

LEARNING FROM THE CHILD

A PARENTS VIEW

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## LEARNING FROM THE CHILD WITH CEREBRAL PALSY

### A PARENTS VIEW

“Let them see your face, my child and thus know the meaning of all things;  
let them love you and thus love each other“

In these lines the great Indian poet Rabridanath Tagore, wonderously expresses the unique value of each individual child, sick or well – the child we have so much to learn from.

#### I. Speaking of learning

If we are to speak of learning and to believe that learning is a determining factor in the life of every human being, perhaps it would be helpful to remember that practically every experience contains something unknown.

Yet strangely enough through our nature and the long history of our species we are extraordinarily well conditioned to perform certain actions over which we have little or no control and to accept with fortitude certain truly momentous events. Women give birth with great courage and if one is to consider even the ultimate human experience of dying, the majority of men and women have managed, since the beginning of time to accept their own death with considerable grace and without allowing their fear of the unknown to rob them of their reason. Somewhere in our nature there seems to be a certain foreknowledge or predisposition, which saves us from the shock of what would otherwise be an incalculable and terrifying experience.

This natural protection covers a wide range of human experiences, but it does not cover them all. There are instances for which no warning seems to exist. Instances that perhaps belong solely to our individual

destinies and not to the collective destiny of mankind, instances that are neither universal nor inevitable and thus conform to no recognisable pattern. Is it our instinctive awareness even of certain natural possibilities that becomes clouded, leaving us amazed and highly vulnerable if they do occur, or is it simply that certain ideas are so unbearable that we could not live with their foreboding and so divorce them from our consciousness?

Whatever the reason for this unawareness, it is certain that in the case of a child's death, as in the case of the birth of a disabled child, parents have no antibodies and no natural relief. There is no comfort in the knowledge of precedent and no blind acceptance of nature's will. Faced with the fragmentation of one's own flesh, reactions can become very primitive and often take the form of stubborn resistance. This may seem unreasonable to others, but can be explained by the fact that the parent finding himself totally unwarned and unprepared, is playing for time in order to better understand and accept this terrifying new reality.

A year before my own child was born, I dreamt that I was holding in my arms, quite a big child, four or five years old, which seemed, apart from its size, to be physically still a baby, unable to support its weight or stand upright. The importance of this dream was not that it was undoubtedly predictive, but that its message was completely lost on me. I did not recognise or anticipate its implications at all and I only remembered the dream years later, when it had already come true. So the warning that might have existed was wasted and no lesson was learnt.

Yet, the symptoms of abnormality in one's own child are soon evident. Both parents know immediately that something is wrong, but imprisoned in their own ignorance and fear, each keeps his apprehensions to himself, while guarding the other's secret and in a primitive, superstitious way, prays that the unknown threat will go away if it is never put into words.

At this point it may be wise to stop and think of what we mean by “parents of disabled children“. There is a tendency in all of us to oversimplify, to generalise, to group and to categorise in order to put our own ideas in order. We refer to parents of disabled children as if they were a collective entity. We expect common characteristics, coincidences of attitude, similar reactions and we do not stop to think to what extent these may be purely circumstantial like those that temporarily connect people who are shipwrecked together . Undoubtedly most parents have shared a considerable area of common experience, but here the similarities surely cease and we are left with individual human beings, whose capacity for survival, adaption and success is purely subjective and for whom the experience of having a disabled child is, after all, a very personal affair.

So where does the experience of having a child that is different from the one we imagined and dreamt of begin in its entirety? Perhaps it is when the watching, waiting parents find the courage to entrust their suspicions to one another and to share their silent grief.

This is the time, when one is reminded of the prophetic words of the French metaphysical poet, Leon Bloy, who wrote in 1898, that: “Man has places in his heart that do not yet exist and into them enters suffering in order that they may have existence“.

## 2. The quest

Experiences are only as significant or insignificant as we ourselves can make them, but this is the experience that must be gone through and for which there is no escape or substitute. We cannot refuse our support and participation to a venture that challenges our whole being and requires our total commitment. For only if we dare to face what is real, can we survive it.

So the quest begins, as we set out together to discover why our child is different from other children. We ask for information and for immediate solutions, for only these can help us at this stage to face our fear, our feeling of personal guilt, of isolation, of segregation, of injustice, the terrifying vista of a dark future. What we fall upon is a new experience for which we are again not prepared. We discover that in science there are no absolute truths and that there is no wisdom or knowledge that can solve all the mysteries of nature. We ask for help and are usually offered evasive answers or scientific theories elevated to the rank of dogma or, worst of all, conflicting views. Thus we find ourselves enmeshed in contradictions that seem to take the form of a conspiracy of words.

All this is the product of doubt for never do people speculate more and have more opinions, than about things they do not fully understand. And simple things seem often the most difficult to express, which perhaps is why parents are seldom told that little is still known about cerebral palsy.

This is surely a period that most parents remember with horror, for in all the confusion, there is the almost obsessive fear that one's child will be wrongly assessed and falsely labelled for the rest of its life by some omnipotent figure of a doctor.

The specialist who cannot risk his own authority by being human will lose it anyway and perhaps it is worth remembering that the parent is the specialist's first patient and his only ally in the task ahead. And every good physician knows that there are no recipes and rules. There are only individual cases with the most heterogeneous needs and demands – so heterogeneous that we can virtually never know in advance what course a given case will take.

The practice of medicine is and always will be an art. So let the doctor who is entrusted with a child and its parents act like an artist, with skill and sensitivity and imagination. This is all that is needed at this stage for

parents to discover their child as a human being and not as a medical case and this can be the happiest break for all concerned – doctor, parents and child.

Yet, even if the ideal conditions of diagnosis, treatment and parent guidance, were to be made available to all parents, undoubtedly the feeling of chaos and disaster would be alleviated to a degree, but the initial shock would still be there. For what happens to us in a crisis has more to do with instinct and other mysterious, unconscious factors, than with our mind. We must each work out our own salvation and help comes usually from the side it is least expected. From the child itself.

### 3. An exceptional human being

What usually happens next in the story we are telling is this: Still in a state of shock, we begin to suffer the imposition of well-wishers, who would advise and help us, so we find ourselves in the paradoxical situation of being over-advised by the unqualified and inadequately advised by the qualified. And meanwhile, there are no magic cures, that could make the whole problem dissolve overnight. So unable to find help outside ourselves, we turn towards our child and what we discover transcends all previous knowledge and understanding.

First of all we discover that our child is an exceptional human being and as everything exceptional constitutes a gift of nature, our child is a gift of inestimable value. We also begin to understand that the needs and necessities of mankind are manifold, what sets one man free is another man's prison and so it is with normality and abnormality. In our love and knowledge of our child we recognise that man is not a machine, in the sense that he can consistently maintain the same output of progress. He can only meet the demands of outer necessity if he is well adapted to his own inner world and to the conditions of his environment. So we try to create a good environment in which our child will be happy and

consequently through the child's contentment we begin to feel happier ourselves. What we soon realize is that all we have to do is to understand and respect the differences in our child and to guard against the futility of wishing to interpret and specify those differences. For the miracle of the disabled child is that, although it lacks so many fundamental specifications, it still functions wonderously as a human-being. This is the first and most important lesson of all.

The ancient Greeks imagined that Hyphaistos, the most resourceful of gods, was a cripple. Of course we know that the Spartans threw crippled babies into the gorge of the Tayettus so as to maintain the superiority of their race, but a clever mother hid her crippled child, and lame Agisilaos became the greatest king of Sparta. It makes you think.

So let us quickly cease to set ourselves and our child goals and time-limits, casting it in the unfair role of a failure or a success. Surely, both success and failure in a functional sense are closely connected with the child's medical diagnosis over which we can have little control. More important is the handling of its life which is largely in our hands. The competition that normal children face in modern society is often accentuated in the case of disabled children through over-attention not to their needs as human-beings, but to their physical achievements. This seems to lessen the child's value as a unique individual with unquestionable human rights. It is a violence to the self-respect of the child who is entitled to be as he is, and not condemned to forced labour in order to compete with his peers. We all have our handicaps, everyone of us, there is no point in dwelling upon them. The important question is our indisputable right to a place in the sun and surely this applies to disabled children too.

This is the moment when we start to learn from the child itself and when the harmonisation between the child and its immediate family

begins, an essential process that can, if it is given a chance to succeed, dispel all further discord.

But first let us consider what we mean by the word “family“ and let us remember that in a family our membership is not based on credentials, but on birth. A family is a loosely woven group of people of different ages, connected by common blood. A family is not a club, where people of similar age and inclination follow a common pursuit. The members of a family are of course going to react in an uninformed and unpredictable way to the child that is different but is nevertheless one of them. Brothers and sisters and grandparents for a start are going to want to know what is the matter with the new baby, so that each of them can learn according to his own personality how to accept it. They are surely entitled to know, but here parents will be faced once more by the ambiguity of scientific truth and the inadequacy of words. It seems best, when explaining to people who are emotionally and not just intellectually involved in a problem, to establish the child’s disability, as a new experience and responsibility for everyone and of course not as a family tragedy, avoiding water-tight specifications and prognostics and not seeking to exhaust the issue. Once this is done, the new baby will invariably win its own battle of identification and claim its place as a member of its family.

#### [4. A life of relationships](#)

And here the learning stage begins for everyone. This is when those unknown, untried regions of the heart come truly into their own. The child with cerebral palsy learns to live quite amicably with its disability, reacting positively to what it can do, and not negatively to what it fails to accomplish. It is usually receptive, eager to please, loving and wonderfully free of stress, a centre of calm for everyone to come close to and derive strength and comfort from in moments of disappointment, sorrow and weakness. Parents, brothers and sisters and family friends all find that they have something to offer and the child discovers that what he has to

offer is appreciated and sought after too. Brothers and sisters in particular play an important role in the healthy and natural development of a special child. The ingredients of this relationship are archetypal and very strong and they seem to have a mysteriously beneficial effect on any child's personality. But for a child with disability it may make all the difference between living and just existing.

Our child was never as happy as when he was with his brother and sister and he missed them constantly when they were away. It was to his sister Marianna that he paid the rarest of all compliments, when he said to her one day: "Agapi Marianna". ("Agapi" is the Greek word for love). For him she was love.

The role of the family and of the teaching and caring professions is to help the child reach its natural potential, whilst enjoying a happy and fulfilling life. But this role does not constitute a position of authority. We are not authorised to manipulate somebody else towards a given end, nor to decide what is best for somebody else, nor to canalise somebody else's life. Disability or weakness in another person does not entitle us to the position of mentor, preacher, healer or saviour. We are none of these things and if we do not learn from one another and most of all from the child itself, we will be nothing at all. Jung has said: "For two personalities to meet is like mixing two chemical substances. If there is to be any combination at all, both are transformed". So what we are really talking about is not authority, but transformation and harmony and in this context, I often have reason to recall the great Florentine physician Milani-Comparetti and his principle of a complete and interrelated approach to any human problem. "Everything is correlated, " he used to say, " for we live a life of relationships".

In this correlation the physician is once again very important and Milani's stress on health rather than sickness, care rather than cure, completeness rather than wholeness, seems so very wise. For to round itself out, the human personality seems to require completeness, not

perfection, and perhaps it is for this very completeness that the defects and weaknesses are there, without which there could be no progress and no development.

## 5. Fragmented treatment and care

So with these ideas in mind, we come now to the other people who will sooner or later be affecting the child's life and development. First let us consider the therapists. In an ideal situation the family and therapists work together and support one another. This cooperation is based on the principle that each has a great deal to learn from the other, if both take the trouble and time to talk, enquire, listen and observe, in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere of common regard for each other's involvement and skills. Therapy is a most exacting business, for the object of therapy is not the disability but the disabled person and each new case that requires treatment is pioneering work. Unfortunately however, even the best therapists are sometimes tyrannized by their adherence to specific methods and by their obsession with the concrete and functional results of their efforts.

Over and again we have seen that there can not be one method suitable for every child nor one manner of approach, because the problem possesses all the paradoxical and unpredictable elements of life itself and cannot be restricted to rigid formulas. The child must understand why he is being required to make a certain effort and also to feel that what is demanded of him is for him alone. Our task as parents and therapists is to help the child to cope with life in its entirety and it is important to realize that unless family members and specialists of all specialities combine their efforts in a concert of many voices, the child will be scattered and wasted.

Fragmented care and treatment destroy the completeness of the child for often the hands may solve a problem with which the intellect has

wrestled in vain, but how can this be, if hands and minds are delegated to rigid timetables and segregated from one another?

Also, human communication is an action and a choice and not an automatic and mindless function and without human communication there is no point in even talking about therapy.

## 6. Functioning or living

Perhaps we could now briefly pause at the question of function which is so often one of the stumbling blocks of parents and therapists alike.

At a Reassessment Session we were met by the chief therapist in the corridor as we arrived with our son. "Oh, hello!" she said, "Is he crawling?". "No, he's not", we shamefully replied and once again we could see the mental black mark going up against his name. No functional progress. "But he's smiling and laughing and communicating and participating and learning and living!", we wanted to cry out. "*This is his function*".

So we see that the learning stage continues indefinitely for us all and this brings us naturally to the major area of education, which plays so important a role in the general scheme of a child's development.

Children are educated by what those around them are and not only by what they say and do. Primarily, the life of the family in which he lives educates the child. But teachers are very important too. Owing to the proximity of contact and the long school hours, the teacher's personality will directly effect the child's development. Teachers must be constantly alert to the signals that the child is giving out and ready to recognise any sign of progress, for if the effort the child is making remains unacknowledged it may not try again.

Special children are mercifully less burdened by rationalization than the rest of us. They must grasp at regular or irregular ways out of their natural difficulties, they must cut corners and if they are not shackled by educational conventions, they often make unselfconscious and truly brilliant use of the limited means at their disposal. This ability should be encouraged, aided and abetted and not stifled by adult rationalization and inflexibility.

So let us watch the question of “understanding” very much – for every child will invariably have someone standing over his head, asking the perennial stupid question: “Does he understand?”.

Unfortunately, we still live in a world where if we do not understand a person, we regard him as a fool. But if special children in particular are to be crushed between our incomprehension and the doubt being cast on their own ability to understand, then we are condemning them to a condition where they will gradually cease to believe in their own understanding and this is truly appalling.

## 7. Society, friend or foe

Our story is at last beginning to reach out into its more universal context, as the child’s inclusion into society begins.

With his warm heart the child with cerebral palsy is ready to make friends but how far does society accept him as a friend? It is here that we come to the thorniest problem of all. In this area most families have undoubtedly shared a considerable amount of common experience.

Beyond the natural complications that the daily practical problems of a disabled child create in our personal and family lives, we have all been wounded by tactlessness and interference and by public opinion in a benighted state of ignorance and indifference. We have all faced deep-rooted misconceptions and prejudices and a callous escapist attitude towards anything that deviates from the normal. We have all been

discouraged by society that seems to stand like an immovable barrier in our path, barring all access, all escape and every prospect. The heartrending lines of Shakespeare come automatically to mind:

“I, that am curtailed of all fair proportion,  
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,  
Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time  
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up  
And that so lamely and unfashionable .....  
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them. “

(Richard III. 1594)

Centuries have passed since this cry of despair. Four since Shakespeare, five since Richard himself, yet it must seem to many parents that the dogs are barking still.

Yet society is the wider world of each child, the world beyond the family haven where he must find his rightful place. In a survey carried out by the Spastics Society of Athens, 22% of all parents still believe that their child is rejected by society and another 21% can give no answer one way or another, which could indicate that they do not really know what social acceptance would mean. This is a hard truth to accept.

## 8. A world of barriers

And the problem does not end there. In Lewis Carroll’s “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland“, published in 1867, we read these lines: “Alice opened the door and found that it led into a small passage... She knelt down and looked along the passage into the loveliest garden you ever saw. How she longed to get out of the dark hall and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains, but she could not even get her head through the doorway; «and even if my head would go through»

thought poor Alice, «it would be of very little use without my shoulders, and they would be bound to get stuck»”.

It seems almost superfluous to say anything more about the frustrations caused by inaccessibility. Lewis Carroll has said it all. Let us look at the images presented here: the narrow passage, the dark hall, the tiny door, the big clumsy head, the even clumsier shoulders. And beyond? The loveliest garden you ever saw – the bright flowers, the cool fountains – just out of reach.

Inaccessibility is about frustrated desires and dreams. In the case of the disabled these should not be seen as unrealistic desires, but solely as the justified need to live a normal and independent life, as an integrated member of the human community, neither privileged nor underprivileged, neither discriminating nor discriminated against.

Life is full of the frustrations that human beings inflict on one another, through short-sightedness, ignorance or indifference. But when we are obliged to also contend with inanimate obstacles and barriers in our everyday lives, it is no wonder that poor Alice is resigned to the fact that she must give up any attempt to reach the lovely garden altogether. The garden is not for her, because she is handicapped by her physical inability to get her head and shoulders through the door – because she does not fully conform to the norms of size and shape. “You are not a girl at all“, one of the animals declares later on in the book. “You are too big“. So even her identity as a member of her own species is questionable.

Thus apart from her inability to get through the door, apart from the frustration and sadness of never reaching the lovely garden, apart from the embarrassment and conspicuousness of feeling so big and clumsy, she is also made to feel stupid and guilty, as if it were all her own fault.

Many people with disabilities have certainly felt this way. These feelings are so familiar that they often grow resigned to them and somehow convinced that they are to blame. It is they who are a bother and a public nuisance with their wheelchairs and crutches and walking sticks, and the less they impose themselves upon other people by circulating in public places, drawing attention to themselves and perhaps requiring assistance, the better.

This is a sad situation because what it comes to is that the existence of a considerable number of people, who live amongst us, is ignored by the wider public and as a result of this state of non-existence, their ultimate social acceptance is greatly delayed. If the disabled do not circulate amongst us, because there are no provisions for them to do so, there is nothing to remind the public of their existence. Also they are less inclined to circulate, as their dependence and their obligation to others increase.

So what is truly to blame in this vicious circle of dissatisfaction? Is it the disabled person himself who insists on his right to reach the lovely garden? Is it the ablebodied person whose good intentions may seem like an imposition or who is too pressed for time and unconcerned to give a hand? Or is it simply that the door is too small, the passage too narrow and the hall too dark?

## 9. Getting to know and like you

And yet it need not be so. Beyond the immediate circle of his family our child made friends that were his alone. His therapists and teachers were important but so was the driver of the school bus with whom he enjoyed a good joke, the local grocer who always saved him a special treat, the captain on the boat who let him hold the tiller, the old ladies who called out his name as he went by, the strangers who lent a hand with his pram, the big boys who took him swimming in the sea and jumping in the waves, the girls who loved to dress him and comb his hair in funny ways, the

people from other countries who did not know his language, but learned the words he knew, so that they could carry on a conversation with him, a whole world of different people, at school, in the park, on the streets, they were all his friends.

The well-adjusted child with cerebral palsy can make and retain many friends, because so many different people effect his life in many meaningful ways. It may only be a smile but that is surely what friendship is about. Warmth and love, confidence and hope, these more than any specific method of therapy or education are the vital elements for the growing plant, the soul of the child to flourish. And what we all know is that it is not always the teacher who teaches and the child is not always the one to be taught. Close to our special child it is more often we who are educated, helped and healed. This is the inestimable gift of an exceptional human-being.

And let us be very clear about one thing. The parents and the family of special children cannot be more or less fallible than anyone else. We know that there is no human foresight or wisdom, that can prescribe direction to our life, except for small stretches of the way. We must travel the best we can. We are not heroic beings and we do not need to be. We cannot always know what is best, we will not always judge correctly, we will frequently feel tired, discouraged and sad, but these natural shortcomings will in no way harm our child. For as long as we can retain a certain clear-sightedness concerning our own qualities and faults, our child can safely reflect them and become more human too. It is after all, part of the business of growing up to recognise that the discords and paradoxes of life are part of our own reality. Our child, every child must not be bereft of this experience but should share in this amazing process of learning, so full of the seeds of the unpredictable.

## 10. The Future

And most unpredictable of all is the future. The expansion of life into long vistas of time is a frightening thought when it comes to the mind of the parent of a child with cerebral palsy. Unaided by experience, but through endeavour and love we feel that perhaps we have taken care of the present to the best of our ability. But what of the future? Our child inevitably will grow, will cease to be a child and will challenge the world from a new view point with an adult's demands and needs. And what if we are no longer there to help? Who will succeed us? In our hearts we know that all true things must change and if we are to establish a true existence for our child, we must allow him to grow and change, to choose and to reject as we all learn to grow and change beside him. There is no other way.

Recognizing our child's weaknesses, we may seek to protect him from the outside world, but we have to force ourselves to remember that he is like a little bird trying his wings and those first, shy and halting attempts at independence should not be thwarted by overprotection. This is his wider world and he should be encouraged to participate in it. Further than this, we can perhaps recognize that our problem is connected with the great problems of society and the wider context of contemporary consciousness. Perhaps that is where the succession lies, but of course we do not know the answer to this question concerning the future in a universal sense. Personally I found what seemed like an answer in my own child, who, when I put him to bed at night, would look at me, with smiling eyes and say: "Tomorrow we will have a good day".

## 11. Love with no conditions

What all these testimonies seem to prove is that this world of ours provides us all with boundless opportunities for human love and the world is empty only to him who does not know how to direct his love towards

things and people and to render them alive and beautiful. Our child rendered the world around him alive and beautiful and his contribution reached far beyond the limitations of movement and speech.

Physically he continued severely disabled all his life, but he was brave and determined and he became a lively and lovable human being. Above all, he was an extremely happy child and this brings me to the importance of happiness as a major component in all physical, mental and psychological development.

There is no doubt that within human limits we did everything in our power to ensure that Themis would have a happy life and an environment in which his abundant gifts of the heart and of the mind could flourish freely. We were quite a good team and we tried to inspire him with confidence and hope, but to find happiness we must be possessed of a spirit to find happiness in and Themis was possessed of such a spirit. We could not have done it for him. He was an unashamedly joyful person and laughter remained with him all his life and endeared him to numerous people, who smile even now when they think of him. To each and everyone he offered something of himself, he never missed an opportunity to communicate with a laugh or a smile. So let me make a strong case for happiness as a life-giving force. All too often we waste its potential by underestimating its value and we burden it unjustly with puritanical disapproval. Themis managed to enjoy almost everything and he taught us that physical disability is not a barrier to happiness.

Above all, those of us who have been privileged to live with a special child have been taught love by the child itself and we should all be eternally grateful for this lesson of love.

Love with no conditions, love as a mutual need.

I believe that our child is not asking us: “How can I be the same as you?”. All he is asking is: “ Will you give me your hand and come and travel with me?”

And we must take his hand and travel with him all the way right to the end of the road, realizing that as Jung has said: “The serious problems of life are never truly solved. If ever they should appear to be so, it is a sure sign that something has been lost “. We cannot hope to solve every problem, but we can learn so much from this long journey. As in Christina Rossetti’s beautiful poem “Uphill”, published in 1861, we may often wonder if the journey “will take the whole long day. From morn to night, my friend?”. It will take a life-time, but the purpose and reward are in the travelling and not in the arriving.

## 12. The ultimate experience

Some parents have suffered the ultimate experience, the experience for which there are no antidotes, of losing their special child.

At the age of seventeen our Themis died. His brave, loving heart stopped beating in his sleep and he slept on. He had spent a happy day with his brother and sister and he was full of plans for the next day. Suddenly from being a family with a disabled child, we became a family without its disabled child, deeply bereaved by the death of its most beloved member. A far, far harder thing to be.

The death of a child is always an outrage but in the case of a disabled child there are additional tormenting questions: Where is he now? Who is caring for him? Is he alone? Is he afraid? Does he know how much we miss him? And again: Will he be mourned or will others think that “it is better so“?

It is always too soon to speak coherently of one’s own bereavement nor can one speak for others, for this is the most personal of all experiences. It

took us a long time to find our balance as a family again because the concept that time alleviates grief is totally erroneous. On the contrary with every day that passes the longing becomes greater and the absence harder to bear. Finally a kind of tranquility descends – perhaps a gift from Themos himself. Who knows? One manages to survive.

At this time, I can say only this: With his inherent love of life, our child was always looking forward and making plans for the future. Perhaps we could have beseeched Time to linger awhile just for him but he would not have chosen a life that was a stoppage or a backwash.

In our own loss we have found that the most tormenting questions seem to concern the reaches of memory and once again, the future. “What if I am no longer there to remember him?”.

In Thornton Wilder’s book “The Bridge of St. Luis Rey“, published in 1927, there is, I think, a beautiful answer to this question: “All those impulses of love return to the love that made them. Even memory is not necessary for love. There is a land of the living and a land of the dead, and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning“.

What is certain is that we are eternally grateful to Him who sent our Themos to be with us for seventeen years. Also that he was greatly beloved and through the love that still flows between us he can never be far away and will always remain an indelible part of our life, a gathering point, from which we still derive strength and comfort. When I write of him, it is to celebrate his life and to thank him on behalf of us all for everything he gave and taught us. This chapter is in his memory.

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\* Apart from specific quotations, there are in this chapter certain basic  
conceptions that reflect the psychological teachings of C.G. Jung, who I  
consider one of the greatest thinkers of our times.

\*\* The observations quoted are from conversations with Milani Comparetti, not  
from written texts.

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