

Elie Wiesel:

(applause) "She has dark eyes and the smile of a frightened child. I have been looking for her all my life. Was it she who saved me from the silent death that is being resigned to solitude? And from terminal madness as well, that is terminal as if describing a cancer when it is incurable? Yes. That madness in which one may find a refuge, if not safety. This is what I'm going to speak to you tonight, about madness.

[00:01:00] A madness laden with memories, a madness with eyes like everyone else. But in my story, they are like the eyes of a smiling child who is trembling with fear.

You are going to ask me: is a man who knows he is mad truly mad? Or in the bigger picture, in a mad world, is the madman who realizes he is mad the only one who is actually sane? But let us not rush ahead too quickly. If you had to, how would you describe a madman? As a stranger with a bronze face, smiling but joyless, his nerves frayed? When he goes into a trance, his limbs tremble; all his thoughts jostle one another. He often has electrical shocks, not in his brain but in his soul.

[00:02:00] Does that portrait seem right to you?

Let's continue. How can we speak of madness without using words reserved for those who carry it within themselves? What if I told you that in each one of us, sick or healthy, there is a hidden space, a secret zone open to madness? One misstep, one cruel turn of fate are enough to cause us to slip or fall irretrievably. Careless mistakes, lapses of memory, or errors in judgment can lead to a series of falls. And when this happens, we find it impossible to make ourselves understood by our foolish designation, soulmates. If you will not admit this, it will be hard for me, but you should not pity me. Tears sometimes [00:03:00] leave furrows, but never deep ones -- at least not deep enough.

Have I been talking nonsense? I do not think I am completely irrational. Does being mad equal being infirm? Can one speak of a gangrenous mind, or a sort that was beaten to death, of a mutilated cursed soul? Can one be mad when happy? As when unhappy? Can one enter into madness as one enters into religion or poetry? Can one slip into it slow, with slow, muffled steps, breathlessly, as though not to disturb some secret demon who might feign absence or asceticism? Sometimes I'm afraid to close my eyes. I see an unreal world, with its departed [00:04:00] souls. I open them again. The fear has not gone

away. It may be that madness is a vivid feeling of futility. As in Franz Kafka's *Castle*, waiting in front of the closed door, on the landing, for what has already happened, and what, paradoxically, will happen too late."

This is the opening passage in my new novel. It has been written in French and published in France, and is being translated now from the French, and will be published soon. But we have a tradition here for the last 41 years, that I used my usually fourth lecture of the year by reading a passage with a kind of foretaste, a preview. I believe, because of my taste for tradition, that the Y audience must always [00:05:00] come first. (laughter) (applause)

So the story is about madness. But there is madness not only in my novel. There is madness, too, in our world today. Read your daily newspaper; watch your evening program on television.

Muslims killing one another in Iraq and Gaza. In Iran, a madman shrieks that the Jewish people are liars; that we invented the Holocaust for political or financial reasons. And he aspires to acquire nuclear weapons to destroy the Jewish state. And if the international community does not stop him, it, too, would be struck by murderous planetary madness. [00:06:00]

Wasn't the criminal tragedy at Virginia Tech also an act of insanity? A Holocaust survivor, a professor from Israel tried to stop it, and paid with his life. How marvelous, how magnificent a picture that is: the teacher shielding his pupils. A teacher protecting the right to live, and face a future -- a happy one. What does it say about our society when a scholar was lucky to survive the atrocities of the worst of wars, only to be murdered in the free and prosperous and democratic country which is ours? Will the NRA ever realize that the time has come to stop lobbying against [00:07:00] the gun bill in Congress? (applause) We must repeat again and again, because there is no other way. To drive a car, you need a license. And you can go in certain states and buy a gun without a license? What kind of logic is that?

On a different level, anti-Zionism, which is often a disguise for anti-Semitism -- but not always -- is another form of madness when it goes too far astray. Anti-Semitism is really madness. The anti-Semite hated me before I was born. The anti-Semite in his hallucinations is convinced that we Jews control the world. I wish it were so. [00:08:00] (laughter) In Great Britain, of all places, the Union of Journalists, of all people, which is 35,000 members, adopted a resolution to boycott Israeli goods, which means they will eat no more Jewish oranges. For

the English, no more figs, no more dates, no more books. After all, aren't the books -- the *book* of Books -- the products that made Israel famous? So they will stop buying the Bible.

The same scandal had occurred a few years earlier, when prestigious universities in England decided to boycott Israeli academic institutions, and they changed their mind only when a large group of Nobel laureates and other [00:09:00] renowned professors issued strong, justified protests. But the journalists' boycott is still on! Now how far can they go in their immoral lunacy? What will they do now really? Will they boycott Israeli news? Will they stop covering events in Israel?

Another news item from the same country overseas, a British school -- not all, but one, but one is enough -- is reluctant to teach Holocaust-related issues, because they are, "contentious or charged versions of history." My God, what is happening to education in England? Have they lost all sense of proportion? Have they forgotten what happened in the recent past? Have they forgotten their proudest moment, when England was [00:10:00] leading the war against Hitler? Have they lost their memory? Do they wish to lose it?

I cannot but mention also another bizarre and painful item. Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, one of the greatest rabbinic scholars in Israel, recently made a statement that I find shocking. Usually, I refrain criticizing rabbis. I respect their knowledge, I respect their position, and their calling. Whether they are from one movement or another, I have a respect for teachers. But, this great scholar said -- I can't even utter it! -- that the Holocaust occurred. He knows why! Because of Reform Judaism. [00:11:00] (laughter) And he even gave the explanation. Because Reform Judaism began in Germany, the Germany did the Holocaust. My God. In this case, this rabbi should have remembered the rabbinic advice: *siyag lechokhma shtika*, it is said in *Pirkei Avot*, the Ethics of Our Fathers. In other words, he should have kept silent. What about ethical standards and principles? Don't leaders of communities have special responsibilities? Don't they know that words matter? But, we'll deal with ethics later, we shall. But for now, the ethical thing to do is to allow latecomers to come in. (laughter) (applause) [00:12:00] Are you all in?

I believe, of course, that literature, philosophy, and theology, and whatever endeavor we are involved in, must have a moral dimension. Some writers had a kind of prophetic vision. "A people that burns books will end up burning people," said

Heinrich Heine. The German-Jewish poet had strangely frightening premonitions. Essentially, before that happened, people were burned. Before all that, he wrote -- I quote him, a hundred years before -- "And then, that day will come.

[00:13:00] The old German divinities will rise from the fabulous graves, wipe the centuries-old dust from their eyes. The god Thor will get up with his gigantic hammer, and demolish the Gothic cathedrals. Thunder will strike in Germany, and then you will hear the crack, a crack which has never been heard before in the history of the world. Know that the thunder has finally hit its target. Then the eagles will fall dead to the ground, and in the farthest deserts in Africa, the lions, beaten and humiliated, will re-enter their royal caves. And in Germany, a drama will be executed, compared to which the French Revolution will be an innocent, idyllic episode." [00:14:00]

It is true that today, he said, everything has come. "But if you see here and there, some people gesticulate strangely, don't think that they are actors who rehearse tomorrow's play. They are like animals, who run on an empty stage, howling and barking and biting before the hour when the appearance of the gladiators who will fight to death."

One year before his death, Theodor Herzl, another great visionary, the one who knew that one day there will be a Jewish state, and he wrote to a friend of his, a parliamentarian, a Jew, about the Jewish situation in Europe. And this is what he wrote about Hungarian Jewry. He said, quote, [00:015:00] "The hand of fate will also seize Hungarian Jewry. And the later that occurs, and the stronger Jewry becomes, the crueler and the harsher shall be the blow which shall be delivered with greater savagery. Here is no escape."

And one very great man, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, a man whom I am sorry I never met, although I heard that he went around Hungary, Romania, and Poland to Jewish communities, and he also apparently came to mine. I think it was before I was born, so I have an excuse. (laughter) And he said, either '36 or '38, he wrote an article in the Yiddish daily *Moment* in Warsaw, "Dark [00:16:00] clouds are gathering over the skies for Jews in Europe." And the whole article is, leave it -- he said, leave it before it's too late. Jabotinsky died in 1940 in New York, a poor man, desperate man. Just when the war began, just when the Jews were being put into ghettos. I think he died of a broken heart, simply because Jews did not listen to his warnings.

What the three have in common is for them, history had a dimension of ethics. One cannot live as an individual, or as a group, without ethical concerns. The problem, of course, is, ethics is a word. Ethics to me doesn't mean the same thing that it means to those who were the killers of [00:17:00] our people. They believed they were doing an ethical thing by humiliating communities, by isolating them, by killing them. I always grew up as a child, and as adolescent, as an adult, believing that literature, art, philosophy, music, education in general, constitute an indispensable shield that prevents a person or persons from committing excessive evil. Like culture, education is an ensemble of energies and aspirations, dreams and visions, memories and wounds. It is a point of departure and arrival. It is the road, not necessarily the destination. It is desire, rather than fulfillment.

I must have quoted here, from this table, from this room, from this [00:18:00] stage, many times, in Paris there is Palais de Chaillot. And on the frontispiece of that building, words by the great poet Paul Valéry. And he said, "All passerby," he said, "do not enter here without desire, because," he said, "it depends upon you, whether I be a tomb or a treasure. And I bring death or life," and so forth. It means, it depends on you, passerby, whoever you are. But the main thing is, do not

enter this place without desire. And that the desire, therefore, must imply someone else. It must respect the otherness of the other, even celebrate it.

Now someone who was fortunate enough, intelligent enough, to learn in Germany then, to [00:19:00] admire a poem by Schiller, a quartet by Beethoven, and a painting by Rembrandt in the morning, cannot in the afternoon kill children! I was convinced of that! Had history gone mad, I asked last week. Has a dybbuk entered history? Is it that, as often before, too many people forgot that war is an act of despair, whereas peace is an offering of hope?

Einstein wondered whether God had the choice of what he wanted his creation to be. Is man meant to be God's failure? God's error? Are some of us condemned to be God's victims, and still others His orphans? Are these our only choices as human beings, Jews or non-Jews? To find the key to the mystery of theodicy, and human resignation to evil and its power? For me, it is still a mystery. We need to have faith [00:20:00] in what we read, and to believe that the person who wrote those sometimes good, beautiful, uplifting words, meant them. And that person behaved by example. That if a person wrote, appealing to the

reader to be kind and compassionate, that that person was kind and compassionate.

I still believe that whatever the existential question may be, teaching and learning one another the art of living together, of course, memory, which is the basis, which is the soul of all education, must remain its principal component. For it is only when we join our memories -- when mine implies yours, and accepts yours -- that we can, and therefore must, take part [00:21:00] in the noblest of quests. The quest for learning.

And that is true of all aspects of study and teaching -- and of course, for me as a Jew, of Jewish studies. They're all rooted in one word that defines the fragility, the vulnerability, but also the invincibility of the general human condition. And of course, it is memory. The person without memory is still human, but that person is no longer the person.

Actually, in antiquity, forgetting was on some occasions considered a positive phenomenon. In Greek mythology, Lethe, the River Lethe, made the damned souls in hell forget their ordeal. In some Talmudic texts, forgetting is called a blessing. Imagine someone incapable of forgetting his own mortality. [00:22:00] How could one live? How can one live, if

death remains a constant companion? But in real life, amnesia is a curse. Isn't memory the heart and soul of whatever is alive in all of us? To remember is to retrieve from the distant past people and events, and incorporate them into our own awareness and sensitivity. It is to say no to the sand covering the landscape of our very being.

What is memory? It's a world in itself. There is the memory of memory. There is a memory inside memory. Memory has its own language, its own archeology, its own mystery, its own thirst, and its own [00:23:00] joy. Within the framework of culture and education, to remember is to acknowledge the postulate that vanished lives do leave traces, and scars, on the surface of history. That all events are intertwined. That all gates remain open to the search of truth, friendship, love. It is to reconcile justice and dignity. It is to affirm our human faith in the other's humanity. It is to confer meaning on fleeting endeavors. Memory means to accept that questions may have their own beauty, even if they have no answer. The great Rebbe Nachman used to say, it happens that one person has a question, and no answer. A hundred years [00:24:00] from then, another person has another question, and that also has no answer. And neither the first nor the last knows that the second question was an answer to the first.

So the challenge and threat to culture, to education, from the ethical viewpoint, they have a name. And the name, of course, of the challenge, is the name of an enemy. The enemy of what is culture, of what is memory. And it's called fanaticism. Fanaticism means hatred. Fanaticism is blinding, and hatred is an infectious disease. Perhaps the fanatic thinks, but he doesn't want me to think. He is afraid of other peoples' thoughts. Thus, fanaticism is the paralysis of thought, and the end of creativity. [00:25:00] The fanatic hates doubts, and those who cling to them. The fanatic has no questions, only answers, wrong answers. To feel superior, he humiliates. He never laughs; he only sneers. He never whispers, he only shouts. His language is brutal. Vulgar. Obscene. Violent. He appeals to what is vile and low and ugly in the other. In looking at the other, he already sees him dead. Most fanatics are obsessed not with life, but with death. Theirs is a cult of death. Granted, they seek power, but they want to use it. They want to use it in order to serve death. Just look at the suicide killers today in the Middle East [00:26:00] and elsewhere. I've learned in Israel from people who know, because they were involved in saving the wounded, and doing the autopsy of the corpses. Before the suicide killer pulled the trigger,

there was a smile on his face. They smiled before dying. They smiled before killing.

So my friends, this is the beginning of a new century we are in, and we are already able to name its threat. Allow fanatics enough power, and they will use to destroy more than their own surroundings. How does one fight fanaticism? The answer is simple and paradoxical. It's education. And give education its own power. And the power is, [00:27:00] on the one hand, memory. If the enemy will remember what we remember, that the enemy of the Jewish people and so many others -- for we all have the same enemy -- that the enemy pay the price for his cruelty. Anyone who saw Germany in 1945 will never forget it. It was a land of ruins, where every person in the street or at home felt shame. Later on, young people, young Germans, felt shame, and they are wrong. I meet young students, and they feel guilty, and they are wrong. Children of Germans, if their fathers are not killers, of course there is no reason for them to feel shame. But even if their grandparents were killers, their grandchildren should not feel guilty, nor should they feel shame. I repeat a [00:28:00] mantra: children of killers are not killers, but children.

So, what do we do then today, when memory is being denied in so many quarters? What do we do then, when the ethos does not play an important part in human endeavors? We must remember: God did not create the world for it to be destroyed by man. Wars are rarely just; generally, they are blasphemy. Granted, hatred, too, is part of human nature, but it is there as a challenge to be met, an obstacle to be surmounted, an adversity to be defeated. The human race is not a product of diversity for its component to fight one another, but to live [00:29:00] together, join in the quest for harmony. Whatever the ethnic, religious, or social differences between people, the other is not my enemy, but my fellow sojourner, my companion, my friend, and if he is not yet, he can and must be.

All we can say about memory, that memory is universal, and therefore we must explore our own, claim it as our own, and offer it to other memories, so that together, they will become a moral message, powerful. Enough to change the human condition. Plato was Greek, and Seneca Roman. But they belonged to humankind, not only to Athens and Rome. Goethe was German, Shakespeare English, Racine French, and Faulkner American. Is there anyone more universal than they? [00:30:00] The Bible was given to the people of Israel. Is there a work that had and still has a greater impact on civilization?

The deepened study of the conflict opposing Antigone and Creon, Faustus and Mephisto, faith and heresy, logos and ethos, cynicism and belief -- that study transcends geographical borders and time. The question raised by thinkers and scholars can be found in those contemporary students study in their classroom, as does the stimulating invitation to give doubt its rightful place by Erasmus in Holland, and Montaigne in France. I believe in doubt. I believe that doubt is what motivates search and respect. Since my early childhood, I believed in study, and its ability to open vistas to the infinite. Curiosity, [00:31:00] erudition, intuition, memory, a sense of wonder -- all these are embodied in the quest for memory and study.

There are three stages in men's life, said Disraeli. Youth is to make mistakes. Maturity, to fight. And old age, for regrets. We may regret many things; it's natural. Lost opportunities, vanished encounters, wrong decisions, refusals and commitments. But one must never regret the efforts, ambitions, and energies one invests in learning. Accept the idea that learning has little to do with age, and even understand the magic of study. Adult education is as old as the Talmud. Rabbi Akiva began studying at the age of forty.

Fathers are compelled to teach their children: *v'shinantam*
levanekha. [00:32:00] But it means that they had learned first!
What would life be without learning? One minute before I die, I
still want with all my heart and mind, with every fiber of my
being -- learn more about the secret of life, and the final
mystery of death. But I belong to a generation that realized
that there are a thousand ways of dying. But what is the one to
live one's life alive?

So the importance of ethos and knowledge. The importance of
memory and hope. Like language, knowledge can be a cure or a
weapon, a curse or blessing. It all depends what we do with it,
and for whose sake. Now what is ethos? What is ethics? Man's
relationship with God? No. God can do without us. (laughter)
It is my relationship [00:33:00] to you, to any one of you. It
is man's or women's relationship to his friend, neighbor. It is
to the other.

What are the two darkest days in Jewish history? The Talmud's
answers are magnificent. The day Joseph's brothers sold him
into slavery, and -- one, and the other one was the day Moses's
spies returned from the Land of Canaan, and brought despair to
the people in the desert. Poor Joseph. His brothers hated him,
and actually planned to kill him. They threw him into a pit.

An empty pit, says the Bible. But Rashi says, no, it was empty of water, but filled with snakes and scorpions. And they threw him in the pit, and while he howled with fear and pain, [00:34:00] the brothers -- Jacob's children, our patriarch's children -- sat down for a delicious dinner.

What about the biblical commandments, which I love, *lo ta'amod al dam re'echa*, thou shalt not stand idly by while the blood of your fellow human is shed? Said Rashi again, if you watch him die, and you don't save him, you are responsible for his death. I believe this commandment, which is the eleventh, is the most ethical, because it is part of our daily life, and it concerns us every minute, every hour.

As for the spies, after all, they were leaders of the Tribes. Important people, all of them. Invested with authority. But there we encounter a problem: hadn't [00:35:00] they told the truth when they mentioned their impression of what Jews would find in that land, and not to go in? They were telling the truth! That the foreign territory was strong, well-defended by strong men. And strong men in whose eyes? Quote, "We look like grasshoppers." But it was that, that's what they felt! They told the truth. Said Rebbe Mendel of Kotzk, that was their

moral transgression: that they said, in their eyes, why should we care what others think of us?

In the eyes of our recent enemies in Europe, we were subhuman, thus not human. Has it affected our humanity? The problem then was, [00:36:00] and is, abstraction is important to understand theories, but not when we play a story in which human lives are concerned. Ideas as ideas may bear some fruit, but when someone -- a leader or a subordinate, an individual or a group -- when they try to transform human beings in abstractions, as was the case in Hitler's death factories, and in Stalin's gulag laboratories, it is humanity's honor and survival that was in jeopardy and disgrace.

So what lesson can be drawn from the horrifying discovery, years ago, that many SS killers of Jewish men, women, and children, with machine guns and in gas chambers, had college degrees, and [00:37:00] some of doctoral degrees? Where was their humanity? Their ability to absorb culture, the gifts of music, poetry, and philosophy -- what happened to it? A visitor came to the great philosopher Heidegger, Martin Heidegger, to discuss philosophy. But also the general situation in Germany was during the war. Heidegger's reaction? He said, I quote him, "Look well at Hitler's hands. Aren't they admirable?" That was his reaction.

How are we to comprehend Heidegger's fanatic loyalty to the Nazi party, that lasted to the very end of war? He paid dues. How is one to understand his disciple and lover Hannah Arendt's reconciliation with him after the war? Was it that to her, his originality as philosopher was more meaningful than [00:38:00] his Nazi perversion? But that is a question that goes beyond the twentieth century and its fallings and failings.

In his *Laws*, Plato proposes to burn his dialogues, and approves Socrates's death sentence. Plato, the great Plato, without whom philosophy is unimaginable, condoned slavery, and condemned poetry. Was he a bad philosopher for such aberrations? Why was he so against poets? I do not think that Heidegger wrote anything derogatory of Jews. Others have done that before him and after him. Augustine declared that Jews are still around so that Christians could see in them descendants of Cain and their sins. Goethe [00:39:00] hated scripture, which he called a mishmash of Egyptian-Babylonian sodomy stories. Hegel said, "The Jews are servile, incapable of liberty. They cannot escape slavery, except by enslaving others." Listen to Voltaire, the liberal! "We find in the Jews," he said, "that ignorant and barbarous people, who have long united the most avarice with the most detestable superstition, and the most detestable hatred for

every people by whom they are tolerated and enriched. Still,"
Voltaire added, "we ought not to burn them."

Well, several generations later, they were burned. They were
burned, and here I think I will read to you some [00:40:00]
things that -- at least a page -- which you will see what
Voltaire's late, late, late, late, late victims have written.
"In those years, in those years of darkness, one of them, who
was among them, wrote in Yiddish of what he witnessed and
endured. He said in Yiddish, "Toyznter mentshn, lebedike,
gezunte, lebensvilike geyen tsu der shkhite. Thousands of
people living healthy, life-loving, go to the slaughter.
Marching with shuffling feet, and pathetic indifferent. Zey
spraysn mit opgeloshener shrit in a pathetisher glaychgiltikayt
der shotn fun toyt ligt shoyt iber undz ale. The shadow of death
[00:41:00] already hovers over all of us. Lebn mir shelt zikh
oys fun der mase a geshtalter hekher elterer yid mit a
patriarkhaler groyer bord. Near me stands out the figure of the
tall old Jew, with the patriarchal gray beard. Er trogt tales
un tfiln untern orem, nit mer. He carries only his tallis and
tefillin under his arm, nothing more. Zist men azoy in tsores un
yiesh. Thus, we were in tribulation and despair. Plutsling
gezirt der alter yid mitn tales un tfiln azh ke'lev hastik.
Suddenly, the old Jew with the tallis and tefillin jumps up. un

git a zeg mit a shtarker un zikherer shtim. And speaks to everybody, with a strong and confident voice. Yidn, zayt nit tsutrogn, zayt nit moyre shekhoredik! Vos sitzt ir azoy? Jews, don't be so troubled. Don't be so melancholy. Why do you sit like that? Nor nit in atsves khas v'sholem, nor nit in yiesh. A Jew should never despair. Should never give in to melancholy." And he said, "Volt ikh gehat bronfn, If I had a Slivovitz or bronfn, volt ikh getrunken lekheyem. If I would have a drink, I would offer you a drink. And that Jew says, Lekheyem, yidn, lekheyem! And he said, 'I would propose a lekheyem. zet ir oder nit vi mir geyen moshiekhn antkegn? Don't you see,' he said, 'that we are going to greet the Messiah?'"

I don't know who wrote it. It's part of a volume called *Kiddush HaShem*, the sanctification of God's name. I don't understand that Jew. He was there. He knew that all of them were going to die, he said so. And he said, "No, we're not going to die. We are going to greet the messiah."

What does one do with memory, and what does one do with life, when life is threatened, when all that surrounds life is a threat? What does one do? What does one do in a [00:44:00] world which is mad, or threatened by madness? I have written about Hasidic masters. I love them all. I like Hasidism. I

come from a Hasidic background, and I still consider myself a Hasid. And in what I wrote about them, I discovered that every great Hasidic master, almost at the end of his life, he -- or, they all had a period of profound sadness. And I didn't understand why. Then I understood. Who would come to see a rebbe? Happy people didn't. Those who were not happy came. Somebody came to say, look, he's poor. Another one came to say somebody is sick. One couple didn't have children. Once a husband was in jail. They all came because they had -- and he, the rebbe listened and listened and listened, and everybody [00:45:00] poured out his heart to the rebbe. But there came a point where the rebbe couldn't take it anymore. Literally couldn't take it. Day after day, week after week, year after year, he couldn't take it. So he had a choice. Either, to give up his faith, or his sanity. And they all chose, of course, not to leave faith. But something happened to their psyche. And the true matter was, in helping others, they cured themselves. And I believe this was the ethical message of Hasidism. In helping the other, the person who is helping is curing himself [00:46:00] of despair, of sadness, of melancholy, of anxiety. And I have learned a lot from the Hasidic tradition. And only after I had written I realized what I owe that tradition.

In one of my novels, I describe a young man who is in jail. A communist jail, being tortured. Tortured because the torturer, the communist torturer, inquisitor, wanted him to betray his friend, who was still running free. And my hero, who is Michael -- Micha'el -- resisted. Didn't speak. Then they put him in a cell, together with a young madman, knowing that if Micha'el would remain long enough with the young madman, he will be contaminated by the young man's madness, and he, too, will become mad. [00:47:00] And therefore, before that, in order to save his sanity, he would speak to the inquisitor and betray his friend.

So, he didn't betray. Instead, he decided he will cure the young man. And he began talking to him. To set the boy an example, Micha'el danced, laughed, clapped hands, scratched himself with his dirty nails, made faces, stuck out his tongue. He had to show the boy that being a man meant all this. And now he talked all day long. Sang through endless evenings. He told sad stories, and let his tears run freely. When a man is troubled, he weeps. He told [00:48:00] erotic stories, even obscene stories, while his cheeks flamed like torches at twilight. Desire is fire, and strength. He reported funny adventures he had lived through or heard about, and laughed in great gusts. Laughter is a weapon.

And the boy, the mad boy, listened silently, immobile as a statue, resisting all assaults. Words, tears, Micha'el's funny faces were flung up against him and fell back like dead birds. Micha'el lost his temper often; then, his face wrathfull, his eyes flashing sparks, he struck the boy violently, or shook him by the shoulders until they were both out of breath. "Wake up, for God's sake! It's our only chance! One of us will win and if it isn't me we're both lost. Do you hear me?" Futile. The shaggy boy kept silence, [00:49:00] breathing the air of another world.

"At least tell me your name!" Micha'el shouted, and gritted his teeth. "I am Micha'el! Are you listening? Micha'el! Pay attention, watch my lips. Micha'el! And who are you? What's your name? Help me -- it's silly, I know, but that's how it is! You are crazy, and I am not. But only you can get us out of this. Give me some help, for God's sake. What's your name?"

Futile efforts, vain furies. The boy lived in a kingdom barred to Micha'el. Where he lived, tortures and caresses were of little effect. The day when the boy suddenly began sketching arabesques in the air was one of the happiest of Micha'el's life. His eyes dimmed with tears. Then all was not inexorably

lost and barren. He felt like dropping to his [00:50:00] knees and offering thanks to God. He did not, but took the boy's hand in his own, squeezed it hard. Very hard, and murmured gently, "Thank you, thank you, my little friend. Thank you." His intelligence and personality were still dim, barely flickering, but Micha'el took heart. And now he talked more, as if wishing to store ideas and values in the boy, for his moment of awakening.

Micha'el compared himself to a farmer, months separated the planting and the harvest for the moment it was planting. And he said, "Right at this instant, there are couples all over the world who think they are embracing, and some who really are. There are hearts hammering because they want to be beside someone who has just departed, and in the wild countryside of some country just awakening, or just falling asleep, there is a woman, some woman being [00:51:00] stoned for a reason -- some reason, and nothing can save her from human beings. And there is a man, some man, being deserted, whatever his desires. And he can expect nothing more from human beings. And yet, I tell you, affection exists. Love exists. Friendship exists. They are created and transmitted like a secret formula, from heart to heart, and from mouth to ear. I know. I know the path of the soul, overgrown of not only the night -- the vast, very barren

night -- without landscapes, and yet, I tell you, we will get out. The most glorious works of man are born of that night. I know it isn't easy to live always under the question mark. But who says that the essential question has an answer? The essence of man is to be a question. And the essence of the question is to be without [00:52:00] answer. But to say, what and where is God, what is the world, what is my friend, is to say that I have someone to talk to. Someone to ask a direction of. The depth, the meaning, the very soul of man, is his constant desire to ask the question ever deeper within himself. To feel ever more intimately the existence of an unknowable answer. Man has the right to risk life, his own life. He does not need to submerge himself in destiny in order to maintain his deep significance. He must risk -- he can risk a confrontation with destiny. He must try to seize what he demands, to ask the great questions, and ask them again. To look up at another, a friend, and look up to him again. If two questions stand face to face, that's at least something. It's at least a victory. The question, the demand, the outcry, [00:53:00] the sickness in the soul or in the eyes, they never die. What I say to you, what I pass on to you, my young friend, I learned from a friend, the only one I had. He's dead, or in prison. He taught me the art and the necessity of clinging to humanity, never deserting humanity. The man who tries to be an angel only succeeds in making faces.

It's in humanity itself to define both our question, and the strength to keep it within limits; or, on the contrary, to make it universal. To flee to a sort of nirvana, whether through a considered indifference or through a sick apathy is to oppose humanity in the most absurd, useless, and comfortable manner possible. A man is a man. A man is human only when he is among men. It's harder to remain human than to try to be beyond humanity. Accept the difficulty. Tell yourself [00:54:00] even God admits his weakness before the image he has created. To be indifferent for whatever reason is to deny not only the validity of existence, but also its beauty. Betray, and you are human. Torture your neighbor, you are still human. Evil is human. Weakness is human. Indifference is not." So, at the end, he manages to cure the young man.

In conclusion, we believe, therefore, that we are here to do ethical things. We are here to try to improve a world which wasn't waiting for us. And who knows what will happen to us, whether the world will remain world. [00:55:00] Claude Lévi-Strauss, the great thinker-philosopher in France, said, "Creation preceded man." Who knows, it may succeed man. What a horrible thought. The world was empty, did it really come empty? It's all something independent -- we are responsible for the answer. Whenever a human being remains human, it's already

an act of defiance. Whenever a human being opens himself or herself to generosity, to compassion, to ethics, it's already good. It's already a victory.

So how do we know when -- that the person is ethical? Ask him or her? Wrong. But what we say about modesty, can say about morality. Two men argue. Who is more modest of the [00:56:00] two? They quarrel. And then they meet an old sage, and they ask the old sage to be the arbiter. He listens -- listens to the arguments -- and remains silent for a long moment, and then, he burst into laughter. Thank you. (applause)

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