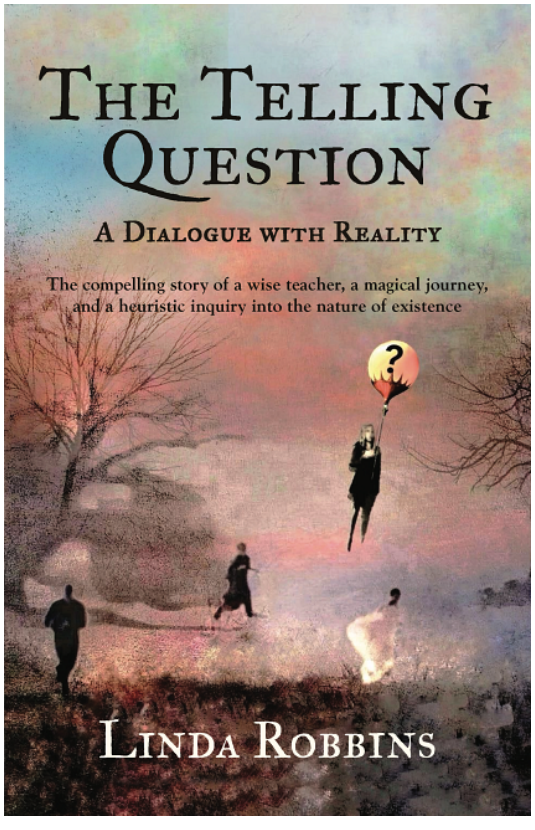

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The Telling Question: A Dialogue with Reality
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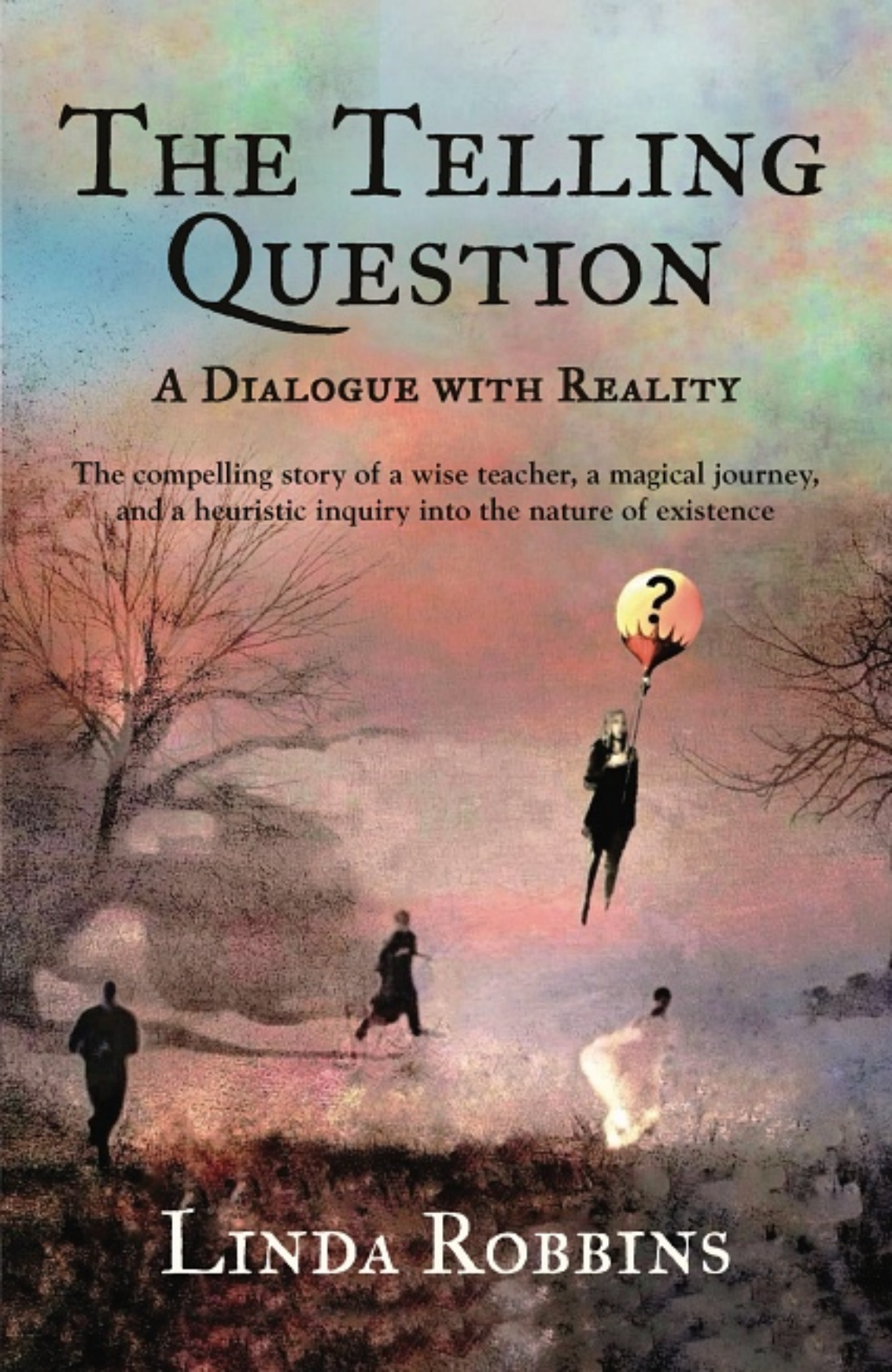
The Telling Question

A Dialogue with Reality

The compelling story of a wise teacher, a magical journey, and a heuristic inquiry into the nature of existence



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The decisive question for man is: Is he related to the infinite or not? That is the telling question of his life. Only if we know that the thing which truly matters is the infinite can we avoid fixing our interests upon futilities and upon all kinds of goals which are not of real importance.

—— Carl Jung

Step by step, as thou goeth,
The Way shall open up to thee.
Thou art the Tao.

—— Sunyata

7

"He's a dying breed," Jay Robert Nash said on the phone the next day, "a complete nonconformist in the American tradition of Thoreau. I want to write about Eddie myself someday. Maybe I'm saving the best for last."

When I told Eddie that I might write an article about him, he gave me a list of names of people who had known him for years, many of them collectors of his work. Nash, a Chicago journalist and the author of a string of bestsellers, was the first person I called.

My next call was to Philip Pinsoff, a wealthy industrialist and art aficionado who had bought Eddie's work since his one-man show at the Art Institute in 1948.

"Highly imaginative" was how Pinsoff described Eddie and his art. He laughed as he recalled how Eddie had been commissioned by a wealthy businessman to do his portrait. Eddie drew the man seated at his desk in front of a large window, a big cigar in his mouth. His form was transparent. You could see through him to the city beyond. When Eddie delivered the drawing, the man was indignant and refused to pay for it. Pinsoff bought it happily.

Both Pinsoff and Nash agreed to meet with me and talk at greater length.

I visited Mr. Pinsoff at his office on Elston Avenue. He was semi-retired, dividing his time between his business and the Field Museum, where he was doing research on Asian art. A distinguished-looking gentleman in his early seventies, Pinsoff

exhibited a quiet warmth which, like the tweed suit he wore, was tasteful and subdued.

Eddie had a natural sense of composition, Pinsoff told me, illustrating his point with some of Eddie's pieces he had brought along to show me.

"See here," he said, holding up a pen and ink drawing and pointing to a mass on the outer edge. "Without this shape, the entire composition would suffer. There would be no unity. Because of it, the drawing is magnificent. It holds your interest. Now *that* is a rare ability."

Pinsoff was also interested in Eddie as a social phenomenon.

"He came from the scene, near North Avenue, when it was swinging, high, wide, and handsome. It was the pot and heroin center, full of bars catering to indigents, drop-outs, and freak-outs. It was the Chicago equivalent of Greenwich Village or Haight Ashbury in the late '50's and '60's.

"Eddie was one of the leaders in that culture, a respected figure. He had reached a mature age by then. He was no kid anymore. He had been jailed and dried out. He had lived with various women, some of whom he married. His credentials for that area were impeccable. He was the senior leader of the group, and he had entrée to everyone and everything. His cognomen, Mr. B, was enough to get you in or out of a lot of places.

"Old Town was then what you would call a closed community, inhabited by artists, musicians, radicals who'd gone underground, a large percentage of them on drugs. Any stranger might be a narc. The only way I could get to Eddie was to go to some bar and say that I was Philip Pinsoff, and I wanted to get in touch with Eddie B.

"The usual answer was 'I don't know an Eddie B.'

"'Well, when you see him,' I would say, 'give him the message that Philip Pinsoff is looking for him.' Sure enough, an hour or two later, I'd get a call from Eddie.

"When *Time* magazine wanted to do a story on him, they sent a reporter to the Art Institute where he'd had his one-man show. The people there referred him to me, and I arranged for the reporter to meet with Eddie. They met once, and when a different reporter was sent the next time, Eddie didn't turn up. I had a feeling he wouldn't. The substitution was a breach of trust.

"Eddie was a tremendous social commentator. He frequented places where people would get high and perform. The performers were often talented misfits, and he'd do drawings of them. He was rather like Toulouse-Lautrec in that way. He was interested in the underside of society.

"He has lived in attics and garages. I'd visit him in places where there'd be no heat, and some woman would be living with him. Eddie wasn't an especially attractive man. There was the fact that he only had one arm, and he wasn't what you'd call well-presented. But he was an extremely masculine man, and that was appealing to women, some women. He never lacked feminine companionship.

"I tried to keep Eddie working. To that end, I would buy drawings. I didn't want to give him charity, which I could very well have done. I wanted to develop his talent. He was very vigorous, and he had a lot of ideas. He was exploding with ideas. He did a lot of Don Quixote drawings, a whole series of Don Quixote, which is indicative of his personality."

Mr. Pinsoff had another appointment scheduled immediately after mine. He had told me that at the outset, but when his

secretary announced that his next visitor had arrived, he continued to talk for a good ten minutes more.

"Have a great time writing your article," he said, as he walked me to a side door that led to the street. "I must congratulate you on your clear-sightedness for recognizing the power of Eddie's story, but a word of warning—don't get so caught up in it that you forget about your own."

My next interview was with Jay Robert Nash, who was a major collector of Eddie's work. The walls of his townhouse were covered with Eddie's drawings. He had also published many of Eddie's poems in a magazine he edited called *Literary Times.*

"I may not be the best judge of poetry, but I only published what I liked," Nash said. "What other standard do you have? Anyone who says different is either a liar, a phony, or lives in New York City." He laughed heartily at his own rough humor.

We were having coffee on the terrace behind his house with Lake Michigan just a few yards away. Two children were playing nearby; we watched them as we talked. The motion of their play influenced the rhythm of our conversation, and the sound of waves lapping on the shore was a calming counterpoint.

"Eddie is as universal as his art," Nash declared. "That's why I love him. He knows the seamy side of life as well as the glorious. He knows the streets the way a good cop on the beat used to know them, the way a novelist ought to know them.

"He's a free spirit, one who will not be 'belonged,' but he's productive. There's where the admiration comes in. I've met a thousand free spirits. Their conversation pales after about ten minutes. This man is the real thing. He lives a life that is twin to his art.

"There's a sort of photosynthesis that works with him. He takes in so he's able to put out, and he's a thinker. Ideas flow from him. But again, he's a thinker who produces. He doesn't just talk. He puts his ideas into concrete form. That's what makes him so at home in Chicago. It's always the 1930s in this town. Labor is king here. You get no respect unless you produce.

"Eddie works with the enthusiasm of this city." Nash swept an arm out towards the buildings in the distance. "Just look at that skyline. Chicago's architecture is legendary. The skyline is always changing because someone's always working out a vision, making that vision *real*."

He paused to let that sink in.

"The weather here, six months of the year, is a gun to your head. You have to compel yourself to work. You work or get out. That applies to everyone. But there's a gentility here too. If you've made money, you want to spread it around, give it to people who will use it the right way, to people who will work.

"In New York, you need ambition. Here it takes something else, a certain kind of tenacity. And talent. You have to have that, of course, but if you're willing to work, the city will provide. How many other places anywhere can say that? This is the Emerald City for the heartland and the people who came here from the farms, since the banks foreclosed this country and made a vagrant army out of people who wanted to work.

"What has been of interest to Eddie is the everyday life of the city, not because he lacked the range to see more, but because he found the miraculous there. Because he neither judged nor rejected, it was as if he were magnetized. Things happened to him. He absorbed life, and because he lived in Chicago and loved it, Chicago was enlivened through him.

"I can think of maybe fifteen people who *are* this city, and Eddie is among the top five. And he doesn't even have to live here anymore. That's not important."

By his own account, Nash was one of the highest-paid journalists in Chicago, but when he was just starting out, he was not making much money. Regardless of that limitation, he would buy Eddie's drawings, knowing he would have to scrape for the rest of the month to get by.

Nash took me back to the '60s, to an incident that happened at O'Rourke's, a popular watering hole for Chicago's journalists, writers, and media people. He was sitting at the bar one afternoon. The only other person in the place was an elderly woman who looked like she had wandered onto the wrong movie set. There was something about the woman's features and her odd formal dress that captured his imagination. He found himself inventing a story for her when his concentration was broken by Eddie's sudden entrance. He needed twenty dollars, but he had not brought any drawings or poems to sell.

"That's all right, Eddie," Nash said. "We can settle up another time." But it wasn't all right with Eddie. He looked around the bar. A man he knew slightly had just come in and was sitting at the bar reading a paperback book. Eddie asked if he could have the blank page at the back. The man handed over the book, and Eddie tore the page out carefully, pulled a stubby pencil out of his shirt pocket, and did a quick drawing of the woman at the bar. The whole incident was over within ten minutes. Eddie had his money and was on his way. Nash had a drawing that perfectly captured a certain Goyaesque quality in the woman's appearance that he had just been contemplating.

Later, when I told Eddie about Nash's recounting of that episode, he laughed and said he remembered it too. That

sparked the recollection of a time when he needed five dollars. Nash would almost always give him five dollars for a poem, but he didn't have a poem. It was the beginning of winter, and it was getting cold. He did not have a place to sleep that night. As he walked along, considering his predicament and watching the dry leaves blow down the street, the first lines of a poem came. By the time he reached O'Rourke's, it was all there. He went inside, wrote the poem down on a napkin, and then sold it to Nash, who was standing at the other end of the bar.

As they fall,
No special place is made for them
Beyond their summer,
And beneath the broad fullness
Of the spring they knew,
They felt that surely they alone
Knew the melting
And the running
And the dripping
Of winter.

Eddie recalled another time when he had gone to O'Rourke's with some drawings to sell. Finding Nash engaged in a heated discussion, he decided not to bother him. But Nash took out his wallet, handed Eddie a fifty, and said, "Come to my place tomorrow, and I'll have more."

The next day, Eddie went to Nash's home. Nash was not there, but he had left the door unlocked. Eddie stepped inside, and there, on the hall table, was an envelope with his name on it, containing two crisp hundred-dollar bills. Eddie left two of his best drawings in exchange.

As the afternoon shadows lengthened and the children set off for home, Nash asked me, “Well, what do you think? Have you got enough?” I nodded and prepared to leave, but Nash made no move to rise. He was staring out at the lake, watching a single boat, a long way off, making its way toward the horizon.

“You know,” he said, “the thing I’ve always admired about Eddie is that he was willing to trade time. You have to be willing to trade time. Eddie spent an entire year developing a certain technique, but after that, it was his.”

Nash gave me a thoughtful look. “Remember, you’ve got forever. We’ve all got forever.”

There was one more person I wanted to talk to before deciding if I would write the article. A renowned Chicago personality and old-time radical, Studs Terkel had known Eddie for years, dating back to Eddie’s early marriage to an actress. Studs was the author of several sociological studies, including *Working*, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression,* and *Division Street: America.* He was also the narrator of “The Good Fight,” an excellent documentary about the Spanish Civil War, in which Eddie makes a cameo appearance. Studs was working on a new book when I called, with the deadline fast approaching, so he asked if I would mind conducting my interview over the phone. I did not mind at all, and Studs was happy to take some time out from his writing to talk about an old friend.

“He’s larger than life,” Studs said, “a figure out of theater! There’s no one like him.”

Because of Eddie’s legendary resilience, Studs was in the habit of introducing him as “my good friend, Lazarus.”

“Eddie has hit rock bottom so many times, like coming back from Spain with half an arm. You’d see him staggering along and

think, ‘Oh God, that’s it for Eddie. He’s not going to make it this time.’ But then you’d see him again, and he’d be full of life.

“Eddie forever is what I say.”

I asked Studs what he thought it was about Eddie that set him apart.

“Wonder,” he replied without hesitation. “He has a childlike innocence, a zest for living…”

“That most of us have lost?”

“Lost or never had. Eddie gets older, but there are always new people, young people. They’re his contemporaries.”

Studs had told Eddie that he wanted to write a book about him. All Eddie had to do was record his stories. Eddie was a natural storyteller, but he found it difficult to talk to a machine. His stories were enhanced by the attention of his listeners. None of that was going on between him and the machine.

Nevertheless, he made a valiant effort. The tape recorder that Studs had given him fell off a bar and was of no use after that. The second one, donated by a well-meaning friend, he left in an alley. When he returned to look for it only a few minutes later, it was gone. That made him feel good, he said, to see that the alley pickers were doing their job, putting things that were still of use back into circulation. Had that tape recorder been where he left it, he would have felt all wrong about the balance of things.

My intervention in the storytelling process made him feel better about the balance of things. Not only did I listen to his tales, I wanted to hear them again and again. Eddie’s life, though it had been marked by suffering, was full of the kind of magic that caused me to wonder about its source.

Much of Eddie's wisdom was derived from his interactions with the *I Ching.* He had been consulting the book for years when he came upon a line in the Wilhelm/Baynes version that struck him as being of monumental importance:

> *The secret of the Tao is to keep the changes moving so that no stasis occurs, and an unbroken coherence is maintained.*

That one sentence cracked the code for him, catalyzing the teaching and making it more accessible.

Eddie became adept at keeping the changes moving. After he returned from Spain, he found a job with the New Deal's Works Project Administration, better known as the WPA. He sang in their choir until funding for the program ran out.

Later, when he had started playing the piano again, he happened to be in the vicinity of the building that had housed the WPA music project, and he remembered that it had been full of pianos.

As he entered the lobby, he saw multitudes of young people scurrying about, many of them carrying sketchbooks. He asked where he could find a piano. No one knew. He was about to leave when a janitor directed him to the auditorium, and there he saw a beautiful Steinway baby grand. Sitting down on the bench, he placed his portfolio beside him and proceeded to play the Chaconne.

People began to drift into the room. Soon, a small crowd had gathered. A woman who looked a little older than the others noticed the portfolio and asked if she might look through it. Eddie nodded and continued to play. She then asked if it would be all

right for her to show the drawings to her husband. Again, Eddie nodded. The woman withdrew and came back a few minutes later.

“My husband would like to speak with you,” she said.

It was a mystery, but Eddie played along, following behind the woman he now took to be an administrator of whatever this place was. She led him out of the auditorium and down a long corridor, at the end of which was an office. She opened the door, motioned for him to take a seat, and excused herself.

Five minutes passed, and then ten. He had no idea what was coming. Perhaps he was about to be admonished for commandeering the piano, but he was more curious than worried.

A pleasant-looking man wearing a three-piece suit stepped into the room with Eddie’s portfolio under his arm. He introduced himself as Serge Chermayeff, Director of the Institute of Design. Eddie had heard of the school; he knew it had been started by the same people who founded the world-famous Bauhaus in Germany, but he had not known its precise location.

Chermayeff wedged himself behind a well-appointed desk, placed the portfolio on its surface, and opened it.

“I’m so happy you came to us today,” he said. “We would like to offer you a scholarship. You will be able to take all the classes you want, and we will fix you up with a job to help with expenses. How would that be?”

Eddie did not know how it would be. Going to school had not been on his itinerary. The news that he was being given something that he would never have thought of asking for left him reeling, but he forced himself to get over that on the spot.

“That would be fine,” he said. “When do I start?”

“Right away,” Chermayeff replied.

The job was cleaning up after the print-making classes. Students would squeeze ink from a tube onto a glass plate and spread the ink with a roller before pressing a sheet of paper onto it. At the end of each class, Eddie cleaned the plates with gasoline. In the beginning, that was all he did. Then, one day, he noticed an interesting pattern on one of the plates. He picked up a piece of paper, pressed it on the glass, and made his first monoprint. That evening, he hid in the print shop, ducking behind a cabinet when the janitor came to lock up. All night long he worked, producing dozens of prints and laying them out on the floor to dry. When there was no more room in the print shop, he pushed them under the wire enclosure into the adjoining classroom.

The next morning, the first class had to wait in the hall while Eddie's prints were collected. The teacher took him aside and told him kindly but firmly that he could do all the printing he wanted, but he must not interfere with the classes.

For the most part, Eddie's teachers were fond of him and enthusiastic about his talent. For many, he was a hero because he had volunteered to fight in the Spanish Civil War, but some had trouble tolerating his prodigious energy and the fact that he was given license to do pretty much as he pleased.

Eddie rolled his own cigarettes. One of the less sympathetic teachers saw him give one to another student and reported him, claiming it was marijuana.

People at the school knew of Eddie's addiction, but as long as he didn't make a show of it or involve other students, they looked the other way. Now, they assumed he was dealing. Chermayeff called him into his office, and this time Eddie *was* in trouble. Chermayeff apologized. He did not want to do it, but he had to ask Eddie to leave. He hoped that Eddie would continue

working on his own. The school would give him enough supplies to get started.

Unfazed by this turn of events, Eddie recruited a friend who had a car. Together, they loaded it up with supplies and drove into the country to a vacation home belonging to the friend's parents. They were there for a week, with Eddie staying awake much of that time, turning out massive quantities of monoprints.

Eddie made the rounds of the galleries in town to show his new work. At the Little Gallery, Madeline Tortelot, the owner, bought two prints and asked, "Has Carl seen these?" Eddie said no, and before he could ask who Carl was, Madame Tortelot was on the phone talking to Carl Schniewind, the curator of prints and drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago. After a brief exchange, she hung up and told Eddie that Carl would see him on Friday of the following week at nine a.m.

On the appointed day, Eddie brought his prints to the Art Institute and spread them out on a table in front of the curator, who spent the next half hour studying them without saying a word. Eddie thought he must be taking up too much of the man's time, so he thanked him, gathered up his prints, and was headed for the door when Schniewind called out to him, "When you're ready, we'll give you a one-man show."

According to Eddie, his was the longest-running one-man show in the history of the Art Institute. On the morning after it closed, he woke up on the floor of the loft he was renting on State Street, still feeling the effects of the drugs he had taken the night before and found himself looking at a pair of expensively shod feet. Then he heard a business-like voice say, "Eddie Balchowsky?"

Eddie groaned in reply.

"I would like to purchase the prints from your show at the Art Institute."

Carl Schniewind had contacted Phillip Pinsoff when the show opened, but Pinsoff, shrewd businessman that he was, waited until the show was over to buy up everything that had not sold.

In the *I Ching*, innocence is regarded as the condition of being in alignment with the Tao. One attains that state by maintaining a principled receptivity, so as to be open to what Carol K. Anthony called the Cosmic Will. Eddie's innocence seemed to generate a protective force. He frequently did not know where his next meal was coming from, or where he would find lodging for the night, but he would not allow uncertainty to turn into insecurity or fear.

I asked him how he was able to accomplish that.

"It's simple," he said. "You rise to the challenge when it appears before you, but you don't carry it with you as a state of mind. You don't let yourself become an answer to a challenge."

He told a story to illustrate his point. He had arranged to meet his connection on an evening when the worst snowstorm of the year had been predicted. He was staying with a friend on the North Side and had to travel to the South Side. The friend lent him a warm coat and a woolen muffler, but he did not have shoes that would fit Eddie. The ones he was wearing were worn out; the soles were flapping, but they would have to do until he could get another pair.

When he arrived at the corner where the dealer was supposed to be waiting, an unmarked police car was parked at the curb, its engine idling. The dealer, of course, was nowhere to be seen. Eddie ducked into the alley. By then the storm had unleashed its fury. The plows were not out yet, and drifts of snow

were piling up. As he stumbled along, he thought about what he should do. If he did not get out of the weather, he would have a case of frostbite that would send him to the emergency room. On the other hand, if he did not get a fix soon, he would be hurting anyway. He kept going, hoping that the dealer would be in the pharmacy on the next street over, where he sometimes went to use the pay phone.

As Eddie came out of the alley, he saw a dark spot under a streetlamp being rapidly covered with snow. He brushed the snow away and almost cried when he saw what was there. The spot turned out to be a pair of high-top work boots of good quality and still eminently wearable. They were his size.

In the pharmacy, he bought a pair of therapeutic socks for diabetics and put them on along with the work boots. It was ten minutes past the time when he had agreed to meet the dealer.

He went back to the corner. The unmarked car was gone, and the dealer was right where he was supposed to be.

To the police, Eddie was an enigma. They had a hard time understanding the bundle of contradictions that was Eddie Balchowsky. To them, a criminal was a criminal, but Eddie had the audacity to be more than that. He had fought in a war they knew little about, but they recognized the sacrifice he had made. He was a genuine war hero. He was also fast-talking, and he seemed to be everywhere at once.

Eddie told me a story about an officer who shook him down on the North Side, let him go, then met him on the West Side, shook him down again and let him go, then saw him on the South Side and had to let him go once more. The man was furious. He knew that all that traveling was to make a connection, but he couldn’t catch Eddie with anything on him.

That same officer stopped him in an alley a few days later and told him to get in the squad car. This time he was carrying.

When the officer asked what he was up to, Eddie said, “I just wrote a poem. Want to hear it?”

Without waiting for a reply, he recited “Cook County Jail.”

For what?
If not for whom—
If not for me
There can be no being here.
Not that you, detective,
Are anyone you are to me.
To your face I say,
“Here is my back,”
And to your back I say nothing.
And in this, our silence,
All things turn;
And turning grinds a harsh abrasive note
Until it strikes,
And breaks the heart.
Then, perfect strain
Is perfectly supported.
Shadows die where first they fall,
And all of life is viciously divided,
To serve each day with three dark and separate suns
That rise and set
In cold and empty skies.

The poem made the man so mad that he ordered Eddie out of the car, completely forgetting to shake him down.

Eddie's need for heroin never slowed him down. While his cohorts were nodding out, he was drawing, writing poetry, and playing the piano. Their infatuation with oblivion was not for him. He told me he felt like he was drawing with his body as he ran through the streets and alleys of Chicago, and when he set pencil to paper, the result was the cumulative effect of all that motion. Whether it was a drawing or a poem, it would come like a flash of lightning, energy discharged in quick illumination.

He once did a drawing of a street violinist, finished it just as the man was moving out of his range of vision, then sold it to someone who appeared at his side, saying, "Is that for sale?" It was all one unbroken movement.

Another time, he was headed to the Lanore Cafeteria, a favored '60s hangout for the city's artists and street people. He had a tube of black printing ink with him and a pad of paper. As he walked through an alley, he saw a rubber roller lying in the snow. He picked it up and put it in his pocket. When he got to the cafeteria, he sat near a window that was covered with frost. After staring at it for a while, enjoying the intricacy of the pattern, he took out his printing ink, squeezed some onto the window, rolled it out, then pressed a piece of paper against the glass and pulled a print. The result looked remarkably like the group of people seated at the next table, and one of them bought it.

In the '60s, Eddie worked as a janitor at the Quiet Knight, a popular Chicago folk club. The top names of the era played there, and Eddie got to be friends with many of them. The owner of the club, Richard Harding, took a special interest in Eddie.

Before getting to know Eddie, Harding had had no patience for addicts. Then a close relation died of a heroin overdose, and he became more sympathetic. That was one of the reasons he

hired Eddie, but he also wanted to annoy the city's officials. Eddie was one of the most notorious addicts in Chicago. Hiring him was equivalent to thumbing his nose at the political machine.

Outwardly, there could not have been two people less alike. Eddie was of Lithuanian peasant stock. Richard had a lord-of-the-manor air about him. What they had in common was an uncompromising regard for one another. Eddie spent hours listening to Harding talk about business, offering advice and encouragement. Richard looked the other way when Eddie siphoned off the house liquor and never said a word when it was mysteriously replaced. Drunk or sober, Eddie worked harder—and faster—than any three men Richard might have hired to replace him.

Eddie took responsibility for dealing with tradespeople and handling complaints so Richard would not be bothered. When the plumbing in the club sprang a leak, totally immersing the shop below in water, Eddie cleaned it all up, placated the shop owner, and managed to leave him laughing.

Richard Harding was the only man Eddie would ever call "Boss."

I was still thinking about whether to write the article when Eddie introduced me to Richard Harding's son, John, who had grown up admiring Eddie and his free-spirit élan. The three of us spent an evening together, at the end of which John told Eddie that I was "the one."

"What do you mean by 'the one'?" I asked.

"The one to write the book, of course."

"Hold on," I said. "I hadn't thought about writing a book."

"Well, you should because you're the one to do it."

About the Author

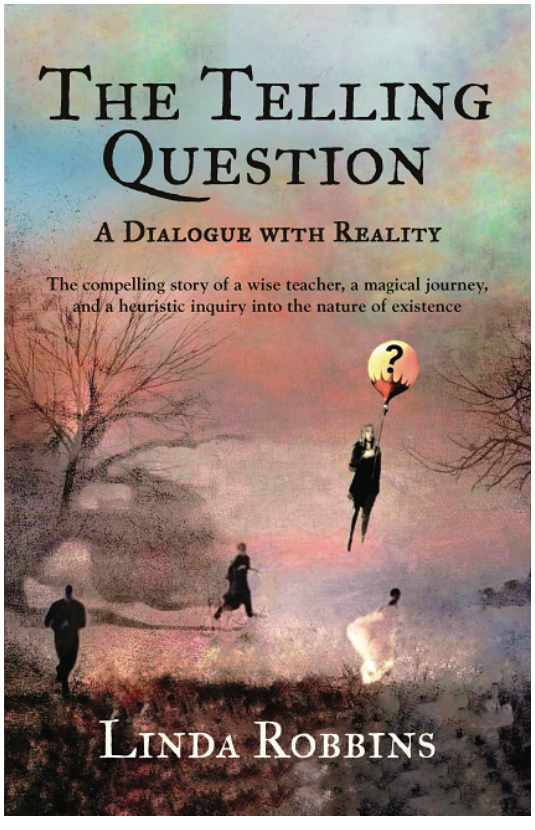
My father was a writer. I grew up thinking I would be a writer too one day. The war in Vietnam changed many things, including my idea of what I ought to be doing in the world. Upon graduating from college at the top of my class in 1971 with a degree in English literature, I felt called to do something meaningful to aid in the anti-war effort. This pivotal moment changed my direction, and I became committed to a life of activism and advocacy.

I later joined a national organization dedicated to building a progressive workers' movement. After seven years, the group disbanded, and I turned to writing**.** In 1980, I wrote a freelance article that was a cover story for *The Chicago Sun-Times* magazine supplement. Armed with credible evidence that I could write professionally, I began work on an epic novel, wrote a few screenplays, and produced a lot of poetry, all of which helped me to grow as a writer.

A guiding principle during that period was a quotation from Archibald MacLeish: "One does not write as a writer and should do nothing to put oneself in that popinjay attitude. One writes as a man who is moved by human life, who cannot take it for granted." This idea has deeply influenced my writing. In those early days, I had MacLeish's words taped to my typewriter so I could never forget them.

The Telling Question is my first full-length work to be published. Another quotation, this one from Maya Angelou, helped me to bring it to completion. "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you," she said. This one has been in me for a very long while. It was time to let it go, to release it into the world, and see what comes of it.

I have lived in New Mexico for over 30 years. Every day, I draw inspiration from its rich cultural heritage and supernal landscape. This special place has helped to shape my creative vision and my life.



THE TELLING QUESTION: A Dialogue with Reality is the story of an existential journey in search of personal, intellectual, and spiritual meaning. It is an unfolding shaped by attention and reverence.

The Telling Question: A Dialogue with Reality
By Linda Robbins

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