

Green Book of Meditations Volume 3 Oriental and Monotheist Wisdom

I was not wholly satisfied with my second volume and I wished to further emulate Frangquist and Shelton in collecting a broad selection of instructional meditations from the world religions. Perhaps I should have practiced their silence? In any case, I spent a summer putting together this volume from my favorite books. I don't think I did as good a job as my predecessors, but I think that there are some fascinating pieces nestled inside this volume for you.

I don't have copyright permission on many of these articles. I am not making money off this deal, so I don't feel too bad about this. In fact, I consider it free advertising for the authors. It's probably best if people discovering this copy do not further distribute it. Use your judgment.

The original edition is much different from this one. The Zen Koans, Haiku & Christian Thoughts are the same, but I removed many selections from the Tao of Pooh and the Te of Piglet, because many represented the sole thoughts of Benjamin Hoff (a recent writer) and were not the retold timeless stories of old Taoists (which I kept in this volume). This amounted to about 5 pages being removed out of 40 from the Third Volume. I will put those removed selections into a file on the web-site for observing, but not for downloading. I have recently added all the selections in "Zen and the Gospel," "Scots Gaelic Poems," "Three Random Pieces," "Is God A Taoist?," "Wit and Wisdom of Islam" and "Various Other Quotes." The end result is a more diversity and intriguing stories and Druidical one-liners.

Please enjoy,

Michael Scharding
Big River Grove, Saint Cloud Minnesota
Day 88 of Geamreadh, Year XXXIII of the Reform
January 28th, 1996 c.e.

Printing History

1st Printing 1993
2nd Printing 1996
3rd Printing 2003

DRYNEMTUM PRESS



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Truth
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Zen Harvest #710

The one
Who's escaped the world
To live in the mountains,
If they are still weary,
Where should they go?

Zen Harvest #217

Today's praise,
Tomorrow's abuse;
It's the Human way.
Weeping and Laughing...
All utter lies.

The Iron Flute

A Zen Buddhist Collection of Koans

Editor's Note: A koan is a short parable or story in which a gleam of Buddhist wisdom is trapped. It is usually followed by short lectures that enlarge and explain further that wisdom. Several teachers comment on each of the following Koans. This book is available on open reserve.

34- Hsueh-feng Sees His Buddha-nature

A monk said to Hsueh-feng, "I understand that a person in the stage of Cravaka sees his Buddha-nature as he sees the moon at night, and a person in the stage of Bodhirattva sees her Buddha nature as he sees the sun at day. Tell me how you see your own Buddha-nature."

For answer Hsueh-feng gave the monk three blows with his stick. The monk went to another teacher, Yen-t'ou, and asked the same thing.

Yen-t'ou, slapped the monk three times.

NYOGEN: If a person studies Buddhism to escape the sufferings of the world, he finds that all suffering is caused by his own greed, anger, and ignorance. As he seeks to avoid these three poisons and to purify his heart, he may see his Buddha-nature as beautiful and as remote as a new moon, but most of the time he misses seeing even this. He is in the stage of Cravaka.

Another person studies Buddhism to save all sentient beings. He realizes the true nature of man, and sees Buddha-nature in every person without exception. Cloud, rain, and snow he sees with sadness, but he does not blame the sun, and at night he knows other parts of the earth have bright daylight. He knows that mankind destroys things foolishly, but can also create and build things wisely. He is a Bodhisattva.

The monk's first statements were all right, but if he really understood them, he would know better than to ask Hsueh-feng about his Buddha-nature. Hsueh-feng tried to bring the monk back from dreamland with his blows, but the monk took his dream to Yen-t'ou, where he received similar treatment. I can imagine his stupid, sleepy face!

10 Yueh-shan Holds It

The governor of a state asked Yueh-shan, "I understand that all beasts possess Sila (precepts), Dhjana (meditation) and Prajna (wisdom) Do you keep the precepts? Do you practice meditation? Have you attained wisdom?"

"This Poor monk has no such junk around here," Yueh-shan replied.

"You must have a very profound teaching" the governor said "but I do not understand it. "

"If you want to hold it," Yueh-shan continued, "you must climb the biggest mountain and sit on the summit or dive into the deepest sea and walk on the bottom. Since you cannot enter even your own bed without a burden on your mind, how can you grasp and hold my Zen?"

NYOGEN: When one keeps the precepts, he can meditate well; when his meditation becomes matured, he attains wisdom. Since these three, Sila, Dhyana, and Prajna, are interrelated and equally essential, no one of the three can be carried as an independent study. But the governor was trying to understand

the teaching as he might a civil-service examination. He himself had often selected men who might be deficient in one quality, provided that they were strong in another. What foolish questions to ask Yueh-shan! If a monk is deficient in the precepts, he cannot accomplish his meditation; if his meditation is not complete, he never attains true wisdom. He cannot specialize in any one of the three. Today there are Buddhist students who write books but never practice meditation or lead an ethical life and Zen masters" who lack many of the simpler virtues. Even though they shave their heads, wear yellow robes, and recite the sutras, they never know the true meaning of Dharma. What can you do with these imitators? The governor could not understand Yueh-shan's steep Zen, but when he admitted it, Yueh-shan saw there was hope and proceeded to give him some instruction.

GENRO: Yueh-shan uses the mountain and the sea as an illustration. If you cling to summit or bottom, you will create delusion. How can he hold "it" on the summit or the bottom? The highest summit must not have a top to sit on, and the greatest depth no place to set foot. Even this statement is not expressing the truth. What do you do then? (He turns to the monks.) Go out and work in the garden or chop wood.

FOGAI: Stop! Stop! Don't try to pull an unwilling cat over the carpet. She will scratch and make the matter worse.

NYOGEN: Now! How are you going to express it?

14- Pai-yun's Black and White

Pai-yun, a Zen master of the Sung Dynasty wrote a poem:

Where others dwell,
I do not dwell.
Where others go,
I do not go.
This does not mean to refuse
Association with others;
I only want to make
Black and white distinct.

NYOGEN: Buddhists say that sameness without difference is sameness wrongly conceived and difference without sameness is difference wrongly conceived. My teacher, Shen Shaku, used to illustrate this beautifully, and Dr. D. T. Suzuki has put it into English: "Billows and waves and ripples all surging, swelling and ebbing, yet are they not so many different motions of the eternally self-same body of water?"

The moon is serenely shining in the sky, alone in all the heavens and the entire earth; but when she mirrors herself in the brilliant whiteness of evening dew, which appear like glittering pearls sown upon the earth, how wondrously numerous her images! Is not every one of them complete in its own fashion?"

Zen stays neither in assertion nor denial. It is like a steering wheel turning to the left or to the right to guide the vehicle onward. The master in this story was not insisting on his own course, but was warning students not to cling to one side or the other. He sought only to play the game of life fairly even though he knew the fact of non-individuality.

There are many lodges, clubs, and lecture halls, where all sorts of discourses are delivered, each speaker with an urgent message to give to his audience. You can attend these meetings and enjoy the different opinions and arguments, but I advise you to recall occasionally, "Where others dwell, I do not dwell. Where others go, I do not go." It may save you from nervous strain.

The koan also says, "This does not mean to refuse association with others." We can sympathize with different movements in the world without belonging to any of them. We can welcome visitors from any group and serve them tea, brimful of Zen. Each of you may come and go as you wish.

The koan ends, "I only wanted to make black and white clear." That is to say, we are without color.

40. The Dry Creek

A monk asked Hsueh-feng, "when the old creek of Zen dries out and there is not a drop of water left, what can I see there?" Hsueh-feng answered, "There is the bottomless water, which you cannot see." The monk asked again, "How can one drink that water?" Hsueh-feng replied, "He should not use his mouth to do it."

The monk later went to Chao-Chou and related the dialogue. Chao-Chou said, "If one cannot drink the water with his mouth, he also cannot take it through his nostrils." The monk then repeated the first question, "When the old creek of Zen dries out and there is not a drop of water, what can I see there?" Chao-Chou answered, "The water will taste as bitter as quinine." "What happens to one who drinks that water?" asked the monk. "He will lose his life" came the reply.

When Hsueh-feng heard of the dialogue, he paid homage to Chao-Chou saying, "Chao-Chou is a living Buddha. I should not answer any questions hereafter." From that time on he sent all newcomers to Chao-Chou.

NYOGEN: As long as there remains a faint trace of Zen, the creek has not been completely drained. Each person coming here brings his own particular tinge to add to the stream. When Chao-Chou referred to losing his life, he meant to lose one's self and enter Nirvana. A person who attempts to become a sage must pass through many difficulties, and even at the last he must quench his thirst with bitterness. If YOU do not mind these obstacles, I say, "Go to it."

98. Yueh-shan's Lake

Yueh-shan asked a newly-arrived monk, "Where have you come from?"

FOGAI: Are you enjoying the atmosphere?

The monk answered, "From the Southern Lake."

FOGAI: You give a glimpse of the lake view.

"Is the lake full or not?" inquired Yueh-shan.

FOGAI: Are you still interested in the lake?

"Not yet," the monk replied.

FOGAI: He glanced at the lake. "There has been so much rain, why isn't the lake filled?" Yueh-shan asked.

FOGAI: Yueh-shan invited the monk to see the lake, actually.

The monk remained silent

FOGAI: He must have Drowned.

NYOGEN: Zen monks like to dwell intimately with nature. Most Chinese monasteries were built in the mountains or by a lake. Zen records many dialogues between teacher and monks concerning natural beauty, but there must also be many monks who never asked questions, simply allowing themselves to merge with nature. They are the real supporters of Zen, better than the chatterboxes with all their noise in an empty box.

GENRO: If I were the monk, I would say to Yueh-shan, "I will wait until you have repaired the bottom."

FOGAI: It was fortunate the monk remained silent.

NYOGEN: Genro sometimes sounds like a shyster with unnecessary argument.

GENRO: The thread of Karma runs through all things;
{One can pick up anything as a koan.}
Recognition makes it a barricade.
[If you look behind there is no barricade.]
The poor monk asked about a lake
[Go on! jump in and swim!]
Made an imaginary road to heaven.
[Where are you standing?]

94. Living Alone

A monk came to Yun-chu and asked, "How can I live alone at the top of the mountain?"

FOGAI: You are lost in a cloud.

Yun-chu answered, "Why do you give up your Zen-do in the valley and climb the mountain?"

FOGAI: This is not the way to handle ghosts.

NYOGEN: American friends often ask me how to find the "quiet place to meditate." My usual answer is, "Can you not find a quiet spot in your home?" No matter how busy one's daily life is, he can find certain minutes in which to meditate and a certain place to sit quietly. Merely pining for a quiet place away from his own home is entirely wrong. This monk could not harmonize himself with other monks in the Zen-do and wished to live alone on a mountain peak. Even though Yun-chu cornered the monk with the question, no wonder Fogai thought Yun-chu too lukewarm in his method. If I were Yun-chu, I would demand that the monk tell me where he is at this moment. If he hesitated, I would push him out of the room immediately.

GENRO: If I were Yun-chu, I would say to the monk, "If you do not neglect your own Zen-do, I will allow you to stay on the mountain peak. But how can you stay on the mountain without neglecting your own Zen-do?"

FOGAI: Destroy that Zen-do and that mountain!

NYOGEN: Fogai is like an anarchist. I do not wish to associate with this radical monk. Genro's first remark is splendid. Why did he add the last? Look at my associates!

44. Nan-ch'uan Rejects Both A Monk and Layman

A monk came to Nan-Ch'uan, stood in front of him, and put both hands to his breast. Nan-Ch'uan said, "You are too much of a layman. "The monk then placed his hands palm to palm. "You are too much of a monk," said Nan-Ch'uan. The monk could not say a word. When another teacher heard of this, he said to his monks, "If were the monk, I would free my hands and walk away backward."

NYOGEN: When the monk came for sanzen, he meant to express his freedom by not conforming to the rules of entering or leaving the Zen-do, but Nan-Ch'uan's first words jolted him so that he changed his attitude. Where was his freedom then? The world is filled with people who are "too much" of this or that, and there are those who think that by being iconoclastic they can express their freedom. They are all bound.

A free person does not display his freedom. He is free, and so passes almost unnoticed. Since he clings to nothing, rules and regulations never bother him. He may bow or walk backwards; it makes no difference.

GENRO: If I were Nan-Ch'uan, I would say to the monk, "You are too much of a dumb-bell," and to the master, who said he would free his hands and walk backward, "You are too much of a crazy man." True emancipation has nothing to hold to, no color to be seen, no sound to be heard.

A free man has nothing in his hands.

He never plans anything, but reacts according to others' actions.

Nan-Ch'uan was such a skillful teacher
He loosed the noose of the monk's own robe.

NYOGEN: Silas Hubbard once said, "As I grow older, I simplify both my science and my religion. Books mean less to me; prayers mean less; potions, pills and drugs mean less; but peace, friendship, love and a life of usefulness mean more . . . infinitely more."

Here we see a good American who learned Zen naturally in his old age. But why should one wait until he is old? Many people do not know how to free themselves from science and religion. The more they study science, the more they create destructive power. Their religions are mere outer garments too heavy where, they walk in the spring breeze.

Books are burdens to them and prayers but their beautiful excuses. They consume potions, pills, and drugs, but they do not decrease their sickness physically or mentally. If they really want peace, friendship, love, and a life of usefulness, they must empty their precious bags of dust and illusions to realize the spirit of freedom, the ideal of this country.

Thoughts from Confucius

Editor's Notes: Confucius helped to stabilize the chaotic Chinese political scene by promoting a new "religion" based on honor and patriarchy. The term "benevolence" is the golden quality of the "gentleman" that is perhaps wisdom of attunement with the Way. The numbers refer to passages in The Analects, which are a collection of sayings of Confucius by his disciples and grand-disciples. I like the Penguin Classics edition of the Analects. I also recommend the writings of Mencius who further built on the Confucian tradition.

Tseng Tzu said, "Every day I examine myself on three counts. In what I have undertaken on another's behalf, have I failed to do my best? IN my dealings with my friends have I failed to be trustworthy in what I say? Have I passed on to others anything that I have not tired out myself?" (I:4)

When the Master went inside the Grand Temple, he asked questions about everything. Someone remarked, "Who said that the son of the man from Tsou understood the rites? When he went inside the Grand Temple, he asked questions about everything."

The Master, on hearing of this, said, "The asking of questions is in itself the correct rite." (III:15)

The Master said, "Virtue never stands alone. It is bound to have neighbours." (IV:25)

The Master said to Tzu-kung, "Who is the better man, you or Hui?"

"How dare I compare myself with Hui? When he is told one thing he understands ten. When I am told one thing I understand only two."

The Master said, "You are not as good as he is. Neither of us is as good as he is." (V:9)

The Master said, "You can tell those who are above average about the best, but not those who are below average." (VI:21)

The Master said, "I never enlighten anyone who has not been driven to distraction by trying to understand a difficulty or who has not got into a frenzy trying to put his ideas into words. When I have pointed out one corner of a square to anyone and he does not come back with the other three, I will not point it out to him a second time." (VII:8)

The Master said, "is benevolence really far away? No sooner do I desire it than it is here." (VII:30)

There were four things the Master refused to have anything to do with: he refused to entertain conjectures or insist on certainty; he refused to be inflexible or egotistical. (IX:4)

The Master said, "I have yet to meet the man who is as fond of virtue as he is of beauty in women." (IX:18)

The Master said, "As in the case of making a mound, if, before the very last basketful, I stop, then I shall have stopped. As in the case of leveling the ground, if, though tipping only one basketful, I am going forward, then I shall be making progress." (IX:19)

The Master said, "One cannot but give assent to exemplary words, but what is important is that one should rectify oneself. One cannot but be pleased with tactful words, but what is important is that one should reform oneself. I can do nothing

with the man who gives assent but does not rectify himself or the man who is pleased but does not reform himself." (IX:24)

The Master said, "Make it your guiding principle to do your best for others and to be trustworthy in what you say. Do not accept as friend anyone who is not as good as you. When you make a mistake do not be afraid of mending your ways." (IX:25)

The Master said, "The gentleman helps others to realize what is good in them; he does not help them to realize what is bad in them. The small man does the opposite." (XII:16)

Fan Chi'ih asked about wisdom. The Master said, "Know your fellow men." (XII:22)

Tzu-kung asked about how friends should be treated. The Master said, "Advise them to the best of your ability and guide them properly, but stop when there is no hope of success. Do not asked to be snubbed." (XII:23)

Tzeng Tzu said, "A gentleman makes friends through being cultivated, but looks to friends for support in benevolence." (XII:24)

The Master said, "The gentleman agrees with others without being an echo. The small man echoes without being in agreement." (XIII:23)

The Master said, "A man of virtue is sure to be the author of memorable sayings, but the author of memorable sayings is not necessarily virtuous. A benevolent man is sure to possess courage, but a courageous man does not necessarily possess benevolence." (XIV:4)

The Master said, "Men of antiquity studied to improve themselves; men today study to impress others." (XIV:24)

The Master said, "It is not the failure of others to appreciate your abilities that should trouble you, but rather your own lack of them." (XIV:30)

The Master said, "To fail to speak to a man who is capable of being benefited is to let a man go to waste. To speak to a man who is incapable of being benefited is to let one's words go to waste. A wise man let neither men nor words go to waste." (XV:8)

The Master said, "What the gentleman seeks, he seeks within himself; what the small man seeks, he seeks in others." (XV:21)

The Master said, "The gentleman is conscious of his own superiority without being contentious, and comes together with other gentlemen without forming cliques." (XV:22)

The gentleman is devoted to principle but not inflexible in small matters. In instruction there is no separation into categories. There is no point in people taking counsel together who follow different ways. It is enough that the language one uses gets the point across. (XV:37-41)

Confucius said, "Those who are born with knowledge are the highest. Next come those who attain knowledge through study. Next again come those who turn to study after having been vexed by difficulties. The common people, in so far as they make no effort to study even after having been vexed by difficulties, are the lowest." (XVI:9)

The Master said, "Yu, have you heard about the six qualities and the six attendant faults?" "No." "Be seated and I shall tell you. To love benevolence without loving learning is liable to lead to foolishness. To love cleverness without loving learning is liable to lead to deviation from the right path. To love trustworthiness in word without loving learning is liable to lead to harmful

behaviour. To love forthrightness without loving learning is liable to lead to intolerance. To love courage without loving learning is liable to lead to insubordination. To love unbending strength without loving learning is liable to lead to indiscipline." (XVII:8)

Tzu-hsia said, "A Man can, indeed, be said to be eager to learn who is conscious, in the course of a day, of what he lacks and who never forgets, in the course of a month, what he has mastered." (XIX:5)

Tzu-hsia said, " Learn widely and be steadfast in your purpose, inquire earnestly and reflect on what is at hand, and there is no need for you to look of benevolence elsewhere." (XIX:6)

Haiku Collection

Editor's Note: The next section of this collection is taken from *A Zen Harvest* (LOC# BQ 9267 .Z48 1988) by Soiku Shigematsu.

Each time wishing
Beforehand to talk it out
I've never parted from You
Without feeling many words
Unspoken...1.

Autumn coming-
It's almost unnoticed, but
I feel its
Invisible arrival
In the rustling winds. 3.

Rain, hail,
Snow, ice:
All Different, but
They finally meld into
One valley stream. 19.

Over the pond
Every night the moon
Casts its light.
But the water won't be soiled;
The moon won't either. 44.

Nothing seems
So transient as
Human life:
The dew on the petal
Of the morning glory. 64

Should the moon
Distinguish
Rich and poor,
It would never brighten
A poor man's hut. 70.

White face, yellow face,
Ugly or beautiful: it's
Hard to change.
But our mind can be changed,
So set it right. 72.

By their colors
Flowers attract us, but
Soon they fade, fall, and
Finally turn into dust. 74.

To be born
And be unborn is one thing:
Penetrate this fact.
Death is
Illusion. 91

Yes or no,
Good or bad, all
Arguments are gone:
More beautiful tunes come
From pine winds on the hills. 94.

Life is one rest

On the way back from Illusion
To Nirvana;
Let it rain if it rains!
Let winds blow if they blow! 101.

I really love
My barrel-making job;
Connecting each board into
One round barrel. 113.

Walk on deliberately
And you'll surely see the world
Beyond the thousand miles,
Even if you walk
As slow as a cow. 114.

How regrettable!
Never
To return:
Days and months, flowing water,
And Human lives! 120.

Mistaken if you
Think you see the moon
With your own eyes:
You see it with
The light it sheds. 130.

Wisdom, if you
Devise it, is
False;
The true wisdom is
What you never know. 131.

No hesitation anymore!
Having given it all up,
I'm quite ready
To die..... 143.

No parents, no friends,
No children, no wife,
How lonely!
I would rather
Die! 149.

No parents,
No wife,
No children,
No job, no money;
But, no death, thank you. 150.

The wind is you breath;
The open sky, your mind;
The sun, your eye;
Seas and mountains,
Your whole body. 166.

What shall I leave as
A keepsake after I die?
In spring, flowers;
Summer, cuckoos;
Fall, red maple leaves;
Winter, snow. 169.

Woman and man:
They look different
But inside

Their skeletons are
Almost the same. 189.

Were our skins peeled off,
Yours and mine,
Which is you, Which is I? 190.

Cold moon:
Sounds of the bridge
As I walk alone. 191.

Duty and humanity
Are often incompatible:
The road forks
But my body is one. 219.

In the dark
I lost sight of
my shadow;
I've found it again
By the fire I lit. 235.

Coming out of darkness
I'm likely to enter
The Darker path again.
Shine far all over,
Moon on the Mountain edge. 236.

As I stumble on the slope,
My lantern has gone out;
I'm treading all alone
In complete darkness. 282.

When the lantern goes out,
Where, I wonder, does
Its light go?
Darkness is my own
Original house. 408

Love too
Is
Rooted in
Piss
And shit. 245

Make your mind
Flexible as water:
Now square,
Now roundup to
The shape of the bowl. 264.

Feeling helpless, I go out
To meet the moon
Only to find every mountain
Veiled with cloud. 268

Never regard this world as
The only one;
The next world
And the one after the next...
All the worlds are here now. 275

Everyone admires
Beautiful flowers in bloom,
But the ones who know
Visit them
After they've fallen. 284

Even strong winds are
Weakened by
Obedient willow twigs;
They'll never
Be broken in the storm. 308

Reverence is
The source of divine favors;
Without it,
Buddhas and wooden clogs are
Only pieces of wood. 322

Good and bad, are the
Reflections in the mirror:
Watch them closely
And you'll know they're
Nothing but yourself. 334

Your parents,
Grandparents....
All constituted in Yourself.
Love yourself,
Revere yourself. 374

Moonlight
The Four Gates and Four Schools
Are nothing but one. 386

Whilst everyone
Washes their dirty
Hands and feet,
Few remove
Stains from their minds. 395

Even in the dew
On the tiny blade
Of some nameless grass,
The moon
Will show herself. 420

We wish
Our lives were long
While our hair's
Growing long
Is a nuisance. 423

A person who
Does everything as it
Naturally goes
Gets along easily in
This world and the next. 445

Everything is
A lie in this world
Because even
Death isn't so. 451

The moon reflects
Even on dirty water;
This realized,
Our mind clears up. 461

When the water
In your mind
Clears up
Calm stars can be seen

Reflected on it. 462

Someone else's question,
Somehow
You can answer;
But, your mind's question,
How can you answer? 538

The jewel
Is in your bosom;
Why look for it
Somewhere
Else? 557

Push aside
Those leaves heaped on
The Old Path;
You'll see the invisible footprints
Of the Sun Goddess. 568

Pine trees in the wind
Don't break;
They always scatter
The snow before it's
Too heavy for their branches. 569

Pine winds,
Moonlight on the field grasses
Are all that I have:
Besides,
No visitors. 593

So the full moon is admired
Like a well-rounded mind
But once it was a
Sharp-edged crescent. 603

Be round,
Thoroughly round,
Human mind!
Square minds
Often scratch. 604

You may try to be round,
But keep one corner,
O mind,
Otherwise you'll
Slip and roll away. 605

While faithfully throwing their
Shadows to the water,
Flirting with the wind:
Willows by the river. 615

No sound is heard
In the creeks where
Waters run deep;
Shallow streams
Always splash. 618

The man
Who's escaped the world
To live in the mountains,
If he's still weary,
Where should he go? 710

The Tao of Pooh

(A must buy by Benjamin Hoff)

The Stone Cutter, pg. 118

There was once a stonecutter, who was dissatisfied with himself and his position in life.

"One day, he passed a wealthy merchant's house, and through the open gateway, saw many fine possessions and important visitors. "How powerful that merchant must be" thought the stonecutter. He became very envious, and wished that he could be like the merchant. Then he would no longer have to live the life of a mere stonecutter.

To his great surprise, he suddenly became the merchant, enjoying more luxuries and power than he had ever dreamed of, envied and detested by those less wealthy than himself. But soon a high official passed by, carried in a sedan chair, accompanied by attendants, and escorted by soldiers beating gongs. Everyone, no matter how wealthy, had to bow low before the procession. "How powerful that official is" he thought. "I wish that I could be a high official!"

Then he became the high official, carried everywhere in his embroidered sedan chair, feared and hated by the people all around, who had to bow down before him as he passed. It was a hot summer day, and the official felt very uncomfortable in the sticky sedan chair. He looked up at the sun. It shone proudly in the sky, unaffected by his presence. "How powerful the sun is" he thought. "I wish that I could be the sun!"

Then he became the sun, shining fiercely down on everyone, scorching the fields, cursed by the farmers and laborers. But a huge black cloud moved between him and the earth, so that his light could no longer shine on everything below. "How powerful that storm cloud is!" he thought. "I wish that I could be a cloud!"

Then he became the cloud, flooding the fields and villages, shouted at by everyone. But soon he found that he was being pushed away by some great force, and realized that it was the wind. "How powerful it is!" he thought. "I wish that I could be, the wind!"

Then he became the wind, blowing tiles off the roofs of houses, uprooting trees, hated and feared by all below him. But after a while, he ran up against something that would not move, no matter how forcefully he blew against its huge, towering stone. "How powerful that stone is!" he thought. "I wish that I could be a stone!" Then he became the stone, more powerful than anything else on earth. But as he stood there, he heard the sound of a hammer pounding a chisel into the solid rock, and felt himself being changed. "What could be more powerful than I, the stone?" he thought. He looked down and saw far below him the figure of a stonecutter.

The Cork, The Tao of Pooh pg. 88

The Wu Wei principle underlying Tai Chi Ch'uan can be understood by striking at a piece of cork floating in water. The harder you hit it, the more it yields; the more it yields, the harder it bounces back. Without expending energy, the cork can easily wear you out. So, Wu Wei overcomes force by neutralizing its power, rather than by adding to the conflict. With other approaches, you may fight fire with fire, but with Wu Wei you fight fire with water.

The Te of Piglet

(a must buy by Benjamin Hoff)

Making the Best of It, pg. 234

It is fitting that for centuries Taoists have been associated with magic, as Taoism is, on one level or another, a form of magic, a very practical form, perhaps, but magic all the same. Here we will briefly describe two secrets of that magic, two principles of Taoist transformation that may prove useful in the coming years. The first is Turn the Negative into Positive. The second is Attract Positive with Positive. Unlike some other Taoist secrets, there is little danger of these principles falling into the Wrong Hands; because in the wrong hands, they won't work. We might add that they work best for Piglets.

Turn the Negative into Positive is a principle well known in the Taoist martial arts. Using it for self-defense, you turn your attacker's power to your benefit by deflecting it back at him. In effect, he swings his fist and hits himself in the face. And after a while, if he has any intelligence at all, he stops and leaves you alone. Transforming negative into positive, you work with whatever comes your way. If others throw bricks at you, build a house. If they throw tomatoes, start a vegetable stand.

You can often change a situation simply by changing your attitude toward it. For example, a Traffic Jam can be turned into an Opportunity to Think, or Converse, or Read or Write a Letter. When we give up our images of self-importance and our ideas of what should be, we can help things become what they need to be.

The Naval Treaty, pg. 254

"There is nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion," said he, leaning with his back against the shutters. "It can be built up as an exact science by the reasoner. Our highest assurance of the goodness of Providence seems to me to rest in the flowers. All other things, our Powers; our desires, our food, are all really necessary for our existence in the first instance. But this rose is an extra. Its smell and its colour are an embellishment of life, not a condition of it. It is only goodness which gives extras, and so I say again that we have much to hope from the flowers."

The Emperor's Horses, pg. 196

"A Great man retains a child's mind." And, as the following story by Chuang-tse shows, the great man respects the child's mind, as well:

Accompanied by six of his wisest men, the Yellow Emperor journeyed to Chu-T'zu Mountain, to speak to the mystic Ta Kuei. In the wilderness of Hsiang Ch'eng, the procession lost its way. After wandering for some time, the men came upon a boy tending horses.

"Do you know the way to Chu-T'zu Mountain?" they asked him.

"I do," the boy replied.

"In that case," they said, "would you know where we might find the hidden dwelling of the hermit Ta Kuei?"

"Yes," he answered, "I can tell you."

"What a fascinating child!" said the emperor to his companions. "He knows this much" He stepped from his chariot. "Let me test him," and called the boy to him.

"Tell me, said the Yellow Emperor. "If you were in charge of the empire, how would you go about ruling it?"

"I know only the tending of horses," the boy replied. "Is ruling the empire any different from that?"

Not satisfied, the emperor questioned him again. "I realize that governing is hardly your concern. Still, I would like to know if you have ever had any thoughts about it."

The boy did not answer. The emperor asked him once more. The boy replied by asking,

"Is governing the empire different from tending horses?"

"Explain the tending of horses," said the Yellow Emperor, "and I will tell you."

"When taking care of horses," said the boy, "we make sure that no harm comes to them. In doing so, we put aside anything within ourselves that would injure them. Can ruling a nation differ from that?"

The Yellow Emperor bowed his head twice to the ground. "Heavenly Master" he exclaimed.

Incognito, pg. 186

The word for Taoist sensitivity is Cooperate. As Lao-tse wrote, "The skilled walker leaves no trace nor trackshe is sensitive to (and therefore respectful toward) his surroundings and works with the natural laws that govern them. Like a chameleon, he blends in with What's There. And he does this through the awareness that comes from reducing the Ego to nothing. As Chuang-tse put it:

"To him who dwells not in himself, the forms of things reveal themselves as they are. He moves like water, reflects like a mirror, responds like an echo. His lightness makes him seem to disappear. Still as a clear lake, he is harmonious in his relations with those around him, and remains so through profit and loss. He does not precede others, but follows them instead."

The Taoist alchemist and herbalist Ko Hung described one of the benefits of non-egotistical awareness: contentment.

"The contented man can be happy with what appears to be useless. He can find worthwhile occupation in forests and mountains. He stays in a small cottage and associates with the simple. He would not exchange his worn clothes for the imperial robes, nor the load on his back for a four-horse carriage. He leaves the jade in the mountain and the pearls in the sea. Wherever he goes, whatever he does, he can be happy-he knows when to stop. He does not pick the brief blossoming flower; he does not travel the dangerous road. To him, the ten thousand possessions are dust in the wind. He sings as he travels among the green mountains.

He finds sheltering branches more comforting than red-gated mansions, the plow in his hands more rewarding than the Prestige of titles and banners, fresh mountain water more satisfying than the feasts of the wealthy. He acts in true freedom. What can competition for honors mean to him? What attraction can anxiety and greed possibly hold? Through simplicity he has Tao, and from Tao, everything. Else comes; the light in the "darkness," the clear in the "cloudy," the speed in the "slowness," the full in the "empty."

The cook creating a meal with his own hands has as much honor in his eyes as a famous singer or high official. He has no profits to gain, no salary to lose; no applause, no criticism. When he looks up, it is not in envy. When he looks down, it is not with arrogance. Many look at him, but nobody sees him.

Calm and detached, he is free from all danger, a dragon hidden among men.

I Have Three Treasures, pg. 220

I have three treasures, Which I guard and keep.
The first is compassion.
The second is economy.
The third is humility.

From compassion comes courage.
From economy, comes the means to be generous.
From humility comes responsible leadership.

Today, men have discarded compassion in order to be bold.
They have abandoned economy in order to be big spenders.
They have rejected humility in order to be first.

This is the road to death.

Fantasies, pg. 132

The fearful fantasies we have inherited have conditioned us to believe that we need to be protected from the natural world, Better Living Through Heavy Industry, and so on. In reality, as anyone ought to be able to see by now, the natural world needs to be protected from us. Its wisdom needs to be recognized, respected, and understood by us, and not merely viewed through the distorted lenses of our illusions about it. As Sir Arthur Conan Doyle cautioned, through his character.

"One's ideas must be as broad as Nature if they are to interpret Nature," and "When one tries to rise above Nature one is liable to fall below it."

Live, But Live Well, pg. 155

Taoism is not the reject-the-physical-world theory of living that some scholars (and a few Taoists) would have others believe. Even Lao-tse, the most reclusive of Taoist writers, wrote, "Honor all under Heaven as your body." To a Taoist, a reject-the-physical-world approach would be an extremist absurdity, impossible to live without dying. Instead, a Taoist might say: Carefully observe the natural laws in operation in the world around you, and live by them. From following them, you will learn the morality of modesty, moderation, compassion, and consideration (not just one society's rules and regulations), the wisdom of seeing things as they are (not of merely collecting "facts" about them) and the happiness of being in harmony, with the Way (which has nothing to do with self-righteous "spiritual" obsessions and fanaticism). And you will live lightly, spontaneously, and effortlessly.

Illusions, pg. 109

We will begin our examination of illusions with a narrative concerning the Perception of illusions, which show that It All Depends on How One Looks at Things. The first is by the Tao writer Lieh-tse:

"A man noticed that his axe was missing. Then he saw the neighbor's son pass by. The boy looked like a thief, walked like a thief, behaved like a thief. Later that day, the man found his axe where he had left it the day before. The next time he saw the neighbor's son, the boy looked, walked, and behaved like an honest, ordinary boy."

The Samurai's Late Supper, pg. 96

A certain samurai had a reputation for hot-tempered behavior. A Zen master known for his excellent cooking, decided that the warrior needed to be taught a lesson before he became any more dangerous. He invited the samurai to dinner.

The samurai arrived at the appointed time. Zen master told him to make himself comfortable while he finished preparing the food. A long time passed. The samurai waited impatiently. After a while, he called out: "Zen Master-have you forgotten me?"

The Zen master came out of the kitchen. "I am very sorry," he said. "Dinner is taking longer to prepare than I had thought." He went back to the kitchen.

A long time passed. The samurai sat, growing hungrier by the minute. At last he called out, a little softer this time: "Zen Master-please. When will my dinner be served?"

The Zen master came out of the kitchen. "I am truly sorry. There has been a further delay. It won't be much longer." He went back to the kitchen.

A long time passed. Finally, the samurai couldn't endure the waiting any longer. He rose to his feet, chagrined and ravenously hungry. Just then, the Zen master entered the room with a tray of food. First he served miso shiru (soybean soup).

The samurai gratefully drank the soybean soup up, enchanted by its flavor. "Oh, Zen Master," he exclaimed, "this is the finest miso shiru I have ever tasted! You truly deserve your reputation as an expert cook!"

"It's nothing," replied the Zen master, modestly. "Only miso shiru."

The samurai set down his empty bowl. "Truly magical soup! What secret spices did you use to bring out the flavor?"

"Nothing special," the Zen master replied.

"No, no I insist. The soup is extraordinarily delicious!"

"Well, there is one thing

"I knew it!" exclaimed the samurai, eagerly leaning forward. "There had to be something to make it taste so good! Tell me-what is it?"

The Zen master softly spoke: "It took time," he said.

Gospel According to Zen

Editor's Note: This collection of sayings was taken from a book called *The Gospel According to Zen: Beyond the Death of God* edited by Robert Sohl in 1970. I highly recommend the book to you.

Three Sayings of Jesus

Jesus said to his disciples: Make comparisons; tell me what I am like.

Simon Peter said to him: You are like a just angel.

Matthew said to him: You are like a wise philosopher.

Thomas said to him: Master, my mouth will in no way endure my saying what you are like.

Jesus said: I am not your master.

Jesus said: Let him who seeks not cease his seeking until he find;

and when he find, he will be troubled,

and if he is troubled, he will marvel,

and will be a king over All.

Jesus said:

I m the light which is over everything.

I am the All;

from me the All has gone forth,

and to me the All has returned.

Split wood: I am there.

Lift up the stone, and you will find me there.

Gasán and the Bible

A university student while visiting Gasán asked him: "Have you ever read the Christian Bible?" "No, read it to me," said Gasán.

The student opened the Bible and read from St. Matthew: "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these... Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself."

Gasán said: "Whoever uttered those words I consider an enlightened man."

The student continued reading: "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Gasán remarked: "That is excellent. Whoever said that is not far from Buddhahood."

Stringless Harps

Men know how to read printed books, they do not know how to read the unprinted ones. They can play on a stringed harp, but not on a stringless one. Applying themselves to the superficial instead of the profound, how should they understand music or poetry?

Eat when you are Hungry

The Zen sect says, "When you are hungry, eat; when you are weary, sleep." Poetry aims at the description in common language of beautiful scenery. The sublime is contained in the ordinary, the hardest in the easiest. What is self-conscious and ulterior is far from the truth; what is mindless is near.

Sporting Fishes

If your heart is without stormy waves, everywhere are blue mountains and green trees. If our real nature is creative like nature itself, wherever we may be, we see that all things are free like sporting fishes and circling kites.

The Empty Boat

Suppose a boat is crossing a river and another boat, an empty one, is about to collide with it. Even an irritable man would not lose his temper. But suppose there was someone in the second boat. Then the occupant of the first would shout to him to keep clear. And if he did not hear the first time, nor even when called to three times, bad language would inevitably follow. In the first case there was no anger, in the second there was because in the first case the boat was empty, in the second it was occupied. And so it is with man. If he could only pass empty through life, who would be able to injure him?

Three in the Morning

What is meant by "Three in the Morning"? In Sung there was a keeper of monkeys. Bad times came and he was obliged to tell them that he must reduce their ration of nuts. "It will be three in the morning and four in the evening," he said. The monkeys were furious. "Very well then," he said, "you shall have four in the morning and three in the evening." The monkeys accepted with delight.

Zen Archery

One day Heiko Sensei led his student, Ito, up to the top of a cliff. The waves crashed against the base of the cliff, several hundred feet below. Heiko took up a bow and set up a target 50 yards away.

"Let's have a contest," he told the student.

Ito fired an arrow and hit the red bull's-eye on the target.

"Not bad," the Master replied. Heiko Sensei took the bow and then fired an arrow into sky as high as it could go and it landed hundreds of yards away in the ocean. He exclaimed loudly, "Bull's-eye!"

Meshing Nets

"As a net is made up of a series of ties, so everything in this world is connected by a series of ties. If anyone thinks that the mesh of a net is an independent, isolated thing, he is mistaken. It is called a net because it is made up of a series of interconnected meshes, and each mesh has its place and responsibility in relation to other meshes." -The Buddha

The Butterflies of Chuang Tzu

Editor's Note: I used Burton Watson's translations found in *Chuang Tzu: The Basic Writings* published by Columbia University Press in 1964. Chuang Tzu was a Taoist contemporary of Confucianist Mencius and lived in the 4th Century before the Common Era. The central themes of his writings are freedom, the pointlessness of words and a Zen-like humor.

The Dream

Once Chuang Chou dreamt that he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was Chuang Chou. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Chuang Chou. But he didn't know if he was Chuang Chou who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Chuang Chou.

What is Acceptable?

What is acceptable we call acceptable; what is unacceptable we call unacceptable. A road is made by people walking on it, and thusly things are so because they are called so. What makes them so? Making them so makes them so. What makes them not so? Making them not so makes them not so. Things all must have that which is so and things all must have that which is acceptable. There is nothing that is not so, nothing that is not acceptable.

The Argument

Suppose you and I have had an argument. If you have beaten me instead of my beating you, then are you necessarily right and am I necessarily wrong? If I have beaten you instead of your beating me, then am I necessarily right and are you necessarily wrong? Is one of us right and the other wrong? Are both of us right or are both of us wrong? If you and I don't know the answer, then other people are bound to be even more in the dark. Whom shall we get to decide what is right? Shall we get someone who agrees with you to decide? But if he already agrees with you, how can he decide fairly? Shall we get someone who agrees with me? But if he already agrees with me, how can he decide? Shall we get someone who disagrees with both of us? But if he already disagrees with both of us, how can he decide? Shall we get someone who agrees with both of us? But if he already agrees with both of us, how can he decide? Obviously, then, neither you nor I nor anyone else can know the answer. Shall we wait for still another person?

But waiting for one shifting voice to pass judgment on another is the same as waiting for none of them. Harmonize them all with the Heavenly Equality, leave them to their endless changes, and so live out your years. What do I mean by harmonizing them with the Heavenly Equality? Right is not right; so is not so. If right were really right, it would differ so clearly from not right that there would be no need for argument. If so were really so, it would differ so clearly from not so that there would be no need for argument. Forget the years; forget distinctions. Leap into the boundless and make it your home!

Happy Fish

Chuang Tzu and Hui Tzu were strolling along the dam of the Hao River when Chuang Tzu said, "See how the minnows come out and dart around where they please! That's what fish really enjoy!"

Hui Tzu said, "You're not a fish, so how do you know what fish enjoy?"

Chuang Tzu said, "You're not I, so how do you know I don't know what fish enjoy?"

Hui Tzu said, "I'm not you, so I certainly don't know what you know. On the other hand, you're certainly not a fish, so that still proves you don't know what fish enjoy!"

Chuang Tzu said, "Let's go back to your original question, please. You asked me how I know what fish enjoy, so you already knew I knew it when you asked the question. I know it by standing here beside the Hao River."

Seven Openings

The emperor of the South Sea was called Shu (Brief), the emperor of the North Sea was called Hu (Sudden), and the emperor of the central region was called Hun-tun (Chaos). Shu and Hu from time to time came together for a meeting in the territory of Hun-tun, and Hun-tun treated them very generously. Shu and Hu discussed how they could repay his kindness. "All men," they said, "have seven openings in their head so they can see, hear, eat, and breathe. But Hun-tun alone doesn't have any. Let's try boring him some!"

Every day they bored another hole, and on the seventh day Hun-tun died.

Look Under Your Feet

Master Tung-Kuo asked Chuang Tzu, "This thing called the Way-where does it exist?"

Chuang Tzu said, "There's no place it doesn't exist."

"Come," said Master Tung-kuo, "you must be more specific!"

"It is in the ant."

"As low a thing as that?"

"It is in the panic grass."

"But that is lower still!"

"It is in the tiles and shards."

"How can it be so low?"

"It is in the piss and shit."

The Sacred Tortoise

Once, when Chuang Tzu was fishing in the P'u River, the kind of Ch'u sent two officials to go and announce to him: "I would like to trouble you with the administration of my realm."

Chuang Tzu held on to the fishing pole and, without turning his head, said, "I have heard that there is a sacred tortoise in Ch'u that has been dead for three thousand years. The king keeps it wrapped in cloth and boxed, and stores it in the ancestral temple. Now would you this tortoise rather be dead and have its bone left behind and honored? Or would it rather be alive and dragging its tail in the mud?"

It would rather be alive and dragging its tail in the mud," said the two officials.

Chuang Tzu said, "Go away! I'll drag my tail in the mud!"

The Frog in the Well

Have you ever heard about the frog in the caved-in well? He said to the great turtle of the Eastern Sea, "What fun I have! I come out and hop around the railing of the well, or I go back in and take a rest in the wall where a tile has fallen out. When I dive into the water, I let it hold me up under the armpits and support my chin, and when I slip about in the mud, I bury my feet in it and let it come up over my ankles. I look around at the mosquito larvae and the crab and polliwogs and I see that none of them can match me. To have complete command of the water of one whole valley and to monopolize all the joys of a caved-in well, this is the best there is! Why don't you come some time and see for yourself?"

But before the great turtle of the Eastern Sea had even gotten his left foot in the well his right knee was already wedged fast. He backed out and withdrew a little, and then began to describe the sea. "A distance of a thousand li cannot indicate its greatness; a depth of a thousand fathoms cannot express how deep it is. In the time of Yu there were floods for nine years out of ten, and yet its waters never rose. In the time of T'ang there were droughts for seven years out of eight, and yet its shores never receded. Never to alter or shift, whether for an instant or an eternity; never to advance or recede, whether the quantity of water flowing in is great or small; this is the great delight of the Eastern Sea!"

When the frog in the caved-in well heard this, he was completely at a loss.

The Caged Sea-bird

Once a sea bird alighted in the suburbs of the Lu capital. The marquis of Lu escorted it to the ancestral temple, where he entertained it, performing the Nine Shao music for it to listen to and presenting it with the meat of the T'ai-lao sacrifice to feast on. But the bird only looked dazed and forlorn, refusing to eat a single slice of meat or drink a cup of wine, and in three days it was dead. This is to try to nourish a bird with what would nourish you instead of what would nourish a bird. If you want to nourish a bird with what nourishes a bird, then you should let it roost in the deep forest, play among the banks and islands, float on the rivers and lakes, eat mudfish and minnows, follow the rest of the flock in flight and rest, and live any way it chooses. A bird hates to hear even the sound of human voices, much less all that hubbub and to-do. Try performing the Hsien-ch'ih and Nine Shao music in the wilds around Lake Tung-t'ing. When the birds hear it they will fly off, when the animals hear it they will run away, when the fish hear it they will dive to the bottom. Only the people who hear it will gather around to listen. Fish live in water and thrive, but if men tried to live in water they would die. Creatures differ because they have different likes and dislikes. Therefore the former sages never required the same ability from all creatures or made them all do the same thing. Names should stop when they have expressed reality, concepts of right should be founded on what is suitable. This is what it means to have command of reason and good fortune to support you.

Swimming Boatmen

Yen Yuan said to Confucius, "I crossed the gulf at Goblet Deeps and the ferryman handled the boat with supernatural skill. I asked him, 'Can a person learn how to handle a boat?' and he replied, 'Certainly. A good swimmer has acquired his ability through repeated practice. And, if a man can swim under water, he may never have seen a boat before and still he'll know how to

handle it! I asked him what he meant by that, but he wouldn't tell me. May I venture to ask you what it means?"

Confucius said, "A good swimmer has acquired his ability through repeated practice, that means he's forgotten the water. If a man can swim under water, he may never have seen a boat before and still he'll know how to handle it. That's because he sees the water as so much dry land, and regards the capsizing of a boat as he would the overturning of a cart. The ten thousand things may all be capsizing and turning over at the same time right in front of him and it can't get at him and affect what's inside; so where could he go and not be at ease.

"When you're betting for tiles in an archery contest, you shoot with skill. When you're betting for fancy belt buckles, you worry about your aim. And when you're betting for real gold, you're a nervous wreck. Your skill is the same in all three cases, but because one prize means more to you than another, you let outside considerations weigh on your mind. He who looks too hard at the outside gets clumsy on the inside."

Old Man Falls into Water

Confucius was seeing the sights at Lu-liang, where the water falls from a height of thirty fathoms and races and boils along for forty li, so swift that no fish or other water creature can swim in it. He saw a man fall into the water and, supposing that the man was in some kind of trouble and intended to end his life, he ordered his disciples to line up on the bank and pull the man out. But after the man had gone a couple of hundred paces, he came out of the water and began strolling along the base on the embankment, his hair streaming down, singing a song. Confucius ran after him and said, "At first I thought you were a ghost, but now I see you're a man. May I ask if you have some special way of staying afloat in the water?"

The old man replied, "I have no way. I began with what I was used to, grew up with my nature, and let things come to completion with fate. I go under with the swirls and come out with the eddies, following along the way the water goes and never thinking about myself. That's how I can stay afloat."

Is God a Taoist?

by Raymond M. Smullyan in *The Tao is Silent* 1977 publ. by Harper Collins

Mortal: And therefore, O God, I pray thee, if thou hast one ounce of mercy for this thy suffering creature, absolve me of having to have free will!

God: You reject the greatest gift I have given thee?

Mortal: How can you call that which was forced on me a gift? I have free will, but not of my own choice. I have never freely chosen to have free will. I have to have free will, whether I like it or not!

God: Why would you wish not to have free will?

Mortal: Because free will means moral responsibility, and moral responsibility is more than I can bear!

God: Why do you find moral responsibility so unbearable?

Mortal: Why? I honestly can't analyze why; all I know is that I do.

God: All right, in that case suppose I absolve you from all moral responsibility but leave you still with free will. Will this be satisfactory?

Mortal: (after a pause) No, I am afraid not.

God: Ah, just as I thought! So moral responsibility is not the only aspect of free will to which you object. What else about free will is bothering you?

Mortal: With free will I am capable of sinning, and I don't want to sin!

God: If you don't want to sin, then why do you?

Mortal: Good God! I don't know why I sin, I just do! Evil temptations come along, and try as I can, I cannot resist them.

God: If it is really true that you cannot resist them, then you are not sinning of your own free will and hence (at least according to me) not sinning at all.

Mortal: No, no! I keep feeling that if only I tried harder I could avoid sinning. I understand that the will is infinite. If one wholeheartedly wills not to sin, then one won't.

God: Well now, you should know. Do you try as hard as you can to avoid sinning or don't you?

Mortal: I honestly don't know! At the time, I feel I am trying as hard as I can, but in retrospect, I am worried that maybe I didn't!

God: So in other words, you don't really know whether or not you have been sinning. So the possibility is open that you haven't been sinning at all!

Mortal: Of course this possibility is open, but maybe I have been sinning, and this thought is what so frightens me!

God: Why does the thought of your sinning frighten you?

Mortal: I don't know why! For one thing, you do have a reputation for meting out rather gruesome punishments in the afterlife!

God: Oh, that's what's bothering you! Why didn't you say so in the first place instead of all this peripheral talk about free will and responsibility? Why didn't you simply request me not to punish you for any of your sins?

Mortal: I think I am realistic enough to know that you would hardly grant such a request!

God: You don't say! You have a realistic knowledge of what requests I will grant, eh? Well, I'll tell you what I'm going to do! I will grant you a very, very special dispensation to sin as much as you like, and I give you my divine word of honor that I will never punish you for it in the least. Agreed?

Mortal: (in great terror) No, no, don't do that!

God: Why not? Don't you trust my divine word?

Mortal: Of course I do! But don't you see, I don't want to sin! I have an utter abhorrence of sinning, quite apart from any punishments it may entail.

God: In that case, I'll go you one better. I'll remove your abhorrence of sinning. Here is a magic pill! Just swallow it, and you will lose all abhorrence of sinning. You will joyfully and merrily sin away, you will have no regrets, no abhorrence and I still promise you will never be punished by me, or yourself, or by any source whatever. You will be blissful for all eternity. So here is the pill!

Mortal: No, no!

God: Are you not being irrational? I am even removing your abhorrence of sin, which is your last obstacle.

Mortal: I still won't take it!

God: Why not?

Mortal: I believe that the pill will indeed remove my future abhorrence for sin, but my present abhorrence is enough to prevent me from being willing to take it.

God: I command you to take it!

Mortal: I refuse!

God: What, you refuse of your own free will?

Mortal: Yes!

God: So it seems that your free will comes in pretty handy, doesn't it?

Mortal: I don't understand!

God: Are you not glad now that you have free will to refuse such a ghastly offer? How would you like it if I forced you to take this pill, whether you wanted it or not?

Mortal: No, no! Please don't!

God: Of course I won't; I'm just trying to illustrate a point. All right, let me put it this way. Instead of forcing you to take the pill, suppose I grant your original prayer of removing your free will, but with the understanding that the moment you are no longer free, then you will take the pill.

Mortal: Once my will is gone, how could I possibly choose to take the pill?

God: I did not say you would choose it; I merely said you would take it. You would act, let us say, according to purely deterministic law which are such that you would as a matter of fact take it.

Mortal: I still refuse.

God: So you refuse my offer to remove your free will. This is rather different from your original prayer, isn't it?

Mortal: Now I see what you are up to. Your argument is ingenious, but I'm not sure it is really correct. There are some points we will have to go over again.

God: Certainly.

Mortal: There are two things you said which seem contradictory to me. First you said that one cannot sin unless one does so of one's own free will. But then you said you would give me a pill, which would deprive me of my own free will, and then I could sin as much as I like. But if I no longer had free will, then, according to your first statement, how could I be capable of sinning?

God: You are confusing two separate parts of our conversation. I never said the pill would deprive you of your free will, but only that it would remove your abhorrence of sinning.

Mortal: I'm afraid I'm a bit confused.

God: All right, then, let us make a fresh start. Suppose I agree to remove your free will, but with the understanding that you will then commit an enormous number of acts which you now regard as sinful. Technically speaking, you will not then be sinning since you will not be doing these acts of your own free will. And these acts will carry no moral responsibility, nor moral culpability, nor any punishment whatsoever. Nevertheless, these acts will all be of the type which you presently regard as sinful; they will all have this quality which you presently regard as

sinful; they will all have this quality which you presently feel as abhorrent, but your abhorrence will disappear; so you will not then feel abhorrence towards these acts.

Mortal: No, but I have present abhorrence toward the acts, and this present abhorrence is sufficient to prevent me from accepting your proposal.

God: Hm! So let me get this absolutely straight. I take it you no longer wish me to remove your free will.

Mortal: (reluctantly) No, I guess not.

God: All right, I agree not to. But I am still not exactly clear as to why you now no longer wish to be rid of your free will. Please tell me again.

Mortal: Because, as you have told me, without free will I would sin even more than I do now.

God: But I have already told you that without free will you cannot sin.

Mortal: But if I choose now to be rid of free will, then all my subsequent evil actions will be sins, not of the future, but of the present moment in which I choose not to have free will.

God: Sounds like you are pretty badly trapped, doesn't it?

Mortal: Of course I am trapped! You have placed me in a hideous double bind! Now whatever I do is wrong. If I retain free will, I will continue to sin, and if I abandon free will (with your help, of course), I will now be sinning in so doing.

God: But by the same token, you place me in a double bind. I am willing to leave you free will or remove it as you choose, but neither alternative satisfies you. I wish to help you, but it seems I cannot.

Mortal: True!

God: But since it is not my fault, why are still angry with me?

Mortal: For having placed me in such a horrible predicament in the first place!

God: But, according to you, there is nothing satisfactory I could have done.

Mortal: You mean there is nothing satisfactory you can now do, but that does not mean that there is nothing you could have done.

God: Why? What could I have done?

Mortal: Obviously you should never have given me free will in the first place. Now that you have given it to me, it is too late, anything I do will be bad. But you should never have given it to me in the first place!

God: Oh, that's it! Why would it have been better had I never given it to you?

Mortal: Because then I never would have been capable of sinning at all.

God: Well, I'm always glad to learn from my mistakes.

Mortal: What!

God: I know, that sound sort of self-blasphemous, doesn't it? It almost involves a logical paradox! On the one hand, as you have been taught, it is morally wrong for any sentient being to claim that I am capable of making mistakes. On the other hand, I have the right to do anything. But I am also a sentient being. So the question is, Do I or do I not have the right claim that I am capable of making mistakes?

Mortal: That is a bad joke! One of your premises is simply false. I have not been taught that it is wrong for any sentient being to doubt your omniscience, but only for a mortal to doubt it. But since you are not mortal, then you are obviously free from this injunction.

God: Good, so you realize this on a rational level. Nevertheless, you did appear shocked when I said, "I am always glad to learn from my mistakes."

Mortal: Of course I was shocked. I was shocked not by your self-blasphemy (as you jokingly call it), not by the fact that you had no right to say it, but just by the fact that you did say it, since I have been taught that as a matter of fact you don't make

mistakes. So I was amazed that you claimed that it is possible for you to make mistakes.

God: I have not claimed that it is possible. All I am saying is that if I make mistakes, I will be happy to learn from them. But this says nothing about whether the if has or ever can be realized.

Mortal: Let's please stop quibbling about this point. Do you or do you not admit it was a mistake to have given me free will?

God: Well, now this is precisely what I propose we should investigate. Let me review your present predicament. You don't want to have free will because with free will you can sin, and you don't want to sin. (Though I find this puzzling; in a way you must want to sin, or else you wouldn't. But let this pass for now.) On the other hand, if you agreed to give up free will, then you would now be responsible for the acts of the future. Ergo, I should never have given you free will in the first place.

Mortal: Exactly!

God: I understand exactly how you feel. Many mortals -even some theologians - have complained that I have been unfair in that it was I, not they, who decided that they should have free will, and then I hold them responsible for their actions. In other words, they feel that they are expected to live up to a contract with me, which they never agreed to in the first place.

Mortal: Exactly!

God: As I said, I understand this feeling perfectly. And I can appreciate the justice of the complaint. But the complaint only arises from an unrealistic understanding of the true issues involved. I am about to enlighten you as to what these are, and I think the results will surprise you! But instead of telling you outright, I shall continue to use the Socratic method.

To repeat, you regret that I ever gave you free will. I claim that when you see the true ramifications you will no longer have this regret. To prove my point, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I am about to create a new universe, a new space-time continuum. In this new universe will be born a mortal just like you, for all practical purposes, we might say that you will be reborn. Now, I can give this new mortal, this new you, free will or not. What would you like me to do?

Mortal: (in great relief): Oh, please! Spare him from having to have free will!

God: All right, I'll do as you say. But you do realize that this new you without free will, will commit all sorts of horrible acts.

Mortal: But they will not be sins since he will have no free will.

God: Whether you call them sins or not, the fact remains that they will be horrible acts in the sense that they will cause great pain to many sentient beings.

Mortal: (after a pause) Good God, you have trapped me again! Always the same game! If I now give you the go-ahead to create this new creature with no free will who will nevertheless commit atrocious acts, then true enough he will not be sinning, but I again will be the sinner to sanction this.

God: In that case, I'll go you one better! Here, I have already decided whether to create this new you with free will or not. Now, I am writing my decision on this piece of paper and I won't show it to you until later. But my decision is now made and is absolutely irrevocable. There is nothing you can possibly do to alter it; you have no responsibility in the matter. Now, what I wish to know is this: Which way do you hope I have decided? Remember now, the responsibility for the decision falls entirely on my shoulders, not yours. SO you can tell me perfectly honestly and without any fear, which way do you hope I have decided?

Mortal: (after a very long pause) I hope you have decided to give him free will.

God: Most interesting! I have removed your last obstacle! If I do not give him free will, then no sin is to be imputed to anybody. So why do you hope I will give him free will?

Mortal: Because sin or no sin, the important point is that if you do not give him free will, then (at least according to what you have said) he will go around hurting people, and I don't want to see people hurt.

God: (with an infinite sigh of relief) At last! At last you see the real point!

Mortal: What point is that?

God: That sinning is not the real issue! The important thing is that people as well as other sentient beings don't get hurt!

Mortal: You sound like a utilitarian!

God: I am a utilitarian!

Mortal: What!

God: Whats or no whats, I am a utilitarian. Not a Unitarian, mind you, but a utilitarian.

Mortal: I just can't believe it!

God: Yes, I know, your religious training has taught you otherwise. You have probably thought of me more like a Kantian than a utilitarian, but your training was simply wrong.

Mortal: You leave me speechless!

God: I leave you speechless, do I? Well that is perhaps not too bad a thing, you have a tendency to speak too much as it is. Seriously, though, why do you think I ever did give you free will in the first place?

Mortal: Why did you? I never have thought much about why you did; all I have been arguing for is that you shouldn't have! But why did you? I guess all I can think of is the standard religious explanation: Without free will, one is not capable of meriting either salvation or damnation. So without free will, we could not earn the right to eternal life.

God: Most interesting! I have eternal life; do you think I have ever done anything to merit it?

Mortal: Of course not! With you it is different. You are already so good and perfect (at least allegedly) that it is not necessary for you to merit eternal life.

God: Really now? That puts me in a rather enviable position, doesn't it?

Mortal: I don't think I understand you.

God: Here I am eternally blissful without ever having to suffer or make sacrifices or struggle against evil temptations or anything like that. Without any of that type of "merit," I enjoy blissful eternal existence. By contrast, you poor mortals have to sweat and suffer and have all sorts of horrible conflicts about morality, and all for what? You don't even know whether I really exist or not, or if there really is any afterlife, or if there is, where you come into the picture. No matter how much you try to placate me by being "good," you never have any real assurance that your "best" is good enough for me, and hence you have no real security in obtaining salvation. Just think of it! I already have the equivalent of "salvation" and have never had to go through this infinitely lugubrious process of earning it. Don't you ever envy me for this?

Mortal: But it is blasphemous to envy you!

God: Oh come off it! You're not now talking to your Sunday school teacher, you are talking to me. Blasphemous or not, the important question is not whether you have the right to be envious of me but whether you are. Are you?

Mortal: Of course I am!

God: Good! Under your present worldview, you sure should be most envious of me. But I think with a more realistic world-view, you no longer will be. So you really have swallowed the idea which has been taught you that your life on earth is like an examination period and that the purpose of providing you with free will is to test you, to see if you merit blissful eternal life. But what puzzles me is this: If you really believe I am as good and benevolent as I am cracked up to be, why should I require people to merit things like happiness and eternal life? Why

should I not grant such things to everyone regardless of whether or not he deserves them?...

God: [But} we have gotten sidetracked as it is, and I would like to return to the question of what you believed my purpose to be in giving you free will. Your first idea of my giving you free will in order to test whether you merit salvation or not may appeal to moralists, but the idea is quite hideous to me. You cannot think of any nicer reason, any more humane reason, why I gave you free will?

Mortal: Well now, I once asked this question to an Orthodox rabbi. He told me that with the way we are constituted, it is simply not possible for us to enjoy salvation unless we feel we have earned it. And to earn it, we of course need free will.

God: That explanation is indeed much nicer than your former but still is far from correct. According to Orthodox Judaism, I created angels, and they have no free will. They are in actual sight of me and are so completely attracted by goodness that they never have even the slightest temptation towards evil. They really have no choice in the matter. Yet they are eternally happy even though they have never earned it. So if your rabbi's explanation were correct, why wouldn't I have simply created only angels rather than mortals?

Mortal: Beats me! Why didn't you?

God: Because the explanation is simply not correct. In the first place, I have never created any ready-made angels. All sentient beings ultimately approach the state, which might be called "angelhood." But just as the race of human beings is in a certain stage of biologic evolution, so angels are simply the end result of a process of Cosmic Evolution. The only difference between the so-called saint and the so-called sinner is that the former is vastly older than the latter. Unfortunately it takes countless life cycles to learn what is perhaps the most important fact of the universe, evil is simply painful. All the arguments of the moralist, all of the alleged reasons why people shouldn't commit evil acts, simply pale into insignificance in light of the one basic truth that evil is suffering.

No, my dear friend, I am not a moralist. I am wholly a utilitarian. That I should have been conceived in the role of a moralist is one of the great tragedies of the human race. My role in the scheme of things (if one can use this misleading expression) is neither to punish nor reward, but to aid the process by which all sentient beings achieve ultimate perfection....

Mortal: Anyway, putting all these pieces together, it occurs to me that the only reason you gave free will is because of your belief that with free will, people will tend to hurt each other, and themselves, less than without free will.

God: Bravo! That is by far the best reason you have yet given! I can assure you that had I chosen to give free will that would have been my very reason for so choosing.

Mortal: What! You mean to say you did not choose to give us free will?

God: My dear fellow, I could no more choose to give you free will than I could choose to make an equilateral triangle equiangular in the first place, but having chosen to make one, I would then have no choice but to make it equiangular.

Mortal: I thought you could do anything!

God: Only things which are logically impossible. As St. Thomas said, "It is a sin to regard the fact that God cannot do the impossible, as a limitation on His powers." I agree, except that in place of using his word sin I would use the term error.

Mortal: Anyhow, I am still puzzled by your implication that you did not choose to give me free will.

God: Well, it's high time I inform you that the entire discussion, from the very beginning, has been based on one monstrous fallacy! We have been talking purely on a moral level, you originally complained that I gave you free will, and raised the

whole question as to whether I should have. It never once occurred to you that I had absolutely no choice in the matter.

Mortal: I am still in the dark!

God: Absolutely! Because you are only able to look at it through the eyes of a moralist. The more fundamental metaphysical aspects of the question you never even considered.

Mortal: I still do not see what you are driving at.

God: Before you requested me to remove your free will, shouldn't your first question have been whether as a matter of fact you do have free will?

Mortal: That I simply took for granted.

God: But why should you?

Mortal: I don't know. Do I have free will?

God: Yes.

Mortal: Then why did you say, I shouldn't have taken it for granted?

God: Because you shouldn't. Just because something happens to be true, it does not follow that it should be taken for granted.

Mortal: Anyway, it is reassuring to know that my natural intuition about having free will is correct. Sometimes I have been worried that determinists are correct.

God: They are correct.

Mortal: Wait a minute now, do I have free will or don't I?

God: I already told you you do. But that does not mean that determinism is incorrect.

Mortal: Well, are my acts determined by the laws of nature or aren't they?

God: The word determined here is subtly but powerfully misleading and has contributed so much to the confusions of the free will versus determinism controversies. Your acts are certainly in accordance with the laws of nature, but to say they are determined by the laws of nature creates a totally misleading psychological image which is that your will could somehow be in conflict with the laws of nature and that the latter is somehow more powerful than you, and could "determine" your acts whether you like it or not. But it is simply impossible for your will to ever conflict with natural law. You and natural law are really one and the same.

Mortal: What do you mean that I cannot conflict with nature? Suppose I were to become very stubborn, and I determined not to obey the laws of nature. What could stop me? If I became sufficiently stubborn, even you could not stop me!

God: You are absolutely right! I certainly could not stop you. Nothing could stop you. But there is no need to stop you, because you could not even start! As Goethe very beautifully expressed it, "In trying to oppose Nature, we are in the very process of doing so, acting according to the laws of nature!" Don't you see, that the so-called "laws of nature" are nothing more than a description of how in fact you and other beings do act. They are merely a description of how you act, not a prescription of how you should act, not a power or force which compels or determines your acts. To be valid a law of nature must take into account how in fact you do act, or, if you like, how you choose to act.

Mortal: So you really claim that I am incapable of determining to act against natural laws?

God: It is interesting that you have twice now used the phrase "determined to act" instead of "chosen to act." This identification is quite common. Often one uses the statement "I am determined to do this" synonymously with "I have chosen to do this." This very psychological identification should reveal that determinism and choice are much closer than they might appear. Of course, you might well say that the doctrine of free will says that it is you who are doing the determining, whereas the doctrine of determinism appears to say that your acts are determined by something apparently outside you. But the confusion is largely caused by your bifurcation of reality into the

"you" and the "not you." Really now, just where do you leave off and the rest of the universe begin? Or where does the rest of the universe leave off and you begin? Once you can see the so-called "you" and the so-called "nature" as a continuous whole, then you can never again be bothered by such questions as whether it is you who are controlling nature or nature who is controlling you. Thus the muddle of free will versus determinism will vanish. If I may use a crude analogy, imagine two bodies moving toward each other by virtue of gravitational attraction. Each body, if sentient, might wonder whether it is he or the other fellow who is exerting the "force." In a way it is both, in a way it is neither. It is best to say that it is both, in a way it is neither. It is best to say that the configuration of the two is crucial.

Mortal: You said a short while ago that our whole discussion was based on a monstrous fallacy. You still have not told me what this fallacy is.

God: Why the idea that I could possibly have created you without free will! You acted as if this were a genuine possibility, and wondered why I did not choose it! It never occurred to you that a sentient being without free will is no more conceivable than a physical object, which exerts no gravitational attraction. (There is, incidentally, more analogy than you realize between a physical object exerting gravitational attraction and a sentient being exerting free will!) Can you honestly even imagine a conscious being without free will? What on earth could it be like? I think that one thing in your life that has so misled you is your having been told that I gave man the gift of free will. As if I first created man, and then as an afterthought endowed him with the extra property of free will. Maybe you think I have some sort of "paint brush" with which I daub some creatures with free will, and not others. No, free will is not an "extra"; it is part and parcel of the very essence of consciousness. A conscious being without free will is simply a metaphysical absurdity..

Scharding: I guess the only remaining question is why God created anything in the first place? Probably because God loved the idea of sentience as much as God loves God's own sentience. But would God not have created sentient creatures once God thought of even their possible existence? God loves even the smallest most imperfect creatures.

Some Christian Thoughts

The Bird

John Shea *Mystery: An unauthorized biography of God*, pg. 26.

The following passage starts the Dutch Catechism:

"In A.D. 627 the monk Paulinus visited King Edwin in northern England to persuade him to accept Christianity. He hesitated and decided to summon his advisers. At the meeting one of them stood up and said: 'Your majesty, when you sit at table with your lords and vassals, in the winter when the fire burns warm and bright on the hearth and the storm is snowing outside, bringing the snow and the rain, it happens of a sudden that a little bird flies into the hall. It comes in at one door and flies out through the other. For the few moments that it is inside the hall, it does not feel the cold, but as soon as it leaves your sight, it returns to the dark of winter. It seems to me that the life of man is much the same. We do not know what went before and we do not know what follows. If the new doctrine can speak to us surely of these things, it is well for us to follow it.'

Revelation

Monika Hellwig *Understanding Catholicism*, pg. 17

When we speak of revelation in a religious sense, we are still using the word. In more or less the same sense of a breakthrough experience in insight, knowing and understanding that takes us by surprise and introduces us to a new dimension of depth and intimacy with the ultimate, the One, the source and foundation and goal of our being. This kind of break through can happen in a number of different ways: in our experiences of nature, in the workings of our own conscience and consciousness, in personal relationships with other people, and in the his-story of the community.

The most basic and universally available kind of revelatory experience in the religious sense is the one associated with an experience of nature. Most of us have at one time or another been flooded by a sense of power, beauty, majesty or mystery at the sight of great mountains, vast sweeps of sky, the immense ocean with its rhythmic waves, the stillness of lakes, the blanketing quiet of forests. Most of us have at some time had a sense of an encompassing providence in spring sunshine, winter snow, autumn's brilliant colors, summer's extravagant abundance of life, the wonder of birth and the balm of sleep. These and so many other experiences, not all joyful ones, offer the opportunity for the revelation and discovery of the all-encompassing power and presences of the One who is greater than we are, prior to us, transcending our ability to grasp, our bountiful host in the world of nature, the silent but welcoming backdrop to all our experiences of life. The Hebrew Scriptures (known to most Christians as the Old Testament) are full of allusions to such experiences, suggesting them as starting points for our prayer that will lead us to deeper encounters with the transcendent, hidden but ever-present God. Such allusions form a constant theme, for instance, in the psalms, Jewish prayers which Christians continued to pray from the earliest Christian times, as indeed Jesus himself did.

Women and Nature

Elizabeth Johnson *Women, Earth and Creator Spirit* pg. 22

Three basic relationships: human beings with nature, among themselves, and with God. In each instance the major classical pattern of relationship is shaped by hierarchical dualism, that is, modeled on the dominance of ruling male elites and the subjugation of what is identified as female, cosmic, or foreign, an underclass with only instrumental value. As the ecological crisis makes crystal clear, the polarization of each pair's terms is nothing short of disastrous in its interconnected effects. Our eyes have been blinded to the sacredness of the earth, which is linked to the exclusion of women from the sphere of the sacred, which is tied to focus on a monarchical, patriarchal idea of God and a consequent forgetting of the Creator Spirit, the life-giver who is intimately related to the Earth.

In the quest for an ecological ethic grounded in religious truth, these three relationships need to be rethought together. But we must be wary of roads that lead to dead-ends. I think it is a Strategic mistake to retain the dualistic way of thinking and hope to make an advance simply by assigning greater value to the repressed "feminine" side of the polarity. This is to keep women, earth, and Spirit in their pre-assigned box, which is a cramped, subordinate place. Even if what has previously been disparaged is now highly appreciated, this strategy does not allow for the fullest flourishing of what is confined to one pole by pre-assigned definition. In truth, women are not any closer to nature than men are. This is a cultural construct. In truth, women are every bit as rational as men, every bit as courageous, every bit as capable of initiative. At the same time, precisely because women have been so identified with nature, our voices at this moment in time can speak out for the value of despised matter, bodies, and nature even as we assert that women's rational and spiritual capacities are equal to those of men. What we search for is a way to undercut the dualism and to construct a new, wholistic design for all of reality built on appreciation of difference in a genuine community. We seek a unifying vision that does not stratify what is distinct into superior-inferior layers but reconciles them in relationships of mutuality. Let us then listen to women's wisdom, discern our kinship with the earth, and remember the Spirit, as we step toward an ecological ethic and spirituality.

Iron in our Blood

Women, Earth and Creator Spirit pg. 34

A crucial insight emerges from this creation story of cosmic and biological evolution. The kinship model of humankind's relation to the world is not just a poetic, good-hearted way of seeing things but the basic truth. We are connected in a most profound way to the universe, having emerged from it. Events in the galaxies produced the iron that makes our blood red and the calcium that makes our bones and teeth white. These and other heavy elements were cooked in the interior of stars and then dispersed when they died to form a second-generation solar system with its planets, on one of which the evolution of life and consciousness followed. In the words of scientist Arthur Peacocks:

" Every atom of iron in our blood would not have been there had it not been produced in some galactic explosion

billions of years ago and eventually condensed to form the iron in the crust of the earth from which we have emerged."

Chemically, humanity is all of a piece with the cosmos. The same is true of our genes. Molecular biology shows that the same four bases make up the DNA of almost all living things. The genetic structure of cells in our bodies is remarkably similar to the cells in other creatures, bacteria, grasses, fish, horses, the great gray whales. We have all evolved from common ancestors and are kin in this shared, unbroken genetic history. To put it more poetically, we human beings as physical organisms carry within ourselves 'the signature of the supernovas and the geology and life history of the Earth.'

Living in the present moment, furthermore, involves us in a continuous exchange of material with the earth and other living creatures. Every time we breathe we take in millions of atoms breathed by the rest of humanity within the last two weeks. In our bodies seven percent of the protein molecules break down each day and have to be rebuilt out of matter from the earth (food) and energy from the sun. Seven percent per day is the statistical measure of our inter dependence. In view of the consistent recycling of the human body, the epidermis of our skin can be likened ecologically to a pond surface, not so much a shell or wall as a place of exchange. In a very real sense the world is our body.

Original Lilith Myth

After the Holy One created the first human being, Adam, God said: "It is not good for Adam to be alone." God created a woman, also from the Earth, and called her Lilith.

They quarreled immediately. She said: "I will not lie below you." He said, "I will not lie below you, but above you. For you are fit to be below me and I above you."

She responded: "We are both equal because we both come from the earth."

Neither listened to the other. When Lilith realized what was happening, she pronounced the Ineffable Name of God and flew off into the air.

Adam rose in prayer before the Creator, saying, "The woman you gave me has fled from me." Immediately the Holy One sent three angels after her.

The holy one said to Adam: "If she wants to return, all the better. If not, she will have to accept that one hundred of her children will die every day."

The angels went after her, finally locating her in the sea, in the powerful waters in which the Egyptians were destined to perish. They told her what God had said, and she did not want to return. (ALPHABET OF BEN SIRA 23A-B)

And God created the human species in God's own image... male and female created God them. (Genesis 1:27)

Scottish Gaelic Poetry

Editor's Note: This collection is from the book *Nuadh Bardachd/ Modern Scottish Gaelic Poetry* (you won't find it in the Library) with collections from many authors with English translations. I have met and talked with these authors while in Scotland.

The Heron

by Sorley Maclean

A pale yellow moon on the skyline,
the heart o the soil without a throb of laughter,
If a chilliness contemptuous
of golden windows in a snaky sea.

It is not the frail beauty of the moon
nor the cold loveliness of the sea
nor the empty tale of the shore's uproar
that seeps through my spirit to-night.

Faintness in strife,
the chin of Death in essence,
cowardice in the heart,
and belief in nothing

A heron can with drooping head
and stood on top of sea-wrack,
she folded her wings close in to her sides
and took stock of all around her.

Alone beside the sea,
like a mind alone in the universe,
her reason like man's
the sum of it how to get a meat

A restless mind seeking,
a more restless flesh returned,
unrest and sleep without a gleam;
music, delirium, and an hour of rapture.

The hour of rapture is the clear hour
that comes from the darkened blind brain,
horizon-breaking to the sight,
a smile affair weather in the illusion.

On the bare stones of the shore,
observing the slipperiness of a calm sea,
listening to the sea's swallowing
and brine rubbing on the stones.

Alone in the vastness of the universe,
though her inaccessible kin are many,
and bursting on her from the gale
the onset of the bright blue god.

I am with you but alone,
looking at the coldness of the level kyle,
listening to the surge on a stony shore
breaking on the bare flagstones of the world.

What is my thought more than the heron's:
the beauty of moon and restless sea,
food and sleep and dream,
brain, flesh, and temptation??

a dream of rapture with one thrust
coming in its season without stint,
without sorrow, without doubt, but one delight,
the straight unbending law of herons.

My dream exercised with sorrow,
broken, awry, with the glitter of temptation,
wounded, with one sparkle, churlish;
brain, heart, and love troubled.

The Great Artist

Ian Smith

In the silence of the wood
where the sun
gilds the winter grass
and everything is still
in the clearing,
I thought of the great artist
so skilled a painter,
so fluent a musician,
the world's chief poet:
I thought that He
also deserved praise,
that He wished to be extolled
for His terrible visions
I will certain, take His picture home
and hang it
beside the Picasso.
The birds will sing their love
in the happiness between us.

Three Random Pieces

Brotherhood

Collected by Donald Morrison, o.d.a.l.

From Faith and Practice of London Yearly Meeting of The Society of Friends:

The life of a religious society consists in something of principles it professes and the outer garments of organization it wears. These things have their own importance: they embody the society to the world, and protect it from the chance and change of circumstance; but the springs of life are deeper, and often escape recognition. They are to be found in the vital union of the society with God and with one another, a union which allows the free flowing through the society of spiritual life which is its strength. Such words as "discipleship," "fellowship," "brotherhood," describe these central springs of religious fellowship....

A Starfish

Anonymous, collected by Scharding

One day a young man was walking along a deserted beach. He saw a frail old man bend over and pick up a starfish and put it back into the receding ocean. He watched for awhile, and to his amazement, the old man picked up one starfish after another and placed it back into the water. The young man walked up to the old man, who was holding a small starfish in his hand, and said,

"Old man, why are you putting starfishes into the ocean."

"They will die on the drying sand unless I put them into the water." he replied.

"But that's silly! There are thousands of beaches in the world and millions of starfish who will die each day. Why should you waste your time on such a meaningless act."

The old man paused, and in reply he tossed the starfish far out into the water. After a while he spoke, "It makes a difference to this one."

The Island with Two Churches

collected by Sam Adams, o.d.a.l., gr., be.

A Welshman was shipwrecked upon a deserted island for twenty years before a rescue party finally discovered him. The Welshman was delighted at his rescue, but wished to show his rescuers all the work that he had done. He had missed civilization greatly, so he had cut down several trees in order to build a village. There was a bank, a theatre, a pub, a hotel, a jail and two churches. When the rescuers saw the two churches they asked him why he had built two churches.

He smugly replied, "You see the one on the left? That's the one I don't go to!"

Wit and Wisdom of Islam

Sufism is a generic Western term for the various mystical orders of the Muslims. It would be too difficult to try to explain them or even to compare them to any other group. Sufis are Sufis. Shelton and I recommend further readings on Sufis by the author Idries Shah. One interesting characteristic about them is that they are known for a sense of humor, often with religious undertones. Two of their most reknowned fool-sages in their jokes are Mulla Nasruddin and Bohlul. Please enjoy these lessons, which are disguised as jokes, that have been collected from throughout the Muslim world. These selections represent only the tip of an iceberg, so if you like these stories then search out further collections.

The Fool and the King

One day, Bohlul walked into court and sat himself down upon the royal throne of King Harun. The entire court was incensed by Bohlul's impudence, so they began to beat him with sticks and to pelt him with stones. Then they dragged him from the throne and threw him out of the palace.

Bohlul dusted himself off and went to talk with King Harun and said, "I only sat on the throne for one minute and the courtiers nearly beat me to death! God have pity on the man who must rule there for his entire life!"

The Breaking

Nasrudin was transporting a great grinding stone to a new site and two other men were helping him to carry it. While transporting it across a treacherous gorge, it slipped and fell a great distance and broke into several pieces.

Nasrudin began to laugh without control and this greatly angered the other two men. "See here now, Nasrudin," they cried, "We have carried that stone a great distance and now it is useless to us. We have wasted a great deal of effort."

"Do not be angry with me," Nasrudin replied, "I was not laughing at our loss, but instead I was rejoicing for the grinding stone. For many years it has been in bondage, busily grinding and turning out flour, when all it had to do to escape was to break!"

The Stink of Greed

At every weekly bazaar, the town's fool was seen pinching his nose next to the merchants' tables. After a while, a townsman asked him why he pinched his nose.

"Because, the bazaar stinks with greed," replied the Fool.

"Then don't sit in the bazaar." instructed the townsman.

"There's no such escape for me, because I'm greedy too." lamented the Fool, "I want to study their ignorant way of life in order to learn from it."

The Claim

A man claiming to be God was taken before the Caliph.

The Caliph told the prisoner, "Last year, someone claiming to be the second coming of the Prophet was executed."

"Serves him right," replied the prisoner, "I hadn't sent him yet."

Names

A certain conqueror said to Nasrudin:

"Mulla, all the great rulers of the past had honorific titles with the name of God in them: there was, for instance, God-Gifted, and God-Accepted, and so on. What would be the best name for me?"

"God Forbid," said Nasrudin.

The Muezzin's Call

One day Mulla was acting as Muezzin and calling the city to morning prayers from the top of a tall minaret. After each vocalization, he would zoom down the stairs and race out into the nearby streets. After doing this several times, a passerby asked him why he did this. Mulla replied, "I am very proud of my calling, and I wish to hear how far my voice can be discerned."

The Drum

A fox was prowling in a forest one day and saw a drum caught up high in a tree. The occasional breeze pushed a tree limb into the drum, making a wonderful sound.

The fox was impressed and thought, "With such a beautiful noise, there must be good innards inside of it to eat."

After the fox had done his work, and had managed to tear open the skin of the drum, he found it empty and only full of air.

The Majesty of the Sea

Regally the waves were hurling themselves upon the rocks, each deep-blue curve crested by whitest foam. Seeing this sight for the first time, Nasrudin was momentarily overwhelmed.

Then he went near to the seashore, took a little water in his cupped hand and tasted it.

"Why," said the Mulla, "to think that something with such pretensions is not worth drinking."

Ambition

Nasrudin was being interviewed for employment in a department store. The personnel manager asked him:

"We like ambitious men here. What sort of a job are you after?"

"All right," said Nasrudin, "I'll have your job."

"Are you mad?!"

"I may well be," said the Mulla, "but is that a necessary qualification?"

The Acquaintance

One day, Mulla Nasruddin was traveling down a rural road when he saw a great host of picnickers having a great feast. Without a word, Mulla walked into the crowd, sat down, and began to eat with these strangers.

One of the picnickers paused in his eating, turned to Mulla, and asked him, "How many do you know here?"

Mulla replied, "I only know the bread, the cheese, the dates and the melons. That is enough."

The Guest

Mulla Nasruddin went to stay at the house of a friend for a few weeks. However by the second day, his host and his hostess began to take a dislike for Nasruddin. They began to plot for an excuse to rid themselves of his company. They devised a scheme in which they would pretend to have a fight and ask Nasruddin to adjudicate a decision in favor of the husband or the wife. After that, the other party would take offense and kick him out of the house, and possibly have him beaten too.

"By Allah who will protect you on the journey that is but one day away," said the host, "Tell us who is in the right, myself or my wife."

"By Allah who will be my protector in this house during these three weeks," replied Mulla, "I don't know."

The Man with a Really Ugly Face

There once was a man with such an ugly face, that few could stand to look at him. Despite this, the ugly man never acted as if he was embarrassed to be seen in public. When asked about his curious boldness, he replied, "I have never had to see my own face, because it is fixed to my head. Therefore, let the others worry about it."

The Mirror

A Fool was walking down a road when he saw a valuable silver mirror lying in the road. He picked up the mirror and saw his reflection. Immediately he placed the mirror back on the road and apologized, "I'm sorry, I didn't know that the mirror belonged to you!"

Is it me?

Nasrudin went into a bank with a cheque to cash.

"Can you identify yourself?" asked the clerk.

Nasrudin took out a mirror and peered into it.

"Yes, that's me all right," he said.

The Gypsy and His Son

One day, a gypsy was cursing and yelling at his indolent son. "You lazy idler! Do your work and do not be idle. You must improve your juggling and clowning in order to earn a living and to improve your life!"

Then the Gypsy raised a finger in warning, "If you don't do as I say, I'll throw you in school, to gather lots of useless stupid knowledge, become a learned man, and spend the rest of your life in want and misery!"

Where there's a will...

"Mulla, Mulla, my son has written from the Abode of Learning to say that he has completely finished his studies!"

"Console yourself, madam, with the thought that God will no doubt send him more."

The Sermon of Nasrudin

One day the villagers thought they would play a joke on Nasrudin. As he was supposed to be a holy man of some indefinable sort, they went to him and asked him to preach a sermon in their mosque. He agreed.

When the day came, Nasrudin mounted the pulpit and spoke:

"O people! Do you know what I am going to tell you?"

"No, we do not know," they cried.

"Until you know, I cannot say. You are too ignorant to make a start on," said the Mulla, overcome with indignation that such ignorant people should waste his time. He descended from the pulpit and went home,

Slightly chagrined, a deputation went to his house again, and asked him to preach the following Friday, the day of prayer.

Nasrudin started his sermon with the same question as before.

This time the congregation answered, as one voice:

"Yes, we know."

"In that case," said the Mulla, "there is no need for me to detain you longer. You may go." And he returned home.

Having been prevailed upon to preach for the third Friday in succession, he started his address as before:

"Do you know or do you not?"

The congregation was ready; "Some of us do, and others do not."

"Excellent," said Nasrudin, "then let those who know communicate their knowledge to those who do not."

And he went home.

Nasrudin and the Wise Men

The Philosophers, logicians and doctors of the law were drawn up at Court to examine Nasrudin. This was a serious case, because he had admitted going from village to village saying: "The so-called wise men are ignorant, irresolute and confused." He was charged with undermining the security of the State.

"You may speak first," said the King.

"Have paper and pens brought," said the Mulla.

Paper and pens were brought.

"Give some to each of the first seven savants."

They were distributed.

"Have them separately write an answer to this question: 'What is bread?'"

This was done.

The papers were handed to the King, who read them out:

The first said: "Bread is a food."

The second: "It is flour and water."

The third: "A gift of God."

The fourth: "Baked dough."

The fifth: "Changeable, according to how you mean 'bread.'"

The sixth: "A nutritious substance."

The Seventh: "Nobody really knows."

"When they decide what bread is," said Nasrudin, "it will be possible for them to decide other things. For example, whether I am right or wrong. Can you entrust matters of assessment and judgment to people like this? Is it or is it not strange that they cannot agree about something which they eat each day, yet they are unanimous that I am a heretic?"

First Things First

To the Sufi, perhaps the greatest absurdity in life is the way in which people strive for things, such as knowledge, without the basic equipment for acquiring them. They have assumed that all they need is "two eyes, a nose and a mouth," as Nasrudin say.

In Sufism, a person cannot learn until he is in a state in which he can perceive what he is learning, and what it means.

Nasrudin went one day to a well, in order to teach this point to a disciple who wanted to know "the truth." With him he took the disciple and a broken pitcher.

The Mulla drew a bucket of water, and poured it into his pitcher. Then he drew another, and poured it in. As he was pouring in the third, the disciple could not contain himself any longer:

"Mulla, the water is running out. There is no bottom on that pitcher."

Nasrudin looked at him indignantly. "I am trying to fill the pitcher. In order to see when it is full, my eyes are fixed upon the neck, not the bottom. When I see the water rise to the neck, the pitcher will be full. What has the bottom got to do with it? When I am interested in the bottom of the pitcher, then only will I look at it."

This is why Sufis do not speak about profound things to people who are not prepared to cultivate the power of learning something which can only be taught by a teacher to someone who is sufficiently enlightened to say: "Teach me how to learn."

There is a Sufi saying: "Ignorance is pride, and pride is ignorance. The man who says, 'I don't have to be taught how to learn' is proud and ignorant." Nasrudin was illustrating, in this story, the identity of these two states, which ordinary human kind considers to be two different things.

Whose Shot was That?

The Fair was in full swing, and Nasrudin's senior disciple asked whether he and his fellow-students might be allowed to visit it.

"Certainly," said Nasrudin; "for this is an ideal opportunity to continue practical teaching."

The Mulla headed straight for the shooting-gallery, one of the great attractions: for large prizes were offered for even one bull's-eye.

At the appearance of the Mulla and his flock the townfolk gathered around. When Nasrudin himself took up the bow and three arrows, tension mounted. Here, surely, it would be demonstrated that Nasrudin sometimes overreached himself.

"Study me attentively." The Mulla flexed the bow, tilted his cap to the back of his head like a soldier, took careful aim and fired. The arrow went very wide of the mark.

There was a roar of derision from the crowd, and Nasrudin's pupils stirred uneasily, muttering to one another. The Mulla turned and faced them all. "Silence! This was a demonstration of how the soldier shoots. He is often wide of the mark. That is why he loses wars. At the moment when I fired I was identified with a soldier. I said to myself, 'I am a soldier, firing at the enemy.'"

He picked up the second arrow, slipped it into the bow and tweaked the string. The arrow fell short, halfway towards the target. There was a dead silence.

"Now," said Nasrudin to the company, "you have seen the shot of a man who was too eager to shoot, yet who having failed

at his first shot, was too nervous to concentrate. The arrow fell short."

Even the stallholder was fascinated by these explanations. The Mulla turned nonchalantly towards the target, aimed and let his arrow fly. It hit the very center of the bull's eye. Very deliberately he surveyed the prizes, picked the one which he like best, and started to walk away. A clamor broke out.

"Silence!" said Nasrudin, "Let one of you ask me what you all seem to want to know."

For a moment nobody spoke. Then a yokel shuffled forward. "We want to know who fired the third shot."

"That? Oh, that was me."

The Same Strength

Nasruddin attended a lecture by a man who was teaching a philosophy handed down to him by someone who lived twenty years before. The Mulla asked:

"Is this philosophy, in its present form, as applicable today, among a different community, as it was two decades ago?"

"Of course it is," said the lecturer. "That is just an example of the ridiculous questions which people ask. A teaching always remains the same: truth cannot alter!"

Some time later, Mulla Nasrudin approached the same man for a job as a gardener.

"You seem rather old," said the lecturer, "and I am not sure that you can manage the job."

"I may look different," said Nasrudin, "But I have the same strength I had twenty years ago."

He got the job on the strength of his assurance.

Soon afterwards, the philosopher asked Nasrudin to shift a paving-stone from one part of the garden to another. Tug as he might, the Mulla could not lift it.

"I thought you said that you were as strong as you were twenty years ago," said the sage.

"I am," answered Nasrudin, "exactly as strong. Twenty years ago I could not have lifted it, either!"

The Value of the Past

Nasrudin was sent by the King to investigate the lore of various kinds of Eastern mystical teachers. They all recounted to him talks of the miracles and the sayings of the founders and great teachers, all long dead, of their schools.

When he returned home he submitted his report, which contained the single word "Carrots."

He was called upon to explain himself. Nasrudin told the King: "The best part is buried; few know, except the farmer, by the green that there is orange underground; if you don't work for it, it will deteriorate; and there are a great many donkeys associated with it."

Second Thoughts

Hundreds of people were streaming away from the evening meeting of a certain Sufi, while Nasrudin was making his way towards that house. Suddenly Nasrudin sat down in the middle of the road. One of the people stopped and asked:

"What are you doing?"

Nasrudin said: "Well, I was going to the house of that Sufi. But since everyone else is going away from it, I'm having second thoughts."

The Orchard

A man snuck into another man's orchard and filled his apron with lemons. On his way out of the orchard he was caught by the owner. The owner demanded, "Have you no shame before God?"

The man casually replied, "I don't see any reason to be ashamed. One of God's creatures wants to eat a couple of God's dates from one of God's trees on God's Earth."

The owner called to his gardener, "Bring me a rope, so that I may demonstrate my reply." A rope was brought and the thief was tied to a tree. The owner took a stick and began to fiercely beat the thief. The thief cried out, "For God's sake, stop it! You're killing me!"

The owner coolly told the thief, "Just a creature of God is hitting another creature of God with a stick from one of God's trees. Everything is His and I, His servant and slave, do what He ordains. Who's to blame?"

"Great quibbler," whimpered the thief, "From this day on, I give up my zealous Determinism. You made me see the truth of Free Will."

The Grammarian

Nasruddin sometimes took people for trips in his boat. One day a fussy pedagogue hired him to ferry him across a very wide river. As soon as they were afloat the scholar asked whether it was going to be a rough ride.

"Don't ask me nothing about it," said Nasrudin.

"Have you never studied grammar?"

"No," replied the Mulla.

"Then half of your life has been wasted." clucked the Grammarian.

Storm clouds began to fill the sky and powerful winds dragged the boat into the rapids and dangerously deep eddies. The boat was smashed and began to quickly fill with water.

Nasrudin asked the Grammarian, "Have you ever learned to swim?"

"No, certainly not!" the Grammarian said with a pretentious sniff.

"In that case," replied the boatman, "all of your life is lost, for we are sinking."

Not a Good pupil

One day Mulla Nasrudin found a tortoise. He tied it to his belt and continued his work in the fields. The tortoise started to struggle. The Mulla held it up and asked:

"What's the matter, don't you want to learn how to plough?"

Hidden Depths

One day the Mulla was in the market and saw small birds for sale at five hundred reals each. "My turkey," he thought, "which is larger than any of these, is worth far more."

The next day he took his pet turkey to market. Nobody would offer him more than 50 reals for it. The Mulla began to shout:

"O people! This is a disgrace! Yesterday you were selling birds only half this size at ten times the price."

Someone interrupted him "Nasrudin, those were parrots, talking birds. They are worth more because they can talk."

"Fool!" said Nasrudin; "those birds you value only because they can talk. You reject this turkey, which has wonderful thoughts, and yet does not annoy people with chatter."

The Secret

A would-be-disciple haunted Nasrudin, asking him question after question. The Mulla answered everything, and realized that the man was not completely satisfied: although he was in fact making progress.

Eventually the man said: "Master, I need more explicit guidance."

"What is the matter?"

"I have to keep on doing things,; and although I progress, I want to move faster. Please tell me a secret, as I have heard you do with others."

"I will tell you when you are ready for it."

The man later returned to the same theme.

"Very well. You know that your need is to emulate me?"

"Yes."

"Can you keep a secret?"

"I would never impart it to anyone."

"Then observe that I can keep a secret as well as you can."

The Wisdom of Silence

Some hunters were in the woods looking for game. They discovered a group of three orangutans and managed to catch one of them. The other two orangutans escaped and hid behind some nearby bushes and trees.

As the hunters were dressing the corpse of the first orangutan, a steam of blood issued forth. "How red the blood is!" cried a hunter.

The second orangutan called out, "It's red from eating so many raspberries."

Hearing the second orangutan, the hunters discovered its hiding place and began to beat it with sticks. As they were killing it, the second orangutan mourned out loud, "Now I know the wisdom of silence. If I had held my tongue, I wouldn't have gotten killed."

Hearing his companion's dying words, the third orangutan said, "Thank God I was wise enough to keep silent."

He was killed.

Grateful to Allah

One day Mulla found that his donkey was missing and began to cry. Suddenly he stopped crying and began to laugh and sing. He ran about the village rejoicing in his good fortune. A villager asked him why he was so happy about losing a donkey. Mulla replied, "At least I wasn't riding the donkey when it disappeared. If I had been riding it, I would also have vanished!"

Safety

There was a slave on a boat that was being tossed about by some very turbulent weather. The slave screamed and yelled in fear, until the other passengers could stand it no longer. They asked Bohlul to deal with the slave.

Bohlul told them, "Take the slave, attack a strong rope to him and throw him into the water until he begins to slip under the waves. At that point, pull him back into the boat so that he can realize the relative safety of the boat."

Happiness Is Not Where You Seek It

Nasrudin saw a man sitting disconsolately at the way-side, and asked what ailed him.

"There is nothing of interest in life, brother," said the man; "I now have sufficient capital not to have to work, and I am on this trip only in order to seek something more interesting than the life I have at home. So far I haven't found it."

Without another word, Nasrudin seized the traveler's knapsack and made off down the road with it, running like a hare. Since he knew the area, Nasrudin was able to out-distance the tourist.

The road curved, and Nasrudin cut across several loops, with the result that he was soon back on the road ahead of the man whom he had robbed. He gently put the bag by the side of the road and waited in concealment for the other to catch up.

Presently the miserable traveler appeared, following the tortuous road, more unhappy than ever because of his loss. As soon as he saw his property lying there, he ran towards it, shouting with joy.

"That's one way of producing happiness," said Nasrudin.

There is More Light Here

Someone saw Nasrudin searching for something on the sidewalk.

"What have you lost, Mulla?" he asked. "My key," said the Mulla. So they both went down on their knees and looked for it.

After a time the other man asked: "Where exactly did you drop it?"

"In my house."

"Then why are you looking here?"

"There is more light out here than inside my own house."

The Blind Man and the Lamp

One night, a blind man was carrying a large vase over his shoulder with one arm and holding out a torch with the other hand. A passerby noticed this and cried out, "Ignorance! Day and night are but the same to you, so why do you carry a torch before you?" The blind old man replied, "The light is for blind people like you, to keep you from accidentally bumping into me and breaking my vase."

Salt is not Wool

One day the Mulla was taking a donkey-load of salt to market, and drove the ass through a stream. The salt was dissolved. The Mulla was angry at the loss of the load. The ass was frisky with relief.

Next time he passed that way he had a load of wool. After the animal had passed through the stream, the wool was thoroughly soaked, and very heavy. The donkey staggered under the soggy load.

"Ha!" shouted the Mulla, "you thought you would get off lightly every time you went through the water, didn't you?"

The Trip

Nasrudin's friend Wali slipped and fell from the immense height of the Post Office Tower in London. The eyewitnesses, who had seen him plummet past their open windows, were questioned by Nasruddin. They all agreed that Wali's last words at each floor on the way down were: "So far, so good."

Something Fell

Nasrudin's wife ran to his room when she heard a tremendous thump.

"Nothing to worry about," said the Mulla, "it was only my cloak which fell to the ground."

"What, and made a noise like that?"

"Yes, I was inside it at the time."

The Tax Man

A man had fallen into some quicksand when Nasrudin came along one afternoon. People were crowding around, all trying to get him out before he drowned.

They were shouting, "Give me your hand!" But the man would not reach up.

The Mulla elbowed his way through the crowd and leant over to the man. "Friend," he said, "what is your profession?"

"I am an income-tax inspector," gasped the man.

"In that case," said Nasrudin, "take my hand!" The man immediately grasped the Mulla's hand and was hauled to safety.

Nasrudin turned to the open-mouthed audience. "Never ask a taxman to give you anything, you fools," he said, and walked away.

Appreciation

"Never give people anything they ask for until at least a day has passed!" said the Mulla.

"Why not, Nasrudin?"

"Experience shows that they only appreciate something when they have had the opportunity of doubting whether they will get it or not."

The Forgotten Question

One day as Bohlul was hastily riding from one place to another, he was stopped by a peasant who wished to ask him to answer a question that had been long in bothering him. Bohlul didn't wish to be interrupted in his journey.

"But it is a matter of life and death," protested the peasant.

"All right then," Bohlul snapped, "But be quick about it then, for my horse is restless to continue on the journey."

The poor peasant, disquieted by the pressing need for speed, stuttered and sweated.

"Well, what is it?" Bohlul demanded.

The peasant forgot the question.

Moment in Time

"What is Fate?" Nasrudin was asked by a scholar.

"An endless succession of intertwined events, each influencing the other."

"That is hardly a satisfactory answer. I believe in cause and effect."

"Very well," said the Mulla, "look at that." He pointed to a procession passing in the street.

"That man is being taken to be hanged. Is that because someone gave him a silver piece and enabled him to buy the knife with which he committed the murder; or because someone saw him do it; or because nobody stopped him?"

All I Needed was Time

The Mulla bought a donkey. Someone told him that he would have to give it a certain amount of food every day. He considered this to be too much food. He would experiment, he decided, to get the donkey used to less food. Every day, therefore, he reduced its rations. Eventually, when the donkey was reduced to almost no food at all, it fell over and died.

"Pity," said the Mulla. "If I had had a little more time before it died I could have got it accustomed to living on nothing at all."

The Short Cut

Walking home one wonderful morning, Nasrudin thought that it would be a good idea to take a short cut through the woods. "Why," he asked himself, "should I plod along a dusty road when I could be communing with Nature, listening to the birds and looking at the flowers? This is indeed a day of days; a day for fortunate pursuits!"

So saying, he launched himself into the greenery. He had not gone very far, however, when he fell into a pit, where he lay reflecting.

"It is not such a fortunate day, after all," he meditated; "in fact it is just as well that I took this short cut. IF things like this can happen in a beautiful setting like this, what might not have befallen me on that nasty highway?"

To Deal with the Enemy

Mulla's mother once instructed her son, "If you ever see a ghost, or an apparition in the graveyard, don't be afraid. Be brave and attack it immediately! They will run away from you."

Mulla replied, "But what if their mothers gave them the same advice?"

Various Other Quotes

Gleaned and compiled by Michael Scharding

How could I conclude the Green Books without a whole mess of miscellaneous quotes that I've picked up along the way? Perhaps they will inspire you to search more widely for what you already know, or vice versa? As always, all opinions expressed here belong to their authors or cultures and do not necessarily represent the views of other Reformed Druids.

The main resources for this last collection in The Green Books were the following:

- *Racial Proverbs* by Swlwyn Gurney Champion, 1938.
- *A Druid's Path: Readings Along the Way* by Sterling Lee Few, Jr. (aka Treebeard1@AOL.com) of ADF, Keltria, and OBOD. Unpublished as yet. 1995.
- *Crazy Wisdom* by Niskier, 1990.
- *Wisdom from the Ancients: Proverbs, Maxims and Quotations*, compiled by Menahem Mansoor of the University of Madison Wisconsin in 1994.
- The *Dune* series by Frank Herbert, 1966?.
- *Quotations for the New Age* by Rosenberg, 1978.
- *Peter's Quotations: Ideas for our Time* by Laurence J. Peter, 1977

Art, Beauty, and Poetry

Art is frozen Zen. -R.H. Blyth

Beauty is loved without knowing anything, and ugliness is hated without being to blame. -Maltese

Consistency is the last refuge of the unimaginative. -Oscar Wilde

Poets and pigs are appreciated only after their death. -Italian

Community and Conversation

In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity. -Richard Baxter

The basket that has two handles can be carried by two. -Egyptian

Eat according to your taste, and dress according to the taste of others. -Moorish

Two are an army against one. -Icelandic

The avalanche has already started. It is too late for the pebbles to vote. -Unknown

Man can do without his friends but not without his neighbors. -Egyptian

Better a neighbor over the wall than a brother over the sea. -Albanian

Choose the neighbor before the house and the companion before the road. -Moorish

Argument is the worst sort of conversation. -Jonathan Swift

Without conversation there is no agreement. -Montenegrin

"Yes and No" make a long quarrel. -Icelandic

Faults are thick where love is thin. -Welsh

The faultfinder will find faults even in paradise. -Henry Thoreau

Real progress is made not by the loud, ostentatious, push majorities, but always by small and obstinate minorities. -Henry Skolimowski

Nothing makes you more tolerant of a neighbor's noisy party than being there. -Franklin Jones

Whether women are better than men I cannot say, but I can say they are certainly no worse. -Golda Meir

Love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking outward together in the same direction. -Antoine de Saint Exupery

An old southern Methodist Preacher was asked if there is a difference between union and unity. He replied, "You can tie two cats' tails together and throw them over a clothes line, in which case you have union, but not unity." -W.T. Purkeson

Always forgive your enemies, nothing annoys them so much. -Oscar Wilde

Custom, Justice and Law

An agreement will break a custom. -Welsh

Men do more from custom than from reason. -Latin

Custom and law are neighbors. -Montenegrin

The slogans must be rejected and the complexities recognized. -Michael Harrington

A good catchword can obscure analysis for fifty years. -Wendall Willkie

History shows that men and nations behave reasonably only when they have exhausted all other alternatives. -Abba Eban

The chains of habit are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken. -Samuel Johnson

Originality is the art of concealing your source. -Franklin Jones

There is nothing new under the sun. -Ecclesiastes 1:9

When people are free to do as they please, they usually imitate each other. -Eric Hoffer

We despair of changing the habits of men, still we would like to alter institutions, the habits of millions of men. -George Iles

Equality in injustice is justice. -Egyptian

The more a man knows, the more he forgives. -Italian

He who is accustomed to evil is offended by good. -Mexican

To an unjust government, a martyr is more dangerous than a rebel. -Italian

Everyone should be allowed to keep his natural clothes, his natural food, and his natural religion. -German

Justice flees the world because no one will give it shelter in his house. -Maltese

Moral decisions are always easy to recognize. They are where you abandon self-interest. -Rev. Mother Superior Darwi Odrade, *DUNE*

Every judgment teeters on the brink of error. To claim absolute knowledge is to become monstrous. Knowledge is an unending adventure at the edge of uncertainty. -Leto Atreides II, *DUNE*

Before I judge my neighbour, let me walk a mile in his moccasins. -Sioux

I am free of all prejudices. I hate every one equally.- W.C. Fields

Law separates, compromise conciliates. -German

Treat all men alike. Give them all the same laws. Give them all an even chance to live and grow. -Chief Joseph

Laws are spider webs through which the big flies pass and the little one get caught. -Russian

Fear not the law, but the judge. -Russian

Thieves increase with the making of new laws. -Romanian

Custom is stronger than law. -Russian

First, we kill all the lawyers...- Shakespeare?

Harken to the spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law. - Jesus

The test of courage comes when we are in the minority; the test of tolerance comes when we are in the majority. -Henry David Thoreau

Most people would rather defend to the death your right to say it than listen to it. -Robert Brault

One lawyer in a town will languish, two lawyers will prosper. - Sam Adams, RDNA

The successful revolutionary is a statesman , the unsuccessful one a criminal. -Erich Fromm

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing. -Edmund Burke

When the system defines our choices, it channels rebellion into modes that it is prepared to control, into acts that harm the rebel, not the system. -Starhawk

Laws to suppress tend to strengthen what they would prohibit. This is the fine point on which all legal professions of history have based their job security. -Bene Gesserit Coda, *DUNE*

Death and Fate

He who has been near to death knows the worth of life. - Turkemestan

The fall of a leaf is a whisper to the living. -Russian

He who is fated to hang will never drown. -Scottish

One Calamity is better than a thousand counsels. -Turkish

Your karma ran over my dogma. -Unknown

I'm not afraid to die. I just don't want to be there when it happens. -Woody Allen

I cannot tell you your fate, a man should not know his fate until he is halfway through life. If he were to know sooner, it would all seem an illusion. - Plexus, *Gatorr*

Earth and Ecology

The Earth is a blessing to those upon her. -Egyptian

Do not damage the earth, or the sea, or the trees. -Book of Revelations 7:3

Men go and come, but earth abides. -Ecclesiastes, 1, 4

We didn't inherit the land from our fathers. We are borrowing it from our children. -Amish belief

The universe is made up of stories, not atoms. -Muriel Ruckeyser.

You will find something more in woods than in books. Trees and stones will teach you that which you can never learn from a master. -St. Bernard of Clairvaux

He who follows Nature's lantern never loses his way. -German

O Sacred Earth Mother, the trees and all nature are witnesses to your thoughts and deeds. -Winnebago Indian saying

The world is older and bigger than we are. This is a hard truth for some folks to swallow. -Ed Abbey

The essence of deep ecology is to ask deeper questions... We ask which society, which education, which form of religion is beneficial for all life on the planet as a whole. -Arne Naess

When one recognizes the unity of nature, he also perceives the singleness of mankind. -Gus Turbeville

The highest function of ecology is the understanding of consequences. -Planetologist Pardot Kynes, *DUNE*

To be solitary is alone worthy of God. -Kurdish

Eventually all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of these rocks are the timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs. I am haunted by waters. -Norman MacLean.

I'm often asked the question: "Is it possible to do valid rituals alone?" First of all in nature ritual, one is never alone. All the other beings of nature are present: either sun or moon, trees, plants, or animals. To consider that you are alone when you are in nature is simply a remnant of Eurocentric thinking. -Dolores LaChapelle, *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex, Rapture of the Deep*

Nature confuses the skeptics and reason confutes the dogmatists. -Blaise Pascal

A man said to the universe, "Sir, I exist." "However," replied the universe, "the fact has not created in me a sense of obligation." - Stephen Crane

Indeed I now realize that a man requires intimate and solitary contact with the wild places if he is to survive. When he is deprived of this state he begins to withdraw into himself, a prey to inner demons and the psychic wallpaper that passes for his estrangement from any genuine inner life. -James Cowan, *Letters From a Wild State*

If my decomposing carcass helps nourish the roots of a juniper tree or the wings of a vulture, that is immortality enough for me. And as much as anyone deserves. -Ed Abbey.

Earth-wise, we are as altars on which the divine fires can burn. The stone of the Druids is still within our bodies, as it was within theirs; for holy sacrifice or sacrilegious exploitation. - Graham Howe, *The Mind of the Druid*

In metaphysics, the notion that the earth and all that's on it is a mental construct is the product of people who spend their lives inside rooms. It is an indoor philosophy. -Ed Abbey

We shall never achieve harmony with the land anymore than we shall achieve justice or liberty for people. In these higher aspirations the important thing is not to achieve, but to strive. - Aldo Leopold

Education and Learning

Let not thy heart be great because of thy knowledge, but converse with the ignorant as with the learned. -Ancient Egyptian

I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand. -Chinese

Thou dost not practice what thou knowest; why, then, dost thou seek what thou knowest not? -Muslim

He who learns well defends himself well. -Argentine

First learn, then form opinions. -Talmud

Knowledge that can be stolen is not worth having. -Al-Ghazdi

The men who deserted thee will teach thee knowledge. -Talmud

By searching the old, learn the new. -Japanese

We learn from history that we learn nothing from history. -George Bernard Shaw

Awareness means suspending judgment for a moment..., then seeing, feeling, experiencing what this condition in front of you is all about. -Stephen Altschuler

If knowledge does not liberate the self from the self, then ignorance is better than such knowledge. -Sinai

With great doubts comes great understanding; with little doubts comes little understanding. -Chinese

God protect us from him who has read but one book. -German

The world is a fine book but of little use to him who knows not how to read. -Italian

Better unlearned than ill-learned. -Norwegian

Ask people's advice, but decide for yourself. -Ukrainian

A good listener makes a good teacher. -Polish

To inquire is neither a disaster nor a disgrace. -Bulgarian

If you would know the future, behold the past. -Portuguese

Cultivate your own garden. -Dutch

So great is the confusion of the world that comes from coveting knowledge! -Chuang Tzu

Teaching is a long way, example is a short one. -German

Knowledge too hastily acquired is not on guard. -Latin

Doors are not opened without keys. -Maltese

Discussion is an exchange of knowledge; argument an exchange of ignorance. -Robert Quillen

The man who strikes first admits that his ideas have given out. -Chinese

Nothing is so firmly believed as that which is least known. -Michel de Montaigne

Too much knowledge never makes for simple decisions. -Ghanima Atreides, *DUNE*

An intellectual is someone whose mind watches itself. -Albert Camus

A book is a mirror. When a monkey looks in, no apostle can look out. -George Lichtenberg

Many complain of their looks, but none complain of their brains. -Yiddish

There is nobody so irritating as somebody with less intelligence and more sense than we have. -Don Herold

One learns from books and reads only that certain things can be done. Actual learning requires that you do those things. -Farad'n Corrino (Harq al-Ada), *DUNE*

Most men, when they think they are thinking are merely rearranging their prejudices. -Knute Rockne

There's a difference between a philosophy and a bumper sticker. -Charles M. Schulz

I can evade questions without help; what I need is answers. -John F Kennedy

I often quote myself. It adds spice to my conversation. -George Bernard Shaw

The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery. -Mark Van Doren

For every person wishing to teach there are thirty not wanting to be taught. -W.C. Sellar

You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he live. -Clay Bedford

Learn to reason forward and backward on both sides of a question. -Thomas Blandi

Form your opinion of a man from his questions rather than from his answers. -French

At the moment you are most in awe of all there is about life that you don't understand, you are closer to understanding it all than at any other time. -Jane Wagner.

Agnosticism simply means that a man shall not say he knows or believes that for which he has no grounds for professing to believe. -Thomas Huxley

The road to ignorance is paved with good editions. -George Bernard Shaw

Criticism comes easier than craftsmanship. -Zeuxis (400 BCE)

No writer or teacher or artist can escape the responsibility of influencing others, whether he intends to or not, whether he is conscious of it or not. -Arthur Koestler

Students achieving oneness will often move ahead to twoness. -Woody Allen

History is mostly guessing; the rest is prejudice. -Will and Ariel Durant

One part of knowledge consists in being ignorant of such things as are not worthy to be known. -Crates (4th cent BCE)

Education is a method by which one acquires a higher grade of prejudices. -Laurence Peter

Scratch an intellectual and you find a would-be aristocrat who loathes the sight, the sound and the smell of common folk. -Eric Hoffer, *First Things & Last things*.

An educated man is not necessarily a learned man or a university man, but a man with certain subtle spiritual qualities which make him calm in adversity, happy when alone, just in his dealings, and sane in all the affairs of life. -Ramsay Macdonald, statesman

Many philosophers build castles in the mind, but live in doghouses. -Arne Naess

Fear and Freedom

He who is afraid of a thing gives it power over him. -Moorish

Do not fear a bright gun but a sooty one. -Montenegrin

Fear has created more gods than piety. -German

A warrior without fear is to be feared. -Anonymous

The man is not escaped who still drags his chain after him. -French

Be a master of your will and a slave to your conscience. -Yiddish

You have nothing to lose but your chains. -Spartacus, Greek rebel

"Freedom" is just another word for "nothing left to lose." -Janis Joplin

A hero is a man who can change his fear into positive energy. -A.S. Neill

The only thing we have to fear is fear itself. -Franklin Roosevelt

You can jail a revolutionary, but you can't jail a revolution. -Fred Hampton

Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable. -John F. Kennedy

Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it. -George Bernard Shaw

I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. Where fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain. -The Bene Gesserit litany against fear, *DUNE*

Fools and Humor

He is a fool who speaks and listens to himself. -Turkish

The wise aspire to know, the foolish to relate. -Muslim

Even a fool can govern if nothing happens. -German

A man can make mistakes, but only an idiot persists in his error. -Cicero

The first stage of folly is to think oneself wise. -Greek

The Errors of a Wise Man make your Rule Rather than the Perfections of a Fool. -William Blake

Beware the man who cannot laugh. -Anonymous

Seriousness is the only refuge of the shallow. -Oscar Wilde

The aim of a joke is not to degrade the human being but to remind him that he is already degraded. -George Orwell.

Humor is an affirmation of dignity, a declaration of man's superiority to all that befalls him. -Romain Gary

For the present, the comedy of existence has not yet "become conscious" of itself. For the present, we still live in the age of tragedy, the age of moralities and religions. -Frederich Nietzsche

A satirist is a man who discovers unpleasant things about himself and then says them about other people. Peter MacArthur

Defining and analyzing humor is a pastime of humorless people. -Robert Benchley

It is easier to be original and foolish than original and wise. -Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

It is the test of a good religion whether you can joke about it. -G.K. Chesterton

The secret source of humor itself is not joy but sorrow. There is no humor in heaven. -Mark Twain

The one serious conviction that a man should have is that nothing is to be taken too seriously. -Nicholas Murray Butler

The total absence of humor from the Bible is one of the most singular things in all literature. -Alfred North Whitehead

Leadership

Even a fool can govern if nothing happens. -German

If you want to know a man, give him authority. -Montenegrin

The tyrant is only a slave turned inside out. -Egyptian

Ambitions tend to remain undisturbed by realities. -The Preacher, *DUNE*

The five fingers are not equal. -Turkish

To alter and to make better are two different things; much has been altered but little has been made better in the world. -German

The ditch is the master of the field. -Finnish

Honors change manners. -Latin

Shadows follow those who walk in the sun. -German

Do not blame what you permit. -Latin

Even God has His Mother. -Montenegrin

Heroism consists in hanging on one minute longer. -Norwegian

No matter how exotic human civilization becomes, no matter the developments of life and society nor the complexity of the machine/human interface, there always come interludes of lonely power when the course of humankind, the very future of humankind, depends upon the relatively simple actions of single individuals. -from *The Tleixu Godbuk*, Frank Herbert, *DUNE* books

It's hard to look up to a leader who keeps his ear to the ground. -James Boren

Use the first moments in study. You may miss many an opportunity for quick victory this way, but the moments of study are insurance of success. Take your time and be sure. -Duncan Idaho, *DUNE*

Practical Simplicity

Man does not eat what he desires, but what he finds. -Turkish

Whoever abandons a thing may live without it. -Egyptian

Too much wax burns down the church. -Portuguese

We can never see the sun rise by looking to the west. -Japanese

The best luxury is simplicity. -Kurdish

It is stupid to make a long introduction to a short story. -Book of Maccabees

To drink pure water go to the spring. -Italian

The more abundantly water gushes from its source, the less the source is esteemed. -Russian

The good ass is sold in his own country. -Maltese

Taste is in variety. -Chilean

The marvelous and the astonishing only surprise for a week. -Amharic

Do not become too hard, lest you get broken. -Ukrainian

Sharp acids corrode their own containers. -Albanian

To an inverted vessel, nothing adheres. -Sikh

If the evil will not leave you, then leave it. -Bosnian

He who embraces much collects little. -French

No hemlock is drunk out of earthenware mugs. -Latin

Pass at a distance from him who chops wood. -Maltese

To be a Druid was to be a Master of the art of living. -Graham Howe, *Mind of the Druid*

To remain whole, be twisted. To become straight, let yourself be bent, To become full, be hollow. -*Tao Te Ching*.

Einstein was a man who could ask immensely simple questions. -Jacob Bronowski

Do not catch everything that swims. -Russian

Concrete is heavy, iron is hard, but the grass will prevail. -Ed Abbey

When logic fails, another tool must be used. -Honored Matres Axiom, *DUNE*

When the bridge is gone the narrowest plank becomes precious. -Hungarian

What cannot be cured must be endured. -Scottish

The function of an ideal is not to be realized but, like that of the North Star, to serve as a guiding point. -Ed Abbey

The number of things we can really make our own is limited. We cannot drink the ocean be we ever so thirsty. A cup of water from the spring is all we need. - John Burroughs

The largest tree was once a seed ; and the most complex of all our machines was once only an idea. -Graham Howe, *The Mind of the Druid*

The willow submits to the wind and prospers until one day it is many willows, a wall against the wind. This is the willows' purpose. -Rev. Mother Gavis Mohaim, *DUNE*

Here is a man who uses a pearl like that of the marquis of Sui to shoot at a bird at a distance of 10,000 feet. All men will laugh at him. Why? Because the thing he uses is of great value and what he wishes to get is of little. And is not life of more value than the pearl of the marquis of Sui? -Chuang Tzu 28:3

There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at its root. -Henry David Thoreau

The US consumes more energy for air conditioning than the total energy consumption of the 800 million people in China. - Robert O. Anderson

Under tension, a chain will break at its weakest link. That much is predictable. What is difficult is to identify the weakest link before it breaks. The generic we can know, but the specific eludes us. Some chains are designed to break at a certain tension and at a certain link. But a good chain is homogeneous, and no prediction is possible. And because we cannot know which link is weakest, we cannot know precisely how much tension will be needed to break the chain. -Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature*

No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another. -Charles Dickens

Like using a guillotine to cure dandruff. -Clare Boothe Luce

Those who write clearly have readers; those who write obscurely have commentators. -Albert Camus

Confine yourself to observing and you always miss the point of your own life. The object can be stated this way : Live the best life you can. Life is a game whose rules you learn if you leap into it and play it to the hilt. Otherwise, you are caught off balance, continually surprised by the shifting play. Non-players often whine and complain that luck always passes them by. They refuse to see they can create some of their own luck.' - Darwi Odrade, *DUNE*

1st Farmer: "If you had 100 horses, and I had none, would you give me one?"

2nd Farmer: "Yes."

1st: "If you had 100 cows, and I had none, would you give me one?"

2nd: "Yes."

1st: "If you had 2 pigs..."

2nd: "Now cut that out, you know I have two pigs!"

Prayer

If the prayers of dogs were accepted, bones would rain from the sky. -Turkish

He lingered between two mosques and returned home without having prayed. -Turkish

Call upon the name of God, and ask for what is good for you. -Koran

One hour in doing justice is worth a hundred in prayer. -Koran

If that which is within is not bright, it is useless to pray for that which is without. -Shinto

Call on God for help, but row away from the rocks. -Indian

Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. -Mohandas Ghandi

Prayer does not change God, but changes him who prays. -Kierkegaard

Lord, give me chastity, but not yet. -Saint Augustine

Priests

A rabbi whose congregation does not want to drive him out of town isn't a rabbi. -Talmud

Clever preacher, short sermon.- Japanese

Us nature mystics got to stick together. -Ed Abbey

There are many preachers who don't hear themselves. -German

When the fox starts preaching, look to your hens. -Basque

To go barefoot does not make the saint. -German

Many of the insights of the saint stem from his experience as a sinner. -Eric Hoffer

Malta would be a delightful place if every priest were a tree. -Maltese

No matter large the mosque is, the Imam preaches what he knows. -Turkish

Have no faith in a priest, even if his turban is covered in gems. -Kurdish

Clergyman: A man who undertakes the management of our spiritual affairs as a method of bettering his temporal ones. -Ambrose Bierce

The High Priests of telescopes and cyclotrons keep making pronouncements about happenings on scales too gigantic or dwarfish to be noted by our native sense. -W.H. Auden

It is good that a philosopher should remind himself, now and then, that he is a particle pontificating on infinity. -Will and Ariel Durant

Returning from visiting her friend's church, a woman said, "The minister kept talking about Epistles this morning. I didn't know what they were." Her friend replied, "Oh, my dear, your ignorance is refreshing. I thought everyone knew that the Epistles are the wives of the Apostles." -Anonymous

In the primitive Church there were chalices of wood and priests of gold; in the modern Church there are chalices of gold and priests of wood. -German

If you offer words of the spirit to a man who does not ask for them, you waste the words. But if a man asks for those words and you do not offer them, you waste the man." -*Planet Steward*, Stephen Levine

At a certain dinner, the chairperson, looking around the tables, could not find any clergyman present to ask Grace. So he turned to an actor for the prayer. The actor began "Since there are no clergymen present to say grace, let us thank God...." -Anonymous

Religion

"God" a word for not thinking. -Ed Abbey

No one but God and I know what is in my heart. -Arabic

Whatever we cannot easily understand we call God; this saves much wear and tear on the brain tissues. -Ed Abbey

Many millions search for God, only to find Him in their hearts. -Sikh

Working is half of religion. -Turkish

A man without religion is like a horse without a bridle. -Latin

All "isms" should be "wasms." -Abbie Hoffman

Most sects are right in what they affirm and wrong in what they deny. -Goethe

Only the deaf and the blind are obliged to believe. -Romanian

No religion without courage. -Arabic

Science investigates; religion interprets. Science give man knowledge which is power; religion gives man wisdom which is control. -Martin Luther King, Jr.

Religion has two children, love and hatred. -Russian

Doctrine is nothing but the skin of truth set up and stuffed. -Henry Beecher, 19th cent

Religion destroys evil, morality merely hides it. -Welsh

God has no religion. -Mahatma Gandhi

Small is his religion who seeks daily for it. -Welsh

All conditioned things are impermanent. Work out your own salvation with diligence. -The Buddha's final words.

The best sermon is to listen to oneself. -German

Just before leaving on an European Crusade, Billy Graham was asked if he expected to bring back any new creeds with him, and if so, would he be able to get them through customs. He replied, "Oh that would be easy enough, since few of the new creeds have any duties attached to them."

The fundamental rule of the spiritual quest to establish direct contact with the sacred rather than depend on intermediaries, authorities, dogmas, or institutions -*Hymns to an Unknown God* by Sam Keen

All religions will pass, but this will remain: simply sitting in a chair and looking into the distance. -V.V. Rozanov in *Solitaria 1912*

Rituals mend ever again worlds forever breaking apart under the blows of usage and the slashing distinctions of language. -Roy Rappaport

Man is a Religious Animal. Man is the only Religious Animal. He is the only animal that has the True Religion, several of them. He is the only animal that loves his neighbor as himself and cuts his throat if his theology isn't straight. -Mark Twain

Provide a religious organization with wealth and power and it begins to change into a secular agency. -Edmund A. Opitz

Fantastic doctrines (like Christianity or Islam or Marxism) require unanimity of belief. One dissenter casts doubt on the creed of millions. Thus the fear and the hate ; thus the torture chamber, the iron stake, the gallows, the labor camp, the psychiatric ward. -*Planet Steward*, Stephen Levine

Metaphysics is a cobweb the mind weaves around things. -*Planet Steward*, Stephen Levine

Questions are more likely to make good communications than dogmatic statements, which usually only create resistance, shutting the door which they were designed to force open. -Graham Howe, *The Mind of the Druid*

The fact that a believer is happier than a skeptic is no more to the point than the fact that a drunken man is happier than a sober one. -George Bernard Shaw

A great deal of intelligence can be invested in ignorance when the need for illusion is deep. -Saul Bellow

I consider myself a Hindu, Christian, Moslem, Jew, Buddhist and Confucian. -Mohandas Gandhi

To become a popular religion, it is only necessary for a superstition to enslave a philosophy. -Dean William R. Inge

Modern man has not ceased to be credulous, the need to believe haunts him. -William James

Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind. -Albert Einstein

"Mystery" is a better word for "God" because it suggests questions, not answers. "Why" is always a good question, the one question that distinguishes us from the other brutes. -Ed Abbey, *Confessions of a Barbarian*

When religion and politics travel in the same cart, the riders believe nothing can stand in their way. Their movements become headlong - faster and faster and faster. They put aside all thought of obstacles and forget that a precipice does not show itself to a man in a blind rush until it's too late. -Bene Gesserit Proverb, *DUNE*

The inspiration of the Bible depends upon the ignorance of the gentlemen who reads it. -Robert Ingersoll

The dogma of the infallibility of the Bible is no more self-evident than is that of the infallibility of the popes. -Thomas Henry Huxley

Don't change beliefs, change the believer. -Werner Erhart

All the religion we have is the ethics of one or another holy person. -Waldo Ralph Emerson

People in general are equally horrified at hearing the Christian religion doubted and at seeing it practiced. -Samuel Butler

The writers against religion, whilst they oppose every system, are wisely careful never to set up any of their own. -Edmund Burke

Treat the other man's faith gently; it is all he has to believe in. -Henry Haskins

A fanatic is one who sticks to his guns whether they're loaded or not. -Franklin Jones

The more fervent opponents of Christian doctrine have often enough shown a temper which, psychologically considered, is indistinguishable from religious zeal. -William James

There is something inherently ridiculous in ecumenical dialogue because in the first stage everyone says "if you would only listen to me and my confession, we would have the answer." A great many never get beyond this stage, never listen to the other peoples speeches because they are so busy writing their own and, of course, never see how funny it must appear to God or to the secularist in the world who does not see much to choose amongst any of us. -Eugene Carson Blake

All words are plastic. Word images begin to distort in the instant of utterance. Ideas embedded in a language require that particular language for expression. This is the meaning within the word exotic. See how it begins to distort? Translation squirms in the presence of the exotic. Dangers lurk in all systems. Systems incorporate the unexamined beliefs of their creators. Adopt a system, accept its beliefs, and you help strengthen the resistance to change. -The Stolen Journals, *DUNE*

Silence

The silent man is often worth listening to. -Japanese

A listener needs more intelligence than a speaker. -Turkish

Give every man your ear but give few your voice. -William Shakespeare

Silence is the best answer to the stupid. -Arabic

Silence is not only golden, it's seldom misquoted. -American

Example is a mute admonition. -German

Those who know don't talk. Those who talk don't know. -Lao Tzu

Tact is the art of making a point without making an enemy. -Wilson Mizner

Zen is not letting yourself be horsewhipped into words about it, so as you read these words just unfocus your eyes and stare at the blurry page. -Jack Kerouac

Never answer a critic, unless he's right. -Bernard Baruch

You have not converted a man because you have silenced him. -John, Viscount Morley

As I grow older, I pay less attention to what men say. I just watch what they do. -Andrew Carnegie

He who silently reforms himself has done more towards reforming the public than a crowd of noisy, impotent patriots. -J. Lavater

My father gave me these hints on speech-making: "Be sincere, be brief, and be seated." -James Roosevelt

The quieter you become the more you can hear. -Baba Ram Dass

When Abbot Pambo was asked to say a few words to the very important Bishop of Alexandria, who was visiting some of the Desert Fathers, the elder Abbot replied: "If he is not edified by my silence, then there is no hope that he will be edified by my words." -Thomas Merton.

Travel

Unless we change direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed. -Chinese

The dog that trots about finds a bone. -Romanian

Seek knowledge even in China. -Muslim

He who seeks, finds either his God or his misfortune. -Turkish

A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. -Chinese

There is no bridge without a place on the other side of it. -Welsh

Better to turn back than to lose one's way. —Russian

All men are not like trees; some must travel and cannot keep still. —Romanian

The torch of doubt and chaos, this is what the sage steers by. —Chuang Tzu

Every road has two directions. —Ukrainian

The stone that remains in one spot becomes covered with moss. —Lithuanian

To know the road ahead, ask those coming back. —Chinese

Let everyone praise the ford as he finds it. —Welsh

When you have something to do and you find no companions, take your stick and go slowly. —Albanian

God blesses the seeking, not the finding. —German

When the path is before you, do not look for a road. —Greek

It is not worthwhile to go around the world to count the cats in Zanzibar. —Henry David Thoreau

Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations. —Vulcans of Star Trek

Walk down that lonesome road all by yourself. Don't turn your head back over your shoulder and only stop to rest yourself when the silver moon is shining high above the trees. —James Taylor

Truth

He who speaks the truth must have one foot in the stirrup. —Turkish

The eyes believe themselves, the ears believe others. —Egyptian

The story is only half told when one side tells it. —Icelandic

Being a Sufi is to put away what is in your head—imagined truth, preconceptions, conditioning—and to face what may have happened to you. —Abu Said.

He uses statistics as a drunken man uses lampposts, for support rather than illumination. —Andrew Lang.

All great truths begin as blasphemies. —George Bernard Shaw

The sky is not less blue because the blind man does not see it. —Danish

All say the lamb is good, but each likes a different way of cooking it. —Chinese

Don't deny the truth even for the sake of your friend. —Hungarian

An old error has more friends than a new truth. —German

The greatest truths are the simplest; and so are the greatest men. —John Hare 19th cent.

He who dies for truth finds holy ground everywhere for his grave. —German

There is no disputing a proverb, a fool, and a truth. —Russian

Hope clouds observation. —Rev. Mother Gaus Helen Mohaim, DUNE

The unclouded eye is better, no matter what it sees. —Rev. Mother Odrade, DUNE

The truth is so simple that it is regarded as pretentious banality. —Dag Hammarskjold

The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement. But the opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth. —Niels Bohr

When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less. —Lewis Carroll

Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored. —Aldous Huxley

There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics. —Benjamin Disraeli

Then there is the man who drowned crossing a stream with an average depth of six inches. —W.I.E. Gates

Natives who beat drums to drive off evil spirits are objects of scorn to smart Americans who blow horns to break up traffic jams. —Mary Ellen Kelly

None attains to the Degree of Truth until a thousand honest people have testified that he is a heretic. —Junaid of Baghdad, Sufi

Truth suffers from too much analysis. —Ancient Fremen Saying, DUNE

Wisdom

A narrow place is large to the narrow-minded. —Turkemenistan

The supposition of the wise man is better than the certainty of the ignorant. —Moorish

The best preacher is the heart; the best teacher is time; the best book is the world; the best friend is God. —Talmud

The believer is happy, the doubter wise. —Greek Proverb

A man should never be ashamed to admit he has been wrong, which is but to say, in other words, that he is wiser today than he was yesterday. —Jonathan Swift

Only the shallow know themselves. —Oscar Wilde

For of the wise man as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise man dies just like the fool! For all is vanity and a striving after the wind. —Ecclesiastes.

The father of wisdom is memory; his mother is reflection. —Welsh

Ask the opinion of an older one and a younger one than thyself, and return to thine own opinion. —Syrian

In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. —Ecclesiastes

Doubt is not a pleasant mental state, but certainty is a ridiculous one. —Voltaire

Be wiser than other people, if you can, but do not tell them so. —Lord Chesterfield

A man who stands behind a wall can see nothing else. —Japanese

The wise make more use of their enemies than fools of their friends. —German

Each of us finds his unique vehicle for sharing with others his bit of wisdom. —Baba Ram Dass

A man begins cutting his wisdom teeth the first time he bites off more than he can chew. —Herb Caen

Remember your philosopher's doubts... Beware! The mind of the believer stagnates. It fails to grow outward into an unlimited, infinite universe. —Rev. Mother Taraza, DUNE

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