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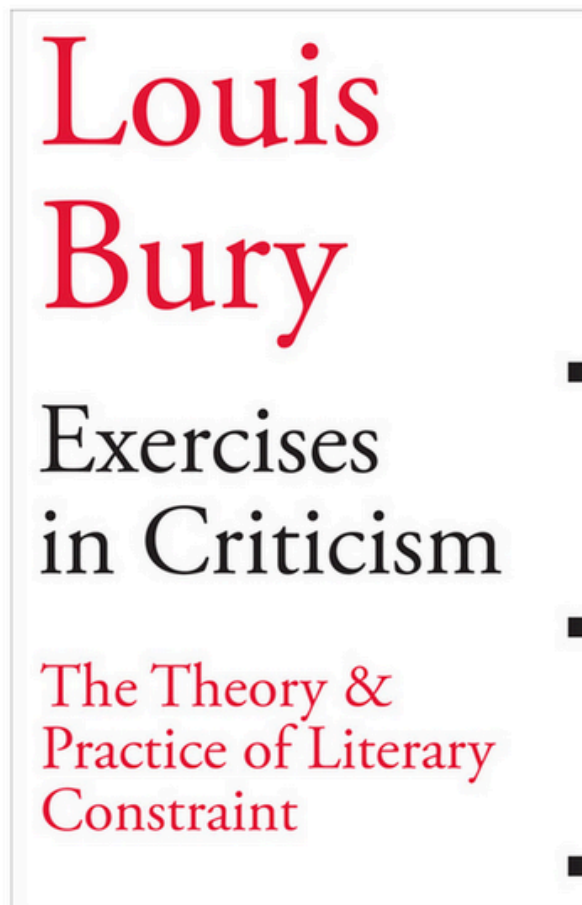
THE BELIEVER

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One should not try
to go over the limit

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The Following is an excerpt from Louis Bury's Exercises in Criticism: The Theory and Praticce of Literary Constraint (Dalkey Archive Press, February 2014). The

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book uses rules and procedures to write poetic and autobiographical criticism about works of literary constraint.



Midway through this book project, in the course of a group conversation at a cocktail party, I happened to mention, in passing, that my father is an electrical engineer. Sensing that this seemingly innocent biographical detail might relate to my interest in constraint, Wayne Koestenbaum suggested I write about my father, electrical engineering, and constraint as part of the project. The suggestion appealed to me but the prospect of writing directly on the topic didn't, so I asked my father if he would be willing, as his birthday present to me that year, to answer a questionnaire. I had intended to use the questionnaire, both my questions and his responses, as raw material for some future, as-yet-undetermined procedure, but the completed questionnaire felt more than self-sufficient, felt, in fact, as though tampering with it—even so much as tampering with my father's spacing and typography—would disturb the halting equilibrium into which we had both settled over the years.

—Louis Bury

Write down a word that comes to mind when you think of yourself.

precise

What language do you think in?

It is hard to tell. I think that I am still translating from Polish to English. Sometimes when I work with numbers, I might count in Polish. I acquired very good background in Polish language with good writing skills. In high school on the last final exam in Polish a student

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is not allowed to make an orthographical error. If this could happen, a student must repeat the entire year.

Maybe they have different rules today not like in 1964.

Do you think differently in different languages?

Yes, of course. I still make many mistakes when I translate from Polish to English.



For example the verb might be located at different part of the sentence.

Meditate on the ways in which math is like a language.

If you analyze logic circuits, one can say that this is like a language.

Does your heart thrill at the thought of an AND gate?

I don't find myself excited by working with gates. For me this is just a tool to analyze combinational or sequential logic circuits. My students find digital circuits easier to comprehend than analog. Generally, I don't like digital circuits. I prefer analog where my doctoral thesis is primary based on it.

How would you characterize your childhood?

I pleasantly remember my childhood. I had lots of freedom since my parents were both working.

I played outside from morning to evening. Many hours I played soccer (I have to account for many broken windows) or in the winter time I was ice skating on the lakes. I also played many war games, since this was the post-war era. I spent more time with my father than my mother. I went with him hunting, traveling and camping, gardening etc. Every summer I went for a

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month for a summer camp. I would go to different part of Poland. I remember that the first camp was close to my town. Later on I would go to the Baltic sea or to the mountains. This event was organized for children whose parent(s) were employed by the police.

How would you characterize your mother?

Smart and demanding. Very hard working women.

How would you characterize your father?

Smart and gentle. Very hard working man.

Explain the importance of your early childhood memories of guns.

As I mentioned above, this was a post-war era. I had access to many guns and rifles, since my father was a police officer. In our house we had many guns and rifles. As a teenager I was firing guns for fun in safe remote areas as in an old castle or army training area.

What do you think of these questions so far?

They are interesting. However, they are hardly related to the electrical engineering.

As I remembered, you mentioned to me that your advisor suggested to you writing about me and my electrical engineering experience.

Write something long.

I will not write something long but I will mention to you that a colleague of mine from NJIT whom I work with at the Sarnoff Symposium writes less than I! Thirty five year ago when I graduated as an engineer, **English/communication skills were not important as today**. At this point, I don't see a reason to



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take English classes in order to improve my communication skills.

Articulate your thoughts on transgression's importance.

One should not try to go over the limit as this can get him in trouble with the law.



What kind of social animal are you?



I don't like to socialize with people in bars. In my association with IEEE Princeton/Central Section I meet many people at our events. Since I am the Section Chair, Mom supports my volunteer work and attends with me many section events because she understands the importance of this to me! She attended our awards dinner at Princeton University Prospect House or activities in Albany or Binghamton.

What appeals to you the most about electrical engineering as a scientific practice?

I was always curious how a radio or TV works. In 1961, in Poland, my parents purchased first TV and had troubles with it. I was able to repair this set by changing vacuum tubes. This was not a very difficult task, but I was interested how this TV set works.

What appeals to you the most about IEEE as social and professional association?

I am able to discuss variety of engineering topics with many engineers.

Do you wish Emily and I could speak Polish?

Yes, I do.

How come you never tried to teach Emily and me Polish?

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Why do you think Mom was attracted to you?

I don't think this has anything to do with electrical engineering.

Please ask Mom this question.

Do you consider yourself a riddle?

No, I don't.

Describe this project that I am working on.

It is a very difficult and challenging task, especially when you write with constraints.

Does the second World War loom in your consciousness?

Yes, it does. When I was in Poland, only my parents were my family. My father had only one cousin in village next to town of Glogow. Both of my parents lost all of their family members in the war.

How do you feel about the practice of writing (in any language)?

I am more comfortable to write in Polish.

How do you feel about having conversations in English?

I do this automatically and don't have any feelings.

How do you feel about having conversations in Polish?

Not much different as a conversation in English.

Do you believe human nature is inherently evil, inherently good, or something in between?

There are three categories. All of the above. It is a human nature.

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When I was a child, I once asked you how come you didn't attend church with the rest of the family and you told me that it doesn't matter what you do but what you believe in your heart. Do you believe this? Do you believe in a God?

I do believe what I said to you. I do believe in God, it has a power that can't be comprehended or explained.

Discuss a sublime experience you have had.

Say something about how constraints operate in writing.

There is a limited writing with constraints. If you don't know a language well, that is also a constraint.

Say something about constraints, unrelated to writing.

Any rules or laws that we impose on ourselves.

What is the nature of our relationship?

What do you most enjoy about watching sports? About playing sports?

I want my team to win. I also want to win.

Soccer: is it a cultural style?

Yes, it is. In South America or in Europe people are very involved with this sport.

When we visited Italy in October, Emily chatted with shoemakers, I continue the conversation with them and asked them if they knew Giorgio Chinaglia, an Italian soccer player who played for Cosmos. He is not popular in Italy due to a stock market scandal. However, the shoemakers respected him of his achievements on the soccer field..

Write something random here.



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Describe the aesthetic dimension of mathematics.

I am not mathematician. However, I took linear algebra in college with many math majors they enjoyed many proofs. I didn't enjoy their philosophical analysis. I prefer more practical engineering approach with more definite results.

Do you worry a lot?

Not a lot. Sometimes.

Do you ever see yourself in me? in Emily?

I see more in you, perhaps because you choose the same teaching profession.

Say something about your life as a teacher.

I enjoy working with bright students, since they learn much faster.

I don't have to work from 9 to 5.

Do you consider yourself to have a vocation in life?

What is your philosophy of existence?

We are visitors on the earth. The time goes too fast.

What is your favorite pierogi filling?

I like them with meat filling.

Write something purple here.

Purple flowers.

Would you say that the importance to your life of your time in Israel is disproportionate to the three years you spent there?

Yes, I agree.

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What is it about electrical engineering specifically, as opposed to other types of engineering (chemical, civil, etc), that appeals to you?

I can design a converter that everybody including other engineers can use.

If I had other engineering knowledge, I might enjoy other engineering areas.

Write something in Polish about your Polish identity, then translate it into English.

Psychoanalyze yourself, briefly.

Any thoughts on poetry?

I tried to give Grandma's poetry books by Juliusz Slowacki to Polish church.

She treasured these books, but I felt that they just taking a space.

Few days ago, before I made a call to the church, I read some of the poems.

I found these poems very enjoyable because they were rich in words that I could appreciate, not like poetry in English.

What do you think it is that makes you good at math?

I use math as a tool. After while you can become proficient in math by repeating particular operations.

In what ways are you different now from when you were forty-four? twenty-four?

When I was 24 I had no responsibilities. At 44 I had to support my family.



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How much has living in the U.S. changed you? Do you consider these changes to be for the better or for the worse?

I am accustomed to a US life. These changes are better and I couldn't live elsewhere.



However, my 18 years in Poland will be always in my memories.



I met Nobel Prize winner from Princeton University. He came to DeVry for a presentation.

He talked about his village in England where he spent his childhood. My point is that everyone remembers their childhood.

Are you easily impressed by others?

Sometimes.

How do you feel about communism?

I am glad that you don't have the experience to live under communism.

Because of that, I have the tendency to be more conservative and ignore socialistic values.

When did Grandma first tell you she was Jewish? How did you react?

I think I was 10. I was in SHOCK!

Say something else about electrical engineering.

Good profession.

Identify something that you don't like about electrical engineering.

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In the US, engineers are not respected as in Europe.

What do you think is the purpose of these questions?

You never ask me many questions. I think you would like to find out more about me.

Do you have any thoughts about metaphor or simile?

What is logic? What is its importance? Its beauty?

Name a great pleasure you couldn't do without.

Working on the computer.

Quote a text that you are particularly fond of quoting or that speaks to you in some way.

What sort of things bother you?

I don't like to hear negative comments about me.

How do you view yourself in relation to others? Does this view change depending on the context?

Provide me with a glimpse of the logic of your imagination.

What are your thoughts on family?

Is there a relationship between shyness and constraint?

Yes it is. A person might have difficulty to express his thoughts.

Categorize your attitude towards your physical appearance.

I am not very concerned with my physical appearance.

Name something that I don't know about you that I'd be surprised to find out.

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Describe the effect of classical music on your brain. Feel free to be poetic here.

It is relaxing.

Say something else about Grandma here.

Very independent. Went thru a lot during war.

Describe your basic political philosophy.

Anti communist.

Discuss the relationship between chess and constraint.

You have to use logic in both.

Discuss the relationship between electrical engineering and constraint.

Some concepts in electrical engineering are imaginary. The constraint is that you cannot visualize them.

Discuss the relationship between masculinity and constraint.

If you weren't an engineer, you would be _____.

Science major- Geology?

Characterize your desires.

Moderate.

Are you given to introspection?

Has writing about yourself at such length had any effect on you

Not really.

Anything else you would like to add or say.

Thanks. Lou.





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