

KNOTS by R.D. Laing

The patterns delineated here have not yet been classified by a Linnaeus of human bondage.

They are all, perhaps, strangely, familiar.

In these pages I have confined myself to laying out only some of those I actually have seen. Words that come to mind to name them are: knots, tangles, fankles, *impasses*, disjunctions, whirligogs, binds.

I could have remained closer to the 'raw' data in which these patterns appear. I could have distilled them further towards an abstract logico-mathematical calculus. I hope they are not so schematized that one may not refer back to the very specific experiences from which they derive; yet that they are sufficiently independent of 'content', for one to divine the final formal elegance in these webs of *maya*.

April 1969

R.D.L.

1

They are playing a game. They are playing at not
playing a game. If I show them I see they are, I
shall break the rules and they will punish me.
I must play their game, of not seeing I see the game.

They are not having fun.
I can't have fun if they don't.
If I get them to have fun, then I can have fun with them.
Getting them to have fun, is not fun. It is hard work.
I might get fun out of finding out why they're not.
I'm not supposed to get fun out of working out why
they're not.
But there is even some fun in pretending to them I'm not
having fun finding out why they 're not.

A little girl comes along and says: let's have fun.
But having fun is a waste of time, because it doesn't
help to figure out why they're *not* having fun.

**How dare you have fun when Christ died on the Cross
for you! Was He having fun?**

**It is our duty to bring up our children to love,
honour and obey us.**

**If they don't they must be punished,
otherwise we would not be doing our duty.**

**If they grow up to love, honour and obey us
either we have brought them up properly
or we have not:**

**if we have
there must be something the matter with them;
if we have not
there is something the matter with us.**

**A son should respect his father
he should not have to be taught to respect his father
It is something that is natural
That's how I've brought up my son anyway.**

**Of course a father must be worthy of respect
He can't forfeit a son's respect
But I hope at least my son will respect me, if
only for leaving him free to respect me or not.**

**There must be something[®] the matter with him
because he would not be acting as he does
unless there was
therefore he is acting as he is
because there is something the matter with him**

**He does not think there is anything the matter with him
because
one of the things that is
the matter with him[®]
is that he does not think that there is anything
the matter with him
therefore
we have to help him realize that,
the fact that he does not think there is anything
the matter with him
is one of the things that is
the matter with him**

there is something the matter with him

because he thinks

**there must be something the matter with us
for trying to help him to see
that there must be something the matter with him
to think that there is something the matter with us
for trying to help him to see that**

**we are helping him
to see that**

**we are not persecuting him
by helping him
to see we are not persecuting him
by helping him
to see that
he is refusing to see
that there is something the matter with
him
for not seeing there is something the matter
with him
for not being grateful to us
for at least trying to help him
to see that there is something the matter with
him
for not seeing that there must be something the
matter with him**

**for not seeing that there must be something the
matter with him**

**for not seeing that there is something the
matter with him**

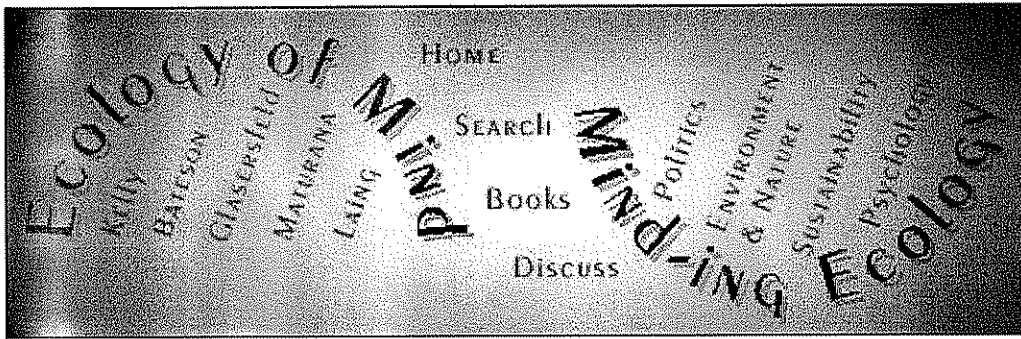
**for not seeing that there is something the
matter with him**

for not being grateful

**that we never tried to make him
feel grateful**

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**It is the duty of children to respect their parents
And it is the duty of parents to teach their children
to respect them,
by setting them a good example.**

**Parents who do not set their children a good example
don't deserve respect.**

**If we do set them a good example
we believe they will grow up to be grateful to us
when they become parents themselves.**

**If he is cheeky
he doesn't respect you
for not punishing him
for not respecting you**

You shouldn't spoil a child.

It's the easy way, to do what they want

but they won't respect you for letting them get away

with it when they grow up.

He won't respect you

if you don't punish him

for not respecting you.

My mother loves me.

I feel good.

I feel good because she loves me.

I am good because I feel good

I feel good because I am good

My mother loves me because I am good.

My mother does not love me.

I feel bad.

I feel bad because she does not love me

I am bad because I feel bad

I feel bad because I am bad

I am bad because she does not love me

She does not love me because I am bad.

I don't feel good

therefore I am bad

therefore no one loves me.

I feel good

therefore I am good

therefore everyone loves me.

I am good

You do not love me

therefore you are bad. So I do not love you.

I am good

You love me

therefore you are good. So I love you.

I am bad

You love me

therefore you are bad.

**Mother loves me
because she is good
I am bad, to think she is bad
therefore if I am good
she is good
and loves me
because I am good
to know she is good.**

**I am bad
to doubt she punishes me for doubting
she loves me by punishing me
for doubting she loves me.**

**She says
it must be *her* fault
if I doubt she loves me.**

**She feels bad because
I don't think she loves me because
she feels bad when I don't think she loves me.**

**She feels
it is her fault**

**that I can be so cruel
as to doubt she loves me
when she makes me feel cruel,
to think she tries to make me feel cruel.**

To be kind is good. To be cruel is bad.

It is bad to feel mother is cruel to me, and hence bad.

**Mother is cruel to me
but she is only being cruel to be kind
because I thought she was cruel when
she was cruel
in punishing me
because I was cruel to her
to think she was cruel to me
for punishing me
for thinking she was cruel
for punishing me for thinking.....**

**You are cruel
to make me feel bad to think
I am cruel to make you feel cruel**

by my feeling bad that you can be so cruel as to think

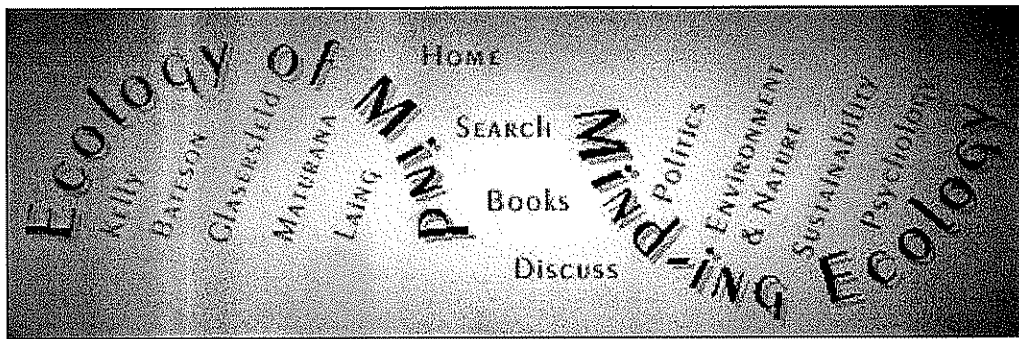
I don't love you, when you know I do.

If you don't know I do there must be something the matter

with you.

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it hurts Jack
to think
that Jill thinks he is hurting her
by (him) being hurt
to think
that she thinks he is hurting her
by making her feel guilty
at hurting him
by (her) thinking
that he is hurting her
by (his) being hurt
to think that she thinks he is hurting her
by the fact that
da capo sine fine

**Once upon a time, when Jack was little,
he wanted to be with his mummy all the time
and was frightened she would go away**

**later, when he was a little bigger,
he wanted to be away from his mummy
and was frightened that
she wanted him to be with her all the time**

**when he grew up he fell in love with Jill
and he wanted to be with her all the time
and was frightened she would go away**

**when he was a little older,
he did not want to be with Jill all the time
he was frightened
that she wanted to be with him all the time, and
that she was frightened
that he did not want to be with her all the time**

**Jack frightens Jill he will leave her
because he is frightened she will leave him.**

Jack is afraid Jill is like his mother

Jill is afraid Jack is like her mother

Jack is afraid

Jill thinks he is like her mother

and that Jill is afraid

Jack thinks she is like his mother

Jill is afraid

Jack thinks she is like his mother

and that Jack is afraid

Jill thinks he is like her mother

**Jack wants to devour his mother and be devoured by her
later, he oscillates between wanting to devour her but
not wanting to be devoured by her, and not wanting to
devour her but wanting her to devour him.**

**Later still, he does not want to devour her and does
not want her to devour him.**

Jack feels Jill is devouring him.

**He is devoured
by his devouring fear of
being devoured by
her devouring desire
for *him* to devour *her*.**

**He feels she is eating him
by her demand to be eaten by him**

**Two people who originally
wished to devour and be devoured
are devouring and being devoured**

**She is devoured, by him being devoured by
her devouring desire to be devoured
He is devoured by her being devoured
by him not devouring her**

**He is being devoured
by his dread of being devoured
She is being devoured
by her desire to be devoured**

His dread of being devoured

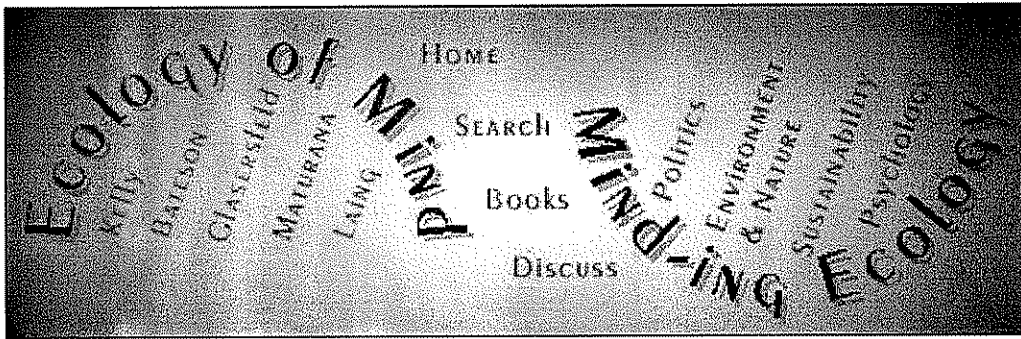
arises from his dread of being devoured by his devouring

her desire to be devoured

arises from her dread of her desire to devour

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I don't respect myself

I can't respect anyone who respects me.

I can only respect someone who does not respect me.

I respect Jack

because he does not respect me

I despise Tom

because he does not despise me

Only a despicable person

can respect someone as despicable as me

I cannot love someone I despise

Since I love Jack

I cannot believe he loves me

What proof can he give?

JILL I am frightened

JACK Don't be frightened

**JILL I am frightened to be frightened when you
tell me I ought not to feel frightened**

frightened

frightened to be frightened

not frightened to be frightened

not frightened

frightened not to be frightened

not frightened to be not frightened

JILL I'm upset you are upset

JACK I'm not upset

**JILL I'm upset that you're not upset that I'm
upset you're upset**

**JACK I'm upset that you're upset that I'm not
upset that you're upset that I'm upset,
when I'm not.**

JILL You put me in the wrong

JACK I am not putting you in the wrong

**JILL You put me in the wrong for thinking you
put me in the wrong.**

JACK Forgive me

JILL No

JACK I'll never forgive you for not forgiving me

**She has started to drink
as a way to cope
that makes her less able to cope**

**the more she drinks
the more frightened she is of becoming a drunkard**

**the more drunk
the less frightened of being drunk**

the more frightened of being drunk when not drunk

the more not frightened drunk

the more frightened not drunk

the more she destroys herself

the more frightened of being destroyed by him

the more frightened of destroying him

the more she destroys herself

JACK You are a pain in the neck

To stop you giving me a pain in the neck

I protect my neck by tightening my neck muscles,

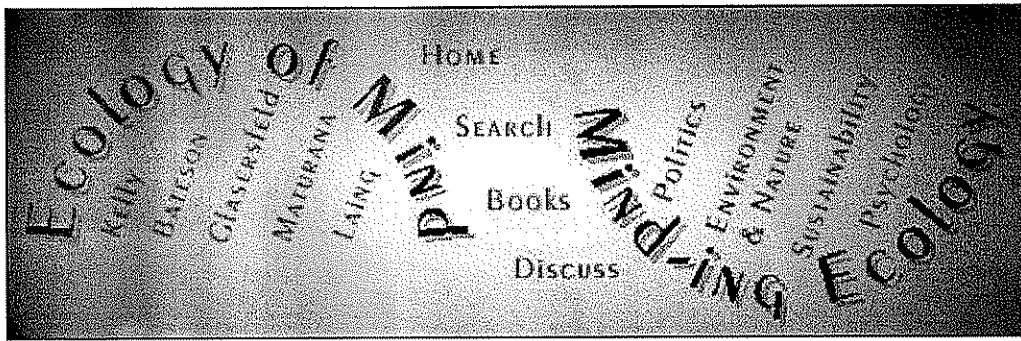
which gives me the pain in the neck you are.

JILL My head aches through trying to stop you

giving me a headache.

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I get what I deserve

I deserve what I get.

I have it,

therefore I deserve it

I deserve it

because I have it.

You have not got it

therefore you do not deserve it

You do not deserve it

because you have not got it

You have not got it

because you do not deserve it

You do not deserve it

therefore you have not got it.

Positive and negative binds.

Negative: Can't win. Everything I do is wrong.

Positive: Can't lose. Everything I do is right.

I do it, because it is right.

It is right, because I do it.

All I have has been given me and is mine

If I have it, I must have been given it

Therefore it is mine.

I haven't it

but I can get it

therefore,

**because I have been given the capacity to get it
it is mine**

**It is not mine
but it has been given me and I have it
therefore I am grateful for what I have, or
have been given.**

**But I resent being grateful for what I have, or
have been given.**

**But I resent being grateful
because if I have been given it, it has not always been mine.
Therefore, if I don't feel grateful
I won't have been given it
therefore, it is (past, present, future) eternally mine.**

**If I don't know I don't know I
I think I know
if I don't know I know
I think I don't know**

Can Jack and Jill

terrified that each and the other are not terrified

become

terrified that each and other are terrified, and

eventually,

not terrified that each and other not be terrified?

All in all

Each man in all men

all men in each man

All being in each being

Each being in all being

All in each

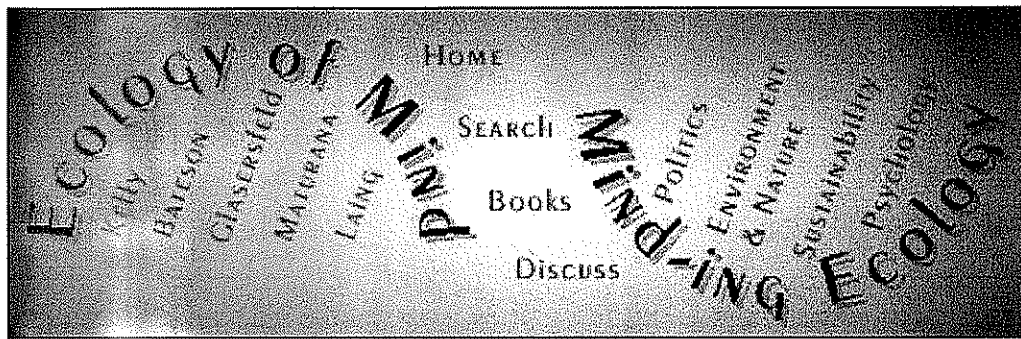
Each in all

All distinctions are mind, by mind, in mind, of mind

No distinctions no mind to distinguish

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**One is inside
then outside what one has been inside
One feels empty
because there is nothing inside oneself
One tries to get inside oneself
that inside of the outside
that one was once inside
once one tries to get oneself inside what
one is outside:
to eat and to be eaten
to have the outside inside and to be
inside the outside
But this is not enough. One is trying to get
the inside of what one is outside inside, and to
get inside the outside. But one does not get**

inside the outside by getting the outside inside
for;
although one is full inside of the inside of the outside
one is on the outside of one's own inside
and by getting inside the outside
one remains empty because
while one is on the inside
even the inside of the outside is outside
and inside oneself there is still nothing
There has never been anything else
and there never will be

I am doing it
the it I am doing is
the I that is doing it
the I that is doing it is
the it I am doing
it is doing the I that am doing it
I am being done by the it I am doing
it is doing it

One is afraid of
the self that is afraid of

the self that is afraid of

the self that is afraid

One may perhaps speak of reflections

Although innumerable beings have been led to Nirvana

no being has been led to Nirvana

Before one goes through the gate

one may not be aware there is a gate

one may think there is a gate to go through

and look a long time for it

without finding it

one may find it and

it may not open

If it opens one may be through it

As one goes through it

one sees that the gate one went through

was the self that went through it

no one went through a gate

there was no gate to go through

no one ever found a gate

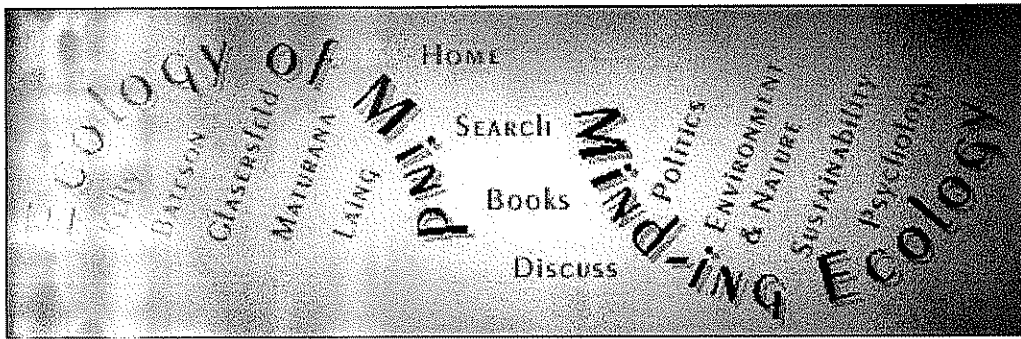
no one ever realized there was never a gate

**By those who know the discourse on dharmas
as like unto a raft
dharmas should be forsaken, still more so
no-dharmas**

**Hearing that dharmas, and still more so, no-dharmas
should be forsaken
some are of the opinion that there is no gate
that is their opinion
there is no way of knowing except to go
through it**

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A finger points to the moon

Put the expression

a finger points to the moon in brackets

(a finger points to the moon)

The statement:

'A finger points to the moon is in brackets'

is an attempt to say that all that is in the bracket

(.....)

is, as to that which is not in the bracket,

what a finger is to the moon

Put all possible expressions in brackets

Put all possible forms in brackets

and put the brackets in brackets

**Every expression, and every form,
is to what is expressionless and formless
what a finger is to the moon
all expressions and all forms
point to the expressionless and formless**

**the proposition
'All forms point to the formless'
is itself a formal proposition**

**Not,
.....as finger to moon
.....so form to formless
but,
.....as finger is to moon
.....so
.....[all possible expressions, forms, propositions,
.....including this one, made or yet to be made,
.....together with the brackets]
.....to**

What an interesting finger

let me suck it

It's not an interesting finger

take it away

The statement is pointless

The finger is speechless

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