of it). I think about how in the madhouse – where, we've now heard, my mother has become the director – the mentally ill start to howl around midnight and to shake the bars. (No doubt an unrealistic product of my overheated imagination!) At just that moment I see Mrs. T. on the screen.

Impossible!

What is this woman doing in public?

I can guess: yet again someone is making a profit from my meteoric rise!

'Niet-zsche,' she says with a cutting hissing sound from a sharp tongue. (She would have it that she too would have been a great actress, if she'd tried. She told my father that in a quiet hour – between the sheets!)

'Niet-zsche knew that only a narrowly focused horizon of consciousness led to a happy life. He knew that because he was incapable of it. As I am,' she smiled winningly at the talk show's host. 'I haven't been blessed with the inner peace of the kind of person who – whatever he does – has a good conscience thanks to his narcissism, ignorance and blindness.'

Now she laughs out loud, bows forward abruptly and as she does so – can I believe my eyes? – spits out a sweet that she had been pushing around her mouth.

The camera follows the sweet.

There, a Vivil mint!

I'm shocked. After all, in a way she's part of the family, and that throws a bad light on all of us.

'You can imagine,' she steams ahead, 'how much embarrassment the whole affair caused us. As I have heard – and I don't doubt it for one second – my ex-husband confronted my new life partner and challenged him to a brothel – sorry!' she broke into a peal of shrill laughter – 'to a duel! I was horrified. My daughter – yes, let's talk about her! – who admittedly (through the meddling of my mother-in-law, an impoverished lady all too aware of her noble blood) has had the benefit of a somewhat elitist education, in any case, she turns up her nose when she hears that her . . . – well, what shall we call him? – her future brother-by-marriage, earns his living in the *film industry*. Even I, who as his former teacher know and value his intellectual capabilities, feel a deep sense of guilt when I consider that he – essentially because of the broken nature of his family – has not nurtured his philosophical talent, which is *extraordinary*, I repeat: *extraordinary*, and is instead pursuing a career which is in the widest sense a *diversion*, a career *in which your own personality can never develop as it should*, which is nothing,' suddenly she reaches new heights of excitement, 'other than pure narcissism, which destroys in the bud every opportunity to develop yourself morally. It's not for nothing that Plato wanted to ban this profession from his state, for what does it serve a person to act, to continually play at things? . . .'

I turned it off.

I breathe, I pant, I burst.

'Duty and affection,' I roar.

And hadn't she worn a push-up bra, making the host's eyes pop out of his skull.

Enough!

The main thing is to make sure she doesn't inherit the house through some trick.

I start to think about it. If she were to marry my father, and if my mother were to . . . and . . . and . . .

Comparative Study

All morning I work on a comparative study of Nietzsche and Wilhelm Reich.

Naturally, that's my angry reaction to Mrs. T.'s nonsensical, indiscreet, shameful (for me, for *us*) appearance on the TV talk show!

It proves to be more problematic than anticipated, basically because there are no points of comparison. If it were Adler instead of Reich, no question about it, you could make progress. If it were Freud instead of Reich, you could at least speculate about the importance that Nietzsche had for Freud, for as a Viennese fin-de-siècle intellectual he must have at least known Nietzsche (I should research this!), and knowing him, he'd have to have a position regarding him. But Wilhelm Reich? I see him distributing condoms in Berlin, having an afternoon nap in his orgone energy accumulator, wasting away in an American jail. I see him smiling and moving his literally loose mouth. I see him taking the measurements of people who have just had orgasms. (Something that Anastasia finds arousing, and when we sleep together, sometimes she whispers to me: 'Now the gauges are blowing their fuses, and Wilhelm Reich is just checking if we're still wired up!' *I can't see him taking part in apparent debates.* But even Nietzsche had his crude realism. Haven't I come across breathing instructions somewhere in his work?

Suddenly I'm obsessed by the supposed memory and look for the quote for hours. Under Breath in the index I can only find: 'So I breathe fresh air again.' Then, under Air: 'Fresh air on the Olympus of thought . . .' Or: 'Fresh air penetrates through the walls of the prison of thought.' He seems to have had the feeling that death by suffocation was immanent!

I don't find the quote I thought of. It began something like this: 'Morning is a good time for knee-bends and breathing exercises.' Although it does seem somewhat improbable for Nietzsche to have written something like this, I can see that, I am pretty sure it was him.

My impulse to search weakens. I leaf through the books that lie in front of me, I lose myself . . .

I think about the fact that at my age I could already be a teacher at the School. That would have a certain theatricality. And were I a Reichian therapist, no doubt at this moment (I look at the clock) I'd be receiving my clients and doing something beneficial for humanity.

'That never interested me!' I shout out loud.

I find the place about the last people, the ones who have invented happiness. Oh yes! Of course! . . . The people who *blink* and say: 'A TV series is better than a kick in the teeth.' A different approach would be possible here. But how many reviewers, arts critics and *apparently educated people* have taken this position as their approach. 'As their Reichian approach,' I murmur nonsensically to myself. My study just isn't getting going.

I'm writing sentences like these: 'Nietzsche had to move the centuries' mass of thoughts. Reich started from zero with breathing. So he had to get further.' Or these: 'Nietzsche, the feminine dancer, paints his hysterical choreographies on the sky of the outgoing nineteenth century. Otherwise this little man would not have been noticed. So his leaps, his self-dematerializations, his stripping bare all remain in the sphere of the ambiguous, of art. He was an ideal object for a cult. He *demanded* nothing.'

I'm not satisfied.

I put aside the pages.

I reach out (listlessly) for the script that the agency sent me on Monday. 'Has Angela spoken to you?' I read. 'Has she?'

Suddenly I feel sorry for Mrs. T. How hard it must be to first think, and then live! 'Dear Wilhelm,' I suddenly say out loud (and simultaneously start to write this on a new piece of paper). 'You say that people only have to breathe right and give themselves a few years, and then sooner or later they will reach their inner centre. Well, do you really believe that? Just like everyone before you, you have

just given the world a further healing system. Nietzsche didn't want to remove unhappiness. He embraced it in despair. He swallowed again and again the brown snake that came creeping out of his mouth. He imagined the most horrific thing of all: that everything – every success and every failure that destroys us – will return in an endless loop, and that it's our task as humans to welcome our existence in this *eternal return*, to say yes to it. How could someone who thought like that not have exploded? But, dear Wilhelm, isn't the breathing person, who hopes to reach his or her inner centre but never does, worse off?'

I'm amazed that such pessimistic thoughts manage to get past the threshold of my consciousness. Come on in, I think. Come on in.

I lie down on the floor and breathe (in spite of everything).

Can't you at least have hope?

I don't have artistic ambitions. Nor ambitions for my love life. My family is broken, but nor would I make an effort for it. I won't start a new one. (As I'm winding down sexual relations with Anastasia, the danger of a condom accident is diminishing.) I don't expect any enlightenment from philosophy. My back isn't straight enough for meditation.

I purse my lips as I breathe in and look at the tip of my nose.

That too is a Reichian exercise.

Sleep wafts in like a heavy skirt from the right.

I'm standing on the edge of a bridge. A storm is approaching from the river.

Pride goes before a fall, I think and then I'm off.