

# Step Right Up

by [Louis Faber](#) (November 2023)



*The Disappointed Souls*, Ferdinand Hodler, 1892

## Step Right Up

They were lemmings aligning,  
ever impatient, always seeking.  
For some, it would be rejuvenation,  
for others rebirth, a recapture of youth.  
He was no mage, not Merlin, but  
they gathered around his table  
a lazy susan of desires, pleas, entreaties.  
All he could offer was snake oil, but they  
gladly took it as hope, an abiding faith  
in a cure for their existential condition.  
They were always willing to wager it all  
in another bet against the house,  
against all odds, desperate for what they  
imagined they might receive in only they  
were worthy of his favor, his beneficence.  
And he stood proudly before them,  
dispensing a nothingness that filled

their voids, and he knew that a promise,  
even a false one, when married to hope  
and faith might be exactly what would  
get them through yet another day.  
He was an angel and a charlatan,  
but he knew that they gave him meaning,  
a purpose that life and religion had denied him  
for that was the symbiotic hand  
that the capricious gods had dealt them all.

## **Unboxed**

They thought they had him  
boxed in, contained, constrained,  
but he would not be truncated, cast aside.  
He would make a quiet escape, proceed  
carefully so they would not realize,  
until it was too late, that he was free  
of their control, their rejection, their spite.  
They wanted him in their psychic morgue,  
one more corpse sacrificed on their altar  
of conformity, but none of them wanted  
to play a ram-less Abraham, and so he  
would be a latter day Isaac free to come down  
the mountain of their solitude.  
That was all he desired, freedom to think,  
to ponder, to reflect, to meditate  
on the state of his mind, his world.  
He was never a rebel, needed no revolution,  
but in their view anyone who deviated  
from their singular group-thought was a danger,  
ideas were weapons that could  
bring down their sense of one great self.  
He cared nothing for that, for them,  
for he knew that no prison short of death  
could mute his fertile mind, and ideas

would well up and percolate freely  
and they could never hope to dam their flow.

### **Hagar's Son**

Did you so fear being Hagar  
that you deemed me Esau, stole  
my birthright, my name, my past  
and cast me off into a wilderness?  
I knew nothing of this, your secret  
taken with you to the grave as you wished.  
Did you consider that I might be  
Ishmael, never knowing my father,  
adopted into a culture that would  
never be mine, a child who would  
become another when theirs arrived?  
It matters little now, for I have  
found you, watered your grave  
with tears of joy and loss, imagining  
the touch of the woman who bore me  
crossing finally into the promised  
land of my family and my heritage.

### **Here at Last**

For how long had he been staring?  
He didn't know, didn't need to,  
time had ceased to matter,  
carried off on the gravitational tide.  
He had been walking for days  
to get to this place, each step  
a new beginning, each going nowhere.  
He knew he might seek solace here,  
knew he could never leave,  
here, now, was his ancestral home.

There was a succulence to the sand,  
the stones, the odd plants  
that, like him, had taken shallow root,  
seeking the succor of a rain  
that was always on the horizon,  
a mirage, a delusion, a desire.  
So he stood and watched and waited  
and knew that was the place, this  
would never be the place. Time  
flowed back over him, bathing him,  
and the encroaching dawn drew  
him away from the world of dreams

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