

Kaleidoscope

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Part I. Logical Exclusions

Frontiers:

1.1. The first challenge

*First there was Logos. Then there was the World.
We tried to fit the World into the Word.
And we described it, attempting to relate its truth
and mystery in our terms. We made it.
Sometimes it fits, sometimes we need to trim and to elaborate this
world we love and hate and cherish and betray...
Stockholm, 1996*

Reality is Logos. I search for my place in this world and discover that, in fact, I am in search of language. My quest leads me to my limits, sometimes beyond. Beyond this frontier extends Freedom.

Freedom and social beings are at odds with each other. Life itself is conceived within borders, circumscribed within the womb. The first challenge is the struggle of birth. At this moment we tear ourselves from the body and will of Mother and ascertain our desire for independent life against her pain: the pain that attempts to retain and at once expels. We burst out in blood and pain to face life. And throughout its course, we struggle with the desire for the tight, warm and protective imprisonment. Yet we dream of the freedom beyond. In this world, this struggle is our first challenge.

The Painful Trilogy

2.1. La Nonna

Every week day, grandma escorts Steven home from school. Steven is a sturdy and energetic five-year-old. His features compose a determined expression, yet there is something soft and deep in his large hazel eyes. La Nonna is small, roughly 1.5 m tall and about 65 years old. Her tired face exhales sadness. My two and half year-old daughter, Liouba, and I see them almost every week on the playground behind the school where we spend Thursday mornings. And every week we witness the same scenario touched only by slight variations.

As soon as Steven spots the slides and the swings, he dashes towards the playground. He climbs, jumps, and runs about. "Would you like a biscuit?" He shares some with Liouba and they begin to chase one another. During the first five minutes, La Nonna seems resigned, but not passive, for she emits charged vibrations. Little by little she turns taut with anxiety and begins to hurry him home. But Steven is here to play and does not intend to leave soon. After another 10 minutes, her tense vibrations sound danger. Her voice rings aggression: "Steven, let's go home". Steven turns to Liouba more attentively now and does not seem to hear or see La Nonna. He climbs up the slides; jumps down; rolls on the ground. La Nonna's voice quavers, "Steven, we've got to go". Steven is now deeply involved in rolling with Liouba on the grass. It seems that he sees and hears only her. La Nonna is tense, her voice bitter, "Steven, I will abandon you. I am going. You will stay here alone. Steven, I am gone, Steven. Look La Nonna is gone". She hides behind some shrubs on the side of the playground. He looks around, and momentarily, anxiety crosses his brows. Then, a smile lightens up his lips. He turns back to Liouba. Liouba is still rolling on the grass. He joins her.

La Nonna inevitably reappears. She is bound to reappear. He takes her reappearance for granted. She is now desperate and furious. She screams, "Steven, let's go right this minute". He still ignores her. "Steven, you ugly monster, let's go right now". He now runs circles around her - faster and faster, gaining speed, like a meteorite. He looks deeply concentrated within himself and detached from the world around. La Nonna screams more and more and begins to shake. She attempts to capture him with her words, arms, legs, body, her whole being. He continues to run around her, not looking at her, but with the obvious intention of being within her reach. They spin. At one moment, she grabs him by the hair. She breathes heavily and pulls

his hair several times so that his whole body swings from side to side. Had she claws, she would have scalped him skinless. She is strong and violent this tiny sad Nonna.

An enraged bull, he sways uncontrollably with his whole body and being, back and forth, with all his strength knocking his head into her pelvis, stomach, and chest. Had he a pair of horns, he would have swung and spun her off into the universe. He is mighty and resolved this young little Steven.

A fighter and a beast on a battle-arena, they swing from side to side. Suddenly, they halt. Their arms and shoulders droop. Finally, they look at each other. Their eyes meet. Tears run down her withered face; La Nonna weeps. Her voice crackles. She pleads, "Steven, please. I beg you. The grandfather... What if he needs to go to the toilet? We must hurry home. Please, what if something happens? The grandfather, Steven". He looks at her with his wide soft eyes and tears come down his cheeks, off his chin. They embrace. They cling to each other, both small, hurt, weeping. Arms around her waist; arms over his head and shoulders; she stoops and limps; he leans on her. They slowly walk away.

Frontiers:

1.2. Birth

I was born. I came into this world. I fought to live.

I battled to become. I loved to be; and searched for love.

Frontiers blow blizzards of solitude. Where I was conceived, at which place I was created, the universe shattered the cry for love into a million stars, splintered them across the sky as a lure of hope for the poetic fool who sometimes tears the eyes away from feet and dares to glance up. Naive, indeed, is the buffoon who believes in the mirage at the frontiers. And forlorn, verily, is the poet, because banality can never be poetry; and what is not like all else is solitaire. Beauty is pain. It moves the vulgar because brutally the reader mutilates the poet's suffering and smudges the flicker of genius with crumbs of stale food. The reader is a pilferer who robs the poet of suffering and pain to use it as manure in the scanty field of poetry sowing banality over the unique. They are many and they are not alone. Whoever said that we were all solitary lied. Within society they are among themselves. But at the frontiers we are scattered like stars, divided by space, darkness, and pain.

Beyond the frontiers, I was born. I became as I fought. I struggled as I loved. I wept as I learnt how to mistrust.

But,
who am I?

The Painful Trilogy

2.2 Ernesto

From Stockholm field notes, 1996.

Oh, Mother! She is the most beautiful woman ever. She has always been so heavenly, so untouchable, so perfect, so remote. We lived in a small town on the sunny island. The lush grass breathed cool dampness caressed by her shadow. Ever since I was a baby - I don't think I could even walk or talk then - I remember her sitting, serene, her hair black waves of thick velvet falling down her cheeks into the crest of her breasts scattering across her naked back; her eyes of darkness cast down; she would paint and polish her nails, the nails on her honey hands and on her milk cream legs. She always used red nail polish. She was always painting her nails.

She would sit for hours, motionless, not from this world, beyond our reality, our misery, our truth. She would sit on the verandah on a plastic woven garden chair, against the changing sky, into the darkness and beyond my cries, my screams, my tears, my wants; beyond me.

When I learnt how to displace myself, I would crawl up to her and attempt to snatch her attention by catching her feet with my mouth. Her feet were all I could reach. She would hit me then, real hard, without even throwing a glance. But she touched me. At last, she touched me. She noticed me. This touch of pain shot like thunder through my skin, flesh, and into my consciousness. This touch of pain overwhelmed my desire for love. This touch of pain ran down my throat in salty streams of tears and into my heart. The tears brought warmth. They brought deliverance. Swallowing my sobs, I twisted on the floor seized not only by pain, but also by an abysmal feeling of gratitude, of love. And all the while, she continued to trim, polish, paint, check, fix her nails; always with red nail-polish.

She has never been happy with my father, I believe. My father was a cop. He was tough. His job was violence. He continued his job at home. Whenever he hit her, it broke my heart. An image would overwhelm me which never let go of me: I saw her as a porcelain figure in red and black satin shattering to pieces. The pieces cut through me and made me bleed until blood there was no more. No one should have ever touched

her. At those moments, I would pray fervently. I begged God to let me take her place; that I be beaten and tortured. Not her. She should have been saved. They could beat me to death, while I kissed her feet, her feet with red nails. But they did not know of my prayer. And God has his own logic. My pain never alleviated hers.

Now, I am 30 years old. I am seeing this woman with red nails and black velvet hair. I recently discovered that she wears a wig to our meetings. But it looks so beautiful against her satin skin. She hurts me; she hits me. She knows my secret and she never looks at me. I lie there at her feet. I kiss her red nails, one by one. I feel warm. I love.

Frontiers:

1.3. Mother

You are a girl. I was waiting for a boy. I even prepared a name for you. Maxim. I was waiting so much for a boy. But there you came.

She was born. But I became. Different. I was also born different.

You are different from us. Poor child. So smart, so lively, so beautiful. What a pity...

My mother did not know with her mind, but felt with all her being that she had to have me. She was waiting for a saviour. Not for the universe at large, but for her universe at least. I was conceived in a moment of passion, where differences, wars even existence came to a halt. There was simply his dark eyes upon her blue, her smallness against his muscles, his black skin against her white. They were each other's arms. And so much love has been put in me, that when a few months later she noticed the difference in her being and knew that I was to come, she expected some trouble; and some of it imposed itself without any prior announcement to her. Hence, for her it was not. In her language a saviour was inevitably male. He was a grammatical and a semantic male. Yet, like most people, she identified him with the organic and waited for a boy.

The Painful Trilogy

2.3. Mezabella

Dedicated to Yohann.

Disclaimer: Any similarity in this story to real people is coincidental. If at anytime anybody gets the uncanny feeling of self-recognition in any of the characters in the story, let them know (both the body and the self) that this recognition stems from inner self awareness or conscience. If this happens, perhaps they could even survive the operation statistics. We may all hope.

*Statistics: 103846566538392827655356758589430
93883755665433122243453646ryfhfnhuekdfkj
hfjghfghnblb/m'a'qpt]1509u89yiuyrqguyqt7q
7t4ugjkbkjbvjagfiat87q4yuqgrfahfbaljgvaf
yutqytuieqiueihjkghkhbuieyp3467675601501-
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laaku.....(et al ad infinitum).....*

I opened my mouth to say that my friend's bathroom was, in fact, a shrine. Mezabella bugged out her heavy, bald, pale, reptilian eyes. That was the sign to the others to seize me. Methodically, Orl grabbed my arms and Candritta tied them swiftly behind my back with stainless chains that shocked my thin skin with their feel of the medical, that is the precise and calculated cold; while Mezabella proceeded to stuff my open mouth with tasteless statistics. The figures immediately set off to work, which was to penetrate me. Thus, instead of saying that Asja's bathroom was immaculate; that the incense, the Japanese prints, the plants and the Indian scarf over the lamp emitted calm and abundant quiet, I had to take care of this situation. The statistics were already beginning to push down my throat, so I had to concentrate on my guttural muscles keeping them tight.

Mezabella slammed the table with her fist and more figures scattered from her hands and shoved themselves into my ears and nose biting and fighting, wiggling and buzzing. Now, I had to figure out how to survive and how to hope.

Candritta was in ecstasy. At the age of 50, she has retained the ferocity of youth and was jumping around me in circles screaming: Aha, that will teach you how to speak nonsense. Don't you know that words are little arrows? Ah? And you wanted us

to catch them? Ah? To do what with them? Tell me, do WHAT with them? Aha, can't speak. Give her some more statistics, Mezabella. Good girl. Yes, more, more, more... Aaaaaah, you wanted to poison us with the words of how Asja gave birth in her bathroom? Alone! With no help from the doctor! What about a midwife? Well, a midwife would have done - but no, madam wants to do it all by herself, in her bathroom, ALONE! Is that so? Madam is better than us all. And as if once is not enough, madam wants to make a statement, she does it twice. Ah? Well, this will teach you a lesson. You thought you could get away with telling us that crap? You wanted to infect us? No, darling, no no nooooooo.

Mezabella too went into a trance. She squinted her eyes and rhythmically banged more and more figures out of her pale fist. She seemed phantom-like, although, as I had discovered earlier today, she was only 25 years old. Suddenly, still squinting, she was nose to nose with me and whispered in a hoarse, crackling voice: so who's paranoiac now? Eh? who's really, really scared? Eh?

Fight your fear - I heard a faint voice from the depth of my being. Fear is what will sell you out. Fight fear. As I listened to the voice, I felt that Orl was confused about this ceremony, and couldn't decide what to make of it. After all, Candritta was right, all those arrows that I sent them could leave their mark - perhaps even indelible. In fact, it seems that some of them have already done so, though he couldn't locate them or figure out which ones. But, what if??? I caught his doubt and it gave me the moment and the strength to snap out of the chains and out of the circle.

I came to my senses in a pine forest. Through the green of the trees I could see the blue sky. The crystal air was filled with warmth and light, as if the sun lurked nearby, even though I did not see it. I was still coughing and saw traces of my belched out statistics. Like worms, they were vigorously fidgeting and digging their way into the soft moss. I wondered what will become of the earth now, but I felt weak and preoccupied. I refused to be muted and mutated by them, so I mustered the last possible squeezes of my abdominal muscles to make sure that I was free. Hurrah! I rejoiced and began to look for a way into life and out of the forest. Perhaps there was something that I did not comprehend. Otherwise, why would it happen when I least expected? But, suddenly, I realized as I softly crumbled that the two little buggers, precisely the digit "6" and the small letter "r", have dug labyrinths throughout my inner flesh. They gnawed through my insides until they filled me with void.

Epilogue to Logical Exclusions

Frontiers

The last challenge

We vested Logos in Reality. I search for my place in this world and I discover that, in fact, I search for peace. In this quest, I venture to the brim. Beyond this frontier extends Freedom.

The challenge is to find the frontier and to wander beyond, without the circle. Throughout our lives we tread the ground of death. We fear it and tremble at its immanence. Yet we know with our stomachs, hearts, heads, or whatever else we believe shelters our souls, that in death lingers our only true freedom. Probably, that is why we also resist life and invent the flaky warmth of comfort for which some bleed until their earthly end and in which others linger to atrophy and suffocate. We fear and heed and need you, death.

Our most important challenge is the challenge of being, of becoming, of going, of realizing that, in fact, we are always going away. We contradict our truth. We contradict our myth and we incessantly repeat that we are here to stay. For freedom and immortality are at odds. Our challenge is to come to *Terms* and, at the same time, to go on eternal wanderings throughout language, the world and most important between the realms of Logos and Reality.

The last frontier extends there, where I sway in the current of language, where language loses meaning, where I walk into a new reality of shattered images, of fleeting symbols, of unappointed reference. Frontiers encompass me into a new formula of Iiiiiii, where I shatters into the darkness which is complete and into the blueness of the eyes that conceived I in a breath of passion when they inhaled madness and looked at this I and breathed passion into her soul. They conceived I at a point where time and space dispersed and where differences, wars and the whole existence came to a halt. At that point, there was simply his black eyes upon her blue, her smallness against his muscles, his black skin against her white. They were each other's arms. I erupted between their Words.

Suddenly, words become void. They frighten me. I repeat them over and over and over again and they lose their meaning. I repeat them incessantly in a panic. Frantically, I cling to them, but they become ridiculous and flee away. They scatter. I forget them and they lose their form of sound. One day I shall venture to that beyond. There, the passivity of the word "born" shall disappear. There, my own, new language awaits me. But, will it be only my own? Will it be void? I do not dare reach that freedom. Uncertainty returns. The challenge is to love.

Part II. Logical Inclusions

Correct question:

Have you noticed that all children like to sing, bang, drum, inspect the flute, play the piano, pluck the guitar? So, what makes Mozart different?

Correct answer:

He was taken seriously.

Respect of choice

Anna said to her 5 year old son: I don't like plastic toys. I don't want you to play with them.

Siddhartha: Why not?

Anna: Because the earth does not like them.

Siddhartha: O.K. I respect that. (Pause). But I like them. So, I will not give them to the earth, then. I will play with them myself. O.K.?

Anna: O.K. play with them yourself, but not in my house. Alright?

Siddhartha: Alright.

Kleptomania

Dylan (4 years old): Santa is a thief.

Erin: Why?

Dylan: Well, where does he get all those things from, then? Can you tell me?

A spot for Artists in the U.S.

Maria (3 1/2): There must be a lot of pencils in Pennsylvania.

Kind Morning

In Russia, people wish each other a "kind morning" like in the English speaking world people wish one other a "good morning".

Liouba at 2 years & 4 months: The wind moves the leaves and the clouds and Kind Morning happens.

Dangerous crossings

Liouba and her girl-friend Sasha are 2 years and 4 months old. They like to play together. But, Sasha has the habit of running away from her mother. The two girls seem to think that this is a funny game and they scatter away from us all over the playground, laughing at our clumsy pursuit dragging Sasha's enormous infant-brother Iliusha and the volumous bags.

I don't want this to become a habit and try to find a way to explain to Liouba why she should not do this. Sasha seems to know the rules for pedestrian children, which is one rule: never cross the road alone. Even though she runs away, she always stops at the edge of the park before the road.

For the first time in her life, Liouba took the initiative and broke the rule. She ran across the road. Petrified, I threw everything and dashed after her. I grabbed her arm and yelled that she should NEVER EVER do this again. I told her that I was tired and that I will not run after her again. So, she ran back to the road.

I ran up to her and asked her, "do you think this is a game?"

"Yes, this is a game," she laughed.

I: No, Liouba. This is not a game. This is dangerous. Why is this dangerous?

Liouba: Because there might be cars...

I: And Sasha is wrong when she runs away. What should you do if Sasha runs away?

Liouba repeats what I had asked her to do in previous escapes: "We should catch Sasha, and we should tell her that this is not a game and that this is not funny. And if Iliusha runs away," she improvised further, "he too should be caught and told that this is not allowed".

"And is Liouba going to run away again?" I asked.

"No, not any more".

"Good. Agreed. And if you run away again, we won't be able to go for walks".

Several days later, Liouba saw Sasha, Iliusha and their father, Artem, approaching the playground and ran to meet them. The girls hugged and kissed, exchanged their tricycle and doll-pram and disappeared around the corner and across the road. I noticed that Liouba checked both sides of the road before dashing across and that she used pedestrian crossings each time she kicked her experiment; while Sasha stayed mesmerized at the edge of the pedestrian walk.

"Liouba, what are we going to do now? Do you remember our agreement?" I asked her.

"Yes."

"So, you broke our agreement?"

"Yes."

"So, what are we going to do, since you broke the agreement?"

She calmly said, "Liouba broke the agreement. Let's go home."

Artem and Iliusha have joined us by now and Liouba explained to them, "Liouba broke the agreement. We're going home." We picked up our stuff, said good-bye to our friends and left. On the way home Liouba said thoughtfully, "when there are cars, Liouba cannot cross the road. But when there are no cars, Liouba can cross the road".

Suddenly, I realized that, in fact, the agreement didn't make sense and therefore she took it for a peculiar whim on my part and hence decided to ignore this nonsensical agreement. For, all along, I have been giving her contradictory information regarding this subject. First, each time we crossed the road, I told her what we should be doing for safety. And she learnt it well, she checked both sides before dashing across, and she dashed across only on the zebra crossings. Isn't the reason why we learn safety rules so that we can apply them in practice? So, here she was applying them. But I never explained why I was allowed to cross the road and she wasn't. We big people make it appear to children that sometimes (most often, in fact) they are not allowed to do things simply because they are little and that there is something wrong with their littleness. "Because you're little... When you grow up, you may do so and so," we

often say. But that makes no sense, really. Moreover, it was not Liouba's job to chase after Sasha.

At this point we were about to cross another road. We checked both sides. There was nothing. Just as we stepped off the pavement, a car appeared. I took Liouba's hand and squatted, "look, Liouba. Do you see? There was no car before. But all of a sudden, it appeared. Cars are big, while a child is small. It is possible that a car suddenly appears and that the driver does not see the child. With this big car, the driver can hit the child, and it is very very painful and even dangerous. Mama is big, so the driver can see her better. That is why it is important for our child to cross the road only with mama or papa, because the driver will see mama or papa from far and then will notice that there is also the child. And even then, mama and papa have to be very careful".

There were no more such incidents.

Difference

2 years and 5 months: Daddy's teats are useless.

- And mama's?

- Mama's are useful.

Subtle solutions

A few days later: We should glue the door juuuuust a tiny bit, so that the door doesn't creak.

A parable for all ages

At 3 years & 3 months, after having watched a Russian cartoon "The Cat's House", Liouba told this story:

The cat was greedy. Because the cat was greedy, the kitten decided to give her a balloon...

Like most adults, I interrupt her with "our" logical correction: despite, despite the fact that she was greedy, he gave her a balloon...

Liouba insists with a hardened tone: ...**because** she was greedy, he decided to give her a balloon. She understood that she should share and became kind.

The cat Nana (our cat) was greedy. Because the cat was greedy, the kitten decided to give her a balloon. She understood that she should share and became kind.

Genealogy

Liouba's version of the world at 3 years and 3 months:

When mama was little, she hid in Liouba's tummy. Then she grew and grew, became bigger and bigger; when she became real big, she decided to come out. She came out and said "Mua-mua".

The princess¹ was little. She grew and grew and grew big and died and became little. I saved her, because she didn't die completely and she climbed into my tummy. She grew and grew and grew and came out of the tummy and stayed little.

While papa came from the forest.

Nana (our cat) appeared in Tver². She was very little, and from her kittens were born. They grew and grew and they developed claws.

Aunt Maya appeared from the sofa.

The Question of Money

3 years and 3 months.

Mama: I am off on errands.

Liouba: Don't take any money with you. Leave it at home.

Mama: Why?

Liouba: You guys, don't spend any money this week, because what if I will be hungry? I need money for food.

¹ Our friend Irina in Tver made the tiny princess from an inch of white lace, 3 inches of silver and blue fabric, a peach glove-finger, and ginger-thread-hair for Liouba's first birthday.

² Liouba's native city in Russia.

Mama: O.K. We'll also leave some for the farm.

Liouba: Excellent. Let's leave some for the farm, in order to ride the pony.

The Principle of Exchange:

Liouba is 3 years, Siddhartha 4 and 9 months.

Liouba snatches away the car he holds in his hands.

Siddhartha: Liouba, but I don't have anything with me. I don't have anything to share with you.

Liouba: I am not sure if I understand you correctly.

Siddhartha: Liouba, I came to your place not from my home and I didn't take anything with me. Give me something and I will share it with you.

Liouba, grandly: Nah.

Strangers and Friends.

Liouba is 3 years and half. I explained to her that she should not follow strangers and leave my or papa's sight. Liouba said that she understood and agreed with this. "I will never go away with strangers".

In the woods of *Parc Angrignon*, she was playing next to a 7 year old boy and his 11 year old sister. Soon, she joined them in their ball game and after 5 minutes the ball rolled into the bushes behind the trees and off the foot-path. The three children instantly vanished. I rushed there, raising my voice: "Liouba, you promised not to disappear with strangers".

Liouba appears: "Yes, mama. I will never go anywhere with strangers."

I: But you just did.

Liouba: But these are not strangers. We've been playing together. They are so friendly.

A grandmother should do her job.

Sasha 3 1/2 screams in an authoritative voice into the receiver while her friend Liouba also 3 1/2 speaks to her (Liouba's) grandmother: Babushka, why don't you trim Liouba's little nails? She almost scratched off my mole.

To Russia in love.

When I began my doctoral programme at the beginning of September 2002, Liouba was in shock. She was still nursing and until then we would spend 2/3 of the day together. Now all of a sudden, I was running to registration, on bureaucratic errands, classes, etc. One week after I began my studies, she announced that she resented the fact that I had to leave her so often and for so long.

"But what can we do?" I asked her. "I need to study and I want to work".

"Well, I prefer to abandon you instead, because then it won't be as hard on me," she replied. "We'll never find Miklukho³. So, I decided to go to Russia to get another Miklukho kitten".

"And how will you go?" I inquired.

"With papa," she gestures in dismay. Obviously - silly of me to ask, since now it is papa who spends 3/4 of the time with Liouba. A few days later, she reminded papa that they should be going to Russia. She packed her bag: the knitted kitten, the stuffed puppy, a shirt, the princess, some maple syrup, and was ready to leave. From that moment on, all her games revolved around the trip to Russia. Finally, it hit Sasha⁴: "but this is a brilliant idea! You can do your work. You wanted to take those extra courses - take them and we'll be back by New Year's eve".

"And how are you going to do without *teetia pat*⁵" I asked her.

"I'll forget it". And they bought the tickets.

Not believing myself or anything that was happening around me, I drove them to the airport. There, Liouba had a symbolic *teetia pat'* and explained to me, "mama, please make sure that you understand. I'll be gone for a very long time. Don't cry. O.K.? You promise you won't cry that much? Just finish your work as soon as you can," and with important airs she boarded the plane with her dad.

During the trip, she was very happy and determined and didn't sleep all the way to Prague, falling asleep only for three hours from Prague to Moscow. She didn't cry at all for several days. On the second night in Moscow, she remembered *teetia pat'* and

³ We lost our Russian Blue cat from Russia, Miklukho Maklai, 2 autumns ago in Quebec.

⁴ My husband's name is Alexandre; Sasha is the short form.

⁵ Liouba's term for nursing - *teetia*: breast, *pat'* was her adaptation of *spat'*: sleep. In other words, that was how she fell asleep all those years.

burst out in loud tears. "A mistake has happened. We shouldn't be here. We have to pack and go back to mama to Montreal right now..."

Sasha didn't know what to say and feeling her pain he cried with her. At 2 am, they sat together on the kitchen floor in Moscow weeping. Liouba realized that she was not alone, that her father feels her pain, and soon began to soothe him. They agreed that when they find another Miklukho kitten, they will return home. She knew that she could rely on her father's support in her project and from that moment on, she was resolved and responsible. Each telephone call, she asks me: "So, what's up mama? You're not missing me too much? You're not crying a lot? Are you done with your work?"

As time went by, she fell in love with Russia and developed new plans. "Papa, next time you talk to mama on the phone, tell her that I am planning to go the Azov sea with babushka Natasha in the summer. Explain to her that I shall be absent for a really long time. Make sure that she understands this well". The next time I call, Sasha transmits to me Liouba's new plan. I hear her voice in the background, "wait papa, let me talk to her myself. Allo, mama? So, how are you doing? Are you done with your work? Not yet? Aha. I am going to the Azov sea in the summer with babushka Natasha. It is going to be a VERY long time. Do you understand this? It's a matter of seasons".

"What do you mean it's a matter of seasons?"

She explained, "Well, now is what season? Winter. Then it will be spring. And only then it will be summer. Well, in the summer, we are going to the Azov sea". Babushka Natasha is happy and said that Liouba is welcome to stay as long as she wanted.

Finally, the Miklukho kitten has been found. During another telephone conversation, she said to me: "So, mama, how are things with you? Are you done with your work? Not yet? Well, you better wrap it up soon. I am going to ship you the kitten. And you can come all together with Nana to Russia".

"But I can't come to Russia, yet".

"Why not?"

"I don't have the money."

Liouba: "What do you need money for?"

- "For the ticket."

- "Which ticket?"

- "The airplane ticket. They won't let me board the plane without a ticket."

Liouba, surprised, "you don't need to take the plane. You have a car".

"But I can't drive the car to Russia, there's the ocean".

Liouba bursts out laughing: "mama, you're so funny. Papa and I checked the atlas and the ocean, it is soooooo tiny. You can drive. Promise me that you'll do your best. You promise?"

Feminism

At 3 years and 8 months:

- Papa, are the bandits out on the street by now?
- No, it's still early for bandits. However, look - someone is walking there. Could it be the bandits?
- No, these are women.
- And women cannot be bandits?
- No, bandits are men - women are people.
- So, men are not people?
- No, men are bandits.

The Fly

Sasha's report from Moscow: Today, Liouba gushed and gurgled with energy from 9 am till 1:20 am. In the morning she invented a game and called it the *Fly*. The first and the only rule of this game was the absence of any rules, at least that was her explanation.

At first, we hid under the bed and counted the springs, and this was called the *Fly*. Then, she hid in the kitchen cabinet, while I crawled under the table and commanded the sitting nearby Kuzia (the dog): "fly!" and "dream!", and this, too was the *Fly*. After that, we read *Everything about the Moomintrolls*; Liouba, sporadically, hid in the alcove between the sofa and the bookshelf and pretended to be Hemul. Before every new paragraph I mewed and moved my imaginary tail and after each exclamation mark I hissed and scratched the carpet, and this was the *fly*. Finally, she locked me out on the balcony, climbed on the table and began to dial '010', '001', '011', and '100', while I looked through the binoculars, to see whether *Kot Baiun*⁶ and the Kitten-who-slept-through-everything were coming, and naturally, this was called the *fly*. Now she is asleep, I sit and write this to you and this is the *fly*.

⁶ From Russian tales recorded by Alexandre S. Pushkin - the cat who put everyone to sleep with the power of his tales, lullabies and eyes.

Correspondence with Canis Lupus.

Since she turned 3 years old, Liouba periodically corresponded with a wolf. She would either draw or scribble something by herself or dictate it to Sasha. Here are two of the dictated letters.

Montreal, Summer 2002.

Dear Wolf,

This is Doll who is writing to you. Lately, a little hare has appeared and the doll began to fight with the wolf with pencils, because she thought that this would please the wolf. But the little hare rescued the wolf. The wolf said "thank you" and then the little hare hid at the wolf's place, while the doll knocked. But the little hare did not open the door.

Moscow, Autumn 2002.

(In Russian some phrases rhymed).

Greetings, dear Wolf.

Now, we live in Russia, please, do not eat us. You have a button; you have a pencil - now, you are not ours. Do not come to us; play at home. You have a mouse; you better eat her. You have a watch. You will go inside the watch; there you will explode and swim away into the Azov sea. You have a book. You will go inside the book; there you will vanish and cool down. You have a telephone. You will go inside the telephone; there you will stray, but we will find you - only later. You have a computer. Now I'll finish writing this letter and will send you there. But don't come to us.

Liouba the Kitten.

More Correspondence from Russia:

Moscow, November 2002.

Greetings, dear Doll!

We will come to you. Wait for us. Eat the mouse. If that won't suffice, another mouse will come – eat her. You Doll, read the ABC book. Everything is written there:

about life and about mice. Beware of the cat Nana. Go out on the street, but if you meet the cat Nana, run back. At home, stay in the corners.

Liouba

Moscow, November 2002.

Greetings, cat Nana!

We will soon come back to you. Get yourself vaccinated, but do not resemble the cat Leopold. Cat Leopold is a round cartoon, while you, Nana – a square cartoon. You will not be a ship, because a ship is of paper, while you have fur, and you are afraid of water. I want to send you headphones. Here, I am writing and sending you “headphones”. Also, I am writing and sending you the letter “A”, and, I might as well, the letter “O”.

Till soon,

Liouba

Letter to father Christmass

Father Christmass, hello.

Listen, kittens live in my stomach. They will soon be born. In grandpa’s too. Grandpa locks himself in the bathroom and miaws. Papa doesn’t have kittens. He doesn’ miaw but writes letters (a b c...). My pajamas’ growing along with me. The little dress too. The tights are all grown. You, father Christmass, give me street shoes that know how to grow. Also, bring me a wooden kitten and a flute that plays faster and faster. We are going to dress up the Christmass tree now. You come through snow, ice and the locked doors. I will give you half a kingdom. Firecrackers are roaming the streets – don’t go near them. Also, there are a lot of shops out there. Don’t go in them otherwise you’ll forget everything. Come straight to us.

Liouba

Christmass 2003 (3 years and 9 months)

Part III. Logical Conclusions

Anthropology on Breastfeeding

Katherine Dettwyler, PhD, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Nutrition at Texas A&M University, and author of "Breastfeeding: Bio-cultural Perspectives" conducted extensive research on human and non-human child-rearing and breastfeeding practices.

The very word infant in zoological terms refers to the time between birth and the eruption of the first permanent molars. The research looking at weaning time in primates and dental eruption shows that breastfeeding ends when infancy ends, when the first permanent molars are erupting. In humans, that happens between 5.5 and 6.5 years.

In addition, she based her comparison on other physiological aspects, such as the age of sexual maturity; the age of the eruption of permanent molars; the time when children quadrupled their birth weight; and the length of gestation, concluding that in every other primate, nursing continues for years, not just months.

Her research showed that humans' natural age of weaning is a *minimum of two and a half years* and a *maximum of seven years*.

Dettwyler's conclusion:

1. Most children in America are weaned from the breast too early.
2. In societies where children are allowed to nurse 'as long as they want,' they usually self-wean, with no arguments or emotional trauma, between three and four years of age.
3. "Another important consideration for the older child is that they are able to maintain their emotional attachment to a person rather than being forced to switch to an inanimate object such as a teddy bear or blanket. I think this sets the stage for a life of people-orientation, rather than materialism, and I think that is a good thing."

The Verdict of Medical Science

Doctor Jan smiled and cooed. "Hhhmmm, so you're three years old. hhhmmm. And you don't speak any English or French yet... hhhmmmm. O.K. your mummy will translate for you. Hhhmmmm. Let's see now, what do you know... Do you know colours? So, what colour is this?"

- Mama why is he asking me that?

- I don't know, maybe he wants to know what colour this is.

- He doesn't know what colour it is? This is blue.

The doctor is delighted: "good. And do you know what colour is this?" he shows a yellow patch on the board.

- He doesn't know that either? This is yellow.

The doctor is beaming: "Very good. And what colour is my shirt? Aha?" he pesters.

Liouba shakes her head and sighs out: brown.

The doctor is beyond himself: "This is very impressive, indeed. She doesn't go to kindergarten and she already knows brown." He too shakes his head, but in wonder: "Now let's see what you can do. Can you stand on one foot?"

"I don't want to stand on one foot," she is dismayed and moves even closer to me.

"But does she understand what you're saying to her? Can she do that? Can she stand on one foot?" the doctor seems worried.

Liouba: "I don't want to stand on one foot. I'm comfortable on two".

Medical diagnosis: Due to unnaturally extended breast-feeding, the child is over-dependent on her mother and is not friendly.

Liouba's Diagnosis

I don't want to ever see him again. That doctor is dumb.