

ETHICS

The ethical person is faced with many responsibilities,—to himself foremost, as the standard setter his family imprinted in him. While always begging for the satisfaction of his infant needs, he is reshaping himself into awareness of another inside him, whom he can tolerate, if not yet love. That is the I he knows inside him, a coxer, a trickster, a seducer who would gladly give him up to a value free existence, but who feels already the painful draw toward becoming an ethical person. This other will offer him gifts of the Seven Persias, but they will not cure the rash on his foot, the painful internal itch to be a moral perfection. He will remain the puppy subject of those Seven Persias, a hungry dog. He will not yet be an ethical person per se but he will be such a person longing to become ethical.

Somewhere value pushes its rapacious nose in through a crack in the wood work, and the ethical person sniffs his way onto the scene. Yet the farther he moves into the territory of goodness, acting for others, denying himself when others can benefit from it, the more he can whiff the odor of corruption in the floorboards of his old dwelling. Perhaps a heartless landlord has lived his life for him, deep in the woodwork, perhaps a good natured dad who folded under too many mid-life pressures and forgot two children, and yet lies interred there in the dust of Shroudsburg, Pennsylvania. There are days when nothing smells good to him except the dark odor of his own self-loathing.