

GOLF
IS
RUINING
MY
LIFE

Lechery, Anarchy, Delirium, Bourgeois
Inertia, Flagrant Hypocrisy, Primitive
Injustice, An Organized Crime in Fact

An Episodic Meditation

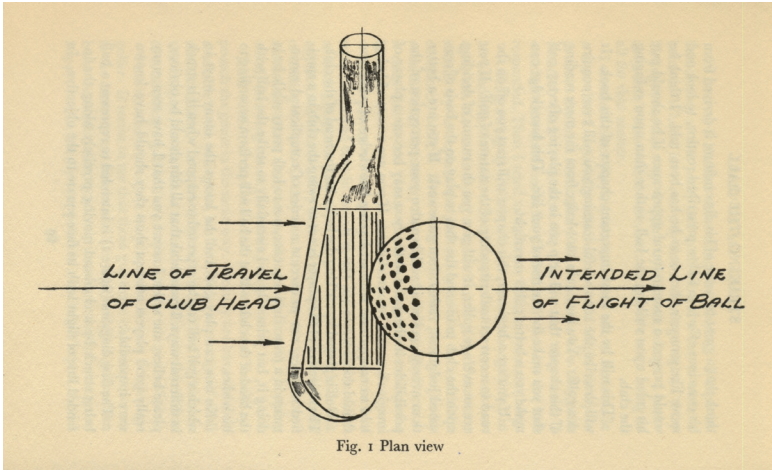
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To my dear brother who played golf once and never played it again.



However heartbreaking it may appear, contemporary life preserves itself in its old atmosphere of lechery, anarchy, disorder, delirium, dissoluteness, bourgeois inertia, psychic anomaly, deliberate dishonesty, flagrant hypocrisy, sordid contempt of everything which shows distinction, laying claim to a whole order founded on the fulfillment of primitive injustice—an order of organized crime, in fact.

ANTONIN ARTAUD
(1896-1948)



To my golfing friends and family.

This is a work of biographical fiction, utter fantasy, and digression. Be assured that none of you, those with whom I've played golf over the years and who've become, in many cases my friends, appear in this work as either real or fictional characters. If by chance you come to believe you recognize yourself in this book, please understand it is only me, the writer, you recognize.

This book does not have a plot, as a plot requires the kind of surveillance I wouldn't wish to impose upon anyone.

*At the very end of the book there is a bibliography of influencers and specific works that follows the flow of text at the back of the book that will greatly enrich the intelligent readers experience.

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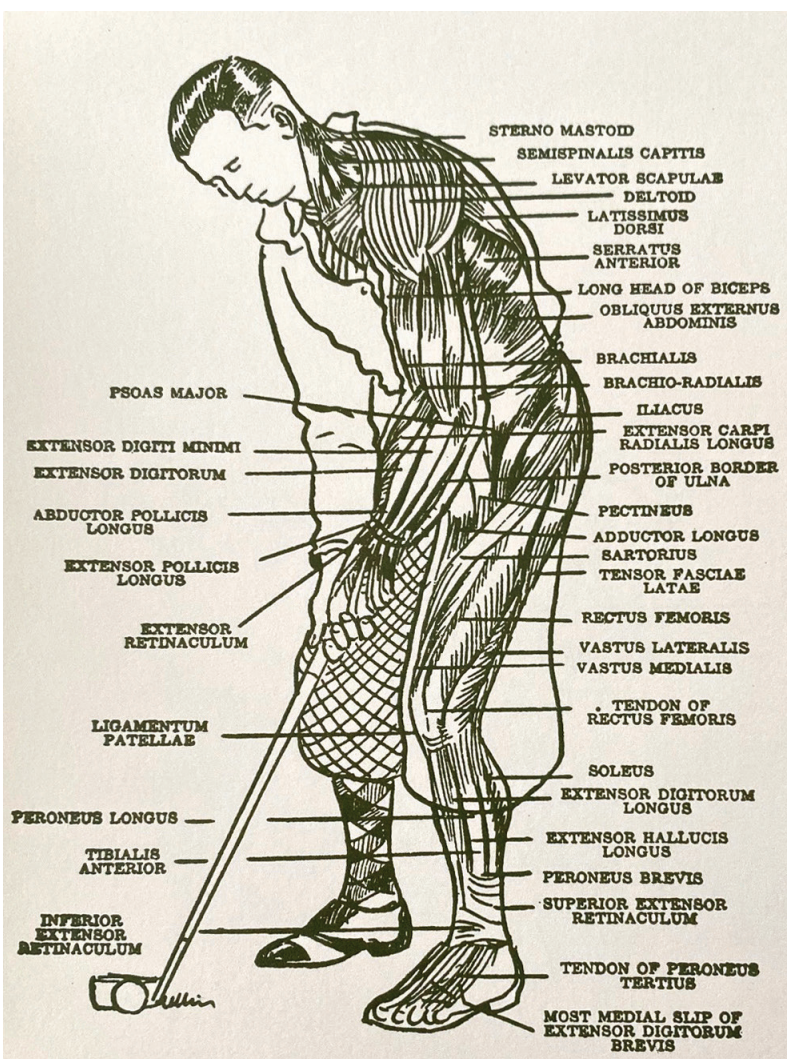


FIG. 15.—IMPORTANT: This illustration, taken from p. 472 of Weil's *Primer of Putting*, should not be shown to opponent until the third week.

part ONE

my left ear is right handed





In my left ear I hear my heart beating. It's warning me I must aim left-of-center, wherever center is, my good ear being somewhere right of it. I close my right eye as I've seen others on the golf course do when putting, hoping to read the green more clearly, holding their putters up to the imaginary line between their ball and the hole, measuring slope and distance as if they were master builders, looking out of their left eye if right handed or right eye if left handed, in either case believing they can predict the ball will roll either right or left as predetermined by gravity, and that they're better off playing golf with one eye open, not two.

It's just after 2 a.m, the best of time mixed with the worst. I'd only drank a little scotch earlier, a little more than yesterday perhaps, though not as much as tomorrow. I've written **Stay in the Present** in black ink on the wrong side of my left wrist, having also meant to write *drunk* instead of *drank* in the previous sentence. I'll erase my wrist in the morning—I'm almost certain writing anything on one's body is a violation of the rules of golf.

I'm playing golf tomorrow, or am I playing the day after? I believe I'm playing tomorrow, I've written it down somewhere. I look forward to golfing now in a backward sort of way, of having a good time even when it's not a good time—all too often these days—and before golf becomes everything that's happened in the past. A little more scotch won't hurt, another dram or two is what the situation calls for.

Episode 2

Jack doesn't understand. He calls the epigraph Artaud provided, '*the invocation*', thinking that's the correct word.

And who is Jack?

Jack's a man I met on the golf course some years ago who's become my sidekick *pro tem*, though his name isn't really Jack, he only calls himself Jack, an homage to a famous golfer who really is named *Jack*.



Jack___, confidant of narrator and ardent golfer

I explain to Jack that the epigraph was chosen for its clarity, in the hope of creating a large enough canvas on which to paint almost any sort of picture; a piece of inspired language that reflects the critical thinking of an intelligent man and is therefore indispensable to the telling of the much greater story of how golf has ruined so many lives, his life, my life, and the lives of thousands, perhaps, millions of golfers.

Knowing how Jack thinks, having played golf with him for some time now, I know he thinks the epigram will overwhelm my story.

Episode 3

Jack believes the goal of being misunderstood was with me from the beginning, that I play golf because I enjoy being misunderstood, that when I say '**Golf is ruining my life**' it's actually a confession of my love of the game. Jack's semi-correct in a perjorative sort of way—golf is a form of confession, a mutant form of a prehistoric ritual—though he enjoys playing golf for money, a major error in judgment for an amateur. I don't play golf for money, as I don't write for money, doing a thing for money takes all the imaginary fun out of it, and I only ever wanted to make enough money so that I didn't ever have to make any more.

Episode 4

That I wasn't meant to understand, or to be understood, is my situation, I say to Jack—that my golf will be better if I do this or that differently or don't do this or that, *change my way of thinking, be positive if negative or at the very least realistic*, and so forth.

It's critical at this point, I say to Jack, **that I come to terms with my misunderstandings**. That I'm a good golfer one day and bad the next, that what once came easily now comes not at all or comes in a sequence that changes in the midst of my golf swing, then vanishes completely. Not that vanishing's a bad thing from time to time so long it's done to my satisfaction so that I don't vanish completely, that I can still feel my knees, whether they're the old knees or the new

knees, rotating properly to provide the necessary torque, and that the hips comply with the knees for a smooth transition.

Episode 5

Jack appears to be listening so I continue:

Episode 6

How often I have no ideas, I say to Jack, not one, and if there was to be one, a real idea that is, it would be ruined from the beginning. *The beginning itself is flawed, rarely if ever the sendoff that's expected.* From such a beginning nothing good can happen, only the futility of the present and the future, the past already having had its say. Then suddenly my golf ball lies down in soggy green pastures and I can't help but wonder, ***Is this what the wind will make of me today?***

The usual answer being no answer at all, I say to Jack, *the question itself is aborted.*

Then on the very next hole another pushback from the old out-of-bounds. The cigar smoke of my companions, facing great difficulties themselves, wafts aimlessly amid the realities of unmet expectations: one is ten yards short, one is much too long, the other I've lost track of, finally spotting him behind a large eucalyptus tree.

The wind plays a greater roll in golf than we'll ever know, Jack says. *The wind's behind so many things.* I don't mind the wind when I'm indoors—I can listen to the wind for days if barricaded behind some enclosure—but to be out in the wind is a whole other matter, especially cold wind and its counterpart, hot wind.

I don't know which is worse, Jack says, *my description of the wind or the wind itself, hot, cold or otherwise.*

I've pissed in the wind too, Jack says, I'm proud to finally admit it, *I love to piss in the wind, it's one of the last great freedoms that belongs to a man,* to witness one's effluvia turn around in mid-air and change direction. I don't know a man who wouldn't rather go outside in what we call, for some reason, **Nature**, than in a tiled bathroom flooded with fluorescent light, Jack says, speaking as if he enjoys listening to himself speak.

Wind's a real factor, the wind will be the end of the world, wind will wear everything down, even the Great Wall of China, Jack says. The end of the world won't be climate change or the extraction of fossil fuels or the petrochemicals used on golf courses. **Wind will be the end of the world.**

Wind or no wind I'm convinced I must have a target, I say to Jack, changing the subject slightly, *the target is essential*, that I must point the crosshairs of the golf club at the target first and then aim, and not aim after the shot is issued and the lawyer summoned. The ball itself is much too small—a wee hardbitten little circle composed of synthetic plastic materials is all, as still as still can be—and the target difficult to ascertain, much less to consistently approach, surrounded as it is by failure after failure, some shots coming close, some better than others and many much worse, a sporting event not unlike the shooting of clay ducks without a rifle.

Golfing, I say to Jack, *I try to think ahead of time while at the same time acknowledging the wind as a feeling*, the wind having something to do with time that I'll never understand, often changing direction the moment the ball's up in the air.

The speed of wind is caused by the difference in temperature between onshore and offshore air masses, according to Jack. *Scientist's would have us believe the recent warming of the Arctic has reduced the temperature between it and the Equator, weakening the winds between them, making the wind an even more unpredictable force.*

True or not, I say, *not thinking ahead of time I get farther and farther away from the target whether there's wind or no wind*, at which time it's too late to consider what's to be

avoided, the torrent of trees on the right or the tall grasses on the left.

Episode 9

The wind gnaws away at things, Jack says. Which is why we get sick and tired of competition at some point—competition wears us out like the wind. *The wind likes to get ahead of time too*, Jack says.

Episode 10

Thinking ahead of time I often become stymied, I say to Jack, behind a tree or in a depression not of my own making or some other place where I shouldn't be. And there I am, having caught up with my golf ball at last, inseparably at one with the shot I've just taken. I don't know how I came to be where I am, whether there was wind or no wind involved, and so I have no other choice but to accept the present without living in the past.

Episode 11

Jack, who claims he's studied the ancients, including Pliny the Elder, says, *I'm just beginning to understand the source of your seemingly endless fount of feeling misunderstood, (it's classic Heraclitus, what I call The Divine Corollary) You can't step in the same river twice*, for it's impossible to do so, just as you weren't meant to be understood.

Episode 12

Jack insists I study the history of golf, that when I know golf's glorious past I'll become a better player, in a much better position to understand what I'm not now understanding.

Then he dumps a sackful of golf books on the front step of my home without ringing the doorbell.

Episode 13

I called Jack this morning.

*I already have too many books, Jack, I say. **No more books** are to be allowed into my house.*

But Jack insists I keep the small library he's lent me for the time being and that he won't take 'no' for an answer.

Episode 14

The thing to know about Jack is that he has a very, very good golf swing. His swing goes on for miles and miles, creating beautiful landscapes both small and grand on which elegant farmhouses were built in previous centuries. The grand old houses look so lovely and graceful from a distance, with high windows and large front porches, and there's always a small private road leading to each of them. But it's far better to pass by them, to keep going, as beautiful as these scenes

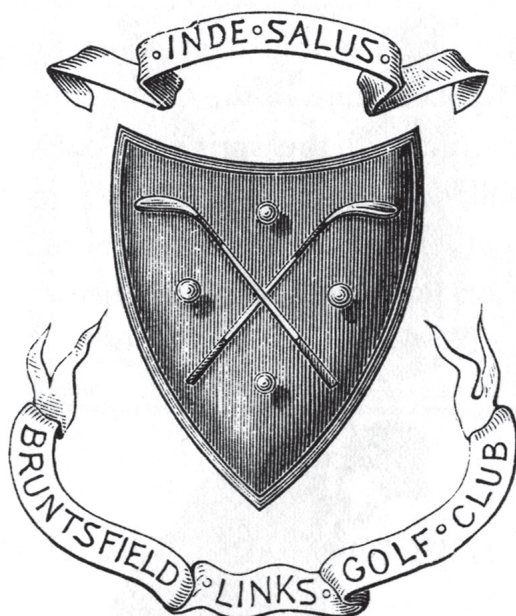
may be. You never know what might be happening inside these houses, and usually what's happening inside is not as pretty as their outside appearances might suggest.

I plummet into golf's past as disclosed in the books Jack's bequeathed me, discovering that the history of golf roughly follows **the party line of imperialism: some people shouldn't have children, and the people who shouldn't have children shouldn't have been born.** Having been born, the people who shouldn't have had children reserve the right to form a coalition of like-minded people to create a club that promises to help pull its members up out of sandtraps so they can become more like the people who should have been born. The sandtraps are controlled by people who should have children and should have been born—*born leaders*—the directors of the club that the people who shouldn't have been born and shouldn't have had children must obey should they be fortunate enough to be admitted to the club.

I quickly lose interest in the books Jack's loaned me—there's too much history in the history of golf—and create a self-induced summary of my own, in imitation of a actual historian: **Golf's past is as mysterious as the wind**, but with a pernicious twist or two: that the people in control of the club are the same people who say that every life is sacred and yet are in favor of overturning laws that give women the choice of giving birth or not giving birth.



*“Golf’s past is
as mysterious
as the wind,
but with a
pernicious twist
or two”*



On the golf course, I say to Jack after returning the books he's lent me, *I often find I'm talking with men to whom I don't know what to say and who don't know what to say to me*. We either have no discourse or we're on the golf course to escape discourse altogether.

I've noticed too, I say to Jack, *that those in positions of power at the club often speak in a kind of stage whisper, probably* to insure they maintain the privilege of enacting laws favorable to their power, and those nearer the bottom are convinced that the club is made of money first and civil rights second, but are members of the club anyway because they love to play golf.

Golf, I say to Jack on a day we're not playing, *is a semi-private club of like-minded people* permitted to talk confidentially amongst themselves within the confines of the club. The Directors, those at the top, believe they have a *vision* that will make the club even better and, once elected, either vote to amend the by-laws so that their vision becomes law, or vote to abolish the laws they don't like so that the laws reflect their vision. *We should never be happy with the law*, I say to Jack, especially laws that smell like what's stuck to the bottom of our shoes. We need to be especially wary of the big phony running for Club President, a guy named Todd, who says, among other things, *Our club is the last bastion of free speech*, as if it's a place where

a person can say anything he or she wants to say without worrying if it's the right or wrong thing to have said, not thinking at all about who's listening.

Pretty soon, Jack says to me, *you'll come to the place where you won't believe in anything*. You're headed down that road you know, Jack says. If you don't believe in golf what do you believe in? *True, golf's only a game*, Jack says, using the word 'only' in an exaggerated tone of voice, emphasizing the word 'ONLY', enlarging the word for dramatic purpose.

The problem with our way of life, I say to Jack, *is that it's now being controlled by people who constantly need our attention*, so that any and all oversight of the system is now a megalomaniacal exercise. I don't mean only golf, I mean the direction we've taken, the conditions we're making for ourselves in which golf plays a part. *It's so much worse than we think*, I say to Jack, we're losing everything we once we believed we had!


And we only know a tiny fraction of what's actually happening, we're only told a little bit here and there, slivers of truth whether true or not. *It's well known to historians and other so-called elites that truth is the only thing we'll have to live with in the end*, I say to Jack. But we don't want truth, truth's the last thing we want, we prefer lies, we suck down disinformation like it's Key Lime Pie. We can't fathom the whole picture, if anyone really knew the whole picture *what's called the whole picture would be classified top*



secret by people we've never heard of, who don't even hold elected office. Then, only after a period of time when we've all forgotten what we thought we knew, a time deemed safe by the experts, the facts will be released to us in little soundbites like some sort of public service. *In the meantime other crimes are being committed and kept secret so that the whole charade perpetuates itself*, I say to Jack.

Well, we might as well play golf, Jack says, *Golf's kind of fun* in a wholesome, fresh air kind of way. You come to believe you're actually doing something good for yourself, getting some exercise while smoking a cigar and listening to stale jokes, *socializing with your golf buddies*, Jack says, *feigning interest in what your buddy has to say*.

Where did the word buddy come from? I say to Jack. Buddy, what's a buddy? He's my buddy, or we're buddies, or worse, my buddy Tom and so forth when the Tom referred to is not around, is there only in the third person, an abstract buddy. ***Such a demeaning word, buddy***. The word must be American, it sounds so much like the USA, *my buddy this, my buddy that, conjuring a flock of buddies*, many buddies, far-flung buddies in other cities and states, a wide, diverse range of buddies. The world's populated by people we either never see or see once and never see again, but still we insist on using the word, *buddy!* ***Only men are buddies***, I say, women are too civilized to be buddies, not even women golfers have buddies, though professional women golfers might have buddies, it's possible, they're quite a different breed,



a specialized type of golfer, they stick together, they seem to be proud of that, of sticking together, I say. ***It's possible professional women golfers have buddies, unlikely but possible.*** I haven't seen or heard a great deal of professional women's golf but I bet I'd never hear a professional woman golfer refer to *her buddy* or be referred to as another woman's buddy. *Her competitor, yes, her friend, her rival also, but I will wager that a professional woman golfer has never used the word buddy* in regards to another woman professional golfer.

Buddy's only a word, Jack says, not something to get worked up over.

Only a word, I say, only a word? *Is golf only a word*, I say, or birth or death or copulation? Are those only words?

Well you're my buddy, Jack says, and I hope I'm your buddy. As for the the rest of the *world? Don't you see that it's made up overwhelmingly of people we don't want to have in our lives whether we think of them as buddies or not*, Jack says.

Episode 19

I call Jack my *friend because Jack is the only one who does listen to me*; he speaks to me by listening. I can tell Jack his sweater is ugly, and he can tell me that he's afraid his wife doesn't love him, and trust these things will remain between us.

I asked Jack once, *Who are you?* Do you have even the vaguest idea who you are? *Knowing yourself in the most difficult thing in the world, a real-time performance in front of the harshest judge imaginable—YOURSELF.*

I know who I am, Jack says, *I play golf,* that's what I know.

Jack, I say, **knowing's such a vague notion** though by now *knowing's* embedded in our constitution. The concept of knowing is a false premise very few men running things will admit to being false. **Knowing** is all about having the upper hand, of maintaining control, that sort of thing. The men running things pretend to know what's right, knowing in their hearts, should they be lucky enough to have hearts, that they don't really know.

Knowing's actually a disaster. Knowing, we've reached the highest citizen-to-lawyer ratio since the fall of Rome, a glimpse of the future that's soon to come. Scientists at least admit they both know and don't know. I once heard a world class physicist define outer space as *a place that's blue and birds fly in it.* Doctors don't know, they only act like they know. Every once in a while there's a good doctor, a doctor who will take the time to look you up and down like a fellow human being with the idea of finding out what's wrong, and then try to heal you or at least give you some decent advice.



*I think I understand what you're trying to say, Jack said, **you have to have the appearance of knowing**, to be thought of as being able to take the lead. There are committee meetings and assignments, responsibilities and so forth, Jack said. *You have to show up on time, do what you say you're going to do, honor commitments*, but rarely in the back of your mind is the question being asked, Is this the right thing to do?*

Our huge insurmountable social-political problem: we've made leadership too easily obtained, I said to Jack, in fact we've made it easier and easier for sub-par people, either belligerent idiots and marginally literate tv personalities or slightly above average lawyers and salesmen to become leaders.

Why do we continue believing our leaders actually want what's best for us, or even know what that might be! Don't we have enough evidence to the contrary? It doesn't matter what we call it—democracy, autocracy, dictatorship—our leaders are mostly incompetent and dangerously pious, mostly men, or even worse, celebrities, I said to Jack. *Once in awhile we get a decent leader, every thousand years or so*, not a truly good leader but a leader who does only a minimal amount of harm.

Our imperfections have grown over the years, and they're pouncing on us. We're all victims now, I said to Jack. Leadership's become some sort of game and we've become



truly miserable at it, killing one another, pounding the ground in agony, groaning, going to big conventions on behalf of the company, putting on nametags, support stockings, pantyhose and cufflinks, showing our best faces hoping to be noticed.

Let me say what I think you're saying, Jack said. The overwhelming majority of men don't like to play golf with women and there are also many women who don't like to play golf with men, which is surprising to men though not to women. *That the original imperial-colonial instinct of the superiority of one kind of human being over another is regulated by golf's form of birth control*, Jack said.

That's more or less what I'm saying, I said to Jack.

Then Jack said, *all you've said might be true but I imagine it must be pretty nice to be a celebrity*.

Episode 22

Then Jack says, *I have the feeling my wife only tolerates me*, that we've reached the stage of mutual toleration in our relationship. She tolerates me slightly more than I tolerate her, or I tolerate her more than she tolerates me, but *there's very little equality in our toleration of one another*. We no longer deliver love to one another as we once did. O, we have sex now and then, *Jack says*, but the best thing by far about sex at this point is just being with somebody else.

Jack pauses to show he's really thinking. Then he says: