

6. Humor is itself a mode of transcendence. And see 2Cor.4.16.
*Her medic's comment, who (of course!) "would be loath to call upon a religious vocabulary" (as of course prescientific).

"BROTHER ASS" AS GOD'S RUNNING GAG:

BODY BECOMES STRANGER-FUNNIER TO SOUL -- ELLIOTT #1803

The title says it: this thinksheet remarks the natural-supernatural distancing --by mutual consent--of body/soul in "the aging process." Yesterday (22Feb84), under Loree's ken through Hospice, a Cape Cod 17-year-old girl weighing 38 lbs. died in her mother's arms after many months of soul/body distancing: was the disease causing the distancing (1) a "natural" evil, (2) in any sense a joke? (We need not ask if it was horror, anguish, mystery: "premature" death, especially when disease or accident renders the body grotesque, is death shouting louder its challenges and quandaries.) (She was full of God, with "an enormous immer flame."*)

1. As our body (which St. Francis called, functionally and humorously, "Brother Ass") ages, intimations of im/mortality increase. My word "im/mortality" presents the increasing body/soul tension which is the subject of this thinksheet. If both body and soul are maturing--the former downward, the latter upward--they diverge from each other in intimations-experience: **body** receives, increasingly, intimations of mortality (death being ever nearer); **soul** receives, increasingly, intimations of immortality.

2. In paragraph #1, I speak existentially, not metaphysically. Whatever is "out there," "really real," vis-a-vis "body," "soul," "mortality," "immortality," "downward," "upward," human beings of whatever bio- and socio-tribe have **the distancing experience** I am addressing. (Here I'm tempted to digress into a description of how various tribes--Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, et al--describe the experience. Hold it!) I'm making a statement that (like Paul in Ro.1-3) intends to leave no one out. In addition to the general fact that my responsibilities as a theistic thinker require the effort so to speak as to leave no one (no "child of God") out, I hope for an Esperanto of the spirit, a language (1) understood by all and (2) usable in public institutions such as nonsectarian education and Hospice, institutions now spiritually mute where not under the dominion of philosophical-Stoic fossil phrases.

3. From ½c. ago, I remember Comedian Penner, whose entrance line was always "Stop pushing me!" That's called a running gag, and it may characterize a particular comedian or a particular piece of humorous literature (as Ken Dodd's "How tickled I am!" in one of his comedy acts).... I'm suggesting connecting, for reflection and prayer, this bit from dramatic art to this distancing fact **as experienced by the saints**. "Saints" (French for "holy ones," who aspire to live the precept "Be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy") witness to humor in their increasing transcendence of their own mortality. Stern, young Goethe sends Faust to hell (Part One): old Goethe, in the last version of Part Two, rejuvenates Faust divinely through penitent-woman Gretchen (as Part One had rejuvenated him demonically through innocent-woman Margareta) (302, Louis MacNeice, Galaxy/65): "By choirs of noble souls surrounded/This new one scarcely feels his soul,/Can scarcely sense this life unbounded,/Yet fills at once his heavenly role./See how he sheds the earthly leaven,/Tears off each shroud of old untruth,/And from apparel woven in heaven/Shines forth his pristine power of youth!" The mood is joy and good humor: Mother Mary is in charge (in contrast to when Mephistopheles was in charge and Faust, as Prometheus, committed hubris: "I probed the hidden,/And cursed my world and self with words forbidden."--281).

4. At 66, I can hear-feel the good humor in Goethe's giving body-eyes to those who died at birth (296f): "Climb up then into my eyes--/Organ matching world and earth;/...For the eyes you lost at birth."