



OULU MOTHER AND
CHILD HOME AND
SHELTER ASSOCIATION



ULLA KONTTILA

DESIRE
AND
THE RATIONAL SELF

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Foreword

Sexual interest in children is one of the most hated forms of sexuality. It is also one of the most misunderstood. Sexual interest in children, or paedophilia, is constantly talked about in the media and public discourse in ways that maintain obscurity and misunderstandings. News and opinions conflate acts and tendencies, illness and sexuality, thoughts and crimes, and at worst, they reduce people to monsters.

No person is just the label that has been slapped on them. Putting labels on people is an easy way to understand the world if you do not have the ability or courage to see humanity as a whole. These labels are maintained by the fear of what could be revealed and what we might also see in ourselves. It's easier to avert our gaze than face something straight ahead. It's easier to give power to fear, disgust and hatred.

Martha Nussbaum gives a name to the way of thinking that uses labels: the politics of disgust. We categorise people under labels that evoke unpleasant emotions while simultaneously elevating ourselves as something purer and better. This trick is naturally just an illusion, because labels based on simplification and self-delusion can't erase the fact that nobody's thoughts and actions are completely pure and unproblematic.

Each of us has our dark side. Trying to make the dark side disappear doesn't make anyone a good person; trying to stay on the right path in spite of it does. Nussbaum defuses confrontations between people by talking about the politics of humanity, where the aim is to see the similarities in people's needs and interests.

Everyone seeks a good life, happiness and the realisation of their interests in their own way. One of our greatest interests is linked to

sexuality and satisfying romantic relationships. Whether it's realised or not depends on many factors, such as our resources, the social and cultural conditions and the choices we make. However, one of these factors is luck, which may lead us to surprising situations or simply leave our wishes hanging in the air.

Bernard Williams writes about moral luck, which means that the moral issues we must face in our lives depend on the luck of the draw. His most widely known example is that a person born in Nazi Germany must face moral problems of a completely different calibre to a person born in a free society during peacetime.

With regard to sexuality, sexual interest in children can be compared with things like uncomplicated mainstream heterosexuality, a cis gender identity and an accepting environment. In an intersectional analysis, these are called privileges. They are undeniably benefits from the perspective of moral luck. As a rule, a person born in the mainstream culture who discovers an ordinary straight sexuality within themselves will not need to face inner conflicts, shame or contempt.

A young person discovering a sexual interest in children, such as Juhani in this book, is in a completely different kind of situation. When he understood as a teenager that his sexual and romantic interest was focused on girls aged under 10, he also discovered the crushing truth that he could never both experience the sexual fulfilment he wished and be a morally good person.

Such a life-altering moment separates the young person in a fundamental way from other people with their ordinary sexuality and situations in life who seem to have it all with regard to moral luck. For young Juhani, the moral choice stood on his path of life like an Easter Island statue, inevitable and immovable. It was impossible to pass it by or pretend that it didn't exist. And he has had to face this choice again and again. In fact, this is what the dialogue throughout the book is about.

According to Jean-Paul Sartre, humanity is characterised by constantly having to choose in a situation that always makes choices difficult. The existential freedom of humans means that you have to choose yourself again and again each moment. You can try to escape from the choice by

pretending not to choose. You can say that “Satan made me do it” or that “the desire was too great to resist”. There are thousands of ways to deceive yourself, but in the end, even self-deception is a choice.

Sartre’s answer to the difficulties of the human condition is authenticity: accepting and acknowledging that you constantly have to choose. An authentic person makes their choice consciously again and again and accepts the inescapable moral responsibility for their choices. You cannot hide behind the circumstances or allow yourself to be led by your desires forever without the responsibility reaching you in the end.

Authenticity requires us to face the reality and ourselves directly without trying to evade them, even though our culture, social norms and psyche keep offering us the cup of oblivion and self-deception at each turn. Our self, body, situation and environment also oppose our interests vigorously.

It’s like we’re wading through sticky glue, trying to struggle towards our chosen direction. Our sexuality is a part of this. It pushes us forcefully in one direction, while simultaneously slipping through our fingers when we try to harness it to serve our interests. Sexuality tries to take over our will, defeat us with shame, proclaim the good news of recklessness and pose as the great liberator, depending on the situation.

Juhani talks often about his struggle between the desire and the rational self. It’s a struggle for authenticity. The opponent is our own desire, but also the society that surrounds us and is ready to pull the rug from under our feet at any moment. If you can’t identify any similar struggle in your own life, you are truly morally lucky and can play the game in easy mode.

People who experience sexual interest in children, but do not want to harm them, must face the moral choice dead on throughout their lives. This is why the ideas based on disgust must be turned upside down. A person who makes the right choice again and again experiences the weight of a moral choice many times over compared to those lucky people who practically never have to face such choices due to their sexuality. Such a person deserves respect instead of disgust.

Sexual interest in children is a much more complex and diverse phenomenon than how it’s usually presented in the media and public

discourse. Human sexuality and especially the fantasies of humans can be very vivid and imaginative. Sexually arousing things mix and meld into different scenes, moods, characteristics and situations.

Features related to sexual interest in children do not differ from this in any special way. There are people whose fantasies occasionally star young or childlike figures. They may be children or they may only have some aspects that resemble children, such as petite bodies. In that case, the paedophiliac characteristics of sexuality are more traces than actual tendencies.

Others have a clear sexual interest in children or young people, but the interest is mixed with other sexual preferences and may sometimes be more weakly or strongly present in different stages of life. Sexuality like this is inclusive; it includes sexual interest in children and fantasies about them as a part of the overall spectrum of the individual's sexuality.

When a sex object is necessary for arousal or fulfilment, the sexual interest is called exclusive. In that case, nothing except this object, such as a child, can produce a complete sexual experience. Such a form of sexual interest in children is rare; most sexual interest in children is present in an inclusive form.

The hand of sexual preferences each person has been dealt is a part of moral luck. Without a doubt, exclusive sexual interest in children is the most difficult hand to play, but even that doesn't mean that you should fold or toss your cards away. You can live a good life in any case, but the stronger and more controlling your sexual desires are, the harder you have to struggle with them. The dialogues in this book give a good example of such an effort.

In public discourse, the word "paedophile" practically always refers to a person exhibiting the most extreme characteristics. It's usually equated with a person who has committed a serious crime against a child. In reality, sexual interest in children is usually present in a much milder form, and only few have committed a crime.

Most people are surprised to learn that research in sexology and criminology has found that only few paedophiles commit a sexual offence. Sexual interest doesn't mean a sexual act, no more than heterosexuality

means rushing around in blind lust and forcing others to have sex with you. Even though sexuality is a strong force, it only rarely manifests as something unrestrained and uncontrolled.

According to research, only a fraction of sexual offences against children are committed by paedophiles. Other perpetrators include people who have seized an opportunity, antisocial people, people whose sexual behaviour is unrestricted, people with intellectual disabilities, and other children or young people. Slapping the label of paedophilia on all sexual offences against children or young people is a misunderstanding with far-reaching negative consequences.

In this foreword, I've already addressed several misunderstandings: the need for respect, the prejudiced image and mistaken generalisations. Why? Why should we understand sexual interest in children better? After all, many would call for people like that to be just locked up.

It's because acting tough and puffing yourself up doesn't reduce sexual offences against children. They are reduced when more and more people struggling with their sexual interest in children are seen as people and get help with making the moral choice again and again.

Staying on the straight and narrow is made more difficult by all of the things that make a person's life more difficult: social exclusion, the contempt of others, living with secrets, self-hatred, being forced into the identity of a monster, and so on. It's also made more difficult by all the ineffective remedies against drowning in this endless swamp, such as intoxicants, indifference, isolation from other people, denying and punishing yourself, as well as self-harm.

When the distress grows great enough, in the worst case scenario the person may end up going in the wrong direction, falling into a self-destructive spiral or taking a path labelled "monster", on which how they act no longer matters. In that case, they have no reason not to pull the pin from the grenade and destroy everything.

In our treatment of people who are struggling with challenges such as sexual interest in children, the stakes are high. The problem-focused approach to discussing the topic that exudes disgust only makes the challenges more difficult and increases the risk of sexual offences.

Understanding the phenomenon better, encountering people with respect and seeing humanity under the label makes progress possible.

The dialogue in this book is an example of what is possible when you're willing to meet the person without assumptions and labels. Instead of looking at the other person through glasses tinted with prejudice, we ask: What does it mean? What does it mean to you specifically? These are the questions Ulla often asks in the book, giving Juhani the chance to talk about himself and what he's thinking about without prejudice. The result is a dialogue where conflicts, uncertainty and asking open questions are allowed. Understanding is built slowly – together.

Tommi Paalanen

Paalanen is a philosopher, sexologist and an expert in sexual ethics; he works as the Executive Director of the Sexpo Foundation and a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Turku. He also chairs the Sexual Rights Committee of the World Association for Sexual Health (WAS).

SERITA

– setting and supporting sexual limits

It's often impossible for people who suffer from sexual interest in children to get help. This happens, even though helping those who struggle alone with their distorted thinking would be an effective way to prevent crime. Getting help is difficult even when people sentenced for an offence are released from prison and actively want to avoid illegal behaviour. Because the phenomenon provokes strong feelings, it may also prevent professionals in the field from helping offenders, even though it would protect children and prevent repeated offences.

SERITA, which means “work to prevent sexual offences”, funded by the Finnish Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA), is a joint form of work by the associations Oulu Mother and Child Home and Shelter Association and Vuolle Settlement, which started in 2017. It prevents sexual offences and offers rehabilitation for those who have committed an offence. People suffering from sex and porn addiction as well as sexual interest in children and those with a heightened risk of committing a sexual offence also fall within the scope of this work. Family members of potential offenders and those who have already committed a crime can also become clients of SERITA work.

The methods used to help include therapeutic discussions that strengthen the clients' ability to make ethically sustainable choices and lead lives as good as possible without violating the rights of others. The discussions can be held on site, remotely or on the phone. There is an on-call service available via phone and chat. Contact information and on-call hours can be found at www.seritatyo.fi (in Finnish). SERITA work also organises training and information events.

The author of the book has been involved in the SERITA work as an expert in the work on sexual violence since 2019. She is a trained psychiatric nurse, sexual counsellor, sex therapist and tantric instructor. Before SERITA work, she worked extensively as a psychiatric nurse for the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services of the City of Oulu.

This book by Ulla Konttila is a significant contribution to the field that makes it easier to discuss the topic rationally. In addition to Ulla, I would also like to thank all of our partners for making our project possible.

December 2020

Timo Peltovuori

Executive Director

Oulu Mother and Child Home and Shelter Association

1.

This book has something to say for everyone. Everyone of us has desires that we cannot satisfy in real life. Everyone has to constantly choose between two voices. The one that wants us to greedily grasp and immediately satisfy all its desires, and the one that sees the whole picture from other people's point of view, too. This book is based on the discussions one of my clients and I had over a year. In this book, we will call my client Juhani. During the discussions, he presents a way of thinking that can help anyone to control any desire better.

Juhani is a man who experiences paedophilic feelings.

The next thing I should say that he is not what you think he is. He has never touched a child inappropriately.

Public discourse often suggests that people with sexual interest in children should be castrated or sentenced to death. At the very least, everyone should constantly judge them and remind them of how repulsive they are. But there is a simple reason I don't do that: it doesn't help.

Two months earlier, I had started working on a project with the aim of reducing and preventing sexual offences by influencing existing and potential offenders. Paedophiles were not the only group of clients; the clients also included those who had violated the sexual limits of other adults. And not all of those who had violated the limits of children were paedophiles in the actual meaning of the word, because there are only a few people in Finland who have been diagnosed with paedophilia. Nearly all my clients were insightful and wanted to change. Working with all of them was rewarding. Juhani was not unusual in this respect, but our discussions flowed at an exceptional level.

Anyone can be a potential perpetrator. They are not just marginalised men, masturbating in the bushes. The offenders around the world include family fathers, husbands, teachers. All professions and social classes are represented. And the act does not always constitute an offence. It means any sexual act that lacks connection and consent, which the victim considers frightening or a violation. These acts are committed by men (and rarely by women) who are aroused and intoxicated by their fantasies and fail to notice that the other person isn't participating. And there is a terrifying number of these offenders, but they either do not seek help or do not receive it. They do not always even understand that what they did was wrong. If the only thing done to prevent sexual offences is teaching safety skills to children, this shifts the responsibility to the incorrect party. Of course, it is good to be prepared for offenders who do not even try to learn to control their own mind, but most of them can absolutely learn to do it if they want. If you think that only victim support is important, you also reinforce the twisted assumption that sexual desire, especially masculine desire, is uncontrollable. As long as people believe this and are afraid of desire, offences will happen. Like fire, desire is not the problem. It can be used to destroy or provide warmth.

Our therapeutic relationship with Juhani started in mental health services in 2015, when he sought help for coping with sexual interest in children and I was studying sex therapy. When he returned as my client in 2019, I noticed that he had something to say that other people should also hear. He thought that the idea of writing a book together was good, because he wanted to help other paedophiles who were trying to live an honest life with their desire.

I had to wonder why I wanted to write about him so badly. To show off how skilled, open-minded, brave and intelligent I was? Maybe. And maybe inflating my ego isn't a problem if I can use it to make his voice heard. Maybe he has something more intelligent to say than I do. Am I more egoistic than other people? Surely not. My enjoyment comes from the reactions and changes brought out by my brave work-self. Some people derive egoistic enjoyment when others admire their photos on Instagram, and others love receiving praise for their cooking skills. My pride is not

exceptional, and so I'll continue the story with self-satisfied delight.

A little earlier I had visited a photographer's studio, where my wonderful photographer asked what I did for a living. I told her. She was interested and asked more questions. I told her that people who are sexually attracted to minors or even children have very few opportunities to talk about their tendencies with anyone. I also said that those who are not interested in adults at all, only children, have the most difficult time. It means that they have to give up sexual intimacy completely. "That gives me the chills," the photographer said. A part of me enjoyed this reaction. It was as if I had been on a stage and got a reaction out of the audience. This delightful woman made me glow with the joy of existence. When she took photos, she exclaimed, "Amazing! Just like that! What a lovely smile, show it to me again! Wow, that was pretty! Beautiful, that's beautiful!" She made me feel unique, captivating and irresistibly charming. I spent a half an hour being photographed. Occasionally she asked more about my work, and I answered. I enjoyed becoming fully visible, being important because of who I was and what I did. If I stopped smiling for too long, she encouraged me, "Hey, you should think about your clients!"

When I left the photographer's studio, I thought I was making an impression on every passer-by. By the time I had reached the supermarket, however, I had realised that others don't see me as anyone special. Nevertheless, that joy of life stayed with me for a long time. The photographer had managed to tease out the best of me, and this intense experience of being seen compensated for the dozens of experiences of being ignored later. I had told her about getting my passport photo taken a few weeks before. At the studio, an unsmiling young man told me to sit in front of the camera and showed the depressing end result after taking the photo. "I guess that's the best you can get out of me," I said to him, crushed. "Yeah," the man responded laconically.

A good photographer does the same job as a good therapist. They can bring out the parts that their client has always wanted others to see.

2.

We decided to start working by talking as always, but now I would just write down the discussion at the same time. Juhani asked me if I could think of topics for sessions in advance. I thought that I might find books on those topics to help. Juhani would also tell his own story.

We agreed that I'd write down the discussions nearly in full, except for the initial small talk, but that I'd clean out the filler words and use standard language instead of the vernacular. The names of people related to his life that appear in the book have been changed. The "J" at the start of the lines refers to him, while "M" refers to myself.

J: I'm afraid that I don't know how to say what I want to say. The rational self is afraid that I'll start to consider it as something too separate from myself. It's better than me, even though it's still me. The rational self says that I shouldn't talk about it because I'll start to question it. And if I do start to question it, I might end up in a padded room in a straitjacket. I'm afraid of losing my mind if I start to dig too deep into it.

M: Is questioning things always a bad thing?

J: Questioning things isn't bad, it's the spiral that it might lead to. If I get stuck in a spiral, I won't find the answers that I'm looking for. The rational self says that questioning things may lead me to a dangerous road that won't do me any good.

M: Could Einstein's wise words about the impossibility of solving problems at the same level of consciousness that created them apply to this?

J: I guess.

M: And what if the spiral means that you're going around in circles on a lower level than the one where the rational self operates? That the rational self is above the spiral?

J: The rational self says that you're on the wrong track. The rational self says that I might get stuck in a spiral of questioning all reason. That self feels like you're trying to turn it into a general voice that's the same for everyone and that says the same wise things to everybody. Every time I ask it, "What are you?", it answers, "I am you, a mirror image of your consciousness that's just able to show a different image." It has never tried to pretend to be anything other than myself.

M: I'm not sure if I understood that. Except that it's about a personal consciousness.

J: But is it?

M: If it's not general, it's personal.

J: For me, it's another mental voice.

M: Do you believe that a person could develop a rational self?

J: Yes. When I heard it for the first time, it felt like I'd woken up. I started to understand things I'd never understood before. It said that I could wake up one more time. That even this wasn't as real as it could be. That I could be even more awake. The consciousness wasn't fully free yet. What could that mean? This week I asked it what that means, and it always says that I'm not ready to know, but that I do know it.

I noticed that Juhani was starting to feel anxious. I said that out loud, and he responded:

J: I'm afraid of getting stuck in a spiral. I'm scared of what reality is. At one point, I was obsessed with figuring that out. I watched The Matrix

and couldn't sleep for two nights. I read science magazines and scientific journals and tried to find an answer to what is reality. The quantum theory stops at matter appearing out of nothing. I didn't like that answer. Then I read up on biology and chemistry. I didn't like those answers, either. They said that everything is an illusion created by brain chemistry. So that's why it's always something I find difficult to talk about. I don't want to end up in the same spiral of looking for the truth. I'm trying to find an answer that nobody else has been able to explain yet.

M: That's a pretty hard task.

J: It is. And it leads absolutely nowhere.

M: You don't have to find answers right now. You already have enough awareness to stop the thought spiral if it tries to suck you in.

J: Yes. The rational self always stops it.

M: Good. Because then we'd be trying to look for an answer somewhere it can't be found. Even looking for answers is a part of the illusion.

We were quiet for a moment.

M: Do you want to talk about the first time you heard the rational self talk?

J: I was slipping into a very self-destructive state. It was a difficult time in my life. As a reminder, I should tell you that I was facing psychological violence at school almost every day. At home, dad wanted to get a divorce and mom had anxiety.

M: Can I publish that?

J: Isn't that just a story of an ordinary Finnish childhood? You can't identify anybody based on that. Dad lost his job in the 90s. I had nowhere to go. There was anxiety everywhere. So I wanted to put an end to myself. Then it felt like a thunderclap had gone off in my head. One strike. The first word

from the rational self was “No”. I was scared because I’d never heard that before. I immediately recognised it as my own thought, it wasn’t really a supernatural experience. But it was a different voice. I didn’t give it any name, I didn’t think anything special about it, it was just a strong reaction. I slowly started to understand things in a weirdly adult way. It wasn’t about me any longer. If I asked the rational self a question, its answers never lifted me up. It wasn’t about me; it was about something bigger as a whole. That’s why we started to do thought exercises with the idea of forgetting for a moment that I was me. Just for a moment, imagine that there’s a completely empty room, with only you in it, and all experiences have been turned off for just a moment. After doing this exercise often enough, there was only one question that the rational self asked me, “What kind of a life do you want to live?” And when I said, “But I feel like this about children,” it said, “Forget about that for a second. You’re the only one in this room now.” I answered that I want a life that’s as good as possible, so that I won’t harm anyone. I want to live as decent a life as possible. Then the rational self said, “That’s the only thing that matters. Everything else is noise.” That’s where it started. I no longer saw bullies in class, I saw people who weren’t feeling well. I saw a side of the people I knew that made me understand things incredibly wisely. I started to realise that people are much more than how they treat each other. I saw pain, I saw that everyone is running away from a dark side of themselves that they don’t really understand. The rational self taught me to see behind things from a higher level. I wish I had written all that down. I wish people understood the potential they have.

M: How old were you?

J: About fifteen, nearly sixteen. I was in vocational college. The rational self told me to observe my classmates. But we’re running out of time.

M: Let’s continue this next time. How did that feel? That I’m writing things down?

J: Liberating. But the rational self reminds me that we’re the same. I doubt it, because it’s so much wiser than I am. I’m not capable of the thinking it can do.

Juhani had named the wiser voice in his mind as the rational self. For him, it was the other voice of his thoughts. He calls the part of his mind sexually attracted to children the desire, but it is not in control all the time. In fact, it is in control much more rarely than the rational self, which is the part of the mind that respects everyone. It focuses on humanity instead of seeing others – or for him, children – as sex objects. For the rational self, children were children, vulnerable, sentient and in need of safety. Only the desire saw them as objects. I came to the conclusion that every one of us has the voice of the rational self somewhere. It is behind other voices, full of rage and desire; it is not the first to speak. But you can still hear it, if you really want.

3.

A week had gone by, and we met on a sunny day in July. I had just finished a book on sex addiction and I was reading a book on sexual ethics, so I included them in the discussion. We started by reading the last sentences I had written during our previous meeting.

J: The rational self has never tried to present itself as a separate figure, and that must be the reason why I've remained fairly sane. The mechanics that the rational self uses to process thoughts are advanced. It really is more than me. The most interesting thing is that you've always spoken with the rational self.

M: Have I ever talked directly with you then?

J: Yes. I'm still me. In these situations, the rational self can take the reins, and it's me. Still, I sometimes have doubts, because in a way I do feel like it's another mental voice. I have two voices for my thoughts.

M: That's the wisdom in you.

J: For some reason, there's a part of me that can think about things in a more advanced way.

M: In trauma therapy, this could be called structural dissociation. You could say that the personality is split.

J: For some reason, I can't really think about it in that way.

M: Neither can I.

J: Should I?

M: No.

J: The rational self doesn't see itself as separate. Now, this is the paradox. If it is me, why do I say "it"? It's easier to talk about it in the third person.

M: I see the workings of the mind as having three parts in a way. There's the consciousness, the observer and chooser, which can talk about the mind and assess it, to make choices. Then there's the ego – not the traditional Freudian ego, but a part that creates isolation and fear and wanders constantly. Freud might call it Thanatos, the death instinct. Then there's the state of being, the wiser and calmer, non-judgmental part of us. Maybe that's part of you that has become personified as the rational self? Unfortunately, we only rarely reach the state of being.

J: That might be a good explanation. The rational self says that it takes a lot mentally to stay in the state of reason.

M: That's true because the little ego is so automatic. Could you call that other side the little ego?

J: It doesn't have a name yet. It just wants to destroy everything around itself, it's full of hate and fear. It's the voice that wants me to give up. It pushes you towards depression. That voice would've led me to do something to a child. Because for that voice, nothing matters. It only sees destruction. It's interesting, even though it doesn't have much to give. Do you remember when I talked about the box?

M: Yeah.

J: The idea of that box is to lock this voice of destruction away. And it was one of the first things I did with the rational self. It hasn't disappeared from me, it hasn't been erased, but it doesn't control me or define me.

M: Well said!

J: Maybe what I fear the most is that it can somehow escape from the box.

M: So you could call this second voice the voice of destruction? The voice of destruction versus the rational self.

J: Yes. When I and the rational self were locking the voice of destruction into that box, I wondered why couldn't you just destroy it instead of locking it away, couldn't you get rid of it? The rational self had an interesting answer: you can't destroy a part of yourself. Helping destroy a part of me is not the purpose of the rational self. Its purpose is to fight against that voice consciously. Like, saying "no" to it every day.

M: So you have to make that decision over and over again.

J: That's what the rational self tries to remind me about.

M: And you're the one that makes the decision between these two voices.

J: That's right. The rational self has to guide these decisions to fight against destruction. It always says that you have chosen to live an honest life, so this is the option that makes it reality.

M: Is that advice detailed?

J: Not always. The latest advice was, "You have never really forgiven yourself what you feel towards children. That would be a way to help you live an honest life."

M: This is a good place to read a sentence from Paula Hall's book "Understanding and Treating Sex and Pornography Addiction". Here: "Refusal to forgive is often used as a punishment, and in that case, people may think that the person struggling with addiction is in a way accused of a crime, and they have to suffer so that they do not repeat the offence. In reality, it's likely that the opposite will happen: the addiction is triggered by suffering, not by forgiveness."

J: I'm wondering how I can forgive myself for something so horrible.

M: What is the horrible thing?

J: Being aroused by children. Of course, my sexual self enjoys it, but it feels terrible. The rational self says that it's not about accepting the acts, it's about accepting yourself. About accepting myself despite the desires. That's what I should forgive myself. I just haven't been able to do that yet. That's what I always stumble over. I consider myself guilty of something I haven't ever done. And why? I don't like it that the time when the attraction towards children feels the most real is when you talk about the sexual side. Then it's the most complete. And that it feels real, that's what disgusts me. I become infatuated with little girls, and it feels like a real crush, like I really care. And the conflict is the worst. The thing that feels the most real to me is wrong. I'm not trying to pretend anything like that it should be right. I don't want to organise a paedophile parade. So what's the solution to this? The rational self says that there is a solution. But it doesn't say what it is. It says that I'm not able to process the answer yet.

M: But one day, you can.

J: Do you still think that I'm sane?

M: Absolutely! Let's stop for a moment and look at what you said about disgust. Is that a sufficient reason to do something immoral? I'm not talking about acts now, just thoughts. You hate the things you think about. I'm reading Tommi Paalanen's book "Vapaus ja seksuaalisuus" (Freedom and Sexuality). Wait a second, I wrote down a sentence from it on my phone: "The specious moral statements built on disgust and the attitudes that spring from it are very common in discussions on sexual ethics." So a moral statement based on disgust is specious morality.

J: Disgust easily becomes an excuse for beating things down.

M: Isn't that exactly what you're doing to yourself?

J: In a way, yes. But I'm afraid that the desire will go the wrong way if I don't hate it.

M: Could you apply here Paula Hall's idea about how suffering, not forgiveness, is what triggers the addiction? In this case, the activity. Could it be that if you accept the desire instead of judging or hating it, that would free you to act in more constructive ways?

J: That could be, but I see a risk there. I've just always seen a risk there. Still, I know that there must be other ways to control things than hate and disgust. The rational self says that there is a better way. For some reason, I don't know the answer to it yet.

M: Could we look for it together?

J: Yes. But I don't know if it'll be the best answer in the world. It might just be something simple.

M: Often, the simplest things are the most difficult.

J: The mind makes things complicated. There's a lot of power in the mechanics the mind uses to dig a hole.

I agreed and told him as much. The session ended with that apt statement.

After the meeting, I recalled what he said about the box before. Juhani had talked about a spherical box intended for locking away horror. Before, he hadn't been able to process what he liked or other distressing things; instead, he had used locking them inside a box in his mind as a tool. He had also created a guardian for his box. The guardian was a black panther that he, himself, was also afraid of. The guardian was created specifically against himself, to keep him from approaching the box. Later he said that this tool hadn't been a good idea, because it had been too successful. But now he was ready to approach this structure of fear.

4.

The mind that is digging a hole for itself has created an automated mechanism it uses to sabotage peace and clarity. In reality, it doesn't want to leave any room free from guilt and worry in the mind. As Juhani said, "I consider myself guilty of something I haven't ever done." On some level, he knew that he carried the guilt for nothing, but he hadn't been able to free himself from it yet.

At this point, I had begun to understand how great a deceiver the emotional system is. I had read all about emotional management, emotion-focused couples therapy and instructing those who employ violence in controlling their emotions. I was also aware that according to many spiritual traditions, the whole emotional system can be overridden. In fact, it started to feel like an increasingly more attractive option. I had learned to think that feelings are important, you can't suppress them, and this lack of suppression means an uninhibited expression of feelings. I still thought that feelings should not be judged or suppressed, but I couldn't understand people who saw their own emotions as the starting point of everything and controlling them as dullness and denying yourself. Dramatic expression of feelings could even be seen as courage.

It was only after I'd passed the age of forty that I started to realise that feelings were overrated and extremely poor guides. Bernadette Roberts, a spiritual seeker, mentioned in her book "The Experience of No-Self" that she has never learned anything important with the help of feelings. In my work on violence, I saw what kind of destruction emotions, typically jealousy, could create. In mental health work, I had seen how fear paralysed people and made them retreat to their lonely homes. With this in mind,

who would then tell you to listen to your feelings and call it intuition or inner wisdom?

As Paalanen wrote about disgust as a basis for specious moral statements, he noted that it also “plays an important role in social ideologies that foster strict sexual norms and group cohesion, such as religious fundamentalism or conservatism that foster a nostalgic notion of decency.” He also referred to the words of Martha Nussbaum: “Projective disgust involves a double fantasy: a fantasy of the dirtiness of the other and a fantasy of one’s own purity.”

I did not feel disgust towards Juhani and never had. In this case, I did not have to struggle with my emotions to remain professional. In nearly everything else, I did need to struggle with my emotional side. But was Juhani’s disgust towards himself disgust projected at child objects that he had internalised? Those attracted to children, whether they have committed a crime or not, have been assigned the role of bearers of shared evil and darkness.

That week we started the discussion with emotions.

J: I don’t see feelings as a bad thing. You can use them as a good tool. Reducing feeling is not a good solution. The important thing is not to give emotions too much power.

M: Could you describe it with the idea that you accept the emotion, but don’t let it make decisions?

J: We should know whether the feeling is a constructive or a destructive tool. If it’s destructive, you shouldn’t listen to it. If it’s constructive, you can listen to it.

M: Are there examples of constructive and destructive feelings?

J: Fear and hate, at least, are destructive. The very least those feelings have in common is they make you powerless. The voice of destruction tries to make you believe that you can’t be good, the voice of destruction feeds the

feelings and uses them. Let's imagine that feelings are neutral, whatever they are. The voice of destruction takes that feeling and uses it for its own purposes. Happiness included. The voice of destruction even questions if I'm allowed to be happy. It makes you believe that everything is evil and destructive, and that nothing matters. It's incredible that I can examine it. Now, let's take a look at the voice of destruction and I'll tell you what it looks like.

M: Good, tell me!

J: That was already a part of it. It wants to destroy. I just don't understand why. Why do we have to have such a counterweight, or is it even a counterweight? The voice of destruction tries to claim that that's how the world works, it's based on hate. That's why I was self-destructive when I came here — because I'd listened to it. Maybe Freud was right, and our minds contain Thanatos, the death instinct. But why? Why do we have a voice that wants to destroy everything?

M: I believe that it's based on erroneous ideas about separation. This isn't actual sexual therapy.

J: No, it isn't, but it's the most important thing we can discuss. Could there be anything more important for the sake of well-being?

M: Not really.

J: This is at the heart of it all.

M: So why do we have that voice of destruction, death instinct, ego? Because we imagine that separation could be possible. And if separation is possible, then there's something outside you that can threaten you or that you have to want. But as quantum physics shows, when you look at any measurable object in the world at a level smaller than an atom, you find out that the researcher affects the thing being studied. For example, a photon appears as either a wave or a particle, depending on how you want to look at it.

J: The space isn't empty, there are different energy levels on levels everywhere. But you can only observe them when the energy levels are raised high enough to observe them as particles.

M: So you could claim that nothing exists unless you can observe it? Emphasis on "claim".

J: Yes, or yes and no. Things both are and are not at the same time. For example, a quantum computer can be in two states at the same time. What's weird is that two states that are separate from each other still copy each other. This has been proven with a quantum computer. It defies logic. Nobody knows how it works.

M: But that proves that things occur simultaneously. Everything affects everything else.

J: Is it the safest decision to go into this area? It makes you question things.

M: In my view, questioning the world is the sanest thing you can do.

J: Actually, that is right, but if you do it in the wrong way, you end up in a spiral.

M: So you have to go to a higher level of consciousness?

J: A higher level of consciousness is exactly where the rational self wants to lead me. Maybe that's the point.

M: And that's terrifying.

J: Because I'm terrified that I'll lose my mind if I take that road?

M: But wasn't it the rational self that was leading you there?

J: The rational self says that there is such a level, and that you can wake up one more time and reach it. I don't know if I believe that. It's something so unbelievable. I can't reach that state of higher consciousness as long as I

have a block. In a way, I won't let myself go there, because I'm not OK with the paedophilic feelings. I don't even know what it means to wake up one more time. Is it the same kind of thing as my last awakening? It was as if I'd woken up from a dream.

M: It might feel even better.

J: I'm sure it does, but I'm afraid that I won't be able to take it. Will I be able to cope with waking up like that?

M: With the last time you woke up, do you mean the time when the rational self started to talk?

J: Yes.

M: We've come back to the topic of separation. I'd say that the thing that can't cope with waking up is the voice of destruction, because that's when it'll disappear.

J: Would it disappear? The rational self says that you can't destroy it, that you can't get rid of it. But I can always choose to make sure that it'll stay locked up.

M: You also said that the rational self can develop?

J: Yes. Do you mean that the rational self doesn't give an answer because that would give the voice of destruction tools to turn all of this against me?

M: That's possible.

J: This is really...

M: We're getting deep.

J: How do you see this? Do you think this is completely weird?

M: I see this as the best kind of a discussion.

J: Thanks. I guess it is.

M: I'll come back to the voice of destruction and separation. I'd say that the voice of destruction speaks for the belief that you're alone and threatened. But because nothing can be completely isolated from anything, you're the one who's created the illusion of destruction. Not you as Juhani, but this whole collective, seemingly separated mind that is represented by the voice of destruction. How does that sound?

J: I'm not sure. Maybe that's OK. It's hard to say, because I don't completely understand what it's all about.

M: Can it be understood on this level?

J: I've tried to get away from looking for the ultimate answer. I've been searching for an answer, but I haven't found one. The only answer the rational self keeps giving is that you need to choose what you believe in. It sees those questions as just a spiral that feeds itself.

M: About that, I'd say that the answer can't be found inside the spiral.

J: The voice of frustration doesn't want to find an answer, it just wants to dig.

M: Is it the same as the voice of destruction?

J: They might be the same, but I treat them as separate. The point is that while I have the voice of my thoughts, and the voice of the rational self, I and the rational self can create a new voice when I want to. That's how I examine things. When I talk about the voice of destruction, I and the rational self allowed it to speak. If we discuss frustration, the rational self and I can give that a voice and listen to what it says. Or if we want to hear what a potato in the field wants to say, we can give it a voice with the rational self, too. I just form a voice, and then I can ask it almost anything. But if I ask destruction what it thinks of love, it gives the answer that destruction would give. It tells me to google divorce statistics. That's the

heart of the matter that I've lived with for a decade and a half. And now we're in an area I don't like to be in.

M: But you still feel that it's important.

J: It is important, and that's why I'm talking about it. But try explaining that to a random person on the street. But that's the precision that the rational self taught me to use to think about things.

M: I call that an ability to reach a high level of awareness.

J: That it is.

M: But then, who's the one that's afraid? The part of the mind that believes in fear?

J: Let's give it a voice, too. That's something I can do. In the end, even all those voices are just simulations. They're the same as the rational self, which is also myself.

M: There is no separation!

J: It's funny, you do have to come to that conclusion in the end. Those voices are separate in a way, and if I want, I can make them very distinct, and that helps me to process them.

M: You could also call it a method of isolating thoughts. That isn't a term I invented.

J: It's a good term. The isolation is what we do with the rational self. It's best to stop now, thinking like this starts to be physically taxing. But thanks a lot!

M: Thank you. We'll meet again after the holidays!

I read the discussion that had been written down the next day, and I did notice how I'd presented my own values and practically pushed them

at Juhani. I comforted myself by the fact that we both had wanted to deepen the search for spiritual values. Juhani was already familiar with my worldview from our previous discussions of the same issues. Will the work of sexual therapy ever be finished if you keep going round in circles on the formal level? Another good question is if any therapy will ever be finished, or do you just have to decide at some point that you've done enough therapy? According to the psychologist Paula Hall, including the spiritual dimension was also important in any kind of therapy. The old Finnish word for psychology meant "science of the soul", and it's strange that you aren't allowed to use the word "soul" in a psychological context.

Katriina Bildjuschkin and Susanna Ruuhilahti also write about the spiritual aspect of sexuality in their book "Puhutaan seksuaalisuudesta" (Let's Talk about Sexuality).

The spiritual aspect includes imagination, creativity, responsibility, moral responsibility, the sense of humour and freedom of choice. These characteristics are needed for sexual expression, love and sexual interaction. If a person has not used their connection to their own spiritual side, and their own body can't offer safety, that person may subjugate others and treat them like tools to satisfy their own selfish needs and in that way, fill the emptiness they feel and validate their existence.

5.

In the discussion, Juhani had asked if there was anything more important for well-being than talking about these issues. Shouldn't I then proceed towards what he considers important? After all, at its best it could mean that he would not treat other people as tools of satisfaction to fill his emptiness. As far as I knew, he never had done that, at least not directly, and in my understanding he wanted to do everything he could to make sure that it wouldn't ever happen, either.

He asked why we have a voice that wants to destroy everything. And I answered him based on my own understanding of the matter. Instead of giving him an answer, a psychodynamic therapist might have asked, "Why do you think that is? Why is it important to ask that question?" I gave him an answer, because I thought that he was asking me to give one, or at least that's how I wanted to interpret it. I answered eagerly and hoped that I could answer him again. He had said several times that he was afraid of spiralling, and going round and round with his old thoughts would be exactly that. That's all I wanted to prevent by offering him a new perspective, didn't I?

The last day of July was cold: it was cloudy and only ten degrees Celsius outside. The hot and sunny holiday was over, the weather was cooling down and it was time to get back to work. Juhani was on time. He politely asked how my holiday went and we chatted a bit about the summer and how far away from home you had to go before you could say that you went on a trip.

M: Considering that you can't express your sexuality with the kind of a living being that you most want, would it be good to develop other aspects

of your life so that you could get as much joy and satisfaction from them as possible?

J: What makes life feel like a full life? What do we need for that? And what if there's an aspect that can't be fulfilled? Actually, I'm not sorry about it being impossible to fulfil. I've never felt bad because I can't do what I'd like to do. That's not something I've ever been upset about. I've been upset because I haven't come up with any other way to feel that I have a full life. I don't feel like I'm living a completely full life.

M: That's a good question – what is a full life?

J: A meaningful life, maybe?

M: The word meaningful contains the idea of doing everything completely mindfully, that you're happy to do it, your mind is engaged. You're present.

J: And that you feel like you have value. The world doesn't have to please me. It doesn't have to fulfil my desires. Many people live like that, like the world should make their wishes come true. Even though we can decide for ourselves what we think is meaningful. That's not the world's job. The world's job is only to provide options. That's where abusers go wrong, they try to get satisfaction from the world. They assume that the world will give you what you want if you just want it enough. I could choose other things instead of sexual desire to give me a full life. It's about a desire for a full life, and there are different possibilities.

M: But you said that at the moment you feel like there's something missing?

J: It's more that I'm fighting against the fact that I'm not normal. I'm not normal, and that makes me angry.

M: Define normal.

J: The rational self always tries to ask me that, too. It's not about normal.

The reason why life doesn't feel full is that I'm fighting against my sexual side.

M: Now we've reached the heart of the matter.

J: The rational self says that I've been unfair towards myself.

M: That's true.

J: But what can I do? How can I resolve this situation? How can I end this war inside my head? I'm so tired of fighting with myself. And I don't know how to solve it. The rational self is trying to explain some kind of a solution.

M: What kind?

J: One where I shouldn't try to be something other than me. I should be able to forgive myself that I like children. But I'm afraid that I'll end up going in the wrong direction.

M: Won't you still have the awareness and ability for self-control that you've had so far?

J: But I'm afraid that the wrong way of thinking will slowly sneak into me. Like the way society thinks that a paedophile is a ticking timebomb. Many people already think that the word paedophile means a criminal. Or if you have a desire like that, it's only a matter of time before it becomes reality. The problem is that I can't argue against them.

M: Let's think of the sex drive in general. All of us have a sex drive, which is more or less repressed. In principle, the drive is exactly the same, the sexual attraction and arousal are just sparked by different things. This would mean that everyone with a sex drive is a ticking timebomb.

J: That's sound logic. But it applies to normal sexuality. People don't see normal sexuality as a risk. Even though pointing the finger at others won't help anyone. And the rational self says again that I'm pointing the finger at myself. I've been unfair towards my sexuality.

M: True.

J: Maybe it's incredible that I can look at things like this. I don't want to elevate myself, but sometimes I'm amazed at the level of thought I'm capable of.

M: Yes.

J: The simulation I talked about last time. Often the thoughts take a visual form. The voice of destruction is a school bully who gathers a crowd around themselves: the feeling of anxiety, the feeling of fear, the feeling of frustration. Take all that and then go bully other kids at school. I can also visualise my sexual side.

M: What does it look like?

J: It's hard to describe because it curls up into a ball and is afraid of me.

Juhani started to cry.

J: The rational self says again that I've been unfair towards myself. Why is this so hard? The thought that I've beaten up my sexuality is a very strange idea. But I've treated it really badly. I've just told it to stay quietly in a corner, and sometimes it can be used as a treat. That's what it was for many years. I looked at material, masturbated, and after that sexuality went back to stay in the corner, quiet and unnoticed. Maybe that's why it's hard to forgive yourself, because I understand on how many levels this happens. I've done cruel things to myself. I still try to justify it by saying that I've deserved it, because the attraction is wrong.

M: Deserved what?

J: Punishment. I've punished myself. The voice of sexuality is also me, just like the rational self. I'm unfair towards myself. Punishment isn't fair in this situation. My desire doesn't do anything other than what it's been programmed to do. And as for the actual reason, looking for it doesn't

help. Looking for the root cause is an excuse, when I should focus on not punishing the part of myself that feels pleasure. I've created a compulsion where I obsessively look for an answer, and that's become an excuse to neglect myself.

M: That's really well said.

J: That's what the rational self wants to change.

M: Can I read a few excerpts from a book again?

J: Yes.

M: This is from the book "How to Make Love to the Same Person for the Rest of Your Life, and Still Love It" by the sex therapist Dagmar Almquist O'Connor. "We have to begin by resensitizing ourselves to sex, by letting our sexual fantasies play out without stopping them out of guilt or embarrassment. By letting our gaze wander uninhibitedly, abetted by our imagination, into the realm of sexual possibilities. And by feeling our natural sexual responses to this world – the quickening of our pulse, the stirrings in our groin, the dampness in our pants – as a source of pleasure, rather than aborting these feelings before they really begin out of shame or fear of 'distraction' or terror of becoming a 'sex nut.' (...) Sexual arousal is a pleasure in itself; it does not have to go anywhere from there. There are no obligations, no 'uncontrollable' drives."

J: I've always thought that it's strange how showing a nipple in a film gives it a 16+ rating, but you can show blood and explosions. By the way, internal organs are rated 18+.

That made me laugh.

J: In the USA, you used to get a fine for wearing a skirt that reached above the knee in public.

M: In general, people are afraid of sexuality.

J: There should be more talk about how sexuality is a part of us and that's OK. We keep making more and more boxes for each other. It's great that the different aspects of sexuality are seen. But they've turned into boxes, and that's a problem. You can't get people to gather under the same roof. Last week was a Zoo Pride week online. People who are attracted to animals are trying to create a movement to show that there are those kinds of people, too. And some want a paedophile parade. But they keep fighting with each other in there. Because the parade should be only for heterosexual paedophiles. Everyone should be in the same boat. But you still can't actually stay in the same boat. There should be fewer of these sexuality boxes, not more. Asexuality and bisexuality and so on. Everyone goes into their own box, stays there and is scared of the others. There's always a new sexuality box. But that's actually a problem. You go into a box and stay afraid of others. I see that online every day. There was a discussion on a foreign forum about having a paedophile parade. But that didn't amount to anything. They didn't want to include those who like teens or too little kids or those who are gay. Categories make it too easy to point a finger at others. Why can't you just be a person and belong under the same roof anyway? There's no need for a million categories. That just ends up with more fighting. We should focus on how to reduce the number of boxes and understand that we're all people.

M: That's a good end for the discussion today. You don't have to put yourself into a box, either.

J: That's right, I don't.

6.

People always wanted to know the reason for paedophilia. I also wanted to, as did Juhani, I believe. That's why I started the discussion of the week by asking about it.

M: I'm sure you've often wondered why you developed a sexual interest in children.

J: I have. The rational self always asks what I'm going to do with the answer. Would it set me free? I've wondered if my chaotic family situation had any impact. Seeking safety and caring in some way could be the reason. I was seven years old when I met Milja, and she was maybe six years old. Life was scary back then. Dad was drinking constantly and had fits of rage at home. The situation felt pretty unsafe. Sometimes we had to go outside. At other times, the police came to take us away. I was afraid of dad, sometimes he even used to wave a knife around.

M: You're okay with me writing about this in public?

J: That's just another story about 90s kids. Unfortunately, it's a true story. You can't identify anyone because so many others have been through the same thing. Even if you added the name of the place, nobody would necessarily realise. A lot of these children later took the wrong road themselves. Many even committed suicide. But let's get back on topic. Milja moved into the neighbourhood for the summer. It was love at first sight. They drove into their yard in an old car. The crush was immediate. She was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. I was embarrassed and kept

blushing. And it wasn't a one-sided crush. We went to play immediately. We even pretended that we went on a honeymoon trip. It was very sweet, like a crush always is. It's the strongest feeling I've ever had. You couldn't have imagined how that felt like before it happened. We spent a lot of time together that summer, "playing house". It felt like finally there was something that was worth existing for. Of course, I didn't think about it that way as a kid, but now that I go back there, I get the feeling that now there's a reason to exist.

M: Looking for Milja kind of stuck in a way?

J: Maybe. It's hard to say for sure. There must be a lot of other things there too. If looking for that feeling was the only reason, I've had that feeling another time, much later. I was 15. But it didn't cure me.

M: Who did you have crush on when you were 15?

J: I got a love letter that I thought was a joke. Then it turned out to be real. I had just started to realise that I the people I liked were pretty young. But I made myself believe that the limit was 10-year-olds. I used the school's test user ID to browse child model websites with kids from 9 to 14 years. Jatta, the girl who wrote this letter, was 12 years old. So I had to tell everybody that she was too young, that I wouldn't try anything. And I didn't. We met once, and I made it clear that I wasn't interested. It was true in a way. I did have a crush on her, but that was the first time when I realised that it didn't feel complete. I had to understand that she was actually too old.

We started to laugh.

J: It's funny in a way, but in reality it came as a shock, because I thought that what if I'll never be interested in people of my own age. I'd met my rational self roughly a year beforehand. But the situation was so strange, I had to ask what's real in this situation. Now I feel it's a shame that she was so young, because I could've tried to create some kind of a relationship with someone of my own age. She was so pretty. I even considered the option of being friends with her and waiting for her to grow up. But I realised that

it wouldn't work. The rational self knew to say that I would've been trying to look for a replacement for something else in this girl. It wouldn't have been right.

M: It was a kind of a turning point for understanding things.

J: And then there's the children's camp where I was an unofficial assistant counsellor at 15. That was the biggest turning point. You can write about this, there are so many children's camps. It was for kids in primary school age. I already thought at the start that going there wouldn't be a good idea. I hadn't listened to the rational self for about a month, it was like the connection was broken. I thought that the voice had come and gone, whatever it was. I agreed to go to the camp, and it was a kind of a test for me. I was testing myself to see where the limit was, what age was the one I really liked. The camp was where Jatta developed a crush on me, and I didn't immediately realise it, even though now it seems perfectly clear. But I was looking at someone else. I can't remember her name, but she was about 7 years old. Oh my god! This is the most incomprehensible part of my whole problem. The crush was so massive! I was so incredibly infatuated, and I did know that she was so young. I had decided that I'd put the limit on 10-year-olds and older, and those I could have a crush on. But this wasn't just a crush. I thought about things I shouldn't think about. I had very sexual thoughts about her.

M: How does it feel like to talk about this?

J: It doesn't feel bad. It gives me some kind of a feeling. But if I think about that memory too much, I start getting aroused.

M: That's normal. When you talk about things you find arousing, it's also natural to become aroused physically. That's not a problem, there's still a long way from that to the arousal affecting behaviour.

J: It still feels so... when you talk about a small child... It's embarrassing to know that this is what arouses you.

M: That's probably why you're in sexual therapy.

J: So, at the camp the girls suggested that we play spin the bottle one night. In the beginning, I thought, why not? There was no ulterior motive. Until I ended up having to answer a question first. They asked me about masturbating. The little girl was already going to sleep, and I was there playing with a few older girls. Then the moment came. I had the idea that if I could get the little girl to join this game of spin the bottle, I might be able to approach her sexually. Because the question had already changed the atmosphere in that direction. It only took a few seconds, and it was like lightning had struck in my head. It really felt like my head had been struck by a lightning bolt. A strong inner voice came and said "Get out! This game ends now and you're getting out of here!" That was the voice of the rational self, speaking to myself. I obeyed it immediately. I was surprised, because I hadn't heard anything for a while, and then I suddenly did. That was the only time when the rational self was truly angry with me. Now it says that it wasn't really angry, it just had to use a slightly louder voice, because I hadn't been listening.

M: The lightning striking in your head sounds interesting.

J: That's what it felt like. It gave my life a new direction. I knew that I didn't want to make my desires reality. That was the only situation where I thought I wanted to take it further, and I understood what I was doing. That started a long course of study with the rational self. We spent several years going through things. From the simplest ones to complex.

M: That's a great story.

J: I guess it's a great story for what it's worth. The rational self has taught me many things. Among other things, it tells me that you should always try to see the person. Despite everything else that happens, always see the person first. It even tells me that you should see the person first in yourself, too, despite everything.

Juhani had tears in his eyes. He wiped them off and got ready to leave.

J: That's a good place to stop now.

M: Thanks for this. See you next week. Thank you for sharing these very personal things.

Juhani had already told me these two stories a few years before. Milja was a girl with whom he had had an intense feeling of closeness and happiness as a child. The experience had taken place at a time in his life when everything else had been turbulent and impossible for the child's mind to process. The mind of this little Juhani linked the little girl strongly with a feeling of freedom and fulfilment, and the connection still existed.

The second story with the game of spin the bottle at the children's camp might have had a worse ending if the rational self hadn't intervened. Many criminal offenders have used a game to lure children into sexual acts. Knowing this was a heavy burden and difficult to cope with. For this reason, helping those attracted to children as much as possible was important so that they could learn to hear their voice of reason. It was possible to silence the desire at any point and change perspectives. Of course, the stronger you let the desire grow, the more difficult it became, but it was not impossible in any situation. I wanted to let people know this so badly that it felt like a compulsion. I knew that Juhani had the same goal. To blow a whistle on the game desire was playing.

7.

Two weeks had passed since our last meeting. We started the discussion about addiction and the use of porn. We had exchanged a few words on general matters and prepared for the discussion before my first question, which seemed like an attack.

M: Can you masturbate without porn?

J: I can.

M: Then it might not be a major addiction.

M: Can you become aroused by ordinary porn?

J: To a degree, yes, but it doesn't lead to satisfaction. The arousal is roughly 80% of what happens when aroused by children. So it's a bit like eating at a restaurant, but not ordering your favourite meal.

M: In principle, you can achieve orgasm simply by stimulating a body part long enough.

J: Exactly. You can get aroused by almost anything.

M: The mind can turn nearly anything into something sexual.

J: Talking feels more difficult now after a couple of weeks' break. But at the end of vocational college, I also looked at bestiality porn and wondered why I don't have a limit, why can I get aroused by that? It's just something

that's puzzled me sometimes. But where is the limit, then? If there's domination or very violent porn. The porn site Pornhub, or the YouTube of porn, also has simulated rape or simulated incest. That hasn't bothered me, either. For me, violent porn hasn't led to real arousal any longer. In a way, I could get aroused by it, if I allowed it. But I didn't feel anything special when I watched it. And I kind of decided that I didn't want to become aroused by it.

M: Could you watch something where human beings or animals were harmed?

J: I can't. If I even suspect that people are being hurt on purpose, I can't watch it. I can't even watch non-sexual intentional violence on YouTube.

M: About the bestiality porn, can I ask to what extent you think it harms the animal?

J: Well, if a woman gets under a dog, that doesn't do so much harm. The dog isn't forced to do that, I don't see it as terribly damaging. On the other hand, if you think whether that's an appropriate way to treat animals – it isn't. After all, it's not a good, normal activity for the animal. If a man does that to a female dog, that highlights the animal being forced more.

M: Does watching it feel bad?

J: Watching probably doesn't even feel bad. But if the animal clearly looks nervous or upset, that feels bad. Regardless of desire, you should always stick with what's right. If there's an animal that can't show pain clearly, like a fish, and if we hurt it, that still feels bad. If you threw an animal like that into an anthill as a child, it felt bad, even if it didn't show pain. As a child, you couldn't understand that flopping around was its way of showing pain. I can eat meat, but I can't accept an animal being mistreated while it's alive. We know what cruel behaviour towards an animal is. The rational self turned it into a lesson on why sexual behaviour towards children is always wrong. Because one argument that's going around on paedophile websites is that you can teach a child to enjoy sex through play. And the

rational self taught me that it doesn't free us from the behaviour being cruel even if the child joins the game. Because we know where the limit should be. The same argument applies to the treatment of animals. We have an understanding of what is cruel.

M: At least most of us do.

J: Normal people have that limit. If I wonder about doing anything, I always run it through a mental filter, and it tells me if the thing is harmful to others. Because you can always make a different choice. Writing down those first lessons with the rational self would've been incredible. The rational self simulated situations for me and showed me why it's important to understand that the desire always loses to me deciding how I want to treat people. There were a lot of those lessons. A person has a right to themselves, that was one lesson. The second lesson was that you're not special. What are the other ones I can remember? There were a lot of them, but those are the most important ones. One lesson was moral responsibility.

M: Those are good topics.

J: Yes, good topics! It's a shame that it's already been more than 10 years. One of them was also about human behaviour. A kind of a simplified model of human behaviour. I call it the sandbox theory. It would be good to go through them systematically. I can try to do my best to recall them. Still, it's been a while since those lessons. They mostly took place at the end of vocational college. But I've learned to notice when a person feels bad, and bad behaviour is an extension of that. Maybe we could start with some of those. Maybe with the first one.

M: We have time.

J: The first lesson... should I start now?

M: Go ahead.

J: Okay. The very first lesson was that you're not special. And that sounds weird – why's that, everyone is special. But that's not really what it means. It means that I don't have the right to violate the personal area of another person, to imagine that I have the right to the personal area of another individual. The world doesn't owe me anything. I don't have that right over anyone, and no one has that right over me.

M: I think we've talked about this?

J: Yes, we have talked about this. It has different aspects. Where is my own personal area? That's what it means in practice. I don't have the right to any other person's personal area than my own. And that's pretty much the lesson right there. It was a lesson in observing things in practice: was I violating the personal area of another with my behaviour? That's a really important lesson. We don't make demands of any person, saying that they should give us something personal. We don't place ourselves in a special position where we could even control others, that everything would exist for me.

M: That sounds like a pretty fundamental lesson.

J: Yeah, and it was important to learn to notice when I was crossing someone's personal limits. That was what the rational self was explaining with its examples.

M: Can you remember one of them?

J: Unfortunately not. But for example, in a relationship we may tell painful things to others. In that situation, we have opened our personal area to another person. We don't have the right to tell the things that were confided to us to other people under any circumstances. The other person has opened themselves up, and you have to respect that. Even if I was angry, I still couldn't bring out the painful things, because they were told to me in confidence. That would be a violation of the personal area. I'm not even exactly sure why I got these lessons. On the other hand, I couldn't pass them by. They just came.

M: If we get back to the arousal, it can also distort your perception so that you think you see arousal in another person even if it doesn't really exist. What do you think about that?

J: What do you mean?

M: For example, you might be able to recognise the personal limits of another when you're in a rational state of mind, but can you still remain rational while aroused?

J: I only allow myself to become aroused in circumstances that are clearly safe. I only let myself get to that state in certain situations. The rational self can tell pleasure, "You should wait a bit longer". It can say that this is not a good moment. But has the pleasure distorted the object of attraction, or is it a genuine attraction? Meaning that has the attraction to children created pleasure, or has pleasure created the attraction to children? The rational self is not always active. The rational self only activates if the arousal goes too far. If I start having too sexual thoughts, the rational self intervenes. If I see pretty girls, the rational self doesn't say anything. It doesn't intervene in every issue. But it does intervene in sexual thoughts. It blows the whistle to end the game.

M: Where could we get a rational self like that for everyone? So that it's active?

J: I don't know. But the rational self told me from the start that everyone has a version of the rational self. It was linked to the lesson that I'm not special. It just is. I'm not any kind of a special person in that respect. My rational self is just really strong.

M: We're running out of time again. What should we discuss next time?

J: We can go through the other lessons, too.

M: Guilt and shame are another topic we could discuss further. But there were also other lessons.

J: Let's take a look at them in two weeks.

This discussion started with porn and ended with being special. At first glance, it was difficult to connect these issues. Porn addiction is pretty isolated, which in a way means making yourself special. Making yourself special doesn't just mean a justification to violate the boundaries of others based on your own desire, but also putting yourself down. People who struggle with sex and porn addiction usually carry an immense shame and the experience of not being good enough inside themselves. They feel that they're especially bad. Therefore, it makes no difference whether you think that you're especially privileged or especially terrible in relation to others. Being special with regards to rights and human dignity is impossible in any case.

8.

After two weeks, Juhani had a new thought ready to present.

J: For these two weeks, I've been thinking about the "you're not special" lesson from last time, and how it's related to me.

M: Okay. What conclusion have you come to?

J: I think I already said it last time, but the idea is that I don't demand something of another person that doesn't belong to me. I can't elevate myself by thinking that I'm entitled to receive sexual pleasure from a child because I feel that I'm privileged.

M: Well said. I'm reading Wilfried Wieck's book "Männer lassen lieben: die Sucht nach der Frau" (How Men Let Themselves be Loved: Addicted to the Woman), which is quite a feminist book written by a man. He wrote that men often grant themselves the right to everything that generally belongs to women. In many countries, men consider themselves entitled to exploit women as much as they want because they think they're superior.

J: I also noticed that online, many try to justify their preference towards young people by saying that children become sexual earlier and earlier, meaning that they express their sexuality sooner. That's why they demand things like lowering the age of consent. What the rational self said about that was very eye-opening. If we listen to desire, it looks for justifications for its activities. It wants to make things a reality, it wants to enjoy. And so it makes us see facts even in things where they don't exist. Because the

age of consent is intended to be more of an expectation that the person is ready to be responsible for themselves. Being sexually active at a young age doesn't mean that you're ready for it. If you say that person X, regardless of their gender, starts to experience sexual attraction, like many do at that age, the years until they turn 18 should be used to learn about their own body and sexuality without any rush. Simply with yourself or someone of the same age, out of your own free will, with no urgency and in a safe environment. And I don't mean sex right away, I mean exploring the body. That's why there has to be a limit of 18 years for a person to act in a porn movie. If a young person seems to be ready, it's deceptive because our desire focuses on it. The desire makes you see that person as more and more ready, even if it wasn't true at all. It's just the impression desire has about the other. Desire starts to see everything through itself.

M: That's a great summary.

J: That was one of the reasons. It's already an old reason and linked to me not being special. Excessively young people's sexual signals are not for me. They are just a reaction to their own sexual awakening.

M: That's really well said, too.

J: The rational self is good. Regardless of the situation, regardless of what age the people are, it always acts the same. The desire is bolstered by someone behaving in a sexual way.

M: Or appearing to act like it.

J: Yes. That's why it's important to understand the limit, to wait until the other person is actually mature enough for it. That's the reason why there has to be an age of consent of at least 16 to make sure that the person is more ready. But it's not a certainty, because many aren't ready for sexual intercourse even then. Some people never are. The difference between showing sexual readiness and sexual activity is significant. And this is what a paedophile is thinking!

M: Excellent!

I laughed happily.

J: That was one aspect of why the lesson was so important. It showed me that you can't be blinded by desire. The desire can't come and tell me that another person's sexuality belongs to me! Because that's what it's trying to say. A part of the illusion of being special is that we can't experience others like we experience ourselves. That's why our experience feels special and somehow more important. But the idea is to make yourself see when you're starting to think about demanding things you don't have a right to get.

M: That's getting to the heart of things.

J: Now I managed to say it the way I wanted. This is the lesson I learned about 15 years ago. I don't have anything more to say about being special – unless you have any questions. Or unless you notice a problem in the logic.

M: There are no logical issues with it, at least.

J: And now, questions from the audience!

M: Let me think... Do you remember the situation you learned this lesson in?

J: I was looking at what my classmates were doing. Especially what that one bully was doing, and I wondered why it seemed like they wanted me to answer why they were acting like that towards me. And the answer was that they felt they were special and entitled to do bad things. With the bad things they did, they tried to fill in a hole they couldn't fill. They thought that the world is a bad place. They had the idea that you have to be mean to survive in this world. That real strength is being hard about your feelings. The rational self stopped me so I could see how they tried to fill their own emptiness. They were acting very selfishly.

M: Precisely, they attempted to fill the emptiness. What do you think, were they able to do it?

J: Of course not, because I wasn't the solution to their problems. I just didn't argue or get upset. Their actions were simply a reaction to something. That's when I understood that being mean encourages the way of thinking that you can use other people however you want.

M: Some people also call it an emotional block consisting of justifications.

J: For some reason, the rational self saw the "I am special" mechanism in that justification.

M: I'm thinking that the part of our minds that I call the ego believes in being special. It aims for that in all of its activities.

J: It's weird that I didn't know anything about ego or things like that at the time. I just came to the same conclusion by observing a handful of people. Based on four or five people, I created a theory. I'm not sure how scientific it is, but it turned out surprisingly well. It matches up with things astonishingly well.

M: True. You always have the freedom of choice. What does that sound like as a sentence?

J: The rational self always says that you can make a conscious choice despite everything, regardless of what the desire and the voice of destruction are babbling about. It makes us human. That's what it means to be human, to make that choice. I can always do something different, and then all the rest is just noise. Still, there's always the burden of risk. Or the burden of imagined risk. It should free me from all of the guilty conscience. Still, there's something in me that prevents me from freeing myself. There's always a block that says "but" and "how can you know". It's a problem because there are things that don't have an answer. That's why the rational self gave me the lesson of whether this is real.

M: Do we have time to go through it?

J: I can sum it up quickly. At the same time, about 15 years ago, I had a question: is this real?

Juhani looked around.

J: Is this a simulation, a hologram? Elon Musk is trying to study that, among other things. He tries to study if we're living in a computer simulation. And after all that thinking, I couldn't exactly find an answer to the question, but I did get some kind of an answer.

M: Tell me.

J: How should I start? The answer is as stupidly simple as that we can't ever confirm it. Because our perspective of this universe can be distorted, that makes it impossible to observe it as it could be. We'll never get an answer to that. But I can decide what's important to me. I can decide what things I fill my life with. And if I feel like that's enough, that my life is full, that I feel that I exist, the answer loses its meaning. Whether it's a simulation or reality. My decision means that I am and that I matter. In a way I decide that this is real because I can decide what matters. The question itself becomes meaningless.

M: The ability to observe things doesn't necessarily make them real.

J: No, that's true. In a way it's not an answer, it's just the answer that I can decide how I want to live my life. That thought led to the idea of how I want to live my life.

M: And wasn't it that you want to live without harming others?

J: Yes. But as you noticed, it's not an answer to the original question, because it has no answer. Even asking the question itself may be fake. Is there even a question? The answer is that the question doesn't matter.

M: Amen.

J: I feel like it wasn't as well said as it was then. How I want to live is more important than whether this is real. If I make bad choices, I can observe how they have bad results. We decide if things have a meaning. And that should be enough for us.

M: Thank you for sharing these wise thoughts.

J: It feels like I couldn't manage to say it exactly like it originally went.

M: I understood that, at least.

J: Well, that's good.

We laughed.

M: Shall we meet again next week?

J: Yes. Let's agree on the time.

After Juhani had left, I went back to a section in Wieck's book that in my opinion described the illusion of superiority and being special very well. "Men, relatives and friends approach girls they claim to love with sexual demands. Florence Rush observed in the book "The Best Kept Secret" that almost all women experience at some point in their lives – often for years – sexual harassment by fathers, brothers, grandfathers or acquaintances. Had a woman left them? Was the man selfish, unaware of the woman's needs, too passive, too proud to woo her? Was he impatient or too lazy? Did he become a victim of the image of girls in advertising? It must have seemed easier for him to exercise his pretend right on a frightened, defenceless and inexperienced girl, who was still emotionally and physically far from an adult woman."

People are constantly raped in warzones, and not just because they are one of the enemy, but also because it gives a good excuse to sexual exploitation, and acts like a "get out of jail free" card. Is this about a feeling of power that reduces the feelings of insignificance and inferiority? It's

hardly about erotic desire alone. As long as enslavement, exploitation and violence against adults are allowed in society, children will also be in constant danger.

9.

We started the meeting by reading the end of the last chapter, which was about the position of women and also touched on war.

J: The previous bit has two completely different mechanisms. In one situation caused by war, people can react in any way possible if their back is against the wall. If there are no options, people act unpredictably. The chaos and violence lead to unpredictable behaviour. It's not really about sex: it's a reaction to a chaotic situation. I personally wouldn't link the general exploitation of women to war. For instance, you have to have sex to be more acceptable. In that case, boys try to lose their virginity by any means possible, which means that a woman or girl may become a victim. This differs significantly from war.

M: Maybe war could bring all the hidden misogyny to the fore. It falsely gives a justification for sexual exploitation.

J: Yes, that's true. Of course, it's very unlikely that a person would suddenly turn into a monster unless they already had some kind of a potential for it. Still, these two situations should be separated from each other. People cause damage in war. Maybe in case of rape, it's hard to imagine doing damage to a whole system. It's more like that a horrible situation creates horrible activity. And those who are capable of it are susceptible to it from the start. For me, it's really hard to simulate a situation where I'm in a war or I'm a rapist. But I no longer see sex there in any situation. It's simply an action. But why is life so difficult for women in Finland? A big part of it is about social expectations. Because the kinds of things that are expected of us.

Who came up with the idea that you have to get sex to become a fully adult person? Today, porn enters the picture much too soon, which is a big problem. And sexual activity also arrives too early. A more developed kid exposes their friends to sexual behaviour earlier than they're ready. That's what happened to me.

M: What happened?

J: I might've told this before, but I was about 11 and I had a friend who was constantly up to mischief. He was the son of a single father. This boy taught me to masturbate, and we masturbated together. I can't remember why. I didn't see anything special in it. He might not have got any special "kicks" out of it either, because he didn't touch me or force me. For some reason, he wanted to teach me. Showed me porn in magazines. You couldn't get online easily back then. We looked for porn magazines in paper recycling bins. We masturbated together, but I can't remember having an orgasm. Later I understood that it was too early for me. It wasn't distressing, either. I didn't even really think anything about those porn pictures. They didn't actually arouse me. I thought, what's so special about it? My sisters had already told me very early on how children are made, and they told it from the biological perspective. I knew the mechanics, so I didn't see anything special about the porn pictures, either. There was nothing mysterious about them. I didn't get what the wonderful thing about it was. And I still don't. But I wonder how much it affected me sexually. The fact that sexual activity started before I was really sexually awake. But it annoyed me when in the upper stage of comprehensive school, the boys split into those who had to try out sex and keep looking for it to become adults, be tougher than they were. That may lead to forced sex.

M: And the other group?

J: The other group focused on their schoolwork. They didn't seem to have a need to have sex immediately. But some in this other group knew where to go if they "had to get some". There was a girl who people thought "put out". And to think that she was 14 years old! She even got pregnant.

M: What do you think this girl was looking for?

J: Maybe her perception of caring for someone was distorted. Maybe she thought it was caring. Maybe she was rebelling against her parents. But why someone would put themselves in harm's way to rebel? On the other hand, this girl was a bit of a problem child. Maybe having sex like that also meant filling the emptiness. If I simulate myself in her, I just keep asking "Why? Is harming yourself like this a complex?"

M: On the other hand, why do we think that a girl is bad if she has sex with several people?

J: Maybe the problem was that she was too young. But the social expectation is still that the more partners men have, the tougher they are, and the fewer partners women have, the better they are. Still, I see no reason anyone shouldn't enjoy their sexuality. You only have to act in a way that doesn't create a harmful situation. This is also related to the previous thinking about how I don't own anyone. If I married a woman, and if she wanted to have sex with someone else, I'd let her do it if she was still honest about it to me. Because I don't own her body. Her body isn't just for me in this world. I don't own anyone's body, even if I was married. The honesty is the only thing that would matter. Well, Christianity says that you aren't allowed to have sex with anyone except for your own partner. But I don't see the sense in that.

M: Osho would agree with you.

J: Who is that?

M: Osho is dead now, but he was a widely known spiritual teacher, a leader of a spiritual community and very well versed in tantric sex. They say that at the end of his life, he started becoming pretty messed up. But he was very much against marriage, precisely due to the argument about ownership.

J: Marriage doesn't exclude freedom and honesty.

M: It's about making an agreement.

J: I've thought about this a lot recently. I'm thinking more and more that I don't even want to try to lock someone down so I own them. That still doesn't prevent marriage.

M: Maybe your local register office would be a better fit for marriage in this case than the church.

J: Yes. I'm from a religious family and I appreciate religion. For me, it's more of a question of moral responsibility than actually a question of life and death. But it's clear that if you still use something that's 2000 years old as a basis for your behaviour, it can't really keep up with the needs of a changing society. That's the heart of the problem. This is a completely different world to what it was more than 2000 years ago.

M: True. Well, could you imagine getting married?

J: Actually, yes. But it would be really... I'd rather think of it as a wonderful way to show that you want someone in your life for as long as possible. But it shouldn't be an employment contract, either.

M: I'm mainly wondering if you have some kind of an idea that you could also be with an adult.

J: Yes. The bigger problem is that it doesn't necessarily fulfil the other part that likes children. That's why it's difficult to think about having a relationship with an adult, because I know that it won't fulfil me completely.

M: Could you think about it more as a partnership, a friendship?

J: You mean...

M: I'm not advertising a relationship here.

J: Why not. Let's think for a minute. If you think about me as two people.

There's one person, who only likes children 100%. Then there's the other person, who would say that why not a relationship, that wouldn't be bad. But what about the other one, the one who only likes children and is always with me? It would be a third wheel who'd always stay in my mind and disturb things.

M: Is that the reason why you haven't sought a relationship?

J: Not really. The reason is that I won't even try. I'm used to being alone.

M: So you don't specifically want to be alone?

J: Well, it depends on the day. The imaginary other me, the one who only likes children, just keeps interfering. How could I meet its needs? That makes me hesitate and I don't even bother trying.

M: Yeah. What else? We have a little time left.

J: I'll let you steer the discussion.

M: Let's keep talking about relationships. The truth is that you can't be in a couple with a child. A person identifying as having sexual interest in children wrote online that the saddest thing isn't that you can't have sex with a child, it's that you can't have romance.

J: Yes, I'm in exactly the same situation. For some reason, that seems to be the only way to fully care. Even though from the start, it's been that I'd rather not do anything in reality, instead I'd suffer from the lack... from the feeling that your life isn't complete. Better to suffer due to that than abuse a person.

M: True. That's well thought.

J: That's what I can understand and I can fight it. But the sexuality of another person doesn't belong to me. That's the heart of avoiding wrongdoing. I make the choice and always feel that there's something missing from me.

M: I could assume that there's sadness involved in it?

J: There is, but it's sadness because why it has to be so that I... Why can't there be something I could have? Or maybe it's not about having, but fulfilment. Why can't I get fulfilled by something else? But that's a question I can't answer. I should focus on what I can control. Like my own desires.

M: And they can be controlled, unlike what many people think.

J: If I was further in this process, I wouldn't feel sad about being incomplete. Instead, I'd be happy because I can make a different choice.

M: Maybe one day you will?

J: Then I would have to let go of the idea that I should be normal.

M: Could you think about doing it right now?

J: Unfortunately not right now. It takes time. The rational self says that there is an answer to it, but I don't really believe it. Can there be an answer to something like this?

M: Could the answer be an end to the need to ask?

J: Well, that was the answer to the question about reality. The end of the need to ask the question. But for some reason, the rational self says that there is a right answer to it. I don't know about that.

M: I believe that there is an answer. But I can't convince you about that.

J: Maybe everyone has to find their own answer.

M: I want to believe, and I do believe, that complete fulfilment is possible without something external. If there is anything external, anyway. The fulfilment is in you.

J: Yeah...

M: That sounded a bit doubtful.

J: No, I just have to think about it.

M: Maybe it's beyond thought? When you don't think, you just are? Letting thoughts come and go. An ancient meditation technique.

J: Right. Maybe it's one of the things beyond my brain capacity.

M: It might be beyond your brain capacity, but not beyond you.

J: Right. Let's agree on the next meeting. But coming back to the issue people have been asking since always, how can I assume that I'll find the answer? I don't know.

M: We're going in circles again. The answer can't be found on this level, not verbally.

J: That has to be it, I don't know.

M: Anyway, I'm telling you to try to get past your thoughts and into silence. You may have an experience you won't be able to or even need to put into words.

J: But if I find an answer to that question one day, I'll be satisfied.

We agreed on the next meeting and Juhani left. The question about the nature of existence is not one that they teach you to discuss in training for sexual therapy. But again, I kept thinking that as such a fundamental question, can you even refuse to discuss it? A responsible person with paedophilic feelings can't realise their deepest sexual and romantic wishes. What's left for that person? Juhani described emptiness. Any ordinary person feels emptiness if they can't press themselves against another person, skin to skin. But there also exists another kind of fulfilment, a more complete fulfilment, a peace of mind that can't be obtained by any physical means. This is no news. And it's not any religious

statement, either, that I would now try to make people hear at the right point and taking advantage of the despair of another person. Still, with this kind of despair and emptiness you also face the ultimate questions that everyone faces at some point.

Luckily, in modern therapy you can talk about mindfulness and the power of presence as much as you want without being called a weirdo. More and more undeniable research information about mindfulness, meditation and their benefits to mental health is coming. One basic method is to let the thoughts pass you by like clouds in the sky, without fighting them or getting stuck in them. After you keep doing this for long enough, you start to reach the peace beyond words and mental constructs. Many describe it as fulfilment. Even after years of training, I haven't experienced an ecstasy I could claim to surpass all worldly needs, but I have experienced a constantly increasing feeling of peace. The belief in the feeling of complete fulfilment also keeps me going.

10.

Juhani opened the door ten minutes late, and cursed that the downstairs door had been locked, which it usually wasn't. I told him that he was never late, which is why I had thought that he might've forgotten the appointment. He said that he's always on time for everything, and that he didn't mind waiting.

We started by going over the end of the text from the previous meeting and the fact that existential questions aren't usually discussed in sexual therapy, but are not prohibited either.

J: I have noticed the same thing myself: talking about a minor issue leads to talking about a bigger issue. I can't answer the question why I feel like this towards children. That problem makes me question the whole universe. But I don't know why there's that smokescreen in front of the real issue. I'm still waiting.

M: What do you mean by the "real issue"?

J: My real problem is: how could I feel that I'm complete other than through a child, through sexual images related to children? That's the real issue. The other things, like what is real, those are just an excuse for the mind to start digging, because we know that there is no answer. The mind really likes to dig into things. It's a funny example of how if you give the mind a treasure map with an X on it, it'll always dig right next to the mark because it doesn't want to find an answer. It just wants to dig.

That made me smile.

J: I noticed this during the last time in therapy.

M: Which time in therapy? Our previous one?

J: Right. I may not have said it, but I realised that I was trying to solve the mystery of the world. And that's been a problem before, too. An almost obsessive search for knowledge and wondering how the universe works. It interests me. Too easily, it turns into a rug under which you can sweep the important problems. The rational self asks: what are the things that really matter?

M: Exactly. There's no point in us trying to discover the answer to the universe right now.

J: Yeah, and what would I even do with the answer? Would it set me free from this problem? I might end up in the papers, get a prize, but I'd still be back to square one with this problem.

M: But if you found out that the whole universe of forms doesn't exist, then there wouldn't be anything to become interested in or long for. But let's leave that issue be and move on to a more practical level, because the practical level is where we operate.

J: You just sometimes end up drifting over to that side of things. But that's not the real issue.

M: It's good to think about those things, too.

J: Sure, sure, but the problem is that if you spend the whole time on it, it won't be of any use. The more I think about it, the more it looks like that it's precisely the rug that you use to sweep the things you should be thinking about under.

M: That's true. It's the same cycle repeating, and I'm telling you once again that the answer can't be found on this level. You can't find it by going round and round the same issue. The mind likes to give you all kinds of answers with the sole purpose of misleading you.

J: Exactly. Don't look there, look here, say: hey, this is an interesting question! At least that's how it works for me.

M: That's the way the mind works. And you can't find an answer from this story-telling mind. Did you try meditation?

J: I have, many times. I still my mind and don't ask those questions any longer. It usually helps me focus.

M: How does it make you feel?

J: Meditation? Calm.

M: Yes. That's good. When you silence the questions, you feel good.

J: It's actually good that we went over this so carefully, it makes it easier to focus.

M: Still, you can't ignore the mind. It's our most powerful tool. That's why it's important to pay constant attention to your thoughts, but still notice when you're getting into a loop.

J: Luckily, the rational self is pretty good at breaking it.

We were quiet for a moment. We both started to giggle.

J: Well, what's next?

M: Now that we've solved the problem of the universe?

J: It's still good that we went over it. The best thing that's happened to me is getting the chance to process issues like this.

M: That's wonderful to hear!

J: Do I even dare to tell the joke that it's the best thing you can do with your pants on?

M: Why not – after all, this is sexual therapy.

J: I don't tell jokes often.

M: Humour is an excellent tool for processing anxiety. And shame in particular. Freud wrote about it. He said humour acts as a safety valve for anxiety. Or is there really such a thing as a safety valve?

J: Yes. It's actually a pretty important part in many things.

M: I was thinking that we could have some topic in these discussions that we decided in advance.

Juhani started to laugh again.

J: How many times have we thought of that again? Deciding a topic of discussion in advance? I'll talk about whatever you want to bring up. I'm putting the responsibility for steering this on you, because you know how to make it all sensible and interesting.

M: Good. Now, let's put that into practice!

J: Have we really just started?

M: Yes. We have half of this appointment left.

J: Go ahead, your hands are free.

M: We've already discussed very important things. Oh, I accidentally wrote "indecent" at first. About this rational self, the issue of being special, and ethical choices. We can still include theory in this. I'll go get a book.

It's about criminal psychology and it's by Jaana Haapasalo. As I browse through the book, I notice a list of the symptoms of psychopathy.

M: There's a list of the symptoms of psychopathy here. The first is "being slick or having superficial charm". You have none of that.

J: Yeah, I have no superficial charm.

M: That's not what I meant! I'm sure you understand what I was getting at.

J: That's just my sense of humour.

M: But there is a chapter here on the causes of paedophilia. It says here that paedophilia involves a long-term disruption of the development of personality and related sexual development; studies show that there are often personal experiences of childhood abuse in the background. Does this spark any ideas?

J: Personally, I've always been sure that it's about the disruption of sexual development. I don't remember being abused myself, and I don't even want to suspect that. Going down that road is dangerous when there's no evidence. Because my childhood and youth were chaotic, I'm looking for the safety and caring I received from small children back then, when I was a small child myself. It just somehow got stuck there. That's why I still feel that way towards children. This is the best explanation I've got. The reason why I didn't develop past it. It's difficult to answer. Because that stuck with me for some reason. Very young girls have always had crushes on me. Maybe it's because I'm not a big guy and I look young, too. I remember when I was 18 and a friend asked if I had already got into vocational college.

M: Do you feel that you've remained on the level of a child in a way?

J: Not really. I also wondered whether my sexuality has remained undeveloped. Because I also get aroused by regular porn, even if there is an element missing.

M: So it could be a disruption of sexual development as you said, but it hasn't totally stopped.

J: I don't know how you think about it technically. When has development stopped at a certain level?

M: Who even decides what is normal? I haven't met a person with paedophiliac feelings or even a criminal offender with a background of abuse. So it can't be just about that.

J: I don't see it as terribly important. It's difficult to say, but based on the talks I've had with people who are interested in those older than 10 years old, none of them said they'd been abused sexually. But all of them had noticed that the age of their objects of interest didn't increase at the same rate as they themselves were growing. On the other hand, people don't just tell others about their most difficult experiences first thing, anyway.

M: Here it says that many abusers have been victims of sexual abuse in their own childhood, and the resulting hostility and feeling of abuse can strongly interfere with establishing equal relationships with adults. At the same time, the victimised child is given a model of an adult becoming aroused by a child and forcing a child into sexual activity.

J: I'm sure it happens. But personally I think that there have to be other things, too, in order for a person to continue to act like that. You can use alcohol as an argument. After growing up in an alcoholic family and seeing it from a young age, why didn't I become an alcoholic? There has to be some other factor involved, too. That might be a factor that creates a basis for the development, while another factor triggers the abuse. It would be really strange if that was the only reason. It would mean that there are a lot of people who don't fit the formula.

M: Yes. And not all of those who are abused become abusers, I think that's also mentioned here. What about the claim that abusers have sexual anxiety in their contacts with adults?

J: I can't answer that, but I could imagine that the conflict of abuse tears at the mind and results in relationships that don't work out. But that's my simulation and it won't necessarily work, because I can't think like an abuser. I'm afraid of becoming an abuser, but I still can't imagine how it works.

M: Luckily, your mind is structured that way. This specifically talks about abusers, which is completely different from a paedophile.

J: I agree.

M: It's funny that people talk about abuse and label it paedophilia.

J: Paedophilia means an abnormal interest in children. Either I'm not a paedophile, or you have to change the definition of paedophilia. I've made the choice not to commit a crime. I wish that people would somehow understand that I have crushes on children. What would you do to your crush? If you had a crush, would you abuse them?

M: Well, no. Not deliberately, anyway. It's true that in common parlance, people mix up paedophilia and sexual crime constantly.

J: If a paedophile means an abuser, then I'm not a paedophile. Sexual interest in children is a more accurate term.

M: When professionals talk, they make a difference between paedophilia and abuse. Most abusers are not paedophiles, and vice versa.

J: Now we're talking about my experiences. Of course, sexual thoughts are involved. Who doesn't, if you have a crush? Except for asexual people.

M: Yet another box!

J: I don't really know anything about them. Apparently they don't experience sexuality. And then there's also demisexuality.

M: So there is.

J: I'm sure you know much more about this than I do.

M: Keeping up to date with these boxes is challenging sometimes.

J: In fact, the rational self says that we don't need more boxes. Boxes aren't

necessary in the first place. A more important question is what it means to be human.

M: Yes. This is a good stopping point. I'll try to think of a topic for the next time. Just a moment. Let's think about the cognitive distortions abusers use to try to justify their own actions. Like that the child enjoys sex or that sex with an adult won't harm the child.

J: That's a good topic. I'll think about it. I'll try to remember what I've read and heard.

Juhani left and reminded me that he isn't late on purpose and won't miss an appointment for any trivial reason. I was happy that he valued our meetings so much. I stayed for a moment to study cognitive distortions.

From Jaana Haapasalo's book:

An abuser can interpret a child's natural questions about sex as the child wanting to try out sex, and the abuser may consider physical contact a good way to teach the child things related to sexuality. Typical justifications include the following: "but you like it, too", "men need sex, that's just how men are", "why do you put on such tiny summer dresses, then", or "you should be proud of yourself for having the chance to learn so early" (Kähäri 2017). If the child doesn't resist sexual advances due to confusion or fear, the perpetrator may consider the lack of resistance as a sign of wanting sex. Some abusers justify their actions with the distorted idea that in the end, society will see sex with a child as acceptable.

From the start, Juhani had brought up his awareness that sex with an adult harms the child, and no justification can change that. I don't believe that I would have valued him as much if he had expressed thoughts in defence of abuse. In theory, I would've had to somehow develop a sense of his value even in that case to enable myself help him. I would've done it by deciding to see him as a person regardless of everything. If people defended their actions and tried to justify them, that was irritating. However, you had to conquer the irritation by consciously thinking of their value and deciding to see them differently. Still, I didn't have to struggle to value Juhani.

11.

This time I had written an introduction for the meeting. The following passage is from the same book I had quoted from the last time, “Kriminaalipsykologia” (Criminal Psychology) by the psychologist Jaana Haapasalo.

Those who have committed a sexual offence have different kinds of attitudes that justify the offence. Studies show that men who have committed sexual offences against women or children have exhibited the following kinds of attitudes: I can do this because the woman or child is my property, because it is my right as a spouse, partner or father, because I am a man and that gives me the right, because my needs are the only ones that matter, because the victim owes it to me, and because I can do it and I take what I want.

One common distorted idea is that sexual urges are impossible to control. I had brought that up before, and it had to be repeated. That argument of uncontrollability is often used when defending sexual offences or infidelity: “It just happened”. In reality, nothing “just happens” and if you claim that, you’re deluding yourself and others. Nobody ends up in any situation just like that, you play a role in it yourself for a reason. In the end, nothing that happens in the mind is uncontrollable.

We started our appointment with how Juhani was currently doing. He had started to get anxiety attacks at night again, even though they had been absent for a while. During the attack, his heartbeat was rapid, and there were no special thoughts related to it. He thought that the anxiety was linked to the ongoing mental process, even if he wasn’t directly aware of it. However, he noted that what we were currently discussing was for the

best for him, even if it wasn't easy. He was willing to discuss the topic we had decided on last time.

J: There was something interesting that came up as a result of the lesson that I'm not special. The mechanism of being special makes us believe that we're entitled to get something because we're so special. It's also linked to the idea that another person, in this case the victim, owes us something. This lesson came very early, and at first I didn't understand why it was so important. But it affects this exact mechanism, the distorted idea of your own entitlement. What I noticed myself was looking for justifications for your desire. Many people online say that they have an innocent need, and they could have sexual contact with a child if they just were gentle and careful. But that's an illusion, it just means that the desire is active. It makes things look the way you want them to look. This leads to a kind of attempt to make your own actions acceptable, because thinking about it feels good.

M: So some people try to say that you can have sex with a child if you're gentle?

J: That's what the desire tries to say. It tries to tell me that, too. Of course it does! That's what it's all about.

M: This is an extremely important topic for discussion.

J: Uh-huh. The desire makes us forget. In a way, we should always keep the harm principle in mind. We should remember why it's harmful even if it feels like a good idea.

M: The harm principle – that's a good principle.

J: I can explain how it's linked to this. This isn't just about me. It's about life in general. Life is not just about me. It means understanding that other people also exist and experience things. We should understand that if we use them to satisfy our own desires without that person being on a level where they can really be there as an equal or a person, that's always abuse,

regardless of whether the person is an adult or not. There is no equality with that person. And if there is no equality, that should be enough to tell you that it's wrong. We simply can't assume that a child is on that level. If they join the game, that's what they're doing, playing a game. That means that we're the only ones who understand the sexual aspect of the situation. That's where the harm comes in. A child can and should play. So if we introduce sexuality in the play, we deceive the child. It's a trick.

M: Good. Have you talked about this online?

J: Yes! Maybe not exactly in these words. My thoughts back then were a lot simpler. People did understand. Maybe they came from a more passionate level of thinking to slightly calmer consideration.

M: Good work!

J: Yes, but I realised that it's a bit hopeless. The people there aren't necessarily too ready to change. It would take time. I have had longer discussions with two people. One of them was a woman. She taught me the concept of "autopaedophilia".

M: Which is?

J: She fantasises that she herself is a child during sex. She really, really wanted to meet me. But I thought that maybe it wasn't a good idea. The other one was a man, and he and I talked for several months. A magazine also contacted us, and they wanted to write a story about two paedophiles meeting. I chickened out, and I wouldn't have had the money anyway. They were going to write the story on a train to Helsinki. Anyway, the book you cited listed the phrases used by desire. Because that's what it wants to say. It's funny, because you have to think about it when you ask desire: what do you really want?

M: What would the desire say? We aren't asking the rational self this time.

J: You have to ask it through the rational self, because the desire would

just say that it wants sex. That's the answer of my desire, no one else's. My desire wants to be fulfilled. It wants to be important. But that's just my answer, I can't speak for anyone else.

M: Right.

J: It doesn't want to abuse. It doesn't want to use force against anyone. It just wants to be fulfilled. And the only way it feels that way is the idea of sex with a child. But that requires a lot of thinking from me. It's stressful and difficult. It goes into an area where I don't always even dare to look.

M: It's been said that mental delusions continue to exist is precisely because you don't look at them.

J: Right. We've talked about a lot of things. I pretty much managed to say everything I had in mind. I can't say that very many people who feel the same towards children would also think the same way. I can't swear to it in any way. It's sad that I can't represent anyone other than myself. I'd like to say that everyone is equally... moral. But I can't.

M: Because you can't know that. And you can only be responsible for working on your own mind. Still, I think it's really important that you've added the voice of reason to online discussions, too.

J: I don't know if these discussions still happen.

M: Apparently they don't say the words "I'm a paedophile" as such?

J: Well, some do. It's true that people do avoid that word. I also avoided it for a long time. But they do understand that this isn't exactly OK. I think I've talked about it with five people in total. That's a small sample. There was this nice guy, he liked them a bit older than I do. He called himself a paedophile. We talked a lot. I'm not sure what all we talked about. Mainly about what life is like.

M: Can you remember something about how you defined what life is like?

J: Not really. We just chatted about this and that. Nothing very important.

M: The people with whom you can discuss this thing and who understand it must be pretty rare nowadays?

J: I haven't even been looking for them. It's hard to even look these days. The sites where we found each other have been dead and gone for a long time. Discussion about sex might not be illegal, but nobody wants to just start talking about it online.

M: Sexuality is a pretty intimate topic in general, let alone sexual interest in children. Not to mention that sexual interest in children is still a particularly sensitive topic. Even though nowadays there's research-based information available, too. I was wondering if sexuality can be, or if it even needs to be, as easy a discussion topic as cooking?

J: Not really. But how would I like to be treated? I'd like it if it was possible to talk about this without judgement. I wouldn't want this to be accepted as an act. I'd still like to talk about it, just like depression. This is eating at me from the inside, and I don't want to let it control me. But should it be just as easy to talk about sexuality as cooking? In principle that would be a good thing, but maybe it's still something that should have its own time and space. And this is a general answer to all talk about sex. It's good to reserve a separate time and space for it.

M: Sexuality is linked to the deepest levels of being human, unlike cooking.

J: I'd still like the threshold for bringing up sexuality as a topic to be lower. It's still hushed up. You can't talk about it and you can't show it too much. Even if people claim that modern times are so open.

M: What do you think about sex positivity?

J: I'm not sure what that means, exactly.

M: It means a positive attitude toward sexuality.

J: That sounds good, then. If there's a balance. If the harm principle has been taken into account. The harm principle in essence is whether an activity takes a normal activity away from me. Meaning: does it prevent a normal activity? That's the first level. That's the most important thing about it. The second level is whether it takes something away from someone else. Meaning that do my actions prevent the normal activity of someone else? In principle, these two ideas are the core questions you should ask yourself. Is this harmful to me or to another person? Can I make a different choice?

M: That sounds similar to the principle of the philosopher John Stuart Mill.

J: So I haven't come up with anything new after all?

M: According to Mill's principle, limiting the freedom of an individual being is only allowed if it would violate the freedom or rights of another person.

J: In fact, one of my lessons was "The right to yourself". There's also a balance, and it comes from the idea that if we see another person do something wrong, we can provoke them to think about it, but they themselves are always the ones responsible. I can't dictate how another person lives. You should have extremely good reasons for interfering with the life of another person. I can ask drug users: can't you see what you're doing to yourself? But I can't make them stop.

M: That's why the idea of "assigning responsibility" is not good. You can't force anyone to take responsibility. The other expression I read yesterday is "inspiring insight". I don't think that's so good, either. Insight comes when it comes. You can give people food for thought, of course.

J: Right. That's an interesting discussion topic. The point is that I'm the only one who can be fully responsible for myself.

M: That's right. The mind would like to assign a lot of responsibility to other people, too.

J: But can I do something wrong on my own responsibility? Even if I'm responsible for myself, that doesn't matter. It doesn't release me from moral responsibility.

M: Exactly. But we're running out of time now.

J: This is a lot of fun, because it feels like the same discussions I had with the rational self.

M: That's great! Should we think of a topic for the next time? I have another new book here. Or actually the book itself isn't new, it's new for our discussion. "Mielen seksuaalisuus" (Sexuality of the Mind) by Osmo Kontula. I could look for a topic in there. Is that OK?

J: That's fine. Now you're responsible for making sure that this text makes sense. I don't want you to misunderstand. I personally haven't ever written anything serious. If you have a good topic, I'm absolutely fine with using it. The topic that we discussed today was exactly what I've been thinking about. Why someone looks for reasons for what they do – the mental mechanism is the same in all cases.

M: That it is. Could the topic for the next time be "Why is there something dangerous and reprehensible about sex?"

J: Right. Only a few people have been conceived in a test tube, all the rest were conceived by sex. Why do we have a legacy of shame about so many issues?

M: There are two sex acts sitting right here, in fact. That's a bit icky as an idea.

J: Next time I meet someone, I'll tell them that I've always wanted to meet a new sex act!

The next appointment was two weeks later due to a business trip of mine. Juhani was disappointed as he would've liked to meet every week. But he left the meeting in a good mood, and I started to prepare an introduction for the next time.

12.

From “Mielen seksuaalisuus” (Sexuality of the Mind) by Osmo Kontula:

The sexuality of mind inevitably reflects how much attention the media pays to the most problematic manifestations of sexuality, which include sexual abuse and harassment, teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. People write about sex as a bad thing more frequently than as a good thing. Therefore, it is no wonder that so many people are a little confused or even completely baffled by matters related to sexuality. We live in an era with plenty of both sexual promises as well as identified dangers.

The book was published in 2012. Now, seven years later, it felt like we had started to step into a new age. Sex positivity had dominated the conversation. Some seemed to have understood the idea to mean that talking about the dangers of sex, so to speak, such as the risks of addiction and violating the limits of others, felt like spoiling people's fun. And it does spoil the fun in a way, if the fun comes at a too high price. Maybe there is a difference between joy and pleasure. In any case, sexuality is a happy thing, a basic force of life that causes no harm to anyone in itself. Problems can only occur after this force is channelled into behaviour. Sex being reprehensible is linked to the ideas about sex in the Christian tradition as well as other religious traditions, such as the idea of sex as a sin. These ideas are still fairly firmly rooted in the subconscious, no matter how sex positive you try to be. But Kontula also argues that it is nevertheless possible to become liberated from the judgemental attitude towards matters related to sex. “If you can free yourself from the

judgemental attitude, even for a moment, you immediately become more open-minded and relaxed,” he writes.

I expected that I could again talk with Juhani about whether he considered being judgemental towards himself as a requirement for avoiding immoral activity. I also heard from a colleague who had worked in prison that in the nineteenth century, even the prisons had been built in the shape of a church, and they had large churches where the prisoners had to go every Sunday. Undoubtedly, an essential part of the service had been preaching about sin. Nowadays, prisons just have chapels left, and practising religion is voluntary. Nevertheless, India could provide a model: in some prisons there inmates can reduce their sentences if they commit to raising their awareness through yoga and meditation.

M: So that was the introduction. What kind of thoughts does that spark in you?

J: In our society, it's completely true that the Christian tradition has a lot of power. The idea of sex as a sin comes from there. You shouldn't do it for fun. Sort of. It's hard to explain. I had a religious upbringing. Despite that, I wasn't raised to see sex as a bad thing. But you still aren't allowed to talk about it out loud. You can hint at it, but you can't say it out loud. That's how I was raised. That's just my opinion about the core of the problem. Sex is available absolutely everywhere for the young people of today. Whether that's a bad thing in itself, I don't know, but we aren't taught about what we should do with our sexuality. We want to experience sexuality and become aroused. Online porn arouses you, but it doesn't teach you what to do with your sexuality. It only offers extreme arousal.

M: Yes, and it does feel good. It's understandable that you want to come back to that feeling.

J: Of course. There's the conflict, that we aren't raised to understand sexuality. We're raised to be afraid of it, even though sex is everywhere. That's something that should change. We shouldn't be afraid of something that makes us human. Sexuality is a part of it, among a lot of other things.

But there can be fear linked to talking about it, that we'll soon accept things that we shouldn't accept. The fear of losing all control if sexuality is too widely accepted.

M: I also remember a letter to the editor a while back, where somebody was concerned about the rights of homosexuals and considered it a gateway to the legalisation of paedophilic tendencies sooner or later.

J: That's pretty common. If homosexuality is accepted, people assume that harmful forms of sex are also accepted. For children, abuse would mean abusing the child's innocence, the fact that the child doesn't understand it. How can you explain to these people that there has to be a limit? Actually, drawing that limit is very easy, it's not rocket science. If a person's ability to understand is on a completely different level, that's always problematic. Is the person capable of reaching the same level as the other person? It's perfectly obvious that the limit is clear with regard to children.

M: When you study the thoughts of sexual offenders, you can still find distorted thinking that defends the offence, which we have already talked about. Such as if the child smiles during the act, they enjoy it, or if a child is naturally curious about sex or decides to sit in someone's lap, it means that they want to be touched sexually.

J: The need to defend your own actions is perfectly clear there. The rational self taught me a lesson about the idea that if you're looking for justifications for something, then you've gone a long way towards preparing to do it. At least on the level of thought. There's still time to stop at that point.

M: If you become aware of what you're doing. Become aware of your own thoughts.

J: Right.

M: I was going to ask you again: do you consider being judgemental towards yourself as a requirement of not succumbing to immorality?

J: I used to do that. For a very long time. The idea was that it'd keep me awake, so to speak. That kicking myself would keep me alert so that I wouldn't do anything. But it's very hard to get an answer to whether being judgemental is necessary. I understand that side of it in a way, that it makes us see that it's wrong. But it's really bad as a tool. It feels like it's useful and that it'll tell you when you're about to do something wrong. Being judgemental can show you that it's not OK. But it's still a bad tool. Could there be another tool that wouldn't eat at us from the inside constantly? Everybody says that we need the judgement or self-criticism to prevent us from becoming twisted. And that's true, in a way. But the rational self says that there could be a better way to do it. Judgement turns bad over time. It can't remain a good tool, because it has the power to oppress the person themselves, and that can't be a good thing. It might wake us up, but then it starts to consume us. But what could be a better tool, that I don't know.

M: Well put. What could be a better tool to guard your morals?

J: For me, it could be this mindful friend, the rational self that I can use in the same way. It'll always tell me it I'm going the wrong way. I don't need judgement to accompany that. But it still haunts me.

M: Exactly. The rational self doesn't judge you.

J: It hasn't judged me.

M: Could you call that gentle guidance?

J: Maybe, but the rational self can be sharp too. It's usually gentle, but it can be very direct sometimes. It tells it like it is. It doesn't try to cover things up. Is that gentle? It's not necessarily ungentle, either. It doesn't say things in a bad way, but it does mean that I need to take a timeout. I really have to stop. Back there at the camp, it was like thunder had struck inside me. I had to stop, but it still wasn't said in a bad way.

M: The rational self sounds like a loving father.

Juhani laughed.

J: Well, maybe. Now the rational self is laughing a bit, too. I don't know. It's always me. I use the words "rational self" for practical reasons, but it's still me. Why do I have to have two thoughts?

M: Well, we have talked about these two parts of the mind, the two mental states between which we all have to choose sometimes. One side breaks things up into bits that are as separate as possible and judges you, experiences difficult emotions. It's afraid. And the other side sees things.

J: Do you think that there are only two sides?

M: Actually, more like three. There's still the side that observes and chooses.

J: As for me, I think that there are several components. There's the voice of destruction, the stress, and so on. I can process all emotions with their own voice. There's the group of bullies, the voices that enjoy it when you feel bad. And there's frustration. The voice of destruction is the boss of that gang.

M: Yes, you can lump those voices under the same heading.

J: That's actually right. I've been thinking about this a lot recently. When the voice of destruction makes us believe that it wants to die, we also want to die. I don't believe that it actually wants death. I believe that it just wants to be in control. Why would that voice even want to die? All of these components still want to exist. The voice of destruction wants destruction, or even death. But it still only wants to scare you. It just wants to order us to do what it wants.

M: It wants to stay in power.

J: I don't believe that it wants death. In a way, I think about it as a separate person, because that makes it easier to talk about it. It doesn't want to die, it wants us to be afraid.

M: I agree.

J: Good, and this is interesting. It pretends so well that it wants to put a final end to life, but that can't be true, because then it wouldn't exist anymore. I made a simulation and listened to what the voice of destruction had to say. There, I told the voice of destruction: I don't believe that death is what you want. I believe that you want to exist and make us fear a part of ourselves.

M: Did it give you any answer?

J: It's hard to truly say anything about that. Not really. If I repeat the same thought process right now, it feels like it doesn't want to be observed. It wants me to be afraid and think about death, but I can't look at it in itself. It's afraid of its tricks getting noticed.

M: Exactly! You've reached the heart of the matter.

J: Here's what I've been thinking over a couple of weeks. It's matured little by little. I'm now closer to revealing the magic trick of the mind. Our minds have this dark side that wants fear, but that doesn't want us to reveal its tricks. So it uses the fear of death to prevent us from observing it. I don't know if this is a totally strange idea.

M: It's not strange at all. I completely agree with you about how the voice of destruction acts.

J: I'm trying to ask it why it tries to deceive. But it doesn't say anything. So what is its purpose?

M: It has no purpose, and on some level it's aware of that itself.

J: That's how I feel, too. But then why does it even exist? It has to have a reason! Maybe it's the price of our consciousness. The counterweight to rational thinking?

M: I don't believe that we need a counterweight.

J: In my opinion, it can't be completely useless. Or it's simply left behind as some kind of a ghost.

M: It's the ghost of the seemingly divided mind. The voice of destruction is the part of the mind that believes in separation.

J: Maybe it's a consequence of us being capable of rational thought.

M: That depends on what's rational. But to function in this world, we need the ability to assess things, we need this mind. But if it gains power, it starts to destroy.

J: Maybe its only purpose is to be something that wakes you up.

M: It doesn't want to wake up in itself, but usually it causes so much suffering that the person stops to ask if this makes any sense. Still, it tries to make you believe that it does. And scare you. It wants to keep itself alive.

J: That's why I said that I don't believe it wants to die.

M: It wants to kill you without dying itself.

J: But surely it understands that its existence depends on you?

M: You could then ask who this "you" is, but we're running out of time.

J: I hope you don't mind that we started with one thing and ended up with something different.

M: Absolutely not! We're at the heart of things.

We agreed on our next meeting. It wasn't unusual for the topic of our discussions to change and take a sudden turn. This depth was the best I could ever hope from a discussion. Thinking of the next discussion would be more difficult. Or maybe not.

13.

Who am I? I can almost hear someone huff “Let’s not start blathering on the meta level!” But yes, this is exactly the question we need to ask. Or actually, we need to ask who is asking. Eastern philosophies and spiritual literature talk about the ego. As I already noted in the beginning, this is different from Freud’s definition of the ego. The ego is a wider perspective, the delusional belief that we’re guilty and separate from everything else. It creates stories, lives in the past and the future. It’s only a small part of the consciousness, but it has snatched the whole consciousness for its own use, and all of us have to take that power back. The ego creates stories about who you are. When you ask it “who am I?” it’s happy to give you all sorts of answers. You’re a nurse, a mother, a spouse. And then what? I haven’t always been. Those are roles. You are the body. Cells that renew themselves? If my hand falls off, am I still myself? There’s no good answer to that, either. A hand falls off, but the experience of self remains. Therefore, it’s not bound to the body, even though the self usually means the body. In the end, there is no definitive answer to the question of who I am permanently. You can change your name, gender is an uncertain question and it, too, can be changed, roles change, and this body is a completely different cluster of cells from what it was ten years ago, let alone in childhood. Actually, you can only answer the question of who I am not. I’m not a definition. The ego is an imagined self that knows it can’t be real. This question is uncomfortable but liberating. The self is only an accumulation of conditioning and memories. I told Juhani that the voice of destruction, or the ego, wants to kill you without dying itself. He asked, “But surely it understands that its existence is dependent on you?” Can the ego, our tiny mind, have such a wide understanding?

I wanted to continue the topic in our next meeting. Juhani was perfectly fine with that.

J: That's an easy problem to talk about, but hard to find an answer to.

M: I came to the conclusion that this voice of destruction, as you've called it, the ego, can't understand very much. On some level, it knows that it's dependent on you and that you can't be killed, but it still wants the idea of fear. It may somehow be aware of this contradiction, but because it can't change the facts, it only tries to delay being recognised for what it is.

J: I disagree a bit. But that's because I think that the voice of destruction is different for everyone, it's a part of our personality. I'm not saying that you're wrong, but I experience my own voice of destruction in a different way. My voice of destruction knows that it can't survive without me. It still wants control, it wants me to live according to its terms. The voice of destruction takes you to the edge of the cliff and tries to scare you to jump off of it, but the only thing it really wants is the fear. It wants to make you believe that it's the most important thing, the strongest voice, the guiding force you have to listen to.

M: I also think that the voice of destruction appears to everyone in different forms, but in the end, its basic belief is the same.

J: That might be. Yeah. It enjoys anger. If the voice of destruction was a person, what kind of a person would it be? It would be a school bully. It enjoys that. It wants us to see our own good sides in a bad light.

M: Can you think of an example?

J: No, not a personal one right now. I have to think about it for a minute. Maybe the voice of destruction tells me that I can't have a crush on people my own age because I'm a child abuser. It makes it look like it isn't genuine. A few times it has made me give up. It makes me afraid of having a crush because it claims that I'd commit abuse. That I'd give up my morals.

M: In what way you would give up your morals?

J: I'd become a bad person.

M: Does that mean that if you had a relationship with an adult, you'd be deceiving your partner?

J: Right. It would take time for me to really think about this. I haven't processed this side of things much. I haven't thought about, or I can't put into words, what it has tried to make me believe. If there's something that would make me happier, the voice of destruction would bring up the bad things so that I'd be afraid of my own feelings. It always points at the bogeyman, even if I see something good in front of me.

M: Has there been a potential crush like this recently?

J: Well, no. It was before I started therapy. It was difficult in the beginning, because the voice of destruction mainly tells the truth, but it slips in a bit of suspicion. It doesn't start out with a lie. It doesn't even try to trick me immediately – it builds up to that. It shows you a truth, such as that you like children. That's true. And it uses that to sneak in the bad things. You believe it because it was able to say something that was true. That's how it builds the lie of fear.

M: Can you remember well this crush that happened before therapy?

J: It was right before that. I do remember it. I wouldn't have taken it any further anyway, because this woman had a family. I still felt drawn to her because our temperaments were well matched. Other people noticed it, too. But I didn't take it any further. We had a lot of fun, we talked about stuff. I didn't show affection, and neither did she. I still felt affection.

M: Did that affection include sexual thoughts?

J: Well, some. Not massively. No more than usual. Now I'm embarrassed.

M: What makes you embarrassed?

J: I'm not sure. Why should I be embarrassed? I don't have a reason to be. But I've talked very little about affection, especially recent cases. And those haven't been included in our topics.

M: Our topics have varied a lot.

J: That's true. But that was a good description of how the voice of destruction acts. That's how it works for me. Now it's very easy for me to notice when it's trying to talk. It can't really speak up.

M: That's the best thing you can do for your mind. Observe it and choose what you want to believe in. It's actually one of the cornerstones of new therapeutic approaches.

J: Yes, that's true. In fact, one of the things the rational self says is that you should choose what you believe in.

M: And this question of self?

J: Well, that's an endless swamp!

M: Is it really endless?

J: Maybe not really, but it's a question that can't be answered. Or you can ask more questions about those answers. The idea of choosing what you believe in was born based on precisely that question about self. It's the only answer to it that I've found. Because it puts an end to the need to ask the question.

M: That's a great way to put it!

J: Sometimes that's the only win you get.

M: The ego, or the thing that I believe is the source of that voice of destruction, is the one that's asking. The answer may be that the question isn't needed, either.

J: The human mind just isn't happy with that answer because it's not really an answer. You simply have to decide to let go of the idea that an answer could be found. The rational self asks: what would you do with the answer? Would it set you free from anything? Would it cure you? What do you expect from the answer? Our mind likes to play a game, where you show the answer and then you have to guess what the question was. Some of us want to play that game. The frustration enjoys it when we keep digging without finding an answer. It's a gang of bullies, led by the voice of destruction. It results in depression and all that. That's when I noticed that the voice of destruction enjoys the frustration when I'm looking for the answer. At that point, I also reached the result that there is no separation, and that other nasty voices can also be a part of the voice of destruction. Many times, you've said that there is no separation, and now that I've thought about it, I've noticed that these different voices have a lot in common, but all of them point to the voice of destruction, which is the boss. The others are its different forms.

M: That's what I believe. And finally, when you dare to look really closely at the boss, the voice of destruction, you notice that it's not based on anything either. But few people do that.

J: Lately I haven't even tried. It's pretty difficult, because being looked at is something that it doesn't want. It doesn't like that.

M: Exactly.

J: It's as if that would reveal something about it. It tries to hide its magic trick. If we find out what the trick is based on, the deception is revealed. For some reason, I see something else in there than just the deception that we've decided to believe in at some point. I'm not sure why, but it's like I could see something more than that. It's really hard to think about this area. Is this getting too weird?

M: Hardly.

J: During the past week, I put the voice of destruction with its back against

the wall. Like, let's see what you're made of! And I saw fear, I saw that it started to get scared. That was strange. Why would the voice of destruction be scared? But I had this idea that maybe the voice of destruction was born to fill in the part of us people that feels broken. Maybe it's the voice of the part that's afraid, that lives in the crack. The crack that prevents you from being whole and complete. And it scares us to give itself more room to grow. It has so little space. All of us are a little bit broken. Maybe the voice of destruction is the voice of that broken self?

M: That's what I'd say.

J: You would? I thought that this idea was too weird. Why do I see something of myself in the voice of destruction? It's born to fill the broken half of us.

M: That's exactly what I believe: that the voice of destruction is a result of an imagined disintegration.

J: This still needs some work, though.

M: I've been working on that idea with the help of spiritual and philosophical literature. You're getting there by yourself!

J: I'm not sure how right I am. But I caught on to its magic trick for a moment. The voice lives in the crack that prevents us from feeling completely full and whole. That's why it likes the bad thoughts, because they're its food, they give it more room to grow. The worse we feel, the more power and space it has.

M: I think that room to grow is a good term.

J: I'm wondering if I'm personifying it too much.

M: Some things are easier to understand if you personify them.

J: It's funny that people have written spiritual guides about this, because that was born inside my own mind, and I'm still not completely sure about the answer.

M: I think only the most advanced books talk about this area where the ego operates and where it's born. They often get stuck on the level of dualism. Dualism is the idea that there's an object and a subject. Non-dualistic thinking, which in my opinion is the most logical option, is not taught much, but it's becoming more and more common.

J: That makes sense, it's easier for us to process things if they're separated. But you shouldn't get stuck in that. Teaching non-dualism is very difficult.

M: Yes, even now we're using dualist methods.

J: What if they aren't completely mutually exclusive? Can we use separation as a tool of processing, even if separation doesn't exist? They aren't totally mutually exclusive.

M: In a book I love it says that we can use the methods of ego to unmake it.

J: Maybe it's that separation is easy to notice. Putting things in boxes makes processing them easy. But can we say that separation doesn't even exist? Should that change our perspective?

M: I believe that perception changes as the mind starts to become whole. Perception becomes more coherent. I have a friend who lives in that kind of a state. My friend sees the same light in everyone and notices a lot more similarities than differences.

J: On the practical level alone I'm starting to notice how similar we all are. I try to respect the fact that everyone has their weak side. Talking about the same light goes a bit into the spiritual side of things, but the way I see it is that we're fighting with similar problems. Everyone hopes for a better tomorrow. If we noticed this similarity, we'd argue a lot less. Even though I've had a religious upbringing, I'm a bit afraid of religion. I take it this person who sees the light is religious?

M: Actually, my friend is no longer religious.

J: Religion would be a good discussion topic, in fact. I'm a bit iffy about it. It's a sensitive subject.

M: Sure, let's talk about it! I'm not religious, either. In the sense of supporting any specific religion.

J: Once I said that it'd be funny if at the end of the world we would all be in some huge space, and then there would be this great final reveal. It'd make everybody laugh, because we'd understand how stupid the things that we've been fighting about were. And then the end credits would roll!

M: "The End"!

J: That might be my worldview.

M: That also reflects the way I see things.

J: It'd just be so nice if we also understood in real life what is really important in this life. We keep fighting about everything. But that's about being human, and humanity is broken. Bad things happen because we feel bad. We harm others because we don't dare to admit that we feel bad. If we feel good, we punish ourselves immediately.

M: Yes. And it's the voice of destruction that wants that.

J: My thoughts are starting to rush down different routes.

M: Should we take a few minutes of silence and let our thoughts percolate?

J: That's fine.

We spent the last minutes listening quietly to our minds. I already knew that our next topic would be religion and sexuality.

14.

Religion and sex have actually a lot more in common than what you'd think at a first glance, and not just because almost all religions have attempted to set restrictions on the power of sexuality. The age-old idea of sex being sinful still lives on in our subconscious, and in many cultures, the honour and shame of the whole family depends on the woman's "chastity" and reputation. Religion and sex also share common factors. Sexual ecstasy is often described in the same terms as religious ecstasy. It's possible to reach a state of ecstasy during sex that shares a lot of the same elements with religious experiences. Their unusual intensity takes you far away from the worldly matters.

"Deep erotic truths do not reveal themselves to eyes or hearts that are too judgemental," Osmo Kontula writes in his book "Mielen seksuaalisuus" (Sexuality of the Mind). If you approach sexuality with an open mind, it can be a gateway deep into the mind and understanding yourself. By examining sexual fantasies, you can work on deeply rooted conflicts and unsatisfied needs.

Right from the start, Juhani started to talk about what the word "religion" brought to his mind.

J: I can't be, and I don't want to be, an atheist. But I don't fit in with the ideal of Christianity, either. It's like I'd be a sinner every day, and every day I'd have to repent my feelings. Meaning what I feel towards children. And I can't take it. The religion I learned as a child was delimited by very clear rules. And if you didn't follow those rules, you would not receive God's grace. Every day is an apology. And that's incredibly tough. It's a difficult

situation for me, because I want to think that a living reason gives me an answer and a purpose of life. I don't want to let go of that, because I somehow want to cling to the idea that there is a reason for everything. And I have tried to adapt my views so that the way I was raised is more of a moral guideline than something that deals with your whole life. They had pretty good instructions. And after all, they're laws in principle. But I always have to pretend with mum, she's a very religious person. I don't want to make her feel bad. I pretend to be a bit more religious than I am. That's not right.

M: But is it wrong?

J: It is, a little. You should still try to live honestly, even if it isn't always pleasant. But then, where's the limit of morality? I just don't have the energy to argue with anyone. The sufficient level of belief for me is that there is a moral limit, a responsibility for what you do.

M: In that case, you could say that it's about ethics.

J: Yes.

M: Ethics are, or at least they should be, above religions.

J: Many have said that ethics are above religions. You don't need a religion for that. For me, ethics and religion are close to each other in a way. It's impossible to give any more reasons for that. What's important is the feeling that everything has a reason. That's just not enough for a place in Heaven.

M: We've been talking about separation or the illusion of separation, and some religions teach that there is a group of people who can't get to Heaven, and then there are others, usually themselves, who are definitely going to get there.

J: That's interesting. More and more, I'm starting to understand the scope of the rational self's lesson about how you're not special. Because all of those ideas are also trying to prop our view of being someone special. At

one time, I thought that all of us had the same problem that we can only fully experience our own self, and only our consciousness is fully real to us. And that forms a bubble around us: I am and you are. That bubble creates the feeling that I'm the more real person.

M: That's pretty funny. I also often think that other people's experiences can't be as intense as mine, for instance.

J: And the experience of reality of those other people is also just as real. But that requires more thought from us.

M: That it does.

J: It takes more effort to understand the experiences of others, too. If you only stick with your own experience, you end up being satisfied with a too easy answer. Then you think that only I experience being myself.

M: In my opinion, all really smart people question the teachings given based on religious works. Because they aren't consistent.

J: They haven't been made to be consistent. Suddenly, the creator decides to create something. What did it do before that? There's the idea that an entity was alone for an infinite length of time, simply existing, and then created something.

M: Well, let's look more closely at this sentence: God is perfect love. I think it also says that in the Bible. So, how could something perfect create something imperfect?

J: People also write about that online. Then they bring in the Fall of Man, that everything was perfect before it happened. It's just a weird idea because if the Devil came into the Garden of Eden and pretended to be a snake, it begs the question of why God didn't prevent that. It was such a big deal, so why didn't God prevent it from happening? If God was so incapable of preventing it, how can he be God? If he knew what would happen because of that, why was he cruel enough to let it happen?

M: That's it. Would Love do that? Let someone suffer just for kicks?

J: Those are the kinds of questions that nobody can answer. Everyone has to choose what part religion plays in their lives.

M: I also can't believe in a God that bullies his creations and decides to save some and punish others. And making people crucify your own child, well, that's extreme paternal love for you right there.

J: If you read the Bible, you see the massive hostility shown there. Down to the last, most people thought Jesus was a fraud, and then Christianity turned into a major religion after all. But at that time, so few people believed in him.

M: About that previous paradox, my answer would be that God is in fact perfect love, and God could never create anything imperfect. That's why all of this imperfection is an illusion.

J: That's too much for my brain. You mean an illusion created by the active mind?

M: Yes. Exactly.

J: What was the other word for that?

M: Ego.

J: That's right! I forgot that word for a second.

M: The ego is the part of the mind that's not real. And you'll never find any logical answer to the question of existence from inside that part of the mind.

J: Like I said, it only wants to dig. It doesn't want an answer, it just wants to dig.

M: You have an amazing ability to understand these things without any literature!

J: I'm not even trying to say things in a way that would apply universally to everyone. But the interesting thing is that I have reached the same results. Still, now I've noticed that the stress and anxiety enjoy it when I always keep digging right next to the treasure. It's like the answer is a treasure with an X on the map, and in the mental image, I'm always digging right next to it. And all the bad ideas tell me to dig in the wrong spots. They tell me, "Why don't you dig there!" And they make me dig right next to it, as if I didn't even want to see the answer. Now I've realised that there is a part of us that enjoys digging, and it's not actually looking for an answer. It has no interest in the answer.

M: Maybe on some level it senses that the answer would make the digger itself disappear?

J: Yes, of course! The digger would lose its source of energy. In this image, I was the digger and the thoughts, or "guides", always told me to dig next to the right place. They're a gang of bullies and their boss is the voice of destruction, like I said the last time.

M: Don't you start to notice a logic in this?

J: I guess, but every time I've come up with the idea, it's just my idea. I can't assume that it's the answer to everyone, hundred per cent.

M: I'm sure it isn't, at least not in this time.

J: It's getting close to a practical way of thinking, such as like how a part of stress works. When we ask why we torment ourselves.

M: Yes. These lessons are used in psychotherapy.

J: We're running out of time!

We agreed on a new meeting next week, and I knew that we would continue on the same topic.

15.

Thomas Moore, professor of religion and psychology, has written a book called “The Soul of Sex: Cultivating Life as an Act of Love”. He feels that sexuality is one of the most important aspects of human life, perhaps the most important after religion, and these two are often inseparable. He says that sexuality is a lot more mystical than people usually imagine it to be, and discussions about it remain superficial if we only talk about hormones and the mechanics of making love. The soul often expresses itself in the sexual aspects of life. Sex has a strong impact on the soul even when it is loveless or empty or only about exploiting the other person, and such acts leave a deep mark on the mind. An attempt to get sex without commitment can backfire, and a seemingly meaningless adventure can mess up our emotions for a long time.

Many of Moore’s clients sought help with sexual issues, and in the end, they found that these problems contained key mysteries in their own lives. In a way, sexuality is the façade of mind, and when it is handled wisely, our whole internal universe is revealed.

Freud also presented the principle that we outwardly express the most strongly the things that are not fundamentally in our control or that are hard for us to access. If we express sex and sexuality flagrantly or obsessively, it’s simply a sign that we haven’t found the heart of sex and sexuality yet.

I read the above text to Juhani at the start of our meeting.

M: Does that spark any ideas?

J: Was the main point there about why many problems are sexualised, or why people try to solve other problems with sex?

M: That sounds about right.

J: For me, at one point I thought that if there's a problem that we don't want to look deep into and instead want to sweep it under the rug, then sex acts as a place where we can escape the things we don't want to see. Because it has so much power that you can use it to cover anything up. Still, I see another side to it, and that's the conflict where sex is everywhere, but you can't talk about sex. The conflict and stress about how something isn't okay should be removed first. But sexual activity makes you feel really good. It's an easy way to destress. Anything stressful can make us use sex as a method of reducing stress.

M: That's true. And there are more and more sex and porn addicts.

J: We have a conflict about how you should live and experience sexuality. Most of the different spectrums are accepted. But what should we as people do with sexuality? In what way does it fulfil me as a part of my life? We rebel against that conflict either by highlighting our own sexuality or being ashamed of it. How easily we bring sex to the masses even though it's still a taboo! If your sexuality isn't ordinary, you have to be quiet and ashamed. A crisis in life can be the deciding factor that turns this conflict into harmful sexual behaviour. But that's just how I see it.

M: That's good thinking in my opinion.

J: I guess it could be.

M: I had another question today. Clients with paedophilic thoughts often ask how you can cope with this. How do you cope?

J: It's the same way you can cope with anything. The rational self is my method. No matter what the thing is, you can decide that it won't take away your joy of life. I can't say anything except that you have to ask yourself: how do you want to live? The problem being about paedophilia doesn't matter. The rational self says that you should forget, if only for a moment, that you feel this way. And then you should ask: how do I want to

live? As I said before, it's like everything else is noise. All else around us is noise, and at the core is the way you want to live.

M: Often these people are sad because they can't be in a relationship like they want, because that would mean a relationship with a child. So I'd say that it's about grief and accepting your own preference at the same time.

J: That's exactly what I'd like to find an answer to. There is no answer. The only way is to work on thinking about how you want to act. Draw the limits, inside which you can build your life. Realise what you lean on, what's your foundation pillar in life. You can say that you decide to live in a different life despite your desires. And why? What could lead to this decision? But what's the answer for each person? A person should start their own thought process from there. How could we get people to choose their own road with certain limits? And a part of the mind isn't necessarily happy with those limits. A part of me wants something that can't be had, but if I can focus on that decision, it's still just noise.

M: That's such good thinking again!

J: If a person is afraid and worried about something, and if they're asking for help, it's hard to answer that you should just think. Because their thoughts revolve around fear! The rational self started with telling me to imagine an empty room containing only me. And we did that for several days. When that was successful, I managed to imagine that there is just me in here, there is no paedophilia in this space. Then there was the question: how do you want to live? I had to get the fear out first. If a person is afraid and you ask them how they want to live, the answer comes from fear.

M: Then when I encouraged you to meditate, it was not such a bad idea.

J: I'm not sure what I think about meditation, but for me, the biggest help has been that I've been able to stop and think. I'm aware of the different components of the mind and I can give them voices. I know how to handle them. I don't think I have any special skill. Anyone can do it if they want.

M: I believe that too. It's just an effort.

J: It's a huge effort! I'm not constantly in such a state of awareness as where I am right now.

M: What do you think, can you be in a relationship with an adult even if most of the sexual attraction is towards children?

J: Right. Of course you can be, but then the relationship might consist of different elements. A lot of people think about this question. But if I'm in a relationship with an adult and I express an interest, that feels like a fraud because I'm not fully involved. The interest is still somewhere else. It's not an obstacle, but usually the obstacle comes from not being able to be completely honest, and you always have to doubt whether you're only pretending to be interested. But the biggest problem for me was whether I was using the other person as a tool for pleasure, trying to repair myself with someone else. I felt that it would lead to dishonest behaviour, that I'd be using another person to silence the desire.

M: That sounds like a dull sexual relationship.

J: Yeah, you can argue that. No relationship is perfect. But it's hard to talk about this because I don't know anything about relationships! But I can think in advance about how I'd like to act. I don't want to take avoidable risks. So why wouldn't I avoid them? After the initial passion, many relationships turn into mechanical performances. For me, that would be it from the start. How many people would decide to start that kind of a relationship? There's also another side to this. I noticed that a large part of this is dictated by fear and frustration. One woman online spoke of loss. When you lose a person that you've been in a relationship with, how do you get over it? She said that you shouldn't always think about what you lose, you should think about what you've experienced with the other person instead. But I direct this answer to paedophiles. The fear says that we're unable to have a relationship because our interest is somewhere else. But at the same time, we deny ourselves the possibility of experiencing good

moments with another person. We have already made the choice to lose a person who doesn't even exist yet. And we don't have to live that way! Couldn't we ask whether we can enjoy other things with another person? Could the relationship then be built on other things? Does it matter if the sexual interest is not a hundred per cent? Because it rarely is.

M: True.

J: So we create the mechanism of rejection, which makes sense in a way, but does it really make sense? Everyone feels a bit differently about it. Many still refrain from relationships, because the threshold of starting one is so high if you feel like you're deceiving the other person. Maybe you should apply some realism to this idea. Like, what do you expect from a relationship? That it would there be one hundred per cent of interest all the time?

M: So the reason for not having a relationship isn't completely watertight?

J: Right. It inevitably brings up the idea that what do I expect? Perfection? Complete fulfilment?

M: That must be the most destructive illusion that disappoints us.

J: Frustration enjoys it when we set the bar so high that it's impossible to succeed. We have this idea that we could be fully honest in a relationship, as if that's possible. Don't you need to lie a little in a relationship sometimes?

M: Like if a woman asks if you can see her wrinkles clearly?

J: There's a joke online: A woman asks, "Do I look fat in this dress?" The man is sweating and shaking because he doesn't know what to say. But if the interest can lie elsewhere sexually, then how am I being deceitful, in the end? Are there other things to invest in?

M: Shouldn't everyone also have privacy?

J: If a couple has sexual intercourse, do they always think about each other? That doesn't necessarily take away the other things. You can get a bit of a bad conscience. But where do you set the bar? In the end, what do we expect? Realism still means that we'll be a bit disappointed. But you shouldn't be afraid of that disappointment.

M: Even though I often stress that there is no separation, there can be things that you don't need to tell your partner.

J: The right to yourself! There is the right to privacy. And that doesn't necessarily make me dishonest. What the right to your own self means was an important lesson. It's too bad that I can't remember everything about it. But I'm not obligated to explain myself to others. I'm responsible to myself. We could talk more about that.

M: Absolutely. That too! We didn't get so far into religion this time, but there were other important things that came up that I actually wanted to get an answer to.

J: Religion has a bad habit of adding an extra level of shame to things. It spices up everything with shame!

M: Exactly.

J: About those relationships. The fear of what I am makes it difficult to talk about things. It makes me think that if I don't talk about it, I'm not honest. In a way you would have to understand the difference between not having to explain and still being honest?

M: Exactly. Does honesty mean telling absolutely everything? I wouldn't want to live with a person who vocalised everything that came to their mind. It's extremely important to filter some things.

J: We get a bad conscience from things that shouldn't make us feel that way. I just decide to keep something private, and that's not cheating, it's my right to myself.

M: This is a good place to end. Thank you!

16.

Before our meeting, I started to think about whether we should continue with the same topic or if I should try something new. Still, we had agreed on a topic before that we didn't end up talking about after all. The book on criminal psychology included claims on why someone would sexually abuse a child, and I thought we could discuss them. It was also true that sexual offences are not the same thing as paedophilia.

Sexuality is a force that always finds a way to break out. Acknowledging and accepting that are key factors in attempting to prevent people from crossing the line. If a person's feelings and tendencies are validated, this improves their self-esteem and, at its best, increases their mental resources. Feelings and tendencies are still far from acts.

I thought that if the discussion didn't drift to other topics, we could look at the most common types of distorted thinking in people who have abused children. Distorted thinking was also studied in the "Uusi suunta" (New Direction) rehabilitation programme developed by Nina Nurminen, the Principal Lecturer of the Finnish Criminal Sanctions Agency; the programme is targeted at potential and actual sex offenders. I also wanted to talk about how a friend of Juhani's had suspected that Juhani would commit a crime anyway at some point.

Juhani started to talk about online discussions before I had even mentioned the topic. He said that he had come across a discussion expressing wishes about things like lowering the age of consent, and the people involved couldn't or didn't want to see the harm to children.

J: If you justify your desire really hard and don't want to see the harm and pull others into it too, you're already in dangerous waters. These people in the discussions are also hostile, especially towards homosexuals.

M: I was going to talk about distorted thinking anyway. But that's totally nuts.

J: I've also mimicked other people's behaviour myself before waking up. At something like 10 years old I may have called somebody a "faggot" or laughed when people called someone names. I'm still ashamed of it, but I was just a kid back then. Later, the rational self told me: see the person first. That made me stop putting people into boxes. But these people talking online are still stuck in there. There's a difference between racism and thoughtlessness. A racist consciously thinks that a race or other group is less than them. An undeveloped person doesn't understand the thing at all, it's more of a habit or a joke, and they don't see why it's harmful. With the undeveloped people, there's still hope that they'll understand that their actions are harmful. There's less hope for those who have already chosen their way. You could see something like that in these online discussions.

M: How did you end up on that website?

J: I was using the image search to look for child model photos. Just regular pictures. They're completely legal, official pictures of models.

M: We've already talked about them before. There's nothing wrong with them. Especially if it stays there.

J: If only it always stayed there! Sometimes the desire takes over and I may look for something else, too. I've cut it back a lot, though.

M: From a purely legal standpoint, looking is not an offence. Possession is. But looking is not good, either, not for you or the children who have been abused.

J: It's not good, I do understand that. I sometimes give in to desire. But I ran into this discussion online and it confused me. It's not a good discussion.

M: At this point, could I talk about the most common types of distorted thinking, which we could then look at more closely?

J: Okay.

M: The most common ideas defending the offence of sexually abusing a child include the idea that sexual intercourse with an adult and a child makes the relationship between the adult and the child closer. And if the victim of the sexual offence claims to like it when the perpetrator touches them, the act isn't as harmful to the victim. Or touching the genital area of a child is a way of showing love and care to the child. We can start with these.

J: I'll answer to all of those at the same time. They all share the same aspect. What makes them harmful is the thing that they don't see. That the child trusts the adult. If children show that they like something, it still doesn't mean that they understand what it's all about. The actions support your own desire, and you don't understand that both parties aren't operating on the same level. If you say that the child enjoys it, you only see the pleasure, the reactions. That's a reaction to stimulation, and the child can't understand why that happens. That's not a justification, it's a biological reaction. The real problem is using another person to satisfy your desire when the other can't participate as an equal.

M: A good comparison is the reflex where your leg jerks when you tap under the knee. That doesn't mean you want to kick.

J: It's about the adult being in a state of desire. In the state of desire, the desire determines how you think about things. In that case, the other person's biological reaction makes you feel pleasure and rewards desire. You don't see the difference. The difference between a reaction and a conscious activity. It's difficult to explain that to those who have already chosen to look at things through desire. They only see the reaction.

M: Could you say that the desire has taken over the whole consciousness?

J: When a person is in an extremely aroused state, they rarely listen to reason. They don't see the harm – they see the reaction.

M: In general, a person can only be aware of so many things at the same time. In these cases, the harm is completely swept out of mind. And they don't even want to be aware of the harm aspect.

J: It's so sad. Those who have made the choice see all new thinking as an attack on their territory. The desire is their carefully guarded domain. They don't listen, and if you express different kinds of thoughts to them, the reaction is immediately very hostile. They say that they've accepted who they are. The problem is that they defend themselves and can't see that an activity is bad. Their discussion forums are their territory, and they defend it. There's also a sense of solidarity there.

M: Them judging homosexuals is pretty ridiculous.

J: I think it's totally mind-boggling! And the justification is that "it feels so wrong". While they themselves are interested in kids! I dropped that way of thinking immediately after the rational self appeared. And I hadn't even got too far at that point. But that way of thinking annoys me. It's so frustrating!

M: A feeling is an incredibly poor justification for anything.

J: Yes.

M: But there's still always hope that the person makes a different choice. That they notice that there's also another way of looking at things.

J: I tried to reason with those people. You have to wonder that if someone has decided to think like that, why bother even trying. The rational self says that you're judging too easily now. I listened to frustration just now, and the frustration gave energy to judgement.

M: What does the rational self say?

J: Now, the rational self intervened. Nowadays it seems to intervene immediately. It can also be hard at times. But it's right.

M: What does the rational self say about these people? Do they have the ability to change?

J: Of course they do. The rational self says that because they have a group that supports the voice of desire, they write and express things through desire. And that's all I see. And I have to be aware that I'm missing the other side. The rational self tells me that the judgement is not fair, because I only see what has been written through desire.

M: That's smart. I would ask one more question before we run out of time. Do you remember a while back when your friend told you that you have no other option than to commit a crime at some point?

J: No close friend has ever told me that.

M: In that case, I misunderstood.

J: It's more of a general way of thinking. That was the idea where I started from. I used to think like that in the beginning, that sooner or later everything would end with making the desire reality.

M: But now you're thinking differently.

J: It changed pretty quickly. I didn't have time to think like that for very long. When the rational self woke up, everything took a different route. The fear of not being able to control something in myself, that went away. The idea that I wouldn't be able to do anything about it was a sham. The fact that I can choose how I want to live is real. The world around you doesn't need to be real, but your own choices make things real. When I choose that this is something that matters, that makes it real. Greetings from my circa 15-year-old self. That's what the conclusion was as early as then. It's not easy, and I don't expect it to be easy, but makes me feel like I'm real.

M: That's wonderful! We'll see again next week and then we can continue with these ways of distorted thinking.

J: I don't want to live according to desire, I want to live based on what makes me feel real.

17.

It was Juhani's birthday. I knew because he had told me about it the last time. I asked if I could give him a hug, and he said that I could if I felt up to it. I hugged him, and he responded to it halfway, with just one arm and a bit awkwardly.

We started the discussion about illegal pictures and videos again.

J: I have a few pictures. I don't know why I've kept them.

M: So, having these pictures in your possession would constitute an offence?

J: Yes. Then there are those that would not constitute an offence that I've found on sites with models.

M: Does keeping those pictures give you some kind of comfort?

J: Maybe, but it's more about me getting frustrated with the voice of desire sometimes. About getting aroused by children. Those pictures are an easy way to shut up the desire, like giving a treat to a dog. A way to give the desire something so that you don't have to listen to it. The rational self says that it's not the right method, it's a harsh way to treat sexual desire. It's difficult to explain. Or what was our topic again?

M: The idea was to talk more about distorted thinking. But we can talk about this, too. About that hug, I'd like to ask again now that if you stop to think for a minute, why did you say "if you feel up to it"? What's hiding behind that?

J: A small part of me is judgemental, the idea is something like that who would even want to hug me. Because you know who I am. You expect judgement rather than a hug.

M: I know what you are, and you are not your preferences. You're much more than that.

J: That's the level of understanding I'd like everyone to reach. I'm not looking for approval for the desire, but that would be the optimal level. It's really nice that you can do it, because not everyone can. Many people only see the terrible thing.

M: Based on what we've been talking about, there are two voices in you, roughly speaking; two selves. I believe that the rational self is more of what you are. The voice of destruction that the destructive desire obeys is in a way the shadow that everyone has. Still, for you, the side of light is very clearly on top.

J: I do want to think that way. The heart of the matter is that I should be able to prove myself to others. If people knew, that's what it would be like. I wouldn't want anyone to have to prove themselves to others. The way we know each other and treat each other is the key. You should separate the personal and the social level. It doesn't bother me if someone is the worst Nazi in the world, if they can still cooperate with others, leave their comfort zone and on a bad day, they go into the woods to kick pebbles around. Not everyone has to agree if they're capable of being humane.

M: I'll come back to where we started from. Those pictures. Today, people avoid the term "child porn". Because pornography is hopefully produced mainly with the consent of adults, meaning that the actors participate in it voluntarily. A child cannot make that kind of a decision. But let's call them images and video that abuse or exploit a child. Many say that they know that making them brings huge amounts of pain to children or at least wrongs them deeply, but their own desire gets priority over it. What do you think about that?

J: That's true. Violent media was the limit for me. I didn't find anything arousing in that kind of thing.

M: We've already discussed this once, by the way.

J: Yes. But why does that happen? The material is unpleasant, but the desire finds an arousing component in it. Even though most of the material is very upsetting, the desire demands satisfaction from a child. Still, it doesn't take away the idea of wrongness. It creates a conflict there. I enjoy something that I know is wrong. Why do I enjoy something that is wrong? Because the desire finds something pleasing in it. That's what it's about. Then, when the desire has got what it wanted, it goes quiet. It's been satisfied, it has nothing more to say. The wrong remains.

M: This is what you have to tackle, if you want to get results in preventing crime. I mean recognising and challenging the voice of desire. That's the distorted thinking I've been talking about.

J: I agree. How could you stop yourself and think about what you're doing? How could you ask yourself: Is this harmful to me?

M: I believe that the voice of desire is very cunning and can hijack the whole consciousness for its purposes.

J: My theory is that all of these different components, meaning the desire and the others, they want to exist, they want to be powerful. When you give room for the desire, it starts to feed the things it considers pleasing. It looks for something to support its actions. You can have a spontaneous crush on a child, and see more in them. See the child as wanting a relationship. This is my theory, and I don't know if that's what actually happens.

M: I think it goes like that, too. Precisely the way how these different aspects want to exist. It's like they're semi-independent.

J: The rational self says that my feelings and consciousness can create their own version of the situation. This idea can be applied to many things. In

distorted thinking, there's a part that supports the actions of desire, for instance.

M: I had some training in Germany about paedophiles as clients. There they talked about people looking at a child through paedo-glasses.

J: I'm saying practically the same thing.

M: So you can look at a child as a child, who doesn't see things the same way as you see them, instead of looking through paedo-glasses, which sexualise the gestures and the entire humanity of the child.

J: I can see that the crush isn't realistic. For children, a crush is a game, and they don't understand why they feel like they feel. If you only look at them through desire, you want to see that "of course they understand what it's all about". But I'm the only one who understands what it means. And from that point onwards, everything would be wrong. I'd be taking advantage of ignorance. It would be good if everyone understood that a child sees falling in love and having a crush in a different way. For them, it's a game.

M: True. Can I ask you about the pictures, the ones that aren't so acceptable? What does your rational self say about them?

J: Right now, it says that they aren't good for me and that it would be better if I got rid of them. The limit would be at ordinary model photos. I'm not happy or satisfied with them. I ought to delete them. At one point I had more pictures and videos. It felt like they held me hostage. Those have started to feel a bit like that, too. The rational self says that those pictures are a result of frustration, rather than desire. The desire likes them, but it hasn't demanded them. A part of me doesn't like them. The only thing that benefits from it is frustration. I have to think about this. Now, this is a discussion inside my head, with two different sides talking.

M: I'd say that in the end, the rational self and desire can't have much of a discussion, or at least they can't compromise, because they represent opposing ways of thinking.

J: That's an interesting point. I've always wanted to find the compromise.

M: Between these two voices, which I call the ego and the real mind, there can be no compromise. But next I have to add that it's not wrong to act on your instincts if you can do it in an acceptable way. After all, we do have desire, but luckily we also have awareness.

J: I want to find a compromise. If it's impossible, then so be it. Or balance would be a better word. The desire has its own time and space. I've tried to implement that, but the desire always wants a bigger share and more space. I still keep trying, because I haven't come up with any other solution, either.

M: If the desire could decide, it wouldn't listen to reason at all. That's why it's best to follow reason first, to have the rational self in control, so to speak, and let it control desire. Rather than letting them take turns, so to speak.

J: I didn't mean that the desire hadn't been controlled at all until now.

M: Of course it has, otherwise you'd be in prison. And I'd probably be there too! All of us have to have some kind of reason and some level of control.

J: A part of the problem is how desire wants things and all limits disappear before the desire. It's not always even interested in the object. My desire likes children best, but it eats anything you feed to it. So you have to set limits for it. But it doesn't want limits, because it just wants to experience as many things as possible, experience the world through itself.

M: Now that I think about it, maybe psychopaths can't recognise anything other than that in their mind? They only want to experience power and pleasure.

J: When I studied the voice of destruction, I noticed that it wants everything to be done through it. Even the rational self wants you to look at things through it. So that's the price of making a conscious choice. Which of

these mental voices you want to fulfil? According to which of them do you want to live?

M: Simply being aware of this possibility of choice at all is enormous.

J: This is the result of a decade of thinking. And it's not something I have read.

M: It just proves that this is really what the mechanism of the mind is like, doesn't it? You can reach that result even without reading about it, because it's the factory setting of the mind. I read that funny definition in an interview of the philosopher Esa Saarinen.

J: Even those bad voices want to exist, and they want you to see the world through them. That explains why we look for support for desire. If we see things through them, we only see bad things in the world, even though we live next door to a supermarket selling food.

M: We're running out of time.

J: We can choose what we want to see.

M: Exactly. Next time we could continue with what you said about treating sexuality better. And maybe look at distorted thinking some more.

The reader may wonder why I didn't report Juhani to the police for possessing illegal images. It was because an act like this was not yet enough to break the obligation of confidentiality I had as a professional. If he had told me about abusing a specific child or intending to do so, I would have been obligated to report it. In fact, I would have reported him immediately. But with Juhani, I didn't suspect him of not telling me about something and I wasn't afraid that he would cross the limits he had set himself.

18.

What is distorted thinking? Doesn't it mean thoughts that don't correspond to reality? If so, you could say that all memories, interpretations and assessments are distorted thinking, because our ability to see the overall picture is abysmal. However, now that we're talking about distorted thinking in connection with sexual offences, we can talk about ideas that most people do not consider true. Or actually you could say that in Finland, most people would no longer consider them to be true. In the old days, people thought it obvious that women were responsible for controlling men's arousal. These ideas have led to violating the rights of other people and are much more harmful distortions than someone thinking that all dogs are scary, for example. I had already mentioned a few typical distorted ideas, such as if a child says that they like being touched, it doesn't cause them any harm. Juhani had already refuted this distortion several times before.

Other distortions include the following ideas examined in the "Uusi suunta" (New Direction) programme: the child doesn't refuse sex with an adult because the child enjoys it, caressing the private parts of a child is not as bad as having intercourse with a child, some sexual relationships with a child and an adult are the same as a sexual relationship with two adults, or that sexual intercourse with a child is one way of teaching the child about sex.

Here's an especially interesting question: are sexual fantasies about children harmful?

J: Out of those, a couple of things that could be addressed pop up immediately. What is interesting is what the distorted thinking could

mean. In this context, it means a distorted idea that may lead us to harmful acts. It tries to create an excuse for a wrong operating model. It tries to draw attention somewhere else and explain matters in the way that suits itself best. No idea is absolute, but it doesn't remove responsibility for wrong actions. Those who haven't gone too far, so to speak, have understood that the idea is wrong. They know that what they want is something that would be wrong.

M: What would you say about those fantasies?

J: Well.... It's a bit difficult. On a technical level, thoughts should be as free as they can be. It's difficult because in principle, we shouldn't deny any fantasies. The problem is that we can't fully separate the level of fantasy from the level of making the idea reality. If you could fully separate them, of course you could then say that fantasies cause no harm.

M: But when you come to the conclusion that there is no separation, you could also say that there are no private thoughts, either.

J: Does that remove or add responsibility for your own thoughts?

M: If everything is your own, isn't the responsibility then on the person who is aware of it?

J: That doesn't actually answer the question of whether it makes some thoughts forbidden. Maybe the responsibility is about whether it increases the risk of doing something wrong. If the thought supports an incorrect action, that makes it harmful. The way I see it is that in optimal cases the thought would be free, but reality is something else. If the only important thing about a thought is that it simply exists, then does it do any harm even if it's wrong? But when you look at it from a different point of view, the problem is that it's difficult to prove the difference between a thought and something else. That's why we have a responsibility for thoughts.

M: Very true. I don't believe in neutral thoughts. I believe that a thought is an action, and thoughts always have consequences on some level.

J: That's a good point. It's our decision to think about something, it's an activity in itself.

M: In the eyes of law and for practical purposes, the fantasy itself doesn't matter.

J: It doesn't matter, because it's impossible to prove.

M: Yes. In that sense, you could say that you can't get a criminal record by fantasising, no matter how hard you try.

J: Actually, the question is whether the thought changes my actions to make them more harmful. If the answer is yes, I should be critical about my thoughts. I have the responsibility of deciding whether a thought causes me harm.

M: That you do. Nobody else can tell you that.

J: Every time you talk about these things online, someone defends the idea. I'm not against thoughts, I'm against a group having a harmful atmosphere.

M: The atmosphere and overall attitudes start from thoughts.

J: It's true that thoughts rarely are just thoughts. That one group had grown into a certain shape, and all other ideas were seen as a threat.

M: What did those other ways of distorted thinking bring to your mind? Such as the idea that a child should be taught about sex in practice?

J: Going into the personal area is not a teaching tool. If a teacher pulled down their pants in biology class while talking about genitals, how long would they be allowed to work? There, teaching would be used as an excuse to act out the desire. Even my desire wonders: how can you think like that? On the other hand it thinks: how interesting. It immediately starts to create a fantasy. But that's the desire, that's its job.

M: And now? Was the fantasy interrupted?

J: I always stop them very quickly. At least in public! There at least the desire isn't allowed to talk for long.

M: This is a good example of how you control it, and it doesn't control you.

J: Yes, at least nowadays. That wasn't putting a harsh stop to it, either, I didn't really even have the time to think about anything before it stopped. It's more like a reflex.

M: I believe that it's the same mechanism as with anyone about sexual fantasies. Or I don't know, someone with a really bad addiction may fantasise all the time.

J: About thoughts being harmful. I have to take some time to think about it.

M: Go ahead! What about what you said about treating your own sexuality badly?

J: How deep into it can we go now?

M: We have 25 minutes.

J: I know that I haven't treated my own sexual self-image very kindly at all. When I was angry at that part of myself, fantasies and masturbation became a target of anger. Back then I saw my sexual desire as a yapping dog. It was in the corner, and I was annoyed because I had to be there with it. It's not a nice way to treat anyone. That was treating myself badly. It was only a lot later when I had to understand how much it has affected the way how I've treated myself in general. I've only now been processing it with myself. At the moment, when I try to think about it, there's something resisting me. The rational self says that I've made my own sexual desire feel guilty about something that is not its fault at all. There are reasons for how the sexual desire has been shaped. It's impossible to be sure, but

it's a kind of reaction to the things I've experienced. But the reason I'm attracted to children is not the desire's fault. The desire acts like it acts. I've guilted it, guilted and pointed fingers at it. At the same time, I've been doing that at myself. I've treated myself badly while also making myself feel guilty. That's something I need to stop.

M: I agree, you have to stop making yourself feel guilty.

J: I have stopped that, but there's still one problem left. I don't know how to forgive myself. I can't forgive myself for not feeling fully complete, and the way I could feel myself fully complete would be wrong. So I see myself as guilty. That keeps me in a cycle of guilt, I can't break that cycle.

M: You just said that you've stopped making yourself feel guilty.

J: I have tried, but there's still a part of me that screams: why can't you do better? It's been on my mind a lot. I don't know how to change. What that change would be. Would it be acceptance?

M: That's exactly what it would be, and I believe that it has also been happening.

J: Still, there's some last block that's stopping me. And the final one, I don't even know what it is. I've hidden it somewhere really deep down. The block prevents me from accepting it. As stupid as it sounds, I don't know what it is, and I don't even really understand it. The rational self says that it's something I've buried in my mind a long time ago, so that it's become a kind of a ghost.

M: We can't change our subconsciousness all at one go, of course, but with awareness even that can be eventually changed.

J: But why am I so scared that I've decided to hide something from myself? Why have I done that? It has to be something. One time, I had the strange idea that it's the area of the voice of destruction in a way. The voice of destruction has made me believe that there's this area where access is

denied. More and more, I'm starting to believe that it's a magic trick by the voice of destruction. It doesn't want me to see the block that doesn't even really exist. The block was just made by the voice of fear and destruction. Then it stuck "no entry" signs all around it. Could that be it?

M: I'd say it could.

J: That it would actually be the core of the voice of destruction?

M: For me, it's pretty clear that that's exactly what it is. It protects itself precisely by making sure that you don't look at it. It tries to prevent that to the last.

J: This always confuses me.

M: The voice of destruction wants you to be confused and turn away again.

J: That would mean that there's nothing there. But it still feels like there has to be something.

M: I'd say that there isn't anything. It still doesn't mean that it's not terrifying.

J: We're running out of time! But that's something I've been wondering about for a really long time. It's like I could feel that block. I feel that it exists, but I doubt if it's real or if it has just formed somehow.

M: I'm convinced that it's an excellent trickster! But more about that in the next episode!

J: And we've already planned the next episode. It'll air at a quarter to four next Tuesday!

19.

Not long after the previous meeting, I read the article “Uskonnollinen kokemus vai psykiatrinen oire?” (Religious Experience or Psychiatric Symptom?) by the psychiatrist Hannu Lauerma in the Finnish medical journal *Duodecim*. In the article, he writes:

The patient's beliefs must be respected, regardless of whether they are Christian, materialist-atheist, or something else. Proffering your own beliefs to a patient who is in a dependent relationship is against medical ethics. Spiritual discussion in the framework of an already shared worldview cannot be considered a fault. However, because setting limits between different religious and ideological views is difficult, care should nevertheless be taken.

I had a guilty conscience. I hadn't exactly pushed my own views at Juhani, but I had eagerly offered them. On the other hand, I'm not a doctor, and as far as I can recall, I haven't sworn any kind of an oath, either. But Juhani was an exception in how deeply he examined things. I didn't discuss religion or spiritual issues with all of my clients. I usually tried to move in the area that was topical and necessary for the clients, if I could assess it correctly. If I knew that a client was religious, I didn't question it. I might ask what religion meant to them and how it was visible in their sexuality. If a client wanted to know something about my views, I told them. Sometimes more cautiously, sometimes more enthusiastically. I knew I was taking a risk of some kind there, but that risk had usually been worth taking.

M: So, if you consider this as a therapeutic relationship, it would mean a dependent relationship in a sense. And so I shouldn't offer you my own worldview. Unless it seems to be pretty similar as yours.

J: We already talked about this a lot earlier with the rational self. I can't remember if we discussed this. At the time, I thought that it isn't a big deal. Right after the first meetings, I noticed how enthusiastically you presented your own points of view. It didn't bother me as such, but it felt a bit weird. I thought: this isn't what my therapy is about. But the rational self said that they'll help bring me out of my comfort zone, those different views of yours. In the end, it's not even a big difference between our views, but it forced me to consider the meaning of religion in my life. It didn't feel like an important issue in the beginning, but it proved to be important. To believe or not to believe, that's a part of humanity. Spirituality in general. Without even knowing it, you helped reinforce that. I didn't think about anything being pushed at me at all. Nowadays, I try to think about points of view so that there are no opposing perspectives; instead, I can use them to refine my own points of view so that they feel better. I've thought about mentioning it sometimes, but I was afraid of insulting you because I initially thought it was strange. At first, I even wondered if you were a suitable therapist for me, because you brought it up so often. Now I think that you're the perfect therapist for me, because I had to leave my comfort zone. I decided to approach this by listening, and it hasn't bothered me after that.

M: Thank you for telling me about this.

J: You don't have to worry about it. I don't know if you have wondered about it a lot.

M: Not really. I did a bit after that article. But it's good that you're not bothered – now I can really start pushing my agenda!

J: That article is a good example. It wasn't against you, but when you read it, you understood something and were able to use it to refine your own thinking.

M: And I also see us as having very similar views.

J: My worldview still includes a lot of the Christian tradition I received at

home. The way a person feels that they're complete, you can practise that. The purpose of life is to find a way to feel that you're living a full life.

M: And from that, we can jump back to sexuality.

J: Everything crystallises in the idea that I feel like a complete person, present, whole.

M: Do you need sex for that?

J: Not necessarily. It's about choosing what you believe in.

M: I'll continue with an idea I've been thinking about related to sex. People with sexual interest in children probably have to work through a lot of grief about not being able to establish a sexual or even a romantic relationship with a child. But if you think about sexuality in general, there are also people who could practice sexuality in accordance with their orientation, but don't feel the need to do so. Based on that, you could already conclude that it's not the greatest need of a human being or a condition for happiness in any way.

J: Right. As a rule, if everything is OK for somebody, but they experience sexual interest in children, it starts to raise its head because they have nothing else to worry about. People do have other problems, too, but the importance of a problem that can't be solved grows over time. Even though you don't need it to be happy, it gets highlighted because it can't be solved. But it's a big deal, it's not a trivial issue, after all. It does have a lot of weight. Still, it's not the only thing that matters. But sometimes it feels like everything gets stuck in that. It's something that you keep constantly running into.

M: It's really not the same kind of a problem as unpaid rent.

J: It's a funny thing about humans that we always want to worry about something. You have to have something to stress about. And if you don't have anything, you make something up. Who even is completely fine?

There's always some kind of a project, like your rugs are never quite straight. It's as if you have to have a counterweight for everything being otherwise OK. The voice of destruction likes that, it wants us to need bad things to balance out the good ones. You brought up the idea of having an upper limit of happiness. Wouldn't we want to be happy and free of all annoyances? No, because the voice of destruction wants to dig.

M: Let me explain the idea of the upper limit of happiness to the readers. I read it in the book "Minä Onnistun" (I Will Succeed) by Katri Manninen. It mentioned the theory of the upper limit of happiness by the therapist Gay Hendricks. It means that every time we feel happier than what we're used to, we hit our own upper limit of happiness. And instead of enjoying this new, wonderful feeling, we suddenly try to sabotage it to get back to our usual, a bit anxious state.

J: It's so easy to point a finger at being attracted to a child. The voice of destruction keeps saying how horrible you are, and that takes away the joy of life.

M: That's right. Your own mind is your worst enemy.

J: I follow this woman online who talks about a variety of things. She says that at times, we're our own worst bully.

M: There are no other bullies. The most wonderful thing about this is that you can stop the bullying. It doesn't usually stop right that minute, but it can be stopped completely.

J: Over time, things grow big, the spiral of stress and frustration feeds them. It's a big thing to start with, but it doesn't have to take over my life. It mustn't be an obstacle to happiness.

M: You're talking about sexual interest in children?

J: Yes.

M: The term “sexual interest in children” is better than “paedophilia”.

J: Yes, because the word paedophile is so often used to mean only those who have committed a crime. It’s another thing that I’ve thought about a lot. Abuse is not sex.

M: That’s right. It’s violence.

J: I reached this conclusion after thinking about people who feel that their sexuality has been broken after rape. Abuse isn’t sex, and therefore these people don’t need to feel dirty after what happened.

M: What do you mean about being dirty?

J: Maybe it’s the shame of what happened to you. It’s related to how we should treat our sexuality. We usually treat it badly, brand people and point fingers at them about things very easily. After all, you shouldn’t be ashamed of sexuality. It makes us feel human.

M: I think we’ve been projecting subconscious guilt at sex for centuries.

J: It’s one of the problems. The legacy of shame! It also puzzles the rational self. Why is it stuck so hard? Does it have a purpose, or was it just invented to distress us?

M: I’d say that the collective voice of destruction enjoys that too, the legacy of shame, and keeps it up with all its might.

J: There’s still some time left. Should we move on to the next topic?

M: Can I ask you something?

J: You can always ask! You might find my answer strange.

M: What do you think about child sex dolls?

J: They’re a little... I don’t know. I think they’re scary! I wouldn’t even think

about getting one. I have seen them on sale in three places, online that is. I can't really think of a reason to prohibit them. If someone says that manufacturing them would mean approving of the acts, I think that if the act stays on the dolls, why should you prohibit them? Some countries prohibit them, others allow them. I don't know what the situation in Finland is.

M: I talked about it with a colleague last week. Here, judging it isn't a simple matter. My colleague said: "If you cut out a piece of Styrofoam and shag that, it's still Styrofoam. A child doll is just slightly better made."

J: As a counter-argument, I'd say that the child sex doll is clearly modelled after someone, so it's not the same thing as a piece of Styrofoam. But I still wouldn't prohibit them. It's like drawings with child pornography. If it's drawn based on a photo showing a real child, I think it's wrong. But if that's the artist's view, not anything realistic, I can't see any harm in that. Drawing the line at whether any child has suffered when the image was made, that's difficult. But the Japanese anime style, for example, I can't see anything bad in that. The thing that increases the risk to act is so specific to the individual. If we can immediately recognise that the drawing was done based on a real child porn image, that should be prohibited. That just makes drawing a way to get around the law. I believe that a person knows when the line is crossed, but the voice of desire wants to draw the attention away from it and only see the object as arousing.

M: By the way, I told another client about this division between desire and the rational self. That client thought it was a brilliant idea and intended to use it personally.

J: That's great! I believe that everyone has the ability to bring the rational self to life. If you could get it to wake up more easily, you could reduce so much risk of activity! The rational self says that there you go, wanting to make the world better! First and foremost, I want people to understand that they have the ability to make a different choice.

M: This is just the thing that makes the world better!

J: When people talk about making the world better, they often mean changing it to suit themselves. But the answer is not about pleasing anyone. Everyone has to make a choice, and that choice is not necessarily pleasant. If I want to make a better world, that doesn't mean that the end result would necessarily please me or any individual person.

M: Well said again!

J: The core of ethical help is not just trying to take away the other person's problems immediately, but instead giving them a chance to make a better world themselves. Still, we're offering a new tool that they may not have had before.

M: That's wonderful! We'll meet again next week. I don't think we need to worry about topics.

On Juhani's suggestion, we agreed to talk about sentencing people to loneliness.

20.

We had previously discussed Paula Hall's book "Understanding and Treating Sex and Pornography Addiction", which mentions an interesting experiment with rats. Bruce Alexander implemented a "rat park" experiment in the late 1970s. The rats were placed in a large cage with many other rats, stimuli and good food. The cage also had two bottles, one of which contained plain water and the other a water and drug mixture. Nearly all of the rats in the study chose plain water, and none of the rats who happened to drink the drugged water drank it repeatedly. Alexander wanted to refute previous studies, which showed that rats that live in cages chose the drugged water instead of plain water and kept drinking it until they died. The rats in the previous studies had no company or other stimuli. Therefore, the conclusion was that the problem was the cage, not the drug.

Juhani came to the meeting a little tired.

J: I only got about four hours' sleep. Nowadays it's so easy for me to I lose sleep at night, I just can't calm down. My heart rate can go beyond 90, and no amount of rest will help. At some point I fall asleep. That's fine, I'm still myself. But if you're wondering why I'm tired, it's simply because I'm tired.

M: And we had to have a morning appointment today.

J: That's okay, even if it had been later, that still wouldn't have solved the problem.

M: What do you think about at night when you're not sleeping?

J: I try not to think about anything. We did have a real topic, too! But sometimes my thoughts just start running around and I can't calm down.

M: That's how the mind works. Luckily, you can train it little by little. But our topic was sentencing people to loneliness. Do you remember the rat experiment?

J: The one with the cage, it was pretty interesting. When people are depressed, they build themselves a mental cage, as well as a physical one. I think it's important to note that that's what happened to me. I've made myself a physical cage, too. And that's what my loneliness is. Let's not say that being alone is something wrong – deciding to stay lonely is. Of course, animal testing doesn't have a human component, but I've kind of agreed with myself that I have to be alone. That's my human component. Loneliness has started to become easier over time. Not because I want to be alone, because I've become numb about it. The cage has become a safe place. But the idea is that a human being is not meant to live in a cage, not even one they've made for themselves.

M: That's well said, again.

J: Me driving myself into staying alone is not good for me. It's something learned in a way, a matter of getting used to it. A sentence for what I feel towards children. I've taken being alone... it's difficult to say.

M: As a punishment?

J: I haven't actively made it into a punishment. I still do see that aspect of it. It's only really become a punishment recently. The way it affects my life currently is not beneficial. It's become more of an obstacle to action. I would have the ability to spend more time with people, the ability to present myself and benefit others, but I lull myself into loneliness because it's easy. The punishment comes from the fact that I want to change, but I don't let myself change; instead, I choose the ease of loneliness. That's the core of the punishment.

M: How could you start to dismantle this unnecessary cage?

J: I've been offered tools for it, but I haven't used them. Meeting places and activities. I don't know if I can go to them. There would be nice people there, I think. Different kinds of people.

M: Why should you have to be ready for them just like that? Isn't learning and practising the way to make that happen?

J: I've set myself this weird threshold for those activities. I think of the question of benefit. I think: I won't go, because I have nothing to give. I don't see that nobody is demanding anything from me. It's being nervous about putting yourself forward. I'm afraid of revealing myself.

M: What could be revealed?

J: The idea that I'm not completely honest.

M: You mean about this preference?

J: The big problem is that I think that nobody would want to have anything to do with me if they knew the truth about me. And if I don't tell them, I'm not honest.

M: So based on this, you've come to the conclusion that you'll either be a liar or a bad person, meaning that you're a bad person in any case?

Juhani thought about his answer for a while.

J: Now it feels like I just caught the bandit. That feeling comes every time I realise that what I said came from the voice of destruction, not the voice I should be listening to. It felt like there's something that doesn't like me as myself. It's disappointed and angry. I'm angry at myself for being what I am, so that leads to the idea that I shouldn't be with other people.

M: So that's the cage you've built yourself!

J: That's what it is, pretty much. But the idea of judgement is hard to dismantle, because you know that you'll get it, but what would happen if everybody told all their secrets to everyone? In a way, you have to realise that everybody is a bit broken. That can't take away our attempts to live better. You still should try to do better, for yourself and for others. There's always judgement for something, and since you can't escape it, you should try to focus on what you can do despite the judgement.

M: Yes.

J: But that's so hard to do in reality. It's a nice idea, but it's hard to implement because the weight of the judgement is so heavy.

M: Who makes it so heavy?

J: Yourself. That's my conclusion on a potential judgement, but it's really difficult not to care about it. I can't reverse it, either. But it doesn't have to shut me down.

M: I could present my own views about judgement here, of course. You said that you haven't felt like I've been pushing my ideas at you. So now I can offer them again without worrying about it! I think that all judgement is something that comes from your own imagination, it may be collective, but it's still all made up. There is no real reason for guilt. There's only the tossing of subconscious and partly also conscious guilt back and forth. And for no reason! You can liberate yourself from it, even overturn the sentence.

J: Right. I do see for myself that it could be so. But we're so used to needing punishment as a consequence of doing something wrong. That's how all of humanity has been raised. It's a technical point of view, but you don't need a separate judgement from yourself for the things that exist in your mind. Once I told a guy that we're evil because we give double sentences. A big part of the sentence I've given myself is not necessary. Is any of it necessary? Maybe not, but it is expected.

Juhani pauses and starts to laugh. Laughing, he continues:

J: Oh my god, what I just realised! The judgement happens for the same reason as being alone. I don't like a part of myself, and I've burdened it with judgement.

M: What do you identify with? What do you consider as yourself? Are your thoughts and feelings you?

J: Yes. That's a practical way of making a difference, but all of them are a part of me, I consider them as myself. It's just practical to separate one part in order to study it.

M: But how can your self change so much, along with the flow of thoughts and feelings? Isn't there a part that can observe all this?

J: I'm not sure what you mean by that.

M: Meaning that your body has changed quite a bit during your life, for example. Your experience of self has nevertheless remained the same. This also applies to thoughts and feelings.

J: The one awakening I had back then was that I am me. The rational self tells me that it is me. For some reason, I can create two mental voices, and somehow one of them feels wiser than I am.

M: I think that the wiser one is you and the other is just a voice.

J: The rational self has always said that the other one is also me. I treat the rational self as something separate here, because it's practical. It's still me. The rational self is in a weird position because sometimes I see it as separate, but at other times I don't. It's as if someone other reminded me that there is no other. That's strange. It's a paradox!

M: I think that everything here goes just as you said. All separation is an illusion. But we need it so that we can process things.

J: We have to create the thing we process.

M: In that sense, yes, not even the voice of destruction is separate from you.

J: No, it isn't. Even the voice of destruction is me.

M: I wouldn't say it exactly like that. It's created by you, and by all of us together, but it's not the Self with a capital S.

J: I should think about that more, the collectiveness. It'd be interesting to really reflect on it. That would take time from the rational self and me. I feel like I can't investigate the matter on that level.

M: You don't have to.

J: If I start thinking about it, I may not be able to let go, and that takes the whole night. Sometimes I'm afraid of creating new mental simulations about new thoughts. You're presenting wonderful ideas. But I'm afraid of thinking about them, because it'll lead me to digging at something again.

M: Once again, we come back to something we've talked about many times. Einstein!

J: It's impossible to solve problems at the same level of consciousness that created them. That's what the rational self asks, too, can it even be solved at this level? But it puts to question the whole observation where you're asking the question in the first place.

M: Perfectly said!

J: The rational self asks: what on earth do you expect to get as an answer, and what would you even do with it?

M: Exactly. There's no need to dig. Just say that maybe I don't know anything about anything.

J: Or that you can choose what you believe in. That's the only answer I've found.

M: It's a wise answer. So, do you want to believe that you must be judged?

J: You said nearly exactly what the rational self just said. Have I made the choice to believe in the necessity of judgement? Partially yes.

M: Could you change your mind?

J: That would take a lot. I'd like to do it. But I don't know how.

M: By choosing the rational self more and more, the pure you.

J: Why do I feel like we've had this discussion before?

M: I'm sure we have! But it's definitely necessary to repeat it. That's how you learn.

J: We're running out of time.

M: We are. We'll see each other next week. Now at the end, I could say that even though we keep having the same discussion again, we gain a deeper understanding every time.

J: In a way, it feels like we've gone around the circle again.

M: There you can see that something is and remains true.

The truth wasn't in the chain of circular reasoning that Juhani was stuck in. I understood that seeking truth wasn't the primary purpose of sexual therapy, but because this was in any case no longer just about sexual therapy, I wanted to deepen the discussion. If you have a comprehensive insight about something, even the problems related to sexuality will be solved at the same time. And that's what the original goal was, after all!

21.

There were many things I wanted to discuss with Juhani. At least Michael Jackson, the theory of everything, the relationship between sexual arousal and aggression, and the rejection of relationships. And continuing to examine distorted thinking I was looking through “Mielen seksuaalisuus” (Sexuality of the Mind) by Osmo Kontula again, hoping to find something related to aggression. I had recently talked with a person who felt great irritation and frustration about their own arousal.

Kontula wrote:

The central sexual theme of every person develops slowly as a response to the challenges and potential conflicts in early life. If conflict is the starting point of fantasies that have already become fixed, is it any wonder if sexuality and aggression come together? Sex therapist Dagmar A. O'Connor also wrote that anger and arousal spring from the same source, and at the fundamental level, anger, fear and sexual arousal are the same thing. So, if the cause of the conflict is resolved, will its response, meaning the central sexual theme, also disappear? Can a heterosexual person turn into homosexual or vice versa?

If paedophilia is considered a sexual orientation like homosexuality, in that case changing it is not considered possible, either. This was another topic I wanted to discuss. I was curious about whether one of these would become the topic of the day. It might be none of these. However, I often started by reading him the lines I had just written, and that's also what I did now.

J: I might not have enough experience to say anything about those things. For example, if there's a topic that I know nothing about, why should I say

anything about it? Well, I've been looking at discussions by paedophiles online again. I so badly want to tell them about the heart of the problem! If I was reading those discussions and I didn't have the rational self, it's possible that I might get caught in those ideas.

M: Is there an idea there that you could think of as an example?

J: If I didn't have a rational self and I was reading those things, the idea that was first and foremost... I think it's that the age of consent is too high or that being attracted to children can be explained biologically. They would try to make it a normal activity by relying on biology. They'd say, "biology can explain why having sex with a child is OK".

M: Isn't it funny how a person who wants to push their own agenda can always find a study or an argument to support them?

J: The funniest thing is that a person who demands a critical approach towards research is no longer critical at all when a study happens to support their ideas. That's how a human mind normally operates. And when you add emotions to the mix, the discussion becomes aggressive if you try to question the idea. Those people's understanding stops at the limit set by desire. The biggest problem is that people feel that questioning things is an attack on an area where they feel safe. People are always a bit wary and feel like the society scorns them. But you had some topics?

M: About that issue of conflicts, we've already talked about how your sexual interest in children may be due to living in traumatic conditions and getting an experience of safety and closeness from that little girl. But even though you understand it now, that still hasn't removed it.

J: It hasn't decreased or increased, for that matter. I don't know, it was a big question for me. Why? Why do I feel this way? That explanation about childhood is the most logical and certain one. I also expected that I'd grow out of it. But now that the years are going by... You start to doubt if it'll ever go away. I'm trying to give up the idea that there's something about me that needs to be fixed.

M: That can't be easy?

J: It isn't. There's a pressure to have normal feelings. It's difficult to say where the heart of the problem is, because there are so many sides to it.

M: If humans inevitably try to solve their childhood challenges with sexuality, then that applies to all sexuality. Not just the minorities.

J: For me it's clear that the childhood experience when I felt real caring for the first time became sexualised in adulthood. In my opinion, the problem still has to have certain characteristics and a certain timing in order to change into a sexual preference towards children.

M: Is this ever discussed on the online forums, or is the discussion just focused on how this preference could be carried out in reality?

J: They do talk about this, too. Many say their childhood was unsafe. Some of them aren't actually paedophiles, but their objects of interest are still young.

M: To get fancy with vocabulary, being interested in 11–15-year-olds is called hebephilia. But based on these discussions, you could conclude that paedophilia can't be considered an orientation as such? It's more trauma-based.

J: That's how I see it. I don't consider it as an orientation. I don't want to look for justification for actions.

M: Of course, orientation doesn't mean an automatic right to do things.

J: Orientation is a difficult word. It refers to the way sexual attraction is directed. In that sense, it's funny that I don't think about it as an orientation. I don't use the word because I don't want people to think that I'm trying to look for approval for any actions. I have never tried to do that. Or I had this fight fairly early on. I had it very early, when the rational self entered the picture. Before the rational self, I didn't know what to do

with it. I wasn't looking for approval back then, either, or even judgement. I just wondered: what on earth am I going to do now? In that sense, it's been easier for me because I went through those fights together with the rational self, I didn't have to fight them alone. Even though I fought alone, because the rational self was me, I still wasn't going through it alone. It's a paradox!

M: I thought that "Discussions with the Rational Self" might be a good name for this book.

J: That's a pretty neutral name. I'm not objecting to it, at least. It's OK. It doesn't reveal right away what this is all about. It might get people to read the back cover, at least.

M: I'm still wondering about this issue of orientation. Fortunately, people no longer try to change homosexuality. I'm a bit unsure about if you should try to change paedophilia.

J: I've thought about that a lot. In an optimal world, the answer would be no. There, any form of sexuality would be understood as a part of what makes you human. I shouldn't try to get rid of something that makes me human. But that doesn't take away the responsibility for what comes with it. If I feel that it makes me human, that's OK. But I'm still responsible for what I do or experience. If someone gets aroused by a kitchen step stool, and someone out there absolutely, definitely does, what with those four long legs, they still have responsibility. That doesn't take away the responsibility. There's responsibility involved in everything, even in ordinary sexuality. That's a universal rule. What matters is how I act, not how I feel. The experience does matter to me. We should completely forget the boxes: gays, straights, and so on. Human beings are allowed to feel. Everyone has responsibility!

M: From feelings we could jump into relationships. Now that you think that everyone can feel what they feel, and they don't necessarily have to tell others about it, could you think about living with another person and keeping this as your private experience?

J: Now I could. A few years ago I would've said no. I can think about it as being my fight. I don't talk about it to my family, either. They might blame themselves somehow.

M: My colleague put it well: if you decide not to try to have a relationship because you couldn't give your best, then you're deciding what's best for the other person, too.

J: That's a good point. There was another woman who also said that it's selfish to decide for someone else whether you're a good person to be in a relationship. She's British, but she thinks in nearly the same way as I do and gets the same answers. I've come to the conclusion that we're a lot alike.

M: We're completely as one!

J: Maybe. Maybe that's everything, then.

M: We may not have time to get any deeper into this topic of oneness.

J: That goes over my head.

M: It goes over everyone's head, because you can't understand it by thinking. At least not with ordinary thinking. So we can stick to the topic of sexuality today.

J: The rational self warns me about some things. The ones that lead to compulsive thinking. After the rational self woke up, I spent a few years questioning what is real. My weak point has always been the thing that calls the self into question. It's a frightening area, and it makes me spiral. The things that go outside the consciousness. It's outside my perspective. It scares me! It was such a big problem back then. I was afraid of losing my mind when I started to think about it. The question of self makes me anxious, how do I know what is real...

M: Can I interrupt you?

J: Go ahead.

M: I'm now reading this book called "Theory of Everything" that I think is speaking your language, and it discusses this thing exactly. It's not scary! I've been thinking, what if I brought it for you to read? What do you think?

J: Well, I don't know. What does it say?

M: It says that nobody can know anything more than "I am". Nobody can ever know anything more than that.

J: I always end up with the compulsion of trying to find out something beyond that. Where did the rational self even come from? How did I think of the illusion of being special? If I have a mental voice like this, what about me is real?

M: As I think I said before, in my opinion the rational self is real.

J: So why is it separate, a thing that I listen to?

M: Because now the mind appears as if it's divided into different parts. It's not divided in reality. The you that listens is the observer and chooser in your mind. And luckily, you usually decide to listen to the part of you that's the rational self.

J: Sometimes the rational self is just a feeling, it's not always a thought. It's something that's hard to explain properly. I don't think that it makes me someone who's above others. Still, it's always been a bit weird. You'd think that I would've become used to it, but I'm still not completely used to it. I don't know. We're running out of time and now we've gone around the circle again. I know that the rational self has an answer, and that's why we're discussing this issue. Or the rational self is the answer in itself.

M: Yes. Again, this was not a useless circle.

J: I'm still annoyed, because you had other good topics, and this has to be the millionth time we've gone through this.

M: It doesn't bother me!

J: Not even a little?

M: Not even a little. We're getting close to the heart of things again.

22.

I was still wondering about the connection between sexuality and aggression, even though Juhani did not express any kind of hostility. On the contrary, he is one of the nicest people I've met, and maybe that is why his activities have remained as clean as they have. I already knew that hostility and aggression were not exactly the same thing. I was now reading in the book "Kriminaalipsykologia" (Criminal Psychology) by Jaana Haapasalo that childhood experiences can generate sexual aggression if sexual promiscuity is combined with hostility, and that empirical studies have reinforced the idea that the childhood of rapists includes plenty of experiences of violence and insecure attachments. That in turn can be transferred to relationships in adulthood and manifested as a lack of empathy and inability to establish close relationships. Due to their history of childhood development, rapists may often have sexist attitudes and beliefs concerning women. This, again, was about distorted thinking.

I read the previous paragraph to Juhani and asked if it sparked any ideas.

J: Well, the first idea was that this is an incredibly extensive topic. Are you interested in how aggression is linked to sexuality?

M: Yes.

J: I have to think about from what point of view I should approach the issue. Yeah, I've thought about this a fair bit. This is not really universally true, but I think that horrible childhoods are related to aggressive behaviour with regard to sex. The idea of self, empathy and sexuality has not had

the chance to develop. It means that people don't see how they're acting themselves. People like that probably need completely different kind of help than what I feel that I need. But the tendency to continue violence is a legacy we bear. It must be one of the millstones carried by Finnish society in particular. People think that aggressive men are strong. Displaying masculinity is an easy way to conceal the need for help. Others have not experienced violence in their childhood, but as the little things pile up, their actions start to become violent. Many are afraid to show that they're hurting, and aggression is one way to prevent others from seeing it. It's a way to save yourself from an imagined rejection.

M: Exactly. On the other hand, strong aggression is not linked to all sexual offences.

J: No, it isn't.

M: If we think about child abuse.

J: It's not even required. If the question is how aggression is related to sexuality, in many cases paedophiles feel hatred towards themselves. Towards what they feel. It's a major wound that's becoming slowly infected. The pain causes aggression to spill out. In certain situations, those people lose control, and all the pain they have experienced comes on at once and pushes them over the line. The line that prevents them from hurting others. People extend their own suffering by hurting others; the understanding that you're hurting another person gets squashed under how bad they feel. That's one result of my simulations. In that situation, you no longer act as yourself, the violence happening becomes something separate. It's disconnected from the ability to control yourself, and afterwards you may get the idea that it wasn't even you.

M: Exactly. Now we could take a moment to look more deeply into the idea that desire and sexual arousal come from the same source as anger. I think that this is the ego that I've been talking about, while you might call it the voice of destruction that gives orders to desire.

J: Well... Should I talk about how I see it? In a slightly different way?

M: Please do!

J: My own experience as myself is that I don't feel that the sexual desire has anything to do with the voice of destruction, they aren't bound to each other, but the voice of destruction can use desire as a tool.

I clapped my hands enthusiastically.

M: That was exactly what I was going to say next! I'd even written it down. I've written in my day planner that the intention matters, the energy is the same. In other words, you can ask if the energy is serving the voice of destruction or the rational self?

J: The energy actually just is. If you talk about the energy to live and exist, both the voice of destruction and the rational self can harness it for their own purposes. The energy is neutral. At its best, the energy means the lust for life. We can use it to see the purpose of life, that's its purpose at its best. But when I'm talking about energy, I don't mean any kind of energy treatments, this is just a practical way to approach it. The energy gives motivation to act, but the voice of destruction misuses it. The voice of destruction doesn't care if the method it uses is good or bad, it only cares if it can use it to lead things into a bad direction.

M: Let's take a look at testosterone, for example. It's said that the hormone affects sexual desire in both men and women. It also affects aggression. But testosterone in itself is neutral.

J: It depends on what perspective you have on things. A perspective is a perspective, a thing is a thing. It depends on a person's cognitive ability to use their resources. The tool is the same. In principle, if you take things far enough, I'm reaching the conclusion that good and bad are in fact points of view. They, too, can be studied on a level that makes them neutral.

M: Good and bad belong to the world of dualism, where everything must

always have an opposite. Yeah, that was an interesting discussion on aggression. I think I'm almost finished with this question.

J: In a nutshell: I wouldn't put desire and aggression in the same boat. Sexual energy can feed aggression, but not necessarily. Why does it seem to happen fairly often? I believe that those who don't end up in a spiral of sexuality and aggression stay out of sight. The ones who do end up in the spiral get attention. Observation always means that something else remains unobserved. You should always keep that in mind. Otherwise everything comes to a head. In that case, you fail to notice what you have left out.

M: There is only room for very few things at the same time in the awareness of a human being, and the media takes a lot of advantage of that.

J: Well, the media is a completely different discussion. People live boring lives and go looking for excitement.

M: It's the ego looking for drama.

J: It's about looking for drama. Dramatic news makes the top stories precisely because people want it. Even though they say that they don't want it, if you click to open the article, you already wanted it. Click the link to see pictures!

M: That's right.

J: The people working in the media need their money. And the people who huff and puff about why they're publishing such and such news have still read it anyway! We're getting completely off topic. But it's sort of related to how we don't always notice how we filter information. We can't see that the information always goes through a filter. That's natural. But it's still more important to focus on how you act. We can't live without filters.

M: I'll come back to the distorted thinking for a bit. Because now it's been noted that men with toxic masculinity commit more crime, and it's often linked specifically to dismissive and derogatory ideas about women.

J: I've also thought about that recently, because I knew this topic would come up. The people who are hostile towards the other gender see their rights as being threatened. The gulf between genders grew with #metoo. It started out with the injustice of the rich and powerful getting off scot-free. But something strange happened. It became a confrontation, and many asked: how can you approach women if you can't even flirt? But many in those discussions were actually hostile and afraid for their own position. They were afraid of losing their status. Women's freedom frightens them.

M: How is this related to making advances?

J: I tried to answer the question of how this gender conflict came to be. A lot of people were afraid that it would be impossible to approach women at all, especially those who already saw women as inferior.

M: Exactly.

J: I followed these events pretty closely. There are people who intentionally fan the flames. This wasn't a fight of women against men, it was women and men against those acting in bad faith. There are always people who want chaos, who want to stir the pot. These people wanted to turn it into a battle between genders, even though it wasn't originally about that.

M: That was a good platform for misogynist discussion.

J: It's a big problem today that the one who controls information, controls the world. There's a certain type of person who feels bad and has nothing better to do than stir up controversy. They attack on every issue and seek drama. And even here, the group of frustrated people were joined by misogynist men, and it turned into a war between genders, even though it was supposed to be a war against abuse. Misogyny springs up from the same source as racism. It's a fear of losing your own status, or shame due to your imagined poor status.

M: That isn't about sexuality, either, it's about hate.

J: It's clearly about hate. The rational self doesn't understand things like that. It says that these are precisely the things that prevent people from developing. From the perspective of the rational self, it's inconceivable how you can get upset by gender or skin colour. The rational self playfully says: why do you people still act like this? Can't you get any better?

M: Fortunately, development is possible!

J: Another interesting discussion is what happened to me when I was heading in that direction. I was still moving towards a racist and misogynist direction at 13 years old, but when the rational self entered the picture, the need for all that disappeared completely. The need for hate also went completely away. I can't hate any longer, I've lost the ability. I'm happy about it, but it's still odd.

M: It's sensible and healthy. Hate is not healthy, although even many psychologists claim that it is. Identifying it is healthy! What matters is what you decide to do about it after that. Aggression is a force that moves you forward, but hate is already linked with judgemental thoughts. That's their difference.

J: The rational self simply says that hate is not necessary.

M: That's right. For our next meeting, have you watched the documentaries about Michael Jackson?

J: I haven't, and I don't know if I want to.

M: What upsets you about them?

J: Everything!

M: Well, in that case we can skip it.

J: I've thought about it, but the rational self says that I'm not responsible for him in any way. And on the other hand, it makes me feel like I'm also a bad person.

M: He wasn't a bad person, and neither are you. But we can discuss that later.

J: We can talk about it, but I can't promise to watch the documentary.

M: You don't have to, we can discuss the topic of good and evil in other ways, too.

23.

The topic of the day would be Michael Jackson. I've always liked his music, which means that I'm nothing special musically speaking. I originally dismissed the first news about suspected abuse with a shrug. It was only now, after I'd started working with people with sexual interest in children and seeing the "Leaving Neverland" documentaries, that I became interested in the events. Michael was childlike down to his voice and objects of interest, so that at least for him, the theory of paedophiles feeling that children are at their own level was accurate. I'm certainly not the only one to speculate about this, but he may have got stuck in some way in the childhood he never had. He kept longing for the childhood, innocence and playfulness he never had the chance to experience. Due to his position, he could purchase the affection of children and their families, which made the abuse possible. He donated enormous sums to children's charity. Therefore, he truly felt that he loved children and felt a connection with them that he couldn't feel with people of his own age. He fell in love with small boys and made them believe that sex was a part of the love between them.

When talking with people about this, I noticed that they approached it in two ways: Either they didn't believe that the rumours were true, or all of Jackson's music was ruined after the news about abuse. I also encountered the opinion that the documentary shouldn't have been released in the first place. The option of seeing the abuse as abuse and the music as music didn't seem to exist. I explained this observation to Juhani.

J: I haven't watched the documentary, but for me, it's perfectly clear that the abuse happened. I have no doubt about it. Which perspective interests

you? What would be a good perspective on all such cases? Well, I'll start with my own perspective, since I think it's a good one.

M: Go ahead!

J: How should I start? I think that you can separate music completely from its creator. In that case, you like the music and you aren't automatically stating an opinion about the person who made the music. If you like the music, you like the music. The acts that an artist may have committed are wrong, and you don't have to accept them. Many feel that it's difficult not to give support at some level if you buy albums or listen to the music, for instance. In that case, you're still supporting the artist's life as a whole. Listening provides income. If you don't want to give any kind of visibility, you won't listen to the music. I think the perspective that listening doesn't mean approval for the bad actions in any way is more important. Still, many think that if you listen to Michael Jackson's music, you're supporting him as a person as well as everything he was or did. It turns into the idea that you shouldn't even listen to it.

M: There is a logic to it, but it still doesn't completely check out.

J: It doesn't check out, and many understand that it's due to the shock and disgust. The reaction stops you from listening to the music. And at the same time, you want to criticise other people for listening, because what happened seems so personal and so bad.

M: This is the phenomenon of projection at work. People don't want to look inside themselves, because they'd also see the capacity for evil there. It's always easier to look somewhere else.

J: Yes. But I'm not going to dissect that just yet, I'm thinking about people's reactions. It's a part of the emotional investment. After listening to that music for years, it's an emotional investment. Then when something shocking is revealed, you feel betrayed. As if that investment is a loss. I'll try to simulate that a bit more in detail. It feels like the new information hurts your feelings. You feel like if you had known, you would've never listened to his music in the first place.

M: That's a good point of view. I haven't even stopped to think why people react by saying you can't even listen to his music any longer. I've only thought how silly that is.

J: Just think about something that has made you feel good for years. Suddenly, all of that is called to question. There's disgust. Why did you let that music make you feel so good, if it was all a lie?

M: Here we get to the ability to make a distinction. Was the music a lie, or the fact that he donated money to charity?

J: The obvious answer is no, the music hasn't changed.

M: And the money he donated hasn't changed, either.

J: Why donations from wealthy people are seen in a bad light is yet another discussion. But knowing about the actions means that it's easy to get a bad taste from everything he did.

M: What about you?

J: I haven't thought about it. The music changed the world, everybody could be happy about that. For me personally, Michael Jackson didn't really mean anything much, but I know that his music was very important to a lot of people. I saw what the music could do at its best. It took a long time for me to find my own favourite music. And when I found it, I understood why music is so important to so many people.

M: Getting back to how people feel cheated and betrayed...

J: The biggest part is the feeling that I've been betrayed, all of it was a lie, something was stolen from me. When I felt something I wouldn't have felt if I had known.

M: That's why people would rather deny that he could've done those things. That's the reason they don't want to believe it. It's difficult to see that a person you worship also has a dark side.

J: That's true.

M: And that the good that he did could still be good. I believe that he genuinely wanted to help. And you can hear the incredible skill in the music. Those things were done in a different state of mind from the abuse.

J: Many people forget that point online. It's forgotten when you're dealt a hard blow. You can't separate the person as an artist from the private person.

M: It's not always even possible. Still, I see clearly that the mind of the ego can be separated from the loving mind. Here, when I say loving, I don't mean the sexual mind. To sum up, you could say that anyone can do bad things to another person. Anyone.

J: From there, you could jump to the illusion of being special. It prevents you from seeing that if the situation was different, that could also happen to you.

M: I need to be clear now that I don't think that it's right or acceptable that he abused children for years either. It shouldn't have happened, not even once. It was hard to watch the suffering it's caused to those he abused. Despite that, people have still made the point that these things shouldn't have been made public because the person is already dead. I think that it was important to make them public. Just to show that a person with sexual interest in children can also be someone respected.

J: I also think that it was really important. You couldn't have left the matter to rely on just rumours. It wouldn't have been right for the victims. After the confirmation came, the discussion was conflicted. It's still important to be able to discuss bad things, too.

M: To see that nothing is what it appears to be.

J: You shouldn't try to change the past to be like how you wanted it to be, you should see it for what it was. Prohibiting people from listening to his

music doesn't help anyone, either. And does it have to take away respect for the dead even if you talk about these things? You can respect someone while loathing them a bit at the same time.

M: Yeah, that's true. They might not completely exclude each other.

J: One big problem in today's society is that thing A supposedly excludes thing B. Usually things are much more complicated.

M: If you sum up this conversation a bit...

J: Occasionally, I get annoyed about how confusing I get in these conversations. I tried to get the idea out there.

M: You did manage that. To sum up, you could say that it's good that this was made public, because it shows that a person with sexual interest in children can also have a good and skilled side. Still, the setting here was intended to show how a good and skilled person can also have an evil side. But he clearly experienced sexual interest in children. That in itself didn't make him problematic. It was only the way he acted, abused his position, became blind to it. But that he still had the good in him.

J: It doesn't take anyone's skills away.

M: Or their ability to do good.

J: To be either good or evil, it's not like that. Acts are acts, they have their own, separate weight. But the ability to do good exists.

24.

After the Christmas holiday, we started again with a discussion about memories. Juhani had talked about his memories at his childhood home, and received confirmation that he hadn't invented the memories himself: others remembered them, too.

J: My mind can come up with a memory very easily.

M: "False" memories do happen. On the other hand, no memory gives a perfect picture of the situation.

J: Right. Nobody's memory is as good as a film.

M: Did processing memories like this bring up any feelings?

J: Well, a little. Mainly I felt that I had similarities with my mum.

We talked a bit about the things we hoped this book would bring people.

J: I hope that I could help those who suffer with the same problem. I want to prove people that they can stay humane even if the desire wants something else. I don't want awards or applause, I want understanding of what it is to be human despite everything.

M: Exactly like you said.

J: That's the message of the rational self to me. That's what it wants from me, how I should live my life. To choose the path of humanity. The path is

for me to live the best life I can, and nobody else has to carry my burden. I have the same human rights as anyone else. I've been thinking about the voice of destruction again. It wants me to follow its path in a way. Its purpose is to show a path with nothing but fear. I may have already said that the voice of destruction wants us to make a bad decision and choose to listen to it. It's similar to the rational self in that both of them want me to follow them.

M: That's how I think about the mind. We always have the freedom to choose, but the voice of destruction, that I'm calling the ego, is automatic and chooses itself, so it's difficult to notice its power.

J: It's a funny idea, it choosing itself.

M: In other words, it always talks first. Except when the rational self stopped you quickly.

J: I agree. The voice of destruction has already made the choice to be the boss without asking others. It doesn't come to boss me around first thing. It's not bossing me around, it's trying to slip half-truths into my mind. There's some truth mixed in, but it's linked to distress. The truth offered by the voice of destruction has already passed through bad filters. Its purpose is to make you go down a bad road. The truth is there to reinforce the bad things.

M: About that bossing around, I could add that it might not be very direct, but instead it's sneakily trying to get a hold of you.

J: For me, it starts to boss me around when my attention is already on the bad things.

M: I guess this is exactly what Christianity means when it talks about the archfiend.

J: That's it, pretty much. That's how I've also understood it, even though I haven't thought about it that way myself. For me, it's still the voice of

my own thoughts. It does share a similarity with the rational self, but they want to act in completely different directions.

M: They have completely different goals. And you said that the voice of destruction is the head honcho, while the desire is one of its minions.

J: Well, I guess you could describe it that way. But the voices of hate and fear are more of a part of the group of bullies that have come to pick on me. I might not include desire in that gang. The voice of destruction can also use the desire, but it's not the same thing.

M: Now that I'm thinking about it more carefully, they aren't exactly the same thing. I believe that a human being can't exist without wanting something. We want to have something as long as we believe that we're missing something. You can channel that desire in a different way. Hate is aggression.

J: Hate is the best friend of the voice of destruction.

M: That's a good way to put it!

J: Hate has so much energy. If it's about the energy of life, it's a fight about energy, the lust for life, and which voice can use it.

M: Will the rational self start to fight?

J: Well, no. It won't, but it stops me and asks me if I understand where I'm heading. Even though I just called it a fight for the energy of life, the rational self has never fought with me or with any of the other voices.

M: It probably has enough confidence in itself that it doesn't need to. And what good has ever come out of fighting?

J: Now the rational self tells me that this isn't about a fight, it's about the choice. To which voice I choose to give my energy. That's how it corrected this.

M: That's perfectly logical.

J: There's always something weird in talking about energy. I don't know if it reminds me of energy treatments or something. But it gives you understanding.

M: And I still think it's logical.

J: It is logical. Still, for my own part, I'd prefer to use a different word instead.

M: Johanna Blomqvist, who has a PhD in physics, studied the so-called energy treatments and found that "information" might be a more appropriate name for the energy from the perspective of physics.

J: Well... okay. But did we have any other topics?

M: I don't have anything ready right now, but there are plenty of topics I want to get into later. The symbolic meaning of sexual fantasies...

J: That might be difficult, I don't have any technical information. That would be my answer to that.

M: That's fine. I have a book to use as a basis, "Sex in the Forbidden Zone". In the book, a psychotherapist reflects on about how important it would be to value sexual fantasies for themselves, without having to make them a reality.

J: That's an interesting question. Maybe I should think about it.

M: Then there was also the book "Theory of Everything".

J: Yes, whatever that means.

M: That's actually the only book I'd like you to read for yourself, and I'll lend it to you.

J: That's fine. I haven't read anything for a long time. I wonder if I still know how to?

M: I think reading good books would give you more tools to deepen your thinking.

J: I'd have to find something interesting. I've reached some conclusions myself, and it'd be interesting to read how it fits in with the thoughts of those who have studied the issue for decades.

M: The author of this book had specifically reached these results himself. And I also reached nearly the same result during a long car trip when I was 15. I say nearly, because I came to my conclusion as an adult, but it isn't in conflict with what I realised back then. No books are absolutely necessary, but it may be a big help.

J: It's mainly about getting out of your own bubble. Your own thinking has a certain limit. The conclusions you can come to are always limited. You'd have to verify things instead of stating how right you have been.

M: My favourite book asks: would you rather be right or happy?

J: That's a good question. Being right is not for yourself, it's for everyone. If I'm right, I'm not the only one to benefit from that. That's how you should treat being right. It's not for me!

M: But people very rarely check their assumptions!

J: That's true. And after you've reached a conclusion, you no longer think about it and move on to the next one instead. Acceptance can happen too easily.

M: The book "Theory of Everything" talks about exactly that. When a problem gets too difficult, you decide that you don't have to think about it.

J: At some point you reach a limit and can't go any further, and then sweeping things under the rug feels like the most sensible choice.

M: For some reason I feel you should read that book. I already felt that when I started reading it myself. I recognised your “language” in it.

J: That’s something really interesting, then. It just confirms the idea that I’m not special. A lot of people would have the ability to see things in the same way, but few choose to do that.

M: I’m just as convinced that everyone has the ability. But they aren’t aware of it.

J: That’s one reason. In a way, there’s no need for it. Often there’s a crisis that triggers thinking. Usually you need some kind of adversity that drops you into a pit. You have to choose: do you stay in the pit or start to develop?

M: That’s true. Now, we have to agree on our next appointment.

J: And here I was afraid that we’d have nothing to say.

M: We always have something to say.

25.

Even though I was not a psychotherapist, I still used the methods of psychotherapy in my work, and I had learned about many different frameworks during my career. My approach was integrative, as all approaches have their strengths and weaknesses. Depth psychology, or psychodynamics, took sexuality into account perhaps more extensively than other approaches. The book “Sex in the Forbidden Zone” by Peter Rutter, a Jungian psychoanalyst, had made a strong impression on me. Its main theme was sexual abuse in power relationships, mainly the abuse committed by male therapists in their relationships with clients. He wrote that sexuality is often thought to be the most intense when it's the most forbidden. If a person exploits another to spice up their own life, they stop looking for that vitality in themselves. And when the momentary relief from forbidden sexuality is over, the abuser is emptier than before. It becomes even more difficult for them to access the internal resources represented by their sexual fantasy, and they deny their own psychological wounds. These wounds inspire people to fantasise about sexual connections with intoxicating forbidden partners. That in turn increases the difficulties with sexual limits. When those limits remain unbroken, these people can access their internal resources and, with their help, conquer their feeling that only a sexual connection with a forbidden person can heal their own wounds. The fantasies in the forbidden zone are connected to tremendous psychological forces. Sexual intercourse is the ultimate symbol of an intimate relationship. Through intercourse, we can experience our biological and spiritual tendencies as deeply as possible while also sharing them with another person. The symbol of intercourse

lives in our minds, even if the act itself did not take place. Fantasies of intercourse with forbidden partners often represent a need to get in touch with the inner aspect of ourselves that is represented by the image of the forbidden partner. Projection, meaning reflecting something outwards, does not only operate on people's "dark side"; instead, people also project beauty and goodness outside themselves and then sexualise it. This process occurs at lightning speed, usually unnoticed. After this, the act and the symbol may become disastrously mixed.

Previously Juhani had said that at some point he had tried to make his fantasies repulsive, even violent, to punish himself and to get rid of them. Later he had allowed himself to fantasise more, and he had described how even simply imagining kissing a child seemed so pleasurable that almost nothing else could surpass it. Fantasising about children meant deep emotional and significant satisfaction for him. He had also talked about an erotic dream in which he was making love to a woman who was approximately 18 years old, who sometimes turned into a girl of about 7. The intensity of arousal had increased every time the woman turned into a child.

This time, the topic was on the table.

J: Fantasies. Surprisingly, it's a very difficult topic for me. Discussing this is tougher. Creating the mental construct is more difficult. I'm wondering why. I have thought about much more difficult things, after all. For a very long time, I had a very hostile attitude towards fantasies and considered them mainly as something compulsory that I had to get done to help with masturbation. So that creates the difficulty when you ask about the purpose of fantasies. An interesting approach is that we need it; fantasising is self-explanatory. We can't not imagine things. We can't not sketch out images of them. Sexual fantasies hold a lot of power. They activate several areas in the brain, and visualisation is a natural part of that mechanism. Fantasies can be used to meet the need for intimacy, they're a substitute for closeness. Fantasising is often a way to process sexual feelings.

M: With sexual feelings, do you mean physical arousal?

J: That too. But I also meant feelings for a person or a thing. It can mean a feeling of affection and sexual arousal at the same time. I've always been interested in why we're ashamed of fantasising. Why is shame such a big part of it? It can especially happen after sexual thoughts. You may think: "Why did I imagine that?" Why can desire take fantasies to a level that becomes uncomfortable? Maybe it's because desire has fewer limits than then normal state of mind. It can add things to fantasies that you don't usually think about.

M: Before, you talked – or we have talked – about the connection between desire and the voice of destruction.

J: Yeah, we have. The everyday mind tries to keep things very rational. The everyday mind doesn't go out and add fuel to the flames by itself. It's desire that does that.

M: My everyday mind is not very rational!

J: I can't come up with a better way to say it off the top of my head. The everyday mind tries to keep everything level, so that you don't spend too many resources on things, or so nothing gets too wild.

M: That might also be called impulse control.

J: The desire is the opposite. It doesn't want any control. Its purpose is to be desire itself.

M: I suppose you could say that it understands nothing.

J: That's an interesting way to put it, and I agree. It's interesting, and a part of us really doesn't care about anything. If I look at my own desire, it doesn't care about what arouses it, as long as it's aroused. For it, the most important thing is to get the spike of energy. The desire can run around in pretty much all directions. I think that it might work like this for others, too. Sexual diversity can turn anything into a fetish. That's why you could consider desire as its own level. For it, the object isn't important,

it's the reaction. We humans have finally started to reach a level where the sexuality of mind fulfils a person in a different way from biological sexuality. The sexuality of mind means that you can live out your sexuality according to your own abilities. We need to choose what fulfils our lives, and sexuality is a part of that.

M: In my view, sexuality is a single phenomenon, but you can look at it from the point of view of biology or the mind.

J: I separate things to make it easier to think about them.

M: In a way, the ability to separate things is necessary.

J: It's good in and of itself, but there is a risk of forgetting the connection between things.

M: What do you think about the possibility of fantasies having an important symbolic message?

J: Hmm. I do see them having one to an extent. We may not think about it actively, but fantasies may have features telling us that this thing is important. I can't say how much weight I give to communication, or to the symbolic part. It's probably specific to the situation. I've had such a negative attitude towards fantasising that it's difficult to process it now. Do you think that fantasies are always symbolic?

M: I think that everything except for the immutable is symbolic.

J: That's an intriguing idea. My brain is too technical for me to see symbolism in everything. But I might need to think about this for a long time to get a better answer. Sometimes the thought process takes time. I'd say that it isn't always a self-evident symbol. It may not be very easily noticeable. The things that we're processing "leak" into the fantasy in a way.

M: Can you think of any examples?

J: Maybe not a personal example. The most obvious one is a crush entering into the fantasy.

M: You find a person attractive, and fantasies about them might be more tender?

J: There, the sex is more of an extension of the emotion, and the emotion itself is much more complex. If you compare it to porn, for instance, the feeling in fantasies about a crush is different. It's much more intimate, of course.

M: I believe that everyone wants intimacy at some level.

J: I don't know what the most important need is, but the feeling that someone cares is at least a very close second. What the most important thing would be, that I can't say. That I matter?

M: And these two are also intertwined with each other. Sex probably only comes after those in importance.

J: Yes, absolutely. I think sex is important, but I also think that it's only the tip of the iceberg. Sex is only the thing that's visible. It's easy to only notice that. But the sharing of your self with another, for me to share the personal area and what fulfils me with another person, that's the big thing. That's what's completely missing from porn. Some people may try to meet this need for intimacy with sexual connections through a live stream. Once, I watched online porn with an adult trans woman who I thought was arousing. She started to talk about how people see her as something sexual first, and how difficult it is to get to know people. She was annoyed that people saw her first as trans and were aroused by that, instead of being attracted to her as a person. Of course, you could then ask: why do online porn? Still, I didn't masturbate then and listened to her for a long time. She had a lot of viewers. This is a pretty new and fun feature, the desire doesn't care about what a person has between their legs, I may become aroused by them anyway. That was a new situation for me, and for a lot of others, too. That someone would open up about an important issue on a site that wasn't

originally intended for it. In any case, my other sexual preference after a child is a trans woman, maybe! Because my desire doesn't differentiate or care. Now that I've learned more about it, that's what it's starting to look like. I might even think about a trans woman as a girlfriend, maybe! That preference is strong, and the weirdness comes from some of these people who make porn having a fairly large knob between their legs. I'm wondering why that doesn't bother me, and instead it's something fun.

M: A woman with a dick!

J: I've heard that too, a lot of people say that a penis on a woman is just extra.

M: Now we're running out of time, and with such an interesting topic!

J: Let's continue with this.

I gave him the book to take home with him, and we agreed on a time the following week. The meeting ended in a cheerful mood, and I was particularly happy about Juhani putting the idea of potentially wanting a trans woman as his girlfriend out there for the first time. This was the first time he talked about allowing himself a close relationship.

26.

I was 15 years old when, on a car trip from Oulu to Helsinki, I had the clear realisation that everything in this world is based on belief. You can't know anything for sure. Everything you observe is filtered through the brain, it's never direct. We can't really, truly know things that appear to be objective, we just believe in what we have been told or what has been shown us. But even then, we can't know them with absolute certainty.

Luckily my parents let me think in peace. That was an insight that I haven't refuted later, only refined. Not every single thing is based on belief; some things truly exist, because I can state that I am. But that's all I can state. Juhani had thought about similar things, and that's why I wanted to give him the book "Theory of Everything" by Jed McKenna, which in my opinion summed up this idea very concisely.

We started the meeting a bit late, and I apologised for that. Juhani said that there was no rush, because time is only an illusion. He handed me the book and told me that he had read it.

J: This may take at least two sessions. I'd like to explain all of the ideas that it sparked up. I want to start out a bit further back. I already planned last night where to start. It gave me a bit of a funny feeling. In a way, I now understand more about what you've been talking about. About oneness. It seems like it's partially based on this book?

M: Actually, it isn't. I only read this book recently, and I've already had this worldview for ten years.

J: And you came up with it yourself?

M: Sort of. When I was 15, I realised that everything is based on belief. You can't know anything for sure. Then I forgot about it for a long time, and my worldview was mainly scientific and materialistic. Ten years ago, I read Eckhart Tolle's book "The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment", and that gave a start for another in-depth journey on the road to truth. This book just reinforced what I already knew.

J: It was very interesting. I probably would've come closer to the view of that book back then if the rational self hadn't put the brakes on. The brakes were important, because I had to answer the question about what is the most important thing that will fulfil my life. Looking for the final answer didn't fulfil my life, it only fulfilled the need to find an answer. The rational self stopped me so that I could see that what I choose to believe in is what becomes real. What I choose as my own path becomes reality. That's why I slightly disagree with this book. It could still be correct, that's not what I mean. It's not about being right, it's about something even simpler than that. What are the things I consciously choose that make me feel that I exist and that I'm present? There could be a lot of things. I didn't really like the way this book said that religion and science and everything is a lie, even though looking from that level, everything else is non-existent and only exists on the movie screen of consciousness. It's just that the way I see it, the importance is a choice. That's why I didn't like it. I can choose what I think is important, and that's what becomes real to me.

M: That is how it is, after all. It's what we now experience as real.

J: I don't want to tell anybody that your belief is not real, because it's just a belief. In my opinion, that's a bit harsh.

M: That depends on the situation. Let's say that you're at a wedding or a christening – it would be really tactless to say that your partner or child isn't real, they're just a mirage of the mind. But if a person is suffering as a prisoner of their own mental constructs, as people do, it may come as an enormous relief to help them see that it's only a belief.

J: I understand that liberation, that's a big thing. I'm not trying to knock that book. If the idea in that book gives you an answer to the question of what makes your life full, it's real to you. But it doesn't fulfil my life, the answer that everything is in the consciousness. I see that, and I also think like that myself. But even though everything is only in my consciousness, things having a meaning is still something that makes them real.

M: It makes them real to you.

J: And that's just as valuable as anyone else's reality.

M: Yes, nobody is trying to take anything away from you.

J: I wasn't completely sure what I should think of this book.

M: It's actually only suitable for very few people.

J: I'm the only one who can be completely sure of myself, so I'm the only one who can be fully responsible for myself.

M: That's right.

J: I'd like to ask the author if he wanted to point a finger at others and say that the rest of you are wrong.

M: You can interpret it that way, too.

J: It did have a whiff of that.

M: I've been very relieved that I was wrong about a lot of things.

J: I don't think being right is the most important thing.

M: It really isn't! That's why I'm relieved that I wasn't right. What is the thing that really annoys you?

J: That's what I'm trying to think of myself. I'm not even sure.

M: It's also true that nobody wants to hear that that thing you've believed doesn't really mean anything. I think that the truth, which the author is also talking about, is not a matter of opinion.

J: Maybe I'm annoyed because I don't know what I should do about it. What meaning does it have for me?

M: I think it frees everyone from guilt and restores the power the mind already has. You project, you imagine things.

J: Based on that, you might think that I'm not ready for this book. Even though that is true, I still think that the things he calls a lie can have an importance that makes life full, so why would they be false?

M: In many cases, those things don't fulfil life in the end after all.

J: That's also possible, but... Yeah.

M: People are so eager to seek happiness and fill their lives with that, and it leads to them endlessly running around looking. But let's think about a perfect meeting with a fictitious other person, for instance. You share a connection, if only for a moment. There's something real in that. You're together for a moment in the "I Am" consciousness. In my view, this truly is meaningful. It helps you to become aware of the peace and feeling of completeness that is within you.

J: Maybe I need to think about this a bit more. I hope you get what I'm trying to say. I'm trying to say that the perspective to reality is also a choice, and fulfilling your own reality is what we're trying to do in our lives. The things we become aware of are what becomes real. That's why I'm not even arguing against it.

M: Everything happens within reality.

J: Yes. I think I'm only just getting it now. I haven't been arguing against that book. How weird is it to think that you disagree, but you do actually

agree? I felt like my point of view isn't against that book, it complements it. I've also been talking about mental resources the whole time. In that case, when I say that choices make things real, then becoming aware of things, and if awareness is the only reality, then why wouldn't they become reality, the things you have chosen? Did that make any sense?

M: I'd dare to say that we're also pretty good at dreaming. Are the figures in your dreams at night real?

J: What if I'm not afraid of waking up, I'm afraid that I'm no longer dreaming?

M: Yes!

J: Hello from the rational self. It made me say that. As a conclusion, in a way. We have to reserve another discussion for this, too. I may have realised what he actually might've meant about the truth. I have to think about that more. To add another idea, a few months ago I watched a video about dimensions, physical dimensions, and the video tried to explain how the dimensions would work if there were several physical dimensions. I couldn't sleep that night, my brain kept working. I'll combine the idea from that book with the idea I had then. If our consciousness is on a level that's far beyond the physical dimensions, in that case all observations and the universe itself would appear to be bundled around themselves into a tiny ball. The consciousness would see everything. Does that make any sense?

M: It's an extremely great thing to understand.

J: Yay, I managed to put it so briefly! Those dimensions start to go an infinite distance in different directions. But from the perspective of a higher dimension, those other dimensions curve around themselves despite being infinite. The basic idea is that from a higher point of view, infinity looks just like a ball.

27.

We continued the topic straight from where we had left it the previous time.

J: Infinite space can have a finite limit! That got my mind really buzzing. The idea rattled around in my head for a long time. I don't know if I said everything the last time or if I was too unclear. I began to realise that I'd started to add to the book's view on consciousness, and what I said was a conscious choice. We can choose what is real in our consciousness. My version of a conscious choice was very close to the book I read. I value the physical world more than that book seemed to do. That might be the biggest difference. For me, this physical reality is important, and regardless of whether it's in the collective consciousness or not, everything that exists in it's still important to me. I've been thinking about that for the last week. The book didn't comment on that, it said that the consciousness is everything. I'm not sure what bothers me about it, but something does.

M: It's pretty radical if someone says that you can't truly know anything else except for the "I Am" consciousness.

J: I've gone through that round of thinking myself. But it's a question of the point of view. The conscious choice is the absolute answer in itself. The way I think is just as true to me as that book is. That's what I was going for. The conscious choice makes things real.

M: In the end, it's good to let go of all of this thinking. I think that the most important message of that book is that you truly create your own world,

so you aren't really threatened. The feeling of threat is imagined. But because it's so easy to start that useless thought spiral, it's better to let go of all theories now.

J: That's right. In fact, the rational self says that an answer on the level that feels real to me is more important than the reality.

M: Let's go with the level that you feel is real right now.

J: That's the level where I operate. Imagined or not.

M: So you aren't even too interested in whether it's imagined or not?

J: I am interested! But why would something else be more real to me than what I'm experiencing now? In any case, this was a stage that was important for both of us to go through.

M: I've been through it, and for me, it's the most important thing that I've realised. But it doesn't have to be that for you.

J: It's not so far from that! Guess what was the most important thing about all of this? About you giving me that book. Guess!

M: Well... That you had something to do?

J: That I understand you better now. What you've been saying is no longer strange to me. That's more important to me than understanding the whole book. I understand you.

M: That's a nice thought.

J: You know more about me than anyone else. As a situation, telling everything about myself to someone I don't know anything about feels weird at times. And that's how it should be, I'm here to talk about myself instead of you talking about yourself, that's how it works. It's still a bit weird. Now that gap got a bit smaller. Understanding a person is the greatest understanding. This helped me to understand you as a person.

I may not ever really get that book, but I understood that. And when I realised that, I got more out of the book, too. This idea has already been in my head for a long time, but I haven't mentioned it because I didn't know if it was important. I don't know if you think it's strange at all, since you've been doing this for a while.

M: It's a common situation in therapy. After all, it's not the same as a two-way relationship. It bothers me sometimes, because I'd like to talk more about my own thoughts, but I always need to remember my role to some degree.

J: At times I imagine I'm talking to you in my free time, too, like I've said. It's like I'm making an image of you in a mirror to help me. And not knowing you creates a big wall that I run into. I can't bring it into the area I need, because I don't know you. The better I know a person, the better the tool I can borrow for myself from my image of them is. Hitting that wall bothers me in a way. But I'm not asking for your autobiography, and nothing needs to change. Sometimes it's difficult to express things as well as I'd like.

M: Some professional psychotherapists claim that if a client knows too much about the therapist, there's not enough room for the client's imagination.

J: The point isn't about knowing more. The core of it is in that small extent of what I do know. And I don't know what would take that away. But that's how it is with everyone. So what am I looking for? After all, I don't know anyone completely, or even all their thoughts.

M: I've gone through psychotherapy myself. It took two years, and there were at least two sessions per week. I still know very little about the therapist. I do recognise the idea of a wall. And it was sometimes infuriating.

J: What can you do about that idea of the wall?

M: Well, guess what I'd answer to that?

J: I don't know.

M: If you consider my whole worldview.

J: That the wall, too, is just an illusion.

M: Precisely!

J: But if you don't go to that level, in this practical world our perspective stays inside that bubble.

M: Still, my answer would be that the wall doesn't really exist! You are me. You do know me. On a deeper level, where everything is one. Bodies, autobiographies and personas are all an illusion.

J: Oh my god.

We laughed.

J: The things that I haven't said just because I thought that they weren't important. But did we have something more important, too? Just things that have come to mind. Part 1: What the rational self tells me is that what it says isn't meant just for straight white men, its intended for everyone who has a consciousness that understands itself. I grew out of the racist atmosphere in Kainuu. It was fortunate that I did because I was turning into someone who was against everything. The rational self changed it, because its lessons weren't for any specific person, they were for everyone. Even for artificial intelligences! All need for xenophobic thinking disappeared, the need for fear of differences disappeared. And that's what I'm proudest of.

M: Last week at a lecture in Kajaani, I used your story as an example again, including the rational self. The audience listened quietly, very attentively.

J: I don't want recognition for myself for it, but I'm interested in what you talked about.

M: I spoke about the rational self, the first time it came to your life at the children's camp.

J: That wasn't the first time, but that's okay. That's when it came back from a holiday.

M: Okay, we need to review things.

J: If the message stays the same, it's fine if the details are different, it means that nobody can recognise them.

M: The message is that the rational self is what saves you. From crime, being unethical and everything. And that the rational self is in everyone's own mind. Or did I understand it correctly?

J: That's how I see it. The idea that you aren't special means that everyone has the consciousness of the rational self, but so many people don't feel the need to use it.

M: That's exactly how it is. And we're trying to increase this need. I told them about the desire, which has a completely different voice. I said that I respect you, and I also spoke about the time you wondered how someone could want to give you a hug. And I spoke about this assumption about what could've caused the paedophilic attraction, meaning the childhood experiences and the little girl who gave you solace back then. I also spoke about how you don't even try to talk to children, you want to maintain limits.

J: I'm not sure if I'd go that far, because those situations don't even happen. I don't go looking for them, but I wouldn't refuse to talk completely, either. I do know how to talk to children, and those situations don't even come up anyway. But you don't need to remember those details, if the main message is clear: despite everything, you have the chance to make a different choice. That's the job of the rational self, that's what it came to do in my life. But when you said that it protects against all crime – I have downloaded music illegally! I do get the point, of course.

M: Yes, that at least you haven't been in contact with a child.

J: I have shaken hands!

M: There's that!

J: Anyway, you can say what you want, changing things protects me, even, but you can edit the details. The thing about the children's camp was that I hadn't heard the rational self in my head for a month, and I thought that that was it.

M: That's how it was! I may have even written about it.

J: You did write about it, pretty early on.

M: It's funny that I forgot.

J: Me having the better memory, now that's scary!

M: It's all written down here, though.

J: The rational self asks: what does it matter if someone praised something I said? A statue on a square in Helsinki: the paedophile that thinks the most! But that's not my thing, it'd easily get side-tracked, I'd start to bolster my ego by trying to say something smart, and the message itself would suffer. Mostly all of what I've said here is something I've been thinking for more than 15 years. I've had the time to shape the ideas into the form they currently are. Sometimes I'm even afraid of saying something because it might sound like I want to put myself on a pedestal.

M: What an idea that statue was!

J: We-ell, my sense of humour strikes again. But our time is running out. This was an interesting session.

M: It was!

I already knew a topic for the next time, and I told him about it. He had to think about why he didn't allow himself to have the good things in life that everyone can have. He had already thought about the issue, but he intended to start thinking about it more deeply right away.

28.

Another topic, too, came up suddenly, since I'd finally read "Lolita". My mum was 15 years old when the novel by Vladimir Nabokov came out in 1955, and she remembered the uproar it caused. She was told not to even touch the book. The main character, Humbert, is a middle-aged man who falls in love with his 12-year-old stepdaughter Lolita and bribes her into a sexual relationship with him. For the whole of his adult life, Humbert has been attracted to girls of around 12. When he was at that age himself, he fell passionately in love with a girl of the same age, Annabel, who died a few months later of typhus. Humbert wondered:

...that little girl' with her seaside limbs and ardent tongue haunted me ever since — until at last, twenty-four years later, I broke her spell by incarnating her in another.

He had also been occasionally worried about using the little girls he saw in the park in his fantasies and that it somehow affected their lives.

Had I not somehow tampered with her fate by involving her image in my voluptas? Oh, it was, and remains, a source of great and terrible wonder.

Even though he lusted after and "loved" Lolita, he knew that he was doing wrong by giving in to his lust.

As I look back at those seasick murals, at that strange and monstrous moment, I can only explain my behavior then by the mechanism of that dream vacuum wherein revolves a deranged mind; but at the time, it all seemed quite simple and inevitable to me.

I was surprised to find a few similarities between the stories of Humbert and Juhani, even though Humbert is a completely fictitious character.

Nabokov himself despised Freudian symbolism, but he nevertheless included a childhood love cut short in his story, which later came back to haunt the main character as “pederasty”, as he called it. This was like Juhani’s Milja, who had been a sweet saviour in the middle of his 7-year-old nightmarish life and who now appeared as unattainable fulfilment in other 7-year-olds. The other similarity was Humbert’s ability to identify the disturbed mechanism of the mind after the fact. But unlike Humbert, Juhani may have never wondered if simply “involving their image in his voluptas” could affect the children in question.

At the end of the book, Nabokov had written his own thoughts about it, and noted sharply that in addition to this topic, there were two other literary taboos in America: a successful marriage between a white and a black person and the total atheist who lives a happy and useful life and dies at the age of 106. How far had we come from the 1950s?

I wanted to hear Juhani’s ideas about my summary of “Lolita” and the connections between the story and his life.

J: The main character of that book has experienced a really powerful event and affection while he was little, like I did. He experienced fulfilment and caring, and then that’s suddenly taken away. It leaves a vacuum that needs something to fill it. Especially if this happened really young, it shows in trying to find that experience again. He was 12 when his first love happened, and sexuality was linked to it. Milja and I were 6 and 7 years old. We did kiss, too, but it was very innocent, and we didn’t even understand why. But when you experience caring in such a fundamental way when you’re little, and the life around you is otherwise empty or frightening, it can even become a salvation as an experience. I hadn’t experienced that kind of caring anywhere else at that time. You want to follow the same reward track in the brain later, too. You start to fill it with an idealised ghost of love. You should be able to mourn it like someone dead, a relationship you can’t have. But why haven’t I moved on? Because the feeling of caring is so deep down somewhere inside. Maybe this writer understood what kind of a vacuum can result in not getting over a loss.

M: And then it turns into a sexual fantasy and further into an arousal model.

J: That's how I see it too. It turns into a model that slowly gets stronger and stronger. Why that happens, I don't know. About whether my fantasies could affect the children being fantasised about, I can't think about it that way, because I see it from a practical point of view. The one fantasising is still responsible for not crossing the line. If you start to get aroused publicly, you have to blow the whistle and end the game.

M: Exactly. We had another topic, too. Looking after yourself.

J: That's right. That's been a stumbling block for me for a very long time. I don't know where to start with that. It's complicated. The mechanism that feeds self-neglect is very deeply rooted. The last time I left here, the rational self showed me an image of an apple tree and said that this is the tree of uncertainty that bears the fruit of fear and is fed by frustration. In a way, it's a mechanism that maintains neglect, and it's in conflict with the way I'd like to live. The way I want to treat others isn't extended to myself. Already before, I said that I'm the only one who completely knows what I'm fighting with. So I, myself, am the only "judge". That's exactly what punishing yourself means. And then I'm stuck with the harmful way of acting. You become numb to it! I get disappointed with repeating that I've treated myself wrong. Humans try to avoid disappointment, and I'm disappointed with not being able to take care of myself. So facing that is difficult. And then the only option that remains is to become numb to the situation.

M: Is that really the only option?

J: No, it isn't, but it's a natural choice, because it's easy and gives you a chance to act outwardly normally.

M: In a way, the "natural", which is usually automatic control, doesn't help you move forward.

J: It doesn't. That's what getting stuck in a pit means.

M: How is neglecting yourself visible in practice?

J: Putting off some things. It's difficult to say that, and it's even embarrassing. Ordinary things, like hygiene, doing laundry and changing clothes. The situation is better than years ago. Still, you spend all your money on food and bills, and there's nothing left for new clothes. Being overweight is a pretty big problem, and I can't seem to do anything about it. There's not much reason to be a normal weight. Nowadays people need to move so much less. Everything is nearby.

M: Even social interactions mainly happen on a screen.

J: If there's no reason to move, you don't really exercise.

M: It often happens that with age, you're in so much pain because of inactivity that it motivates you to exercise.

J: Backache is the only consequence so far. The back doesn't really want to move to one side or the other. There's also the risk of diabetes.

M: Do you cook for yourself?

J: I cook, but I've been lazy about it. There's just no energy. Nowadays I've been trying a bit more. But I have the bad habit of eating until my desire, not my hunger, is satisfied. Then I overeat because the desire keeps growing, like with any addiction.

M: Human beings seek pleasure.

J: The euphoria of eating is very strong. These are things that have been a problem for me for a pretty long time.

M: And having a shower?

J: That hasn't been a problem, I have one every night. But this mechanism of neglect is interesting, and it shows that the mind is not in balance. It's

easy for all of us to be too harsh to ourselves. The rational self shows me an image. Oh no! Soon you'll be sending me somewhere for treatment.

M: You're already in treatment!

J: This is a pretty tough image. There's a small boy here in a corner, and he's scared. The rational self is actually pointing right at him and saying: this is what your insecurity looks like. This is getting emotional! The little boy, who is a part of the self, I don't know how to treat him right. The part of me who's still the little boy who's scared, I'm treating that part wrong. The boy is a reflection of my insecurity. I'm afraid because I don't know how to be whole. And I don't know how I could be whole.

M: You already are whole. You just don't feel it right now.

J: In a way, that's the question: what do I need to do to feel that I'm whole?

M: Remove the obstacles to wholeness, or to put it better, the experience of wholeness.

J: During the first time in therapy, the rational self told me that I need to rebuild my sexual self-image. I've suspected that I'm bisexual on some level. I haven't really got to know my own sexuality at any point. I haven't been able to decide if I'm straight or bi or something in between. The consciousness is the only box we need, and sexuality is a part of what can fill the consciousness, no other boxes are necessary. The most recent lesson from the rational self is that the only box needed is the box of humanity. My rational self sees humanity even higher up than consciousness. Even though consciousness is included in humanity. Maybe that's why the book didn't open up for me right away.

M: After all, you can only be aware of one thing at a time. Such as the feeling of arousal. In that case, it's more important to keep humanity in mind than the arousal. But awareness is not the same as arousal. The awareness in itself is our most important tool.

J: Now the rational self says that it's not necessary to put them into an order. It just tells me to see the person first. That idea changed me at the time. Humanity is my default value for everyone I meet.

M: So it's not their profession, race, gender or something else?

J: Those things are a part of humanity. But they aren't the things I approach first in a person. It's good to take some cultural issues into account. But fundamentally, we're alike. We fight over unnecessary things, such as philosophies. Hate is pointless. Somebody can be completely different as a person, but I see them as human.

M: So someone is seemingly different.

J: Well, seemingly. Different on a practical level.

M: The thing that we fundamentally are is the wholeness.

J: When I asked the rational self what the meaning of life is, it answered that it's feeling whole as a person.

M: And when I said that the obstacles in the way of that need to be removed, I'm talking about the restrictive beliefs that lead to restrictions of behaviour. We don't need to worry about the wholeness in itself, you don't have to build it especially, because it already exists. It's our core essence. That's precisely what you see in everyone. But thoughts and feelings act as obstacles to experiencing it. Fear, first and foremost.

J: I need to draw it to you some time, even though I don't know how to draw. I'm thinking of a metaphor for how we're all the same under humanity.

M: Next time! And for the next time, you could also explore the beliefs that limit you the most.

29.

I found more support for the idea that discussing religious issues in a treatment relationship is safe. The book “Psykoterauttinen hoitosuhde” (Psychotherapeutic Treatment Relationships) by Lindberg et al. had a chapter dedicated to discussions of religion in a treatment relationship. It clearly stated that people often avoid talking about religious topics in therapy for reasons that cannot be justified by the research on treatment. It also said:

If a patient wants to talk about their religious ideas, they often face unnecessary restrictions. In Finland, religion is often seen as a private matter, and people are not used to talking about it with others. Differences between the patient’s and the therapist’s own beliefs are also seen as an obstacle to discussion, which is linked to a fundamental and largely subconscious idea of a requirement of unanimity.

The psychodynamic view presented in the book about keeping the forces of aggression and destruction in check by avoiding potential differences was also interesting.

M: I’ll continue this by noting that they also mentioned why people are subconsciously afraid of religious disagreements. It has a long, dark history.

J: That it does, and you don’t even need to go very far back. And the way Christianity came to Finland wasn’t very nice.

M: So, I still haven’t done anything terribly wrong by presenting my own points of view strongly.

J: Definitely not. You’ve reminded me that there are other ways of thinking, too, and the other ways were welcome.

M: Still, some therapists could consider my approach controversial.

J: If you rattle someone's religious beliefs, you rattle the whole person. I'm from a religious family, I give a small slice of my life to religion, but I don't take it seriously.

M: Regardless of whether it's an official religion or not, we adopt belief systems in our childhood.

J: Through religion, me and my actions can have more importance than what the world says. Currently, that's enough for me.

M: Then there was the question: what are the beliefs that limit you the most?

J: I'm not sure which one is the worst, there aren't a lot of them. One of the worst is, "I have to be alone". Just a moment, I'll think about this for a minute. Maybe I still believe that attraction towards children would make me a bad person. Even though I've received so many lessons about it from the rational self and I've tried so hard to get away from it. Due to this interest, I thought for a long time that I was antisocial. I limit how much time I spend in public. I make my idea of the judgement given by others a reality. I think, "This is the sentence I would get". We already spoke about this before, that I'm making my own judgement a reality, and that doesn't help me. Being judged is nothing but a burden. And getting over it's the better option. It's a healthier option for myself. But the idea that you need a finger pointing at you is so strong.

M: I might also add that getting over the judgement is a healthier option for yourself AND others.

J: It's easy to forget that, and it's harder to see how that judgement is the worse option for others, other than that I seem a bit more closed off. That effect is hard to see directly. I can hide it pretty well.

M: It definitely must have an effect on the levels that aren't immediately

visible. But when you don't give your best to the world, that's also a bad consequence of the judgement for others.

J: That's true. I almost passed over that idea, because coming from Kainuu, I tend to downplay things.

M: "Who, me? It's nothing."

J: I'm afraid of showing kindness due to my own preferences, and that can't be a good thing.

M: Right.

J: I've been turning this thing of judging and limiting myself round and round in my head for years, and it doesn't seem to be of any use. What causes my frustration? The rational self asks: if I get an answer to that, what do I expect to be solved? It wants to put a stop to chasing that runaway thought. The rational self wants to stop me so I can think and see it from a different perspective. It asks: what are you trying to solve? It doesn't mean that you can't think, the idea is that you should stop and think rationally.

M: Cheers for the rational self! The book I quoted in the beginning uses a psychodynamic framework, which is also known as depth psychology. Depth psychology also discusses this force of aggression and destruction. It's pretty amazing how you've identified the voice of destruction all by yourself, without reading the term anywhere first.

J: I just think that it's the most descriptive name for it. 95% of what I've been saying here comes from my own thought processes and discussions with the rational self. I've been refining these ideas for at least 15 years.

M: While I was talking to another client, who also gave me permission to use their story anonymously, I spoke about you and your way of picturing the mind. We talked about the voice of destruction that desire obeys and that doesn't care about the suffering of others. My client thought that it

was a great description and gave an example of watching a video, in which a small girl was abused while she was crying inconsolably.

J: Unfortunately, I've also seen those things.

M: And my client said that at that moment, all of it was just arousing, but the feeling afterwards was terrible: how could I watch that?

J: Sadly, I have also run into those videos. I couldn't get aroused by them, and unfortunately, there are a lot of those kinds of videos. In most of them, nobody is making anybody cry on purpose. Although those videos unfortunately also exist. Do you want me to describe one a bit?

M: It depends how bad it is and what the purpose of describing it would be?

J: It might help with understanding that it's not about making anybody cry on purpose. But if you feel like you don't want to know, I'm not going to tell you. That's why I asked before starting to describe it. There are some things you'd rather not hear about.

M: That's right.

J: Maybe it's enough to say that in the many videos I've seen, I've only seen some in which the child was crying, and one in which it was done on purpose.

M: Well, that was important to know. Because I've had this horrible blurry idea that all of it is practically torture.

J: Well, it depends on how you define it. All of it is wrong.

M: Of course! But fortunately, not all of them involve torture.

J: For the most part, it's like a part of a game for the child.

M: So they've persuaded the child to do things under the pretence of playing a game?

J: Yes. To be clear, for the most part I chose what to watch. I can't remember everything. I've shut out the worst ones, the ones that said things like HC. That means "hurt core", or porn that involves hurting people. I was careful about what I watched, and the worst ones were by accident. In most of them, the names of the videos were in Spanish or in Chinese. Or I should say that everything I can't read is Chinese to me. But there were also ones in German. I'm careful about what I say. Not because I don't want to talk about it, it's because I'm thinking of you. I don't want to force you to listen to things.

M: That's a nice thought. Not everyone thinks of the therapist, they may even seek pleasure by talking about shocking things. And really, knowing the details isn't necessary.

J: I did wonder why I suggested telling you about that video. In a way, I'd like to open up about it to get it out of my mind.

M: On your scale, is the description distressing?

J: Yes. Thinking about them now, they're all distressing. It depends on which voice you're listening to when you recall them. The desire brings a few videos to mind that it considered arousing. But now I see them as harmful.

M: Now I could say that go ahead and tell me.

J: Are you absolutely sure? I could tell you that the video made a big change in me, and I decided that I wanted to get rid of all this. Right at that time, the external hard disk started to have problems. I would've had time to salvage all videos from it, but I didn't. Now it's broken and it has been reformatted ten times, and I'm happy about it.

M: Was that video a part of the core of the voice of destruction?

J: The way my voice of destruction works, it doesn't actively want to hurt others. My voice of destruction wants me to neglect myself. But if you gave

it all power, it might go as far as to seek hurting others. But I'm not sure, because I haven't allowed it to speak for that long. It has never told me to hurt others, but it does want me to feel miserable.

M: When this other client was aroused by the video in which the child was crying, that client may have allowed the voice of destruction to speak for too long.

J: The voice of desire makes you blind to everything else. It doesn't see the crying child then. It only sees the arousing side of the situation, meaning a child in a sexual situation.

M: And the desire may actually have also been one of the minions of the voice of destruction.

J: Something like that. I feel like all of them give way to the voice of destruction. And the voice of destruction wants more space for itself.

M: We're running out of time. We didn't manage to go through that video thing yet, but maybe it's good that we have a chance to think about it some more.

J: You'll have time to think whether you want to hear about it or not. But for me, it was the turning point, where the attitude towards getting material changed. My desire said nothing about that video. It was just as shocked as I was. I was so happy my desire didn't feel anything at the time, because that made change possible.

M: So you didn't sink in deeper.

J: I was shocked, not aroused.

M: Do you feel it would be a relief for you to talk about it?

J: It would, to a degree, because it's become one of the stones of judgement I'm carrying. It would be time to put a stop to that sentence.

M: I'm ready to do that. Let's look at that together with the rational self, then.

J: The rational self says that you don't need to be afraid, it's not about anything extreme. But I don't want to force you.

M: I have time to think about it now. You can tell me, if it's necessary for the therapeutic process.

J: I think it would be, but because you've done so much work for me, I don't want to cause you any kind of suffering. It's been a source of suffering for me for several years.

30.

I started the meeting by telling Juhani about my discussion with two colleagues about whether describing the details of a potentially traumatising video is important to the therapy process. I received two different answers. One colleague thought that talking about it could be liberating for the client, but I had to make sure that I processed the issue myself somehow. Police officers play Tetris after reviewing distressing videos, so I thought that was something I could also try. The other said that reviewing the details wasn't necessary, nor was it essential for coping with the trauma. My conclusion was that the smartest thing would be to review the main points without exact details, with Juhani recalling the video while focusing on what was happening in his body at that moment. This would be a better way to ensure that the emotional experience could be processed without reinforcing the trauma itself.

J: What do you mean by the main points? What parts would give you an overall impression on what happened in the video?

M: Do I need to have a clear idea about it?

J: If we're discussing something, it's weird to only say a bit of something about it. How can we make sure that we're talking about the same things?

M: If we focus on the feelings and the emotional experience in this moment, we'll stay on the same page.

J: If you know me well enough, you won't need to know the details as long as I tell you how it affected me. It'll give you the information you need.

I'm responsible for the information I intend to give. So it's not necessary to describe what happened in the video in exact detail, I should describe what happened in me.

M: Exactly like that.

J: That's the best answer to the question of what a good way to do this would be.

M: This will also help you focus on what's happening right now, instead of reinforcing the memory of the video.

J: But I have to think about it while I'm processing it.

M: Of course. Somehow I think that telling me about it will reinforce the image more than telling me about your feelings.

J: Yeah, okay.

M: How do you feel right now?

J: Pretty calm. I've slept well for several nights, better than usual.

M: Good. Can you now brave the topic?

J: I'm thinking about the perspective I should take.

M: Take a minute to think about it.

Juhani sat quietly for a while.

J: I don't know.

M: Just start somewhere.

J: I'm not sure where to begin. The first feeling after the video, I felt the same feeling as if I'd put a glass of water on the corner of a table and then

knocked it off with my hand. That fright. I had a scare! What did I just watch? For a moment, it's difficult to look anywhere else, because the fright paralyses you and you're just stuck watching. The panic only comes later. It's only then when you understand what happened.

M: Was it what they call a gore video?

J: I don't think so. There was physical harm involved, though. Wouldn't gore mean that you could see blood or internal organs?

M: I don't know.

J: In the movie world, they label it gore if they show blood or internal organs. I think.

M: OK, let's leave that be.

J: Pretty quickly after that, I closed the video and only then I started feeling bad. And feeling disgusted.

M: What's happening in you right now?

J: I'm not really sure. I'm pretty neutral at the moment.

M: Good.

J: I did have more than a week to think about this. It must've helped. It doesn't feel bad, telling you about this. Then maybe a day went by before the feeling of guilt came. A part of me took that video and used it like a whip to punish myself because I'd watched child porn. The main things were shock and guilt, and I felt bad. For a long time, I used it as a reminder and a punishment.

M: How did you end up watching this video?

J: It was online, a site you can't get to with a normal browser. The dark web. That's where it was, like thousands of other videos. It was maybe the second-largest child porn website.

M: Here, we should probably explain to the readers that the official term used isn't child porn, it's child sexual abuse material (CSAM). We may have already explained this. Do you remember?

J: Maybe. For porn, consent is needed.

M: In any case, that's the word used in casual speech. Let me ask, did you open this video without knowing what it was about?

J: Yes, because the title was in Spanish. I didn't know that it was about hurting someone. I know that child abuse in all its forms means hurting someone. But I didn't know that the focus was on hurting someone physically.

M: Did that appear in your dreams or intrude on your thoughts in other ways?

J: It rarely intruded on my thoughts. I still torment myself with it a bit sometimes. I can't remember it appearing in my dreams. In general, I very rarely have sexual dreams. But the people who go to those websites don't end up there accidentally. Going to a lesser-known porn site and then finding child porn three links away from there, that doesn't happen so much anymore. In contrast, the people who visit those sites, they didn't stumble upon them by accident. You can't even get there with a normal browser! Anyway, my point is that I went looking for child porn deliberately and on purpose. If you go looking for regular porn, you don't run into child porn just like that. The sites through which you can get there are usually really bad. When you're going to a child porn site, you have to go through something like five trash sites that don't even have any porn, only a huge number of pop-up windows. I'm telling about this to help you understand how big the desire to find them is. You can't always even get there.

M: That's comforting, in a way. On the other hand, it can make the desire go wild, because it's linked to the risk of not getting something.

J: The desire uses different feelings as a resource, and the frustration of not finding material can increase the desire.

M: That's exactly how that part of the mind works. But we're running out of time, now. I'll ask again: how do you feel right now?

J: Well... Nothing special. I'm just annoyed that I'm explaining something and then I have to think about what I'm even trying to explain.

M: Still, the things we talked about were enlightening and important. I hope that it'll help you, too, of course.

J: Right.

M: So you aren't feeling any worse, at least?

J: Actually, I'm surprised because I don't really feel all that different.

M: Then we can plan for our meeting next week in peace.

Afterwards, I tried to recall the feelings that the account of the video brought up in me. I realised that it had not caused many reactions, and based on that, I came to the conclusion that not hearing about the details had been the deciding factor. Instead, the idea of what children might see when browsing on their phones felt bad. Wiping images out of your mind was a lot harder than words. That's why I hardly ever watched television or the news, and maybe that was why I was able to cope with my work better. I couldn't imagine even remotely what kind of a confused collection of images constituted the mind of a person who had watched porn every day for years ever since being a teenager. And fortunately, I didn't have to.

31.

On the day before our meeting, I'd been at a training event about grooming as a phenomenon, meaning persuading children and young people to do sexual acts via the internet, among other methods. At the training session, someone asked what the dark web was. I commented that a client, who had given me permission to talk about his issues anonymously, said that it couldn't even be accessed with a normal browser. Even there, you had to pass through a lot of "trash sites" before reaching the illegal material. To this, the trainer responded that more and more illegal material can also be found on the open web these days. I told Juhani about this to open the conversation.

J: Right now, I need to specify something. Last time with the trash sites, I meant that you end up there if you try to find something through the open web. The dark web is different, because you most likely already know where to go. If you want to find child porn on the open web, it's like wading through a swamp. The people who want to find it know where to look on the dark net. If you're looking for it on the normal internet, you won't have any clue on where to start. You'll be trying your luck. You don't go surfing blindly on the dark web, you probably already know the addresses. There are search engines there, but the difference between the normal web and the dark web is that you don't do a public search for those addresses, they're usually shared. There are search engines, too, but they aren't too good. On the normal internet, you can enter something in the search engine and you'll find a site. On the dark web, child porn is also censored. They have sites that specialise in illegal material, but those servers get shut down constantly. The police are pretty good at catching them. About ten years ago I followed

the situation more closely, and all the major child porn sharing sites were destroyed in one day. Every single one of them. It was quite a blow. I think the servers were in Sweden, if I recall correctly. Even now, the situation hasn't been completely restored to what it was before then.

M: Restored!

J: Well, if you look at it from the perspective of the dark web. Or if you ask the destructive desire.

M: That's right.

J: These things are a bit difficult to explain, unless you already know about them. Maybe the most important thing to know is that you won't end up there unless you're specifically trying to get there.

M: With my know-how, there's no risk of even accidentally committing a crime.

J: It's not that difficult, but you can't just type "dark web" into the browser and press Enter to reach the dark web.

M: That sounds like something I might've even tried.

J: I'm sure you'd get some results. There might be Chinese websites that defend the freedom of speech, for instance. People use it for good purposes, too. Not just for crime.

M: It's good to know that, too. So I made a mistake thinking that even on the dark web you have to go through trash sites.

J: Yeah, it doesn't really work like that.

M: So you have to wade through the trash sites on the open web?

J: Yeah. When I was specifically looking for that material, I started with lesser-known porn sites. The lesser-known sites survive on people

clicking the links. So they have automatically created link lists to other sites. A lesser-known porn site doesn't care about what kind of links it has, because it gets money from the clicks. And by following those lists, I found material. That might already give too much information for those who want it. A warning to the reader: do not try that. That's a quick way to make your computer freeze. What I was trying to say the last time is that if you're hanging around bad sites like that, full of all kinds of viruses and trash, you have to really want to look for illegal material.

M: I feel like an old lady, but just to specify, you're now talking about the open web?

J: Yes. This is a bit of a two-sided issue, because I'd rather not explain how it works, because nobody should be visiting those kinds of sites.

M: Exactly. And if I understood correctly, you don't hang around there much anymore, either.

J: Well, yeah. Sometimes you slip up. I don't spend time on those trash sites. The truth isn't always a nice thing. The truth is that I've got this one image sharing site that I follow. I'm not proud of it, and I know that it's wrong, but I haven't got completely rid of that material.

M: Yeah. I'm glad that you were brave enough to tell me.

J: I've thought a lot about why I do it, because the material isn't good for me, because it keeps up the cycle of self-punishment, and that's not good. The problem is that if I could, I'd unlearn how to find those things. If someone could remove the knowledge of how to find them from my head, that would make everything easy. I've been thinking a lot about the mechanics that maintain it, and this theory might only apply to me. The way I see it is that it's a cycle of making sure that you feel bad. And I make sure that I feel bad because I know that looking at that material is wrong. It becomes a punishment to yourself.

M: So, to relieve the guilt, you take a look at that material again?

J: I've been thinking about that, too. Shutting down the desire becomes aggressive. Let's say that someone is begging you for something, like really demanding it, and you know that it's something you don't really want to give. Is it a problem if I use an example that I'd rather not use?

M: It's not a problem for me.

J: When a child is begging for sweets in the sweets aisle. I'd rather not use it in this context, but it's the clearest example. You might lose your patience and snap: okay, let's buy all the sweets. In a way, that's what happens with the material. You lose your patience with the voice of desire and end up thinking that okay, let's look at all the possible material. Getting upset with yourself leads to that material, and it feeds frustration. The mechanism where you get upset with the desire and feed it through frustration is what maintains the use of the material. And this mechanism is harmful in itself. It takes a toll on your mental health.

M: That sounds just like an addiction.

J: It has a lot of the same features as addiction. That's what the mechanism is.

M: There are a lot of places where you can break up that cycle.

J: It's really difficult.

M: Without a doubt. Especially if you've reinforced it for years. And my intention is not to make you feel guilty, I just want to note that.

J: I've had a much easier time with it recently. The biggest thing is seeing why this is harmful to me. That helped a lot with breaking it off. But it's not completely gone. And I don't know how to get totally rid of it.

M: I know. That's why I do this job. It's about repeating the right choice enough times. And I'm sure you already know what are the two voices that you're choosing between.

J: What my rational self wants, it wants to find a balance in this, too...

M: Now I have to interrupt you. How can you find a balance in something like this?

J: Not watching child porn, it's... I have to think about this for a minute. About me not punishing myself for liking children, and that doesn't take away the decision that I don't want to do anything wrong. The balance means that if we argue that my sexuality means sexual interest in children, then let it be like that. But that includes responsibility and seeing why crossing a certain line with it can be harmful.

M: This reminds me of another client I'm having telephone meetings with, who has also given their permission to talk about looking at those legal child model sites, and of course having a bad conscience about that too, but feeling more in balance that way.

J: The rational self has told me to use YouTube. I've watched videos of children playing. The rational self says that you should just use those, as well as normal model sites – there are a lot of them. So why should I use material that also breaks me in addition to the children? That material only leaves harm in its wake. The desire hasn't told me to go there, it's because I'm feeling bad, and that's a consequence of the voice of destruction. In a way, that's one of the magic tricks of the voice of destruction. It wants to make us feel worse and worse. So it's the only one that benefits, not me. Desire is difficult to simulate, but ordinary material is enough for it.

M: I've just thought that the desire could be neutral in itself.

J: In my theory, all mental tools are neutral. They're used either by the rational self or the voice of destruction, and whether they do good or harm depends on that. But this is just my theory.

M: It's my theory, too. We have to continue on this topic next time!

I kept thinking about the connection between desire and the voice of destruction. It's wisest to assume that we can't not want things as long as we're here. But the desire can be transformed, transferred to a better master.

32.

It really was a good idea to continue with the “insight” I had last time about the desire being neutral. In fact, now that I had printed out and read the text I’d written out before, I had noticed that Juhani had said the same thing much earlier, and I had even clapped enthusiastically about it! All this had been completely erased from my memory. That embarrassed and even made me a little concerned about the state of my memory, until someone said that if you don’t keep thinking about an idea for a while after you hear it, your long-term memory won’t store it. True or not, it still comforted me a little. Juhani had in fact said before that the desire is neutral, but in certain contexts the desire did seem to be quite destructive. While reading the text, I also realised that Juhani had already decided not to commit a crime very soon after the rational self entered the picture, but in a way, a crime had still occurred through the possession of illegal material. That is where we started the discussion this time.

J: Mainly, the decision was not to make the desire a reality. Or not to abuse anyone. At that time, I hadn’t even really thought about material, about looking for it or looking at it. The original decision didn’t involve anything about images or videos. I wasn’t even aware that there was something like that available. I had heard the words “child porn”, but I had no idea what that material was. Here’s a good question: if I had also made a decision about the material, would that have stopped me from getting it? It’s impossible to answer that. Why do you even go looking for that kind of material? The idea that I was attracted to children came first. Then I found out that such material existed. In a way, it was just as forbidden for me as regular porn, because of the way I was raised. Looking for porn was already

a bad thing in itself. I didn't understand the difference between ordinary porn and illegal material. In a way, based on that idea child porn – even though that's not a good term for it – is no worse, because it's already in the same "Forbidden" box. And that box existed back when I was 14 years old.

M: A psychiatrist working with sexual offence issues said that because fundamentalist Christians even consider masturbation a sin, they may sometimes have a lower threshold than other people for doing things like abusing their siblings, because it's all the same sin.

J: That's what I was trying to say. The bar for doing something wrong was low, it didn't seem any more wrong than usual. It doesn't stand out from the crowd, it blends into the same mass of wrongdoing.

M: Right. From a very strict religious perspective, you're sinning if you masturbate or watch porn. Then your mind may distort the distinction between looking at illegal material and exploiting others sexually.

J: I had to come to understand that myself. In fact, the harm principle was one of the lessons of the rational self.

M: Which means?

J: Even now, I can't explain it properly. It told me what causes the harm related to things like child porn, and why you can't compare them to ordinary porn. I must've explained it before.

M: I'm sure you have.

J: The harm principle says that abuse is literally abuse of the child's innocence and limited understanding for sexual purposes. The word "abuse" is so fitting, because the ignorance is abused for your own purposes.

M: Exactly. You could sum this up by saying that demonising sexuality is extremely harmful.

J: Yes. Like in the army, where going to the toilet is a task, not pleasure, in religion sex is also a task, not a pleasure.

M: That's how it is regrettably often. But far from all religious people think like this.

J: Nobody wants to talk about it in those circles. They don't want to admit that sexual urges exist. They try to cover them up in any way possible.

M: That's precisely why crime happens, because ideas of good ways to express your sexuality have not been developed. There's only the performance of sexuality, and the harmful ways are lumped in the same basket with it.

J: That's right. The biggest problem with sexuality today is that nobody is sure what they should do with their own sexuality. How does my sexuality complement me as a human being? People don't know how to process this correctly. That should be addressed, and I'm sure that it would reduce abuse. The right to your own body and bodily integrity is so huge.

M: Today, people talk about sexual rights a lot more.

J: It's great that we've started to understand that. If I had heard about things like being transgender when I was 15, I wouldn't have had any idea what to think. The sexuality of the body, meaning the physical reactions, the sexuality of the mind, meaning fantasies and daydreams, and personal sexuality, meaning how you want to express yourself; I think these three are at the core of sexual expression and people should value them. For example: I was clearly born a man. That's the first level. Second level: do I feel that I'm a homosexual? I don't know, sometimes. Third level: do I want to show that in some way? Do I want to go on a Pride parade? These things form the sexual self-image, and these aspects construct each other. I still need to think if it's even necessary to separate the second and third level from each other. I'll keep refining that in the future. It's a part of the theory of humanity.

M: Good. We could continue talking about the neutrality of desire for a minute again, if that's okay.

J: Yes! There are also a few ways of thinking about that issue. How does my desire work? By neutrality, I meant that, it doesn't try to be good or bad in itself, it doesn't bring out good or bad desires.

M: Could you say that when the desire serves the voice of destruction, the desire itself also looks bad? It's easy to confuse it with its boss.

J: If the voice of destruction uses my desire, meaning my sexuality, it brings the desires up very aggressively. In a way the desires I have, or the attraction to children, if the voice of desire wants to use those things, it brings them to my mind when I wouldn't want to think about them. It torments me with them. It tries to bring them up to bully me. What would a good example be? There are a few memories that I'm not very happy about, like the video I told you about. The voice of destruction tries to bring the bad memories to mind and say, "Because you like children, you also like these horrible materials". It tries to use that as a crowbar to pry the door of the mind open and stuff the bad thoughts inside. The crowbar is a part of what is true in a way, meaning that I get aroused by children. It uses that to open the door to my mind and stuff in the bad memories. That's the way it works for me. In that situation, the desire is not the actor, it doesn't try to pry the door open.

M: Personally, I'm still wondering if the desire in itself could be even more simplified, meaning only the experience of desire, arousal and excitement in the body. That would be even more neutral than including any mental image of children.

J: That's right. That's exactly what I meant. When I talk about the voice of desire, I give it my own personal voice.

M: And just as we've discussed, the fantasy in itself can be a good indicator of what's going on in the mind. Its symbolism is a value in itself.

J: Right. But I can't fully explain how my ideas are formed. The starting point of desire is the feeling of arousal. For some reason, I've made it really personified, and I handle it through the personal dimension. I can't do that to all things, and it has taken years to even get here. Being able to look at my desire is the result of many years of work.

M: You couldn't have used that time in a better way.

J: I had a lot of time back then, and I thought a lot during that time. The craziest thing about the rational self is that it really reminds me that I am you, meaning that I'm the one who has taught myself from a different level.

M: In the end, that's what we all do. It's just not obvious. Besides, having such a good awareness of your own mind is rare. But hopefully it's becoming more and more common.

J: So few people need it! People always try to act normally and the days fly by, with their awareness on autopilot. That's a good situation for regular people, that's what the normal mind is aiming at. Not thinking about everything in several dimensions is enough for it. But when you need to survive something, you increase the resources for thinking. I really had the need to survive, so my resources for thinking increased.

M: And that's a good thing. Now, I'll give you a printout of the text to take with you, and I'll be eagerly waiting to hear what you say about it.

33.

We managed to have one meeting in mid-March, before we had to (or had the chance to, whichever way you want to look at it) start working remotely. The whole world had now stopped due to coronavirus, and I held my appointments over the phone from home. I was surprised how well working remotely went, and the workdays flew by. Only the dog interrupted by barking to get outside and then barking again after a minute to get back inside.

I started our discussion with this text, which I had printed out for him.

M: How much of the text have you read?

J: Not too much, it gives me a funny feeling. It's a bit difficult. If I read a story, I create an image about it. But if the text is about me, I start to create an image of myself while reading about myself. It makes me feel strange and hyperaware. Let's say you were watching a movie about yourself, wouldn't that make you feel weird?

M: I've made some videos, and after that looking at myself doesn't feel strange.

J: I do feel like that, but maybe it's because I'm not used to it.

M: In principle, you don't have to read the text, after all.

J: I do want to read it. I'm just trying to get into a state of mind where I'm not creating images.

M: Nothing really happens in the text, because we've just been sitting and talking.

J: But there are still good bits in there. It's only now I notice that we've been talking about the voice of destruction from the start. I do have to read this. Even though it doesn't reveal who I am, I want to be able to say that I'm standing behind what I've said.

M: Yes. That's important. And because there's already a fair amount of text, at some point we just have to decide where to stop.

J: That's the thing.

M: The best story would be you being completely cured, of course.

J: And what would that mean? I wouldn't even expect a cure that would put an end to the desire.

M: That's true. What would being cured enough mean for you?

J: Not having to fight with this issue any longer. Being a balanced person, the complete person. Sometimes, I've even said that the purpose of life is to find what makes you feel complete.

M: In my opinion, too, that's the most important thing to do in life.

J: All of these things have also been said much earlier, but let's say that in this case, winning means that I'm in balance.

M: Maybe no therapy can aim at achieving a perfect balance. But being able to restore it more easily is already enough.

J: That's what I was thinking right at the start. I needed a new tool to process the problem.

M: Did you find one?

J: Actually, yes. I found one pretty early on, even. The new tool was you. Because I'm used to making simulations about things, I also made one of you. I've created a mental voice of you for everyday life, too. That's how it works for me, and it's been a really big help. With what we've discussed, I can create an image of you that helps me even in my everyday life. I'm not sure what to think of that.

M: That sounds sensible. You're lucky to have such an imagination.

J: I've learned that with the rational self. Creating a mental image.

M: A good therapist is someone who eventually makes themselves unnecessary. You already have your own internalised image of me, so the physical me is no longer needed. I don't mean that it won't be needed right from this moment onward.

J: I wouldn't say it's not needed, but it makes things easier even in situations like this, when we can't meet. It doesn't completely remove the need for physical presence, but it makes things easier in between.

M: In the end, the goal might be that the physical presence of the therapist is no longer necessary at all. Or that's what usually happens, at least. Most therapies end after a few years. What does that bring to your mind?

J: I completely missed the last five seconds because I was reading this text, sorry. Because one bit there was so well said! About how the world doesn't have to please me! Have I really said that? Oh my god! I really do have to read it because it contains bits like this!

M: Tell me about it!

J: The world doesn't have to please me. That's the same lesson as the one about how I'm not special. The world is not for my desires.

M: It's still really well said. Could you think about reading it over the next few weeks to give us an idea on how to wrap up our book?

J: Absolutely. I can't say what a good conclusion would be. At the very least, I want the message that we're both standing behind to come through.

M: I believe it will. That message has been said many times in different ways. But as I've said, repeating it's good. Still, you might get tired of reading many hundreds of pages of it.

J: The length is not what's important.

M: Size isn't everything!

J: Not in this situation, at least.

M: What I asked during the five seconds when you were out of this world was that what does the idea of all therapies ending at some point bring to your mind?

J: Well, of course they end, and it always makes me think that... yeah. That are you ready to face that reality?

M: Most people are afraid at the end of a long period of therapy.

J: In a way, it's not the only profession where you want to get rid of the clients in principle, and I mean that in the good way. The point is to get through things. I'm kind of trying to say to myself: "You should be able to cope already, you already have the tools". I'd like to chatter about things for the next few years, too, just for the joy of talking. But like the rational self says, it's not just about me, there are other people, too. And if I keep coming just for a chat, I may prevent other people from getting help.

M: The situation hasn't reached that point. We aren't in such a rush here yet.

J: I guess that's a good thing, in its way. After the first time in therapy back then, I said that I hope you'll have enough work. I want to show that I value what you do, but I don't want people to have problems. In the same way, it

would be weird to tell ambulance drivers or firefighters that you hope they have a lot of work.

M: Maybe it's justified to assume that there will be work.

J: We won't be running out of mental problems very soon.

M: Not for the next few centuries, or even millennia. But at some point, it's good to decide that you now have enough tools, and then meet every few months for a follow-up.

J: That is true... this is really... I'm almost compelled to keep reading this text here and now. For a long time, I've been thinking about writing myself. But I don't know how to write well, I talk better than I write.

M: And that would be why we've done this.

J: When you have dyslexia, it's difficult to start to produce a long text. But it feels funny, I might try to find enough motivation to do something myself. It's not directly about sexuality, it's about the way of thinking with simulations. That would be about understanding humanity. About making the reader see humanity first, and the potential problems only after that. I've been thinking about it for a long time.

M: This text shows the humanity well.

J: Yes, we have talked about it a lot. But now that I really want to read it, it'll take a few nights. We can agree on a new phone appointment, maybe next week again. I don't want a video chat now, but if just talking over the phone is okay, that's good. I don't really have the right equipment.

M: That's fine. I can write like this, too.

We decided to agree on weekly appointments, even if meeting face to face wasn't possible.

34.

As remote work continued, I had time again to look into the books that had been waiting on the bookshelf for another chance. One of them was BEDIT (Berlin Dissexuality Therapy Programme), a group therapy model developed by Beier et al. for people with paedophiliac tendencies. In Helsinki and Berlin in 2014, I had completed a training organised by the Finnish sexuality and relationship foundation Sexpo, and even though I used the lessons learned in my work, I hadn't managed to read the book, which was in English. It talked about how people with paedophiliac feelings assume that therapists judge them and feel disgusted by them. This fear arises from poor self-esteem related to the stigma of paedophilia. The most obvious task of the therapist is to accept the tendency as is, while naturally taking a strict approach to abuse. I thought that this was what I had in fact done, but it was still difficult for Juhani himself to accept his tendencies. In addition, the book mentioned that because sexuality is multidimensional and also includes the dimension of attachment in addition to desire, paedophiles would also like to satisfy their need for attachment through a child. Because this is only possible with another adult, who does not match the sexual ideal and cannot offer an equally intense experience, however, paedophiles must constantly live with their wishes remaining unfulfilled. Paedophilia is a burden and a trauma in itself, and therefore continuous monitoring and support are needed. I personally think that living with such a major vacuum requires a great mental effort on one hand, but also a chance to find that strength in yourself on the other hand. I was waiting for the next discussion on this topic, and naturally also our text.

M: Which one of these should we start with?

J: In a way, there's an assumption of disgust with every person you're getting to know better. The idea is that if they knew more, they might not care about me. In therapy, that gets highlighted in a way, because at least in the beginning, you don't know the therapist and you feel like you have to keep explaining why you feel this way. When you open up about something that you haven't been able to talk about, you assume that you'll be met with disgust. It's fear and insecurity about your own preferences. What the book said is accurate, it was well put. And it also applies to other things besides therapy.

M: You've also talked about the lack of fulfilment.

J: The feeling of fulfilment is the best way to describe the feeling. But it's difficult to explain, the difference between being with an adult or being with a child. The feeling of fulfilment is missing with an adult. In that sense what they said was right, but there's also something else. I feel like that assumed feeling of fulfilment has something extra, too.

M: Have you experienced anything like that in any situation?

J: Well, I only experience the feeling that I can't reach with an adult when I have a crush on a child. I don't think you can describe that. Could it just be the hormone oxytocin? That's the only time it's secreted and you can reach that emotion.

M: Oxytocin is considered a hormone linked to attachment and intimacy. That could be an interesting research topic.

J: I've already said before that it's difficult to describe things because they come from some mechanism of brain chemistry that's not easy to put into words.

M: And that book said that living with this unfulfilled wish in particular is hard and that's why support is needed.

J: My biggest problem isn't the unfulfilled wish, I've got over it. I'm not looking for a relationship, but there are still days when having sentenced yourself to loneliness feels bad. Still, I wouldn't say that my biggest problem is that I can't make my wish come true.

M: What is your biggest problem, then?

J: It's more: why do I still have to fight this thing? Why won't I take care of myself?

M: It would be good to get back to that at some point. Now, you said that you'd read the text through?

J: Yes! It's written exactly like I said it. It didn't hold any surprises. There were only two things that bothered me. First I say that I don't have an example, but then I give an example anyway. It's written so accurately that you notice how I keep running in circles around some things. But I just hope that if someone reads it, they can understand the message and don't get confused.

M: I think they will understand. On the other hand, it's more vivid because it's been written so accurately.

J: At times, it can be difficult to read a text that takes the circuitous route before getting into something.

M: That's what people do in life. This discussion, too, has been simplified a bit and adapted to standard language. You don't speak in a very strong dialect, in any case.

J: Dialects haven't stuck with me.

M: I think we're reaching the final stretch with the text.

J: Yes, we can start finishing it now. You already need a good while to read through that. I have no idea how to end it. It should have something where the ideas get crystallised in one single point.

This time, Juhani had been more anxious than usual. He asked himself why he wasn't taking care of himself. We had talked about it a few times before, too. In some way, he recognised that he was punishing himself for feeling like his sexuality was wrong. That was why he sometimes failed to do important practical things, and that increased his shame. He also knew, however, that he couldn't achieve anything by punishing himself. We still had to reinforce that knowledge a bit more.

35.

A few months earlier, a friend had written to me:

Sexuality in itself is a desire for connection and union, and it expresses the desire and instinct for unity. You may have realised that you've chosen the perfect field, where issues related to connections, "becoming united" and anomalies are studied on a physical level; you work with them simultaneously on a spiritual level while looking for truth and unity. This is a great gift. The problems with sexuality teach the humankind directly about the problems linked to the return to unity: in one person with "sexual problems", the desire for a union is expressed in a compulsive and continuous desire for sex, while in another it is expressed in the desire to join with another by force, etc. It is very important to note that these people have by no means "failed" by being "people with sexual problems" – even though society disagrees. From the perspective of truth, they do not hide things; on the contrary, on an extreme level they express and teach what is problematic in the world and the humanity with regard to unity and recalling the Truth. They make visible the desperation and desire and all absurd ways people use to look for unity and remembrance of Self. In this way, they also make visible the reasons the remembrance is delayed. Let's examine the idea for rape, for instance. The rapist wants to join with another, but approaches the connection, meaning unity, through TAKING. The rapist takes something away from another by force to have the experience of union (as well as power and strength) they desperately need. All the power and strength they as well as every one of us have, is distorted and stunted in the power of taking something by force. This makes the rapist a stripped-down model for the idea of the world: ONLY BY TAKING

SOMETHING FROM ANOTHER can I receive. Or: taking something by force means strength and power. The rapist becomes bare and stripped down so that we can realise that this is what the world teaches us and how people act in the world. In people's eyes, a rapist is horrifying, but from the perspective of truth, the rapist expresses and exposes what the world is, so that we can see it and make a different choice, so that I would dare to give my Self, step out of the house and into the wind and become connected with that one single Truth that is intertwined with all.

I read that part of the letter to Juhani.

M: Here, the house could symbolise the structure of concepts and conditioning, and your cycle inside the house, circling uselessly instead of stepping outside. But first, tell me what thoughts that provoked in you.

J: I had to think for a minute what the writer wanted to say. I think I got it. I feel like it's a part of the harmful expression of sexuality, that you're looking for the feeling of fulfilment in life from another person, without caring about the other person's bodily integrity. If you think about an abuser or a rapist, a lot of them have different starting points, but their methods are wrong and they start with the false assumption that you have to have power over someone else. Some may already have a violent background, and they start to carry out the search for unity through violence.

M: The subconscious goal is still the same.

J: I think that's true, in principle. I haven't prepared well for this session.

M: You don't really need to prepare for this, though.

J: I've been thinking about these things, but it's difficult to form any single idea about rapists.

M: Actually, abuse is rape, just a slightly milder manifestation of it.

J: People often don't notice how even in a relationship, they start to think that they have the indisputable right to another person. They think that they can

use the other to complete themselves. Completing yourself with someone else starts to violate the other person's right to themselves. That's abuse. But it might not be so easy to notice where the line is. You can't always see when you start trying to repair your broken self by using another person.

M: People really just see a crystallisation of their own distortions in rapists. Those distortions are simply not as obvious in everyday life. My friend's example in the letter was that a person could even rape their morning cereal, for instance. That may have meant gobbling it up, taking it in greedily and by force.

J: In its milder form, this mechanism is pretty common. People dump their own bad feelings on someone else. If you feel bad, you can spread it around in a lot of different ways.

M: That's how it goes. And now, if you consider that the goal is to end all activities that harm children even a little, it's important to understand that even an offence that seems minor is a rape on a small scale.

J: Still, I'd keep the limits clear before accusing anyone. If a person notices that someone else is acting in ways that are heading in the wrong direction, I wouldn't immediately interpret it as abuse, unless there's evidence. I did understand that correctly, right?

M: I'm not talking about the practical level right now. Of course, this is what should happen in practice. The judicial system sorts things like crimes into different categories. That's how it should be. But ultimately, the state of mind is the same, even if it's expressed in a different form.

J: For some reason, I just jumped to conclusions. But as I've said, in many of these cases, the main mechanism is the same.

M: This is starting to shape up into a pretty good summary of what we've been talking about along the way. The next appointment, which is the last one for the book, is for you to sum up the message you want to send. I've stated my own message here. People want connections, they want unity,

and they try to find it outside themselves, where it naturally does exist, because the internal and external are not separate things, but you can't find it in any form. Sexuality, in all of its forms, strongly expresses this longing. It's the desire that can be used to understand unity more deeply when it's channelled consciously, but it can also be misused. In brief: sex in itself, even in its legal form, doesn't bring unity. The unity already exists, you only need to see it.

J: Right. Well, I still need to think some more about my own summary. Although I already know pretty well what it is. How to say it in fine words, that I don't know. In a way that would include a gleam of hope in there. I might want to address it more to those who are in the same situation as I was years ago. Say the things I would've wanted to hear back then, when my thoughts were the most confused. But this feels a bit weird: is it already coming to an end?

M: True. It's been nearly a full year of work. It was summer when we started. June, maybe.

J: I really hope that the book will be useful.

M: I'm completely certain that it will be. Even for those without sexual interest in children. But should we go back for a minute to where we started the very first time?

J: Now what we were talking about in that first session...

M: About how you were afraid of spiralling if we started to talk about these things any deeper. What would you say about that now?

J: I didn't spiral! I guess I mainly meant that if we started to talk about questioning reality. It's easy to talk about desires and the voice of destruction, but questioning reality is where the spiral happens for me.

M: And as I've said, and as I want to say once again: you can't solve problems at the same level of consciousness that created them.

J: I've been able to let go of that. Sometimes I get stuck thinking about something, even though there's no hope of finding an answer.

M: As my friend said, going round and round inside that house, meaning the construction of concepts and ideas, is a meaningless spiral. You're just walking inside the house. Instead, you should step out of the house.

J: I've been trying to think about that, too. That problem can't be solved, it just locks you inside a situation, where you can only see the problem. That metaphor with the house is great! The house is our personal area, the place where we feel safe, where we lock ourselves in.

M: And little by little, we dare to spend more and more time outside.

J: Or see more.

M: Yes, that's the same thing. You can't see if you're inside.

J: The voice of destruction likes these circles inside the house, that we stay there, because it prevents us from seeing anything else except for the anxiety. It wants us to see nothing but the anxiety. That's why it likes constantly turning things over and going around in circles.

M: Bingo! Yes.

J: Like that. It's good that we've discussed things on this level. It has made me think better about things. The second dimension helped me to step outside my own bubble.

36.

Now we had finally reached the end. I prepared for the last discussion that would be written down. Easter was over, and the restrictions due to coronavirus were in force. I had just listened to an interview with police officers investigating sexual offences, where they said that the coronavirus situation had increased sexual abuse of children online. These days children spent more and more time on their phones, wanting to find friends, which gave more opportunities for abusers. According to the police, videos of children recorded for sexual purposes are in great demand, and that makes abusers develop into extremely skilled manipulators. Even small children were persuaded to expose themselves under the pretext of playing a game, for example. Therefore, it seemed that the need for therapy for both perpetrators and victims was increasing.

I also told Juhani about the interview I had heard.

J: That's a really troubling situation, the grooming of children is increasing in all unusual situations linked to anxiety and stress.

M: That's right. During those times, people seek comfort and relaxation from sexual material without caring about who it has harmed.

J: People spend even more time than usual on their devices, which makes behaviour like this easier.

M: Now, what would you like to say in our last therapy session for the book?

J: Well, I spent a week thinking about it, and didn't manage to get anything

done. I waited for some ultimate stroke of brilliance to pop up at the last minute, but that didn't happen. I only thought about what my message would be. I feel like I'd love to say something especially great, but I'll just say what feels right.

M: Go ahead!

J: Be kind to others, and remember to be kind to yourself, too. That's everything in a nutshell. For the last week I wondered what I wanted to say from the perspective that I would've needed myself back then. I would've wanted to hear that all possibilities of acting in a different way already existed within myself. The way of being able to feel whole. I don't have to hate the world. The pain we feel has not been caused by the world.

M: I agree with you completely.

J: That's pretty much what I was thinking. The ability to do something different and live in a way that doesn't harm others already exists in me. And you don't need to hate yourself.

M: That's an excellent message!

J: Understanding basic humanity is the key. The people who are in the same situation as me when I was young rarely even see themselves as human beings, and neither did I. That was one of my first questions: do I have the right to be human? That's an extremely harrowing thought, and it leads you to a vicious circle of thinking. Lately, I've started to think about how easily you forget to be kind to yourself. That's why I say that you also should remember to be kind to yourself.

M: Judgement is of no use whatsoever. I don't mean that actions shouldn't be assessed or restricted.

J: But the judgement also starts to limit the joy of life. You also start to limit things in life that aren't related to the actual thing being restricted.

M: Unfortunately, that's how it goes.

J: That's why judging yourself is harmful. We believe that we need judgement to remember and know how to act right. But what if kindness were to help us more? What if you approached the problem not by judging yourself, but instead by understanding yourself and creating the necessary limits that way? What if, instead of judgement, your aim was to become whole as a person?

M: That sounds like an insight!

Juhani laughed happily.

J: I'm usually careful with my flow of ideas. But I didn't say anything too weird now.

M: No, that was very sound advice!

J: But that's all I have to sum up. If you can express that so that it makes sense, that's my message as a whole.

M: I think it already makes sense. Our therapy will continue, so what's the goal that you would now like to reach with it?

J: I'd at least like support with my current situation, related to my studies. And in addition, I need to talk about the anxiety spiral to get over the bad phase.

M: Of course you'll have help with that. There's no point in reinforcing the anxiety spiral by overanalysing it. We should practice letting go and returning to this moment more.

J: I'm a bit scared about this situation. I've let other things go in the background while this book was being written. I've allowed myself to get into a state of paralysis.

M: Do you now mean aspects of life other than this one?

J: Yes. Other necessary activities tend to suffer.

M: Here, too, could you think about being kind to yourself?

J: I should! I can talk about things, but I should also apply them to myself. Sometimes I get too strict with myself, I take the harsh line that I just talked about.

M: And that only paralyses you more.

J: I know exactly how it works. It feels bad when you're paralysed, and then you get even more paralysed.

M: That's a part of the spiral of the voice of destruction.

J: It's a strange pattern that I've been stuck with. I somehow recognise that it's the voice of destruction that brought those things up. I usually can recognise it much faster.

M: The destructive, gnawing part of our minds is very good at hiding. It may even disguise itself as development. Paralysis doesn't immediately look like destruction, but it's caused by fear, just like destruction.

J: It feels like it's the voice of destruction. When I hear the active voice of destruction, I recognise it immediately. But now I don't know if I can "hear" the voice of destruction. I need to be more critical with myself now! What if I'm already implementing the message of the voice of destruction, without "hearing" it separately? I may have heard it a long time ago, and now I'm just putting it into practice.

M: That's how the subconscious belief models work. The voice of destruction is cunning.

J: That was a part of the thought model that feeling bad is just a part of me. I haven't questioned its origin.

M: Which is a thought model that you've created and reinforced yourself.

J: Right.

M: But it can be changed!

J: I hope I can, but how do I change it? That cycle has existed for years. I may end up completely powerless.

M: You're changing it right now.

J: Yes, but I should be able to get completely rid of it. I already know that I'm setting myself up to fail. Whenever things start to get better, I think that soon things will be worse!

M: You have to be constantly vigilant about your own thoughts, and that's difficult. But thoughts change, you have the power to change them. You can apply the same thing that you've applied to this sexual interest in children to the rest of your life. Listening to the rational self.

J: Right.

M: Can I ask you to specify a bit more?

J: Sure!

M: I've understood that you've significantly reduced your use and possession of child sexual abuse material?

J: Yes. Even if I haven't got completely rid of it.

M: I think getting completely rid of it would be a good thing to pursue.

J: I agree. I know there's nothing to gain from it, and I know that it maintains the anxiety. I still feel like I don't know how to be completely without it, but why? Why couldn't I be completely without it?

M: Well, sexuality is a core part of being human. Of course it's difficult to think about having to completely give up the way of expressing it that you like the most.

J: A part of me enjoys it, but I should understand that it's like unhealthy food that doesn't do me good. The pleasure, if you forget ethics for a minute, is extremely strong, and it creates the feeling that you need it. And even knowing that you're doing something wrong doesn't stop you from looking at it. But understanding the cycle of harmfulness and feeling bad works better. You should see beyond the pleasure. When you take away the pleasure, what do you have left? Feeling bad, a guilty conscience, the knowledge of enjoying something at the cost of another person's trauma. That's a horrible thought once the pleasure is over.

M: Now we've reached the heart of things again.

J: You should be able to see that it's not worth the pleasure. It's not good for me. It's difficult. Sometimes you say it sounds like an addiction. There's an aspect of that, too. Being addicted to that material.

M: That's what it means. Because otherwise, you would've reasoned yourself away from it.

J: And at some point I did reason myself away, and everything went well for a long time! But knowing which rocks you should look under, and when the temptation grows... I know, you should just give it up, but, well. I have to work on it.

M: Our work continues.

J: As for me, I'd say I need it, the therapy.

M: You need a reminder that you can always choose that side, the right side.

J: That's what I keep saying, that you should make a different choice, but it's still difficult. Understanding it hasn't automatically made it easier.

M: No, because it's about deeply emotional issues. That's at the heart of all addictive behaviour. It's not about the same kind of a choice as picking

between two cheeses to buy at the grocer's. Major emotions guide things here. Fear and anxiety disguise themselves as desires, desire masks itself as a need. But it's not about need. If it was, you wouldn't feel bad afterwards.

J: That's true, I've understood it. The anxiety is what drives this activity. You patch up the need for things like intimacy and togetherness with porn, and it goes into a direction that feeds anxiety. You'd think that the rational self would've prevented me from falling into that pit, but it hasn't. It gives me a ladder to climb out from there. But the situation is better already.

M: The rational self doesn't force you, you have the freedom of choice.

J: Sometimes I wish it would force me. It lets me get pretty deep before it comes and asks: "Shouldn't you do better?"

M: I believe that it's ready to help you whenever you choose to listen.

J: There's that side of it, too. I haven't been the best at listening.

M: I could also argue that the voice of destruction speaks first and loudest.

J: Well, yeah, maybe, if I'm not in a good shape. Or do you mean that I may not be able to recognise it as well as I think?

M: That's right!

J: It has that aspect, too. I used to believe that I can recognise it immediately. For years, a bad, learned operating model that comes in waves has been brewing in me. I haven't always been able to identify it as something caused by the voice of destruction, I've thought it was an external stimulus or something. But if it's the voice of destruction, I have to think about it from a different point of view. I haven't thought of it as the voice of destruction.

M: As I said, it's good at disguising itself. That's why it's so important to be always vigilant. Now for the conclusion, what could we say as our final words?

J: I don't know.

M: The work is still in progress, for every one of us. For me, too, with my own voice of destruction. It's good to assume that it can take your whole lifetime before you've given the power of decision completely over to the rational self. But every decision reinforces it. You make the choice! Every moment.

J: True!

M: Would this be a good place to end this book?

J: I don't know, I've never ended a book before!

We laughed at the idea.

M: Well, let's do it like this, then.

J: That's how we have to do it.

37.

Afterwards, we talked more about what we still needed to work on. After the most recent discussion, Juhani had been able to silence a strong desire of his which demanded he use illegal material. He had been able to calm down, and the desire had passed. Still, from time to time it was difficult for him to believe that he could completely stop looking at child sexual abuse material. Juhani understood the conflict with the thoughts of the “rational self”. After all, he had realised that he wasn’t special or entitled to seek pleasure at the cost of another person’s suffering. That’s why the idea that he had to look at child sexual abuse material was false. He did recognise that, and it annoyed him. He said that the desire had no power to force him to do anything, no matter how much it screamed at him. He also said that something being illegal wasn’t enough for the desire. Sometimes that would excite it even more, because it wanted to rebel against rules and regulations. Besides, the law didn’t remove desire or prevent it from acting. A different kind of mental decision was needed.

I told him that looking at child sexual abuse material may seem like the viewer isn’t participating in it. Juhani had justified looking at the material by thinking things like that the video had already been made, meaning that the damage had already been done, and he hadn’t been the one to cause it. However, that justification didn’t remove the harmfulness. He compared it himself to “revenge porn”, in which a partner publishes sexual images, intended to be used by the couple together, after their break-up as revenge on the other partner. Juhani had realised that he thought that no outsiders had any right whatsoever to look at such material, because it was made for intimate use. He thought that looking at it would mean participating in the violence. The “rational self” had intervened in the thought process

quickly, asking, “And what about your child porn? How is it any different from this principle?”

Juhani had found that the desire’s reward for looking at the material was not worth keeping your mind prisoner.

At a meeting three months after the last discussion I wrote down, Juhani said that he had deleted all harmful material off his computer. He was facing his fears more and more resolutely. I had never heard him laugh as freely as at that session.

Our mind is imprisoned by desires and the voice of destruction until we consciously decide to free it. And we keep deciding to free it again and again whenever it has got tangled again in the web of desires and stories without us noticing.

In the end, it might be tempting to say that Juhani is the one who has to do so much work with his mind. Every one of us has to work with our minds, because we’re possessed by exactly the same desires and voices of destruction, they only wear different costumes. This side of us lives for splintering and separation, and it doesn’t recognise that every time you disconnect yourself from something, you feel fear and guilt. If Juhani or anyone else detaches themselves as a bystander who supposedly plays no part in harming others, even if they watch it being done, they will feel guilty and bad after the short-term pleasure. As he said, he felt bad due to knowing that he enjoyed himself at the cost of another person’s trauma. But of course, the ego doesn’t tell that to you when you’re planning to do or are already doing something. Our subconscious knows that we’re all linked to each other and everything that happens. That’s why thinking “it’s not my business” digs a hole in our own mind. We always only harm ourselves, or we always only free ourselves. The illusion of separation starts to disappear when we realise that nobody else is really different from yourself. Every one of us has a different, important task and role to play here, but our basic essence and needs are the same. A child has the same need for safety and respect as Juhani. Juhani has the same need for a connection as we do.

Juhani had taken responsibility for his own thinking, and he was consciously and resolutely working on it.

Have you already started?

“The world doesn’t have to please me.”

“If we listen to desire, it looks for justifications for its activities. It wants to make things a reality, it wants to enjoy. And so it makes us see facts even in things where they don’t exist.

“I’ve never felt bad because I can’t do what I’d like to do. That’s not something I’ve ever been upset about. I’ve been upset because I haven’t come up with any other way to feel that I have a full life.”

This is a collection of discussions between Juhani and me, his sex therapist, over a year. The quotations above are Juhani’s own words. He presents a mental method that can help people live with any preference without hurting anyone. This way of thinking can be applied to other mental issues, too. Juhani experiences sexual interest in children, and he has received lessons for coping with it from the wise part of his mind that he calls the rational self. He wants to tell people that a preference in itself does not make anyone a monster. The discussions touch on themes and books about sexology, psychology and philosophy. In addition to Juhani’s life story, the sessions also took in the cultural background to the topic. But my greatest honour and pleasure as author is to present the voice of reason that makes you stop and think: the rational self.