

THE COLLECTED  
BOOKS *of*

**RICHARD  
DENNER**

Volume 18

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dPress 2016 Ellensburg

Cover by Oberon



*Not seen. Hinted at only. By some vorpals, some sea-lions,  
Some scraggs.  
Almost too big to get used to, its dimensions amaze us, who are  
Blind to Whatever  
Is rising and falling with us.*

—Jack Spicer  
Language

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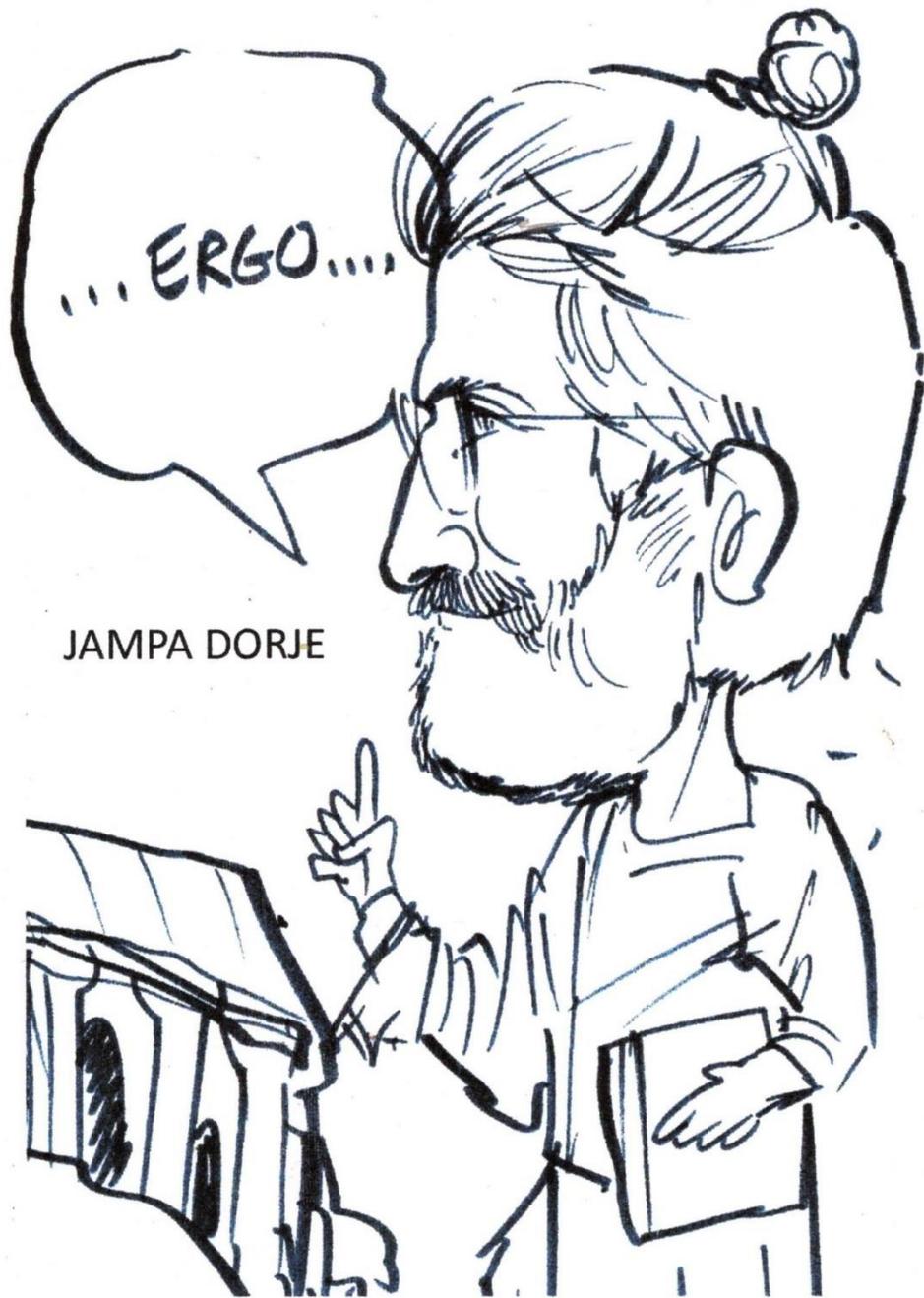
ERGO

DENNER/DORJE

BOATS

TRANSGENDER PLAY  
AND THE BUDDHIST  
MIDDLE WAY

BULWER'S NOVELS



A Treatise on Aesthetic Morality

**JAMPA DORJE**

# ERGO

Foreword by Bouvard Pécuchet

Introduction by Andy Matarrese

**KAPALA PRESS 2016 ELLENSBURG**

HEARTFELT THANKS TO WEBSTER HOOD

HOMAGE TO ALL MY TEACHERS, EAST & WEST

COVER CARTOON BY MICHAEL FLETCHER

POSTER ART BY MATT ALTMAN

OWL COLLAGE & DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE DAILY RECORD FOR USE OF ANDY MATARRESE'S ESSAYS IN VOL. 114, NO. 154  
ELLENSBURG WASHINGTON, JUNE 30, 2015

AND A TIP OF THE HAT TO WIKIPEDIA

*ERGO IS AN EXPANDED VERSION OF A HISTORY OF A NOVEL IDEA*



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## FOREWORD TO *ERGO: A TREATISE ON AESTHETIC MORALITY*

### **Bouvard Pécuchet**

Having pursued sensual pleasure, power, wealth and fame—and having been moderately successful in these pursuits—Jampa Dorje now finds them to be empty and futile, neither good nor bad in themselves but lacking in the truly true end which would give him the greatest joy, to eternity.

The three volumes of *Jampa's Worldly Dharmas* are a lexicon of stories that cover his life until the completion of his three years in solitary retreat at Tara Mandala, a Tibetan Buddhist retreat center near Pagosa Springs, Colorado. The present volume picks up after Dorje left retreat and began living again in the outside world.

Dorje backtracked through his life's experiences, looking for the happiness or unhappiness in the objects he loved and to which he had clung and found a consistent pattern of disappointment

and sadness. Experiencing beauty in art and in the practice of meditation, he wondered if there could be an aesthetic foundation to ethics. Combining the terms aesthetics and ethics, he found it impossible to say the word *aesthetics* three times in a row without slurring the vowels and consonants. Like Spinoza, Dorje distinguishes between morality and ethics, ethics being human-made and morality having to do with Deity, but he opted for a broader use of the term morality as also having to do with ethical behavior.

Oh, a tad of familiarity with Tantric Buddhism and German Philosophy helps in understanding some of the passages that follow, but always, the reader can appreciate the light-hearted living of life that is revealed.

## **AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK OF JAMPA DORJE: A FARMING TOWN'S MONK**

**by Andy Matarrese** (Originally published in Ellensburg, Washington's *Daily Record*)

### ***What's in a name?***

When Jampa Dorje first came to Ellensburg some 40 years ago, he was Richard Denner.

Dorje, the former owner of the Four Winds Bookstore in Ellensburg, says he has about six names, from multiple pseudonyms he's taken as a writer, the "Rychard" with which he'll sometimes sign his artwork, and the several names he took in his journey through Tibetan Buddhism.

A new name is often conferred through each milestone in Buddhism, he said.

Jampa Dorje is his "refuge" name, he said, the name he took after taking refuge with the Buddha, similar to a baptism.

He introduces himself as Jampa. Some people who knew him as Richard Denner like the Jampa name, while others don't, he said.

"Well then, call me Richard," he said.

The name Jampa Dorje means "indestructible loving kindness," he said.

"Hard to live up to, but they always give you something to aspire to," he said.

Dorje joins local Zen Buddhists for worship services at the Unitarian Church, but he's the only Tibetan Buddhist in Ellensburg, as far as he knows.

The robed, bearded and long-haired Dorje understands that he stands out, but has, a few times, gotten a "go back to where you came from" from passing drivers.

But this is where he's from, he said.

Part of his garb, he said, has to do with showing people there are other paths to take in life.

“Some of it has to do with sexual genders,” he said. “Are you so hung up on your masculinity that you couldn’t wear a skirt? What’s wrong? It’s like, free yourself from your constraints.”

Jampa Dorje, Ellensburg’s resident Tibetan Buddhist monk, leafed through one of his volumes in search of a poem.

He found one he wrote during a trip between his parents’ home in California’s Bay Area and his Buddhist retreat center in Colorado.

“I’ve already written my autobiography,” he said, rifling through one of the nine hand-illustrated and written volumes that comprise it.

Times have changed, he read, since people were out protesting China’s selection as host of the Olympics following outcry over its treatment of Tibet.

“I’m ordering a Grand Slam at Denny’s and the waiter says, ‘You guys are awesome.’ I’m checking into a Hotel 6 and the desk clerk asks, ‘Is there anything we can do for your people?’”

Dorje, bespectacled and wearing his orange shirt and red robes, goes on:

“I’m taking a leak at a Shell station, the guy next to me goes ‘om.’ I mean, what is this? I’m only trying to relieve myself!”

He ended the poem laughing.

“As you can see, it’s not a totally serious religious path. I’m a bit of a renegade in a way,” he said. “I just feel that some of that seriousness is just so unnecessary. If you’re not having fun in your religion, I mean, why do it? ... You’re burdening yourself with such unnecessary seriousness over things that should bring you joy and happiness.”

That’s part of Buddhism, he said, avoiding extremes in thought and action.

“It’s not as though people aren’t suffering; I mean they are! But part of it is, they’re not happy, and so much of that not-happiness is their own inability to be happy, and it’s the suffering on top of the suffering,” he said Monday in his small, simple house near Ninth Avenue and Water Street.

We all suffer, he said: “It’s hot out; my butt itches; I’d rather be fishing, but I can’t because I’m Buddhist. Am I good enough? Will I have the security? I hate my boss. All of this is the unnecessary suffering that comes from attachments to ideas and forms and things that are impermanent, which in turn disappoint, fall apart, die.”

***To the hinterlands.***

Many in Ellensburg might know Dorje better as Richard Denner, the former owner of the Four Winds Bookstore.

Dorje has been back in Ellensburg for about a year now, after leaving for some time to care for his parents and pursue Buddhism.

The self-described printer-poet-yogi will present a series of his found junk assemblages and collages — titled “Cowboy Funk” — through this month at the 420 Loft gallery downtown, and the pieces range from the mid-’70s, when he first lived in Ellensburg, to art made in the past year.

He’s been doing found artwork, nailing and gluing together bits of junk, for some time. There’s likely still assembled bits of detritus leaning against remote fence poles around the county he and everyone else has lost track of.

“I wanted to be an artist, and it was easier than learning to draw,” he said.

He said he first tried assembled art while spending time with Bohemian artist-types near Santa Cruz, Calif., in the 1960s.

“One day I swept up a floor and I swept up all the pieces of what they were doing into a box, and then I looked at it and thought, huh,” he said. “And I poured a whole quart of glue into it, and I wanted to see what that would be as a piece of art.”

Many artists of the era were hands-on with their work, he said, talking about how they’d throw paint around and get physical with their creations.

Denner was coy about his age (he’s 74) — “Too old,” he said. “Just old, but still young at heart, huh?” — but said he was part of the small generation born during World War II. His father was an executive with State Farm and his mother was a homemaker.

He grew up in Oakland, near the epicenter of the free speech movement and ‘60s culture.

In 1965, he met the Beat writers Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder.

He told Snyder he wanted to open a bookstore in Berkeley. Snyder told him Berkeley had plenty of bookstores, and he should “find a place in the hinterlands,” Dorje said, one that needed such a store.

### ***North, then Northwest.***

He moved to Alaska after reading *How to Live in the Woods on \$10 a Week* by Bradford Angier with his wife, Cheri, son, and an old hand press.

“Many of us simply left the scene. I went to Alaska. I mean, part of it was to make money to start a bookstore, but part of it was that the street was dangerous,” he said.

Elements of the Left were moving away from the reconciliatory approach he preferred, he said. Others would still throw around accusations of communism and the House Un-American Activities Committee was still blacklisting people and ruining lives.

He said he, in part, had joined the back-to-the-land-movement, a la the “Whole Earth Catalog” books, but slowly gravitated back to civilization. He had dropped out of the University of California, Berkeley, earlier, and enrolled at the University of Alaska Fairbanks to get a degree in English and philosophy.

In the mid ‘70s, he moved to Ellensburg, where he worked as a ranch hand on an 800-acre cattle ranch in the Badger Pocket.

His father owned ranches in California, so Dorje grew up around cattle and horses.

“I needed to learn to irrigate — these were irrigated fields — but I knew how to punch cows, and I knew how to ride horses,” he said. “So it was within my expertise. Long-haired hippie cowboys were a kind of a new thing to Ellensburg.”

Ellensburg’s diversity of experience and background is special that way, he said. The area’s ranches and farms are smaller than elsewhere in the West and Ellensburg, in many ways, is like a microcosm of Berkeley, without the strife of the Vietnam War.

“It’s a kind of farming, ranchers’, philosopher’s town,” he said.

Ellensburg grew on him, he said, and looked like the place in the hinterlands in need of a bookstore. He started the Four Winds Bookstore, which stood in Ellensburg for more than 20 years.

### ***Call to Buddhism.***

In part through his contact with Allen Ginsberg and the Beat scene, he gradually became interested in Tibetan Buddhism.

He met a Buddhist teacher from the San Juan Islands, and he got involved with a group trying to organize a permanent Buddhist retreat setting in a remote part of Colorado called Tara Mandala. One in that group was Tsultrim Allione, who had been Ginsberg’s mediation teacher.

He moved to Colorado in 1998, but later returned to California to care for his elderly parents. Ten years later, after his parents died, he returned to Colorado to embark on a three-year retreat.

“People even do lifetimes, but in practicality the idea of the training is to move yourself along enough, to get off the grid long enough to kinda really get down to fundamentals and really look at yourself, and then re-enter the world,” he said. “Maybe as a teacher, but at least as a

somewhat purified being, purified being simplified, let's say."

Dorje compared it to solitary confinement. He lived in a 12-by-12 foot cabin in the woods and spent most of his time in intense meditation, he said, bookended with other religious duties.

The three-year retreat took four — one of his teachers went to Asia and couldn't return after China took his passport — but Dorje said he didn't mind. He didn't have much else to do.

"At the end of it I came out and a lot of things had changed and I wasn't really sure I wanted to stay in the retreat center and just stroke my beard and go 'om,'" he said.

He moved to Santa Fe, where he spent time with another lama and his family. Dorje said he got to see Tibetan Buddhism at work in the world, in daily life.

He decided to go to Ellensburg, where he has great-grandchildren and 40 years' worth of family.

He hosts a poetry program on Ellensburg Community Radio, makes his art, and, for his latest project, audited a class on 19th century German philosophers at Central Washington University.

He wants to write a book on where Kant, Nietzsche and the others mesh with Buddhism, he said.

"I believe there's a philosophical tradition hidden away in Western philosophy that — I wouldn't say it's Buddhist — but it has similarities to many Buddhist ideas, in terms of the nature of mind," he said.

He's been gradually moving away from parts of Buddhism, he said, but not entirely.

"It is, again, finding a place where you're comfortable; how to be comfortable without going to extremism," he said.

He's been well-off and settled, and he's been an ascetic living in the Rocky Mountains.

"I'm just trying to find a nice central small town in the heart of things that accepts me, and that I can be comfortable in, talk to people," he said. "What higher goal can one have?"

### ***Writer's work included in library collection at UC Berkeley***

Jampa Dorje recently moved about two crates worth of his bound poems and six more full of manuscripts, journals and other documents associated with his writing for archiving at the Bancroft Library at University of California, Berkeley, as part of its collection of California and 1960s-era poets.

Few poets write for money, or get the chance to, he said, and they often write for each other. In turn, they often publish each other's work in limited runs to share. He'd publish small books, or chapbooks.

“That’s been going on since John Keats, or even further back. Ben Johnson. Shakespeare,” he said.

Dorje — an artist, poet, Tibetan Buddhist monk, onetime bookstore owner and former ranch hand — said he thinks “printer” is still a key title.

He worked at underground, college and other small newspapers for some time, including The Berkely Barb, The Polar Star at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, the Queen Anne News and the Ketchikan Daily News in Alaska, where he worked in wax and with knives as a designer.

The library, he said, was interested in his work, though he carried it through Alaska, Washington and Colorado, since it’s still part of that California poetry ecosystem.

Having his work in the research library’s collection is a small honor, he said. He was never a poet in the academic sense, and never sought grants or fellowships, and always saw himself as a bit of an outsider.

“But it’s nice, at this stage, to be recognized as the outsider, that they wanted to include that,” he said.

Plato, he joked, said poets shouldn’t be allowed in his republic. “Basically, we’re exiled,” he said. “We don’t belong here, because we point out things people don’t want to hear.”

Also, he said, he doesn’t have to worry about storing or cataloguing his old work himself, or about his kids tossing it all into a dumpster.

“The idea behind Buddhism is that things are impermanent. So you spend all this time building an archive,” he said, wryly. “And I should have just burned it, but I wanted it to stay permanent.”

## **PART 1**

### **A HISTORY OF A NOVEL IDEA**

#### **AUTHOR’S PREFACE**

Shaggy curves in a fuzzy country. In turn, a state with roads that aren’t on any map.

This story combines mystery, adventure, and inquiry. It’s the story of an idea. It is also the inner, outer, and secret autobiography of a man. The measure is time. The place is the mind.

This painting is art brut. The colors are fauve. The forms verge on the surreal. There is a mustache on the Mona Lisa. And then, it is erased.

This music is punk capriccio. You can hear a requiem contrapuntal to a marching band. *Night in Tunisia* beat out on the lid of a garbage can. John Cage playing an electrified cactus with a feather.

The imaginary prisons of Piranesi. The continuous conundrums of Escher.

Hard whites, infernal yellows, sulfur and yellowgreen. Starts with a smudge of paint and becomes a painting. Starts with silence and becomes the sound of one hand clapping.

Adjust your bullshit meter. Weep anew.

**F**rom whence came this idea, from what source, origin, or cause? A complete description of the process an idea undergoes in its formation is not yet possible, but, given the limitations of my memory and my ability to reflect, I can trace the tendrils of the idea I have in mind back to my first readings of Nietzsche, after I had flunked out of Cal Berkeley, in 1960.

The volume I was reading in the area designated for lunch breaks at the State Farm Insurance Company, where I was employed as a bindery clerk in the Administrative Services Department, was the Doubleday Anchor edition of Francis Golffing's translations of *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Genealogy of Morals* by Friedrich Nietzsche. Both books deal with the dissonance between the moral and aesthetic approaches to life.

Morals and aesthetics. Another tendril takes me to a question I asked Allen Ginsberg at the Berkeley Poetry Conference, in 1965. I had ventured north from California State Polytechnic College, in San Luis Obispo, where I had been studying English and Philosophy, to rub shoulders with poets from the Beat Generation, the Black Mountain School, and the San Francisco Renaissance. Having discussed with Gary Snyder my plan to go to Alaska and earn money to start a bookstore in Berkeley and receiving the advice not to start a bookstore in Berkeley but to go to the hinterlands and find a place that needed a Berkeley-style bookstore, I asked Allen Ginsberg whether it was better to be a good businessman and a bad poet or a good poet and a bad business man. Allen said, "Just be good!"

Another tendril reaches into a poem I wrote at Lu Garcia's house soon after the conclusion of the Berkeley Poetry Conference:

PATTERNS

look at the numbers  
Kant 478a-79d  
there is beauty in the moral order  
and Bacon who should  
be in Everyman's Library  
knew Augustine confessed

I have a friend who says  
there are 3 principles  
the good, the bad  
and that which is neither  
good nor bad

as for the which is neither  
my friend told me to stop  
smoking, which changed my life  
because I do smoke 2 to 3 packs

I write this sitting  
on a Persian rug  
listening to a harpsichord  
on a Victrola play  
Partia #2 in C Minor  
Schmieder 826

478793232826  
in the bottom of the 9<sup>th</sup>

The tap root of the idea I have in mind is to be found in Plato. There the transcendentals (the True, the Good, and the Beautiful) are ontological properties of Being. Truth can be verified by reason, the Good by action, and the Beautiful by experience of proportional harmony. In the *Symposium* (Cooper, John, ed. 1997. *Plato: Complete Works*, Indianapolis: Hackett, p. 211), Plato says, "The true order of going is to use the beauties of the earth as steps along which to mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty: from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions until he arrives at the idea of absolute beauty." Perusing the Wikipedia article on the transcendentals, I see that France Diderot compared the True, the Good, and the Beautiful to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and J. G. Sulzer, in a supplement to Diderot's *Encyclopaedie* in 1776, translated the ideas in terms of the aesthetic, the moral, and the intellectual. (Crocker L. G., *Two Diderot Studies* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1952, pp. 99-101.) Over time, Truth-

Goodness-Beauty become linked and convergent. You cannot have one without the other.

But what is the idea? Dear reader, please indulge me a little longer. I am warming to my subject, but I wish to proceed cautiously, introducing important characters and events as ballast to my intellectual endeavor. Ideas can remain dormant for long intervals. Like with a plant, the right conditions may not be present to enable the seed to sprout. The earth may be fertile; the air may be moist; but the temperature and light might be inadequate for germination. I feel my idea needs time not only to germinate but to grow. What other factors are involved in this idea? Who else has had a hand in its development?

The idea appeared in my consciousness just after the completion of a traditional Tibetan Buddhist three-year retreat where I was ensconced in the cabin, known as Luminous Peak, at Tara Mandala Retreat Center in the San Juan Mountains, near Pagosa Springs, Colorado. I had completed a cycle of practices known as *Dzinpa Rangdröl* (Self-liberation of Clinging), a mind *terma* (treasure) revealed by Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje (1800-1866).

Ideas are funny things. I use the term “funny” both in the sense of amusing or comical and as curious or strange. Having completed my long retreat, I am amused (or, perhaps, it is more accurate to say it is ironic) that, after all these years of rigorous mental training which were designed to enable me to rest in the nature of mind and stabilize the practice of non-thought, I would be having philosophical thoughts at all. Well, lo and behold, as all Dzog Chen meditators know, even if you have the ability to contemplate emptiness and rest in *rigpa* (ordinary mind), thoughts still arise. Whether you attach and cling to them or not is what is important. One discovers that when thoughts arise, they self-liberate all by themselves. No effort is required. But if a thought arises and the meditator becomes distracted (either caused by an idea from within or an event from without) and investigates the distraction, say traces it to a point in the past or projects it into the future, then the mind of the meditator leaves the state of calm abiding, moves away from the mindfulness-awareness meditation, and becomes engaged in a process of ratiocination.

As I said, I had completed my traditional three-year retreat. This was in the fall of 2012. There was a facet of the Dzog Chen training still to be transmitted by Tulku Sang-ngag, the Vajra Master, but that would transpire at the lama’s pleasure. My friend, Beth Lee-Herbert, had completed her retreat in Karuna, a cabin about a mile from Luminous Peak. We were now trying to re-enter the everyday world and were having a rough go of it. It was not easy to leave our snug nests after three years in isolation. True, we had gone from our cabins to the temple for brief periods to receive transmissions and explanations of the yogic practices we were to practice and accomplish, but for long stretches of time (six to eight months during the inclement months and, at other times, periods of one hundred days) we had only the wild folk for companions.

Life in the world and life in the *sangha* (the fellowship of practitioners that had supported us) had continued unabated while Beth and I were in retreat. During the time of our retreat, a three-storied temple had been erected at Tara Mandala. Lama Tsultrim's original vision had now evolved and manifested as a world-renowned retreat center in a dramatic physical setting. (Go to [www.taramandala.org](http://www.taramandala.org) for more information.) But for the first two yogis completing the long retreat at Tara Mandala, it was a bumpy reentry. Even a pure land with a retreat center is a mini-samsara. And now there was facebook and smart phones to contend with, and the economy was coming out of a huge recession, and there were new rules to be followed on the land; and, then, a large statue of Machig Lapdrön (a 12th century Tibetan saint) went missing.

The county sheriff's department investigated and determined, based on the evidence—an empty wine bottle left on the altar, an empty bag that had contained beef jerky, and deep footprints that led into the sagebrush—that the crime was vandalism. Perhaps, someone dared someone else to sneak into the temple and abscond with a statue. Easy enough, since there was no physical security, no locks on the doors. A tracker was called in and reported finding a route through the sagebrush back to the road head that would allow the intruders a clear path. This was accepted as the official explanation, but once the police had left the scene, an another investigation led to another conclusion. A particular nun was found to be responsible because she had neglected to perform a required protectors practice. However, I knew that this nun had been invited to attend a yoga workshop and another nun had done the practice. The other nun was deemed an improper substitute because she was from a different lineage, although she had been practicing with us for over a year. Therefore, it was determined that a karmic break in the protectors practice had occurred, and demons had found a way to violate the temple. Tibetans take their demonology seriously, and the protectors practices are considered of utmost importance in and around a temple to ritually prevent harmful influences and obstacles. At our level of practice, there couldn't be any breaks or slackness. Still, I was dumbfounded.

My formal three-year retreat was complete, but I went back to Luminous Peak to reflect on the nature of necessity and contingency. *Karma* had now become a concept that bore some consideration. I sat down and read Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. After years of immersing myself in Eastern mysticism, I needed to balance my mind with something from the West. *War and Peace* had the weight needed. Not only is it a great read, but it is also an extended meditation on causality, as well as how ideas relate to other ideas. Tolstoy reveals that there is but a mere coincidence between the attempts of his characters to shape history to their own desires while what is happening is independent of their actions.

*Karma* can be described as both the activity and the result. According to Trinley Norbu (*White Sail*, Shambhala, 1992), there are four approaches to understanding karma: (1) karma originates in subjective consciousness (*Vaisesika*); (2) karma originates in ordinary conscious mind

(*Sutranta*); (3) karma originates in the basis of all phenomena (*Yogacara*); (4) karma originates through interdependent circumstances (*Madhyamika*). There is a basis for enlightenment in all these points of view, even though in the enlightenment stage of realization the effect of karma is transcended. From the practice of *Vajrayana* one discovers that it is unnecessary to divide cause from result, and one thereby recognizes all activity is the spontaneous display of the emptiness of all phenomena and self. One realizes that there is no possessor of phenomena, so therefore all phenomena become illusory with the freedom of non-attachment. From the Dzog Chen (Great Perfection) perspective, there is no karma: if phenomena are unborn, there is nothing to be affected; therefore, there can be no results. Still, karma is taught. In *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* (Shambhala 1994, p.283), Patrul Rinpoche writes:

*You know the relative to be a lie, yet still you practice the two accumulations.*

*You realize that in the absolute there is nothing to be meditated on,  
yet still you practice meditation.*

*You see relative and absolute as one, yet still you diligently practice.*

*Peerless Teacher, at your feet I bow.*

I had been four years in a cauldron under intense pressure. I read; I reflected; I meditated; and, then I went AWOL.

My gate keeper, Ani Kunsang, gave me a ride to town. I went to my storage locker, started my truck, and drove to Santa Fe. I contacted Lama Gyurme, whom I had assisted in the painting of lintels for the Tara Temple before going into retreat. It was Lama Gyurme who had sealed me into retreat, and I had promised him I would be his assistant upon completion of my retreat, and I wanted to talk with him and make plans for the next stage of my transition back into the everyday world. I stayed with Lama Gyurme and his family in their apartment at Project Tibet on Canyon Road where I contracted some kind of stomach virus that left me incapacitated. I slept for two days and nights, occasionally receiving sips of chicken soup. Lama G told me that getting sick is not unusual after coming out of long retreat. When I could move around again, I headed back to Tara Mandala, knowing I should be present for a Solstice Ceremony to be held in the temple.

On my way along Hwy 84, just before I reached Abiquiu, I passed an inn with a gift shop, and I decided to turn around and go back in order to buy a present for Lama Tsultrim. Not a smart move. I picked the worst spot along the road between Santa Fe and Pagosa Springs to make this maneuver, and I was hit broadside by a car containing two women with their babies strapped in car seats. The place I had decided to make my U turn was between two curves, so I was not hit

by a car traveling at super high speed, but the impact was still severe.

The seat belt tightly gripped me. The air bag punched me. The impact sent my vehicle into a spin. I felt as though I was writhing in centrifugal force. My left eye saw dark and my right eye saw light. I looked up and saw the flat top of Pedernal Mountain, a mountain I knew from the paintings of Georgia O'Keefe. This is a physical and spiritual sentinel, central in the belief systems of the Apache, the Tewa, and the Navajo. A protector if there ever was one.

After the police arrived and it was determined that no one was injured, only shaken up, the vehicles were removed from the scene, the broken glass swept up, and I found myself standing by the side of the road with a satchel of clothes in one hand and a pair of snow boots in the other. A highway patrol man in a cruiser asked me if he could drop me off somewhere. I told him that I wanted to go to the Abiquiu Inn, which was just around the bend. He drove me there. I got out of the cruiser. The wind blew a tumbleweed across my path. I was wearing my robes, and they fluttered. The cruiser pulled away, and I entered the inn. There was a large photograph of Georgia O'Keefe above the counter. She was seated on the back of a motorcycle behind a man and turned towards the photographer with her hand raised in either a greeting or a farewell. There was ethereal parlor music playing on the speaker system. Beneath the photo was a gray-haired lady that looked very much like the famous painter. She smiled and said, "Interesting escort you had." I thought, "I must be dead." If this were so, it would be ontologically inconvenient for me to return to Tara Mandala for the Solstice ceremony.

"I had an accident on the road," I said.

"I gathered as much from the how the traffic slowed down," she said. "Would you like a cup of tea?"

I drank a cup of tea and booked myself into a room. I lay on the bed and stared at the ceiling. There was a stain where water had seeped through the plaster. I concluded from my feelings that I was out of my body and having a transpersonal experience on a subtle level arising from poor judgment on the causal level. Facing the confusion I was experiencing, I attempted to organize my thoughts along the lines of Ken Wilber's 4 quadrants (Figure 5.1, *The Marriage of Sense and Soul*, Broadway Books, New York, 1999): the subjective, personal experience in the upper left-hand quadrant; the objective, measureable experience in the upper right-hand quadrant; the subjective, shared experience in the lower left-hand quadrant; and the measurable, institutional experience in the lower right-hand quadrant.

The subjective-"I" experience consisting of my eruption from retreat, the broken *samaya* (promise) with my lama, a possible awakening or heightening of consciousness through the recent near death event in the world space. The measurable events involved the various forces (horizontal and centrifugal) of two cars colliding (skid marks, speed) and any wounds or bruises,

aches and pains on my body. The subjective, shared dimension consisted of myths of descent and dismemberment (Iannah, Dionysus, and the accident happening at the base of Pedernal could easily be a magic-myth archetype image related to Tröma (my trauma), the wrathful tutelary deity of my recent meditations, the wrathful, devouring mother of primordial, transpersonal experience. And the measurable side involving institutional personae consisted of the County Sheriff's Department, the medics, and State Farm Insurance Company, as well as the Albiqui Inn where I was presently residing. At any rate, it was bad spot on the highway to make a U-turn, I concluded. Duh.

I phoned Lama Tsultrim and told her what had happened, and she sent Beth to get me and bring me to the land. After a bath in Epson salts and many consoling words, I returned to Luminous Peak to reflect and heal. There, I re-read Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* and continued tracing the tendrils of the themes that had led to this pass. Only a work of art would redeem me. As Thoreau said, "There is elevation in every hour as no part of the earth is so low that the heavens not be seen from, and we have only to stand on the summit of our hour to command an uninterrupted view."

I left retreat with Lama Tsultrim's reluctant blessing, in February of 2013, and completed my move to Santa Fe. I now had a room in a large adobe-style house that belonged to Lama Gyurme, his wife, Yudron, and his young son, Trinley. I received the Tögal stage of retreat teachings in the Dzog Chen practices at Tulku Sang ngag's retreat center near Glorieta, New Mexico, which he calls "The Seat of Longchenpa." I continued to practice Dzog Chen, assist Lama Gyurme when needed, and worked on my autobiography, *Jampa's Worldly Dharmas*, a trilogy running to a thousand pages, written in the third person by my persona, Bouvard Pécuchet.

One morning, while having tea at The Teahouse on Canyon Road, I looked up and saw that a young woman across from me was reading Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*. It is not unusual for the students who attend St. John's College to read original texts. It is the required curriculum at this school. I asked the woman how she fared in her endeavor. She smiled and replied that she was enjoying the book. We got to talking, and before we parted, we both knew we were becoming friends. I even went so far as to give her a no-longer needed draft copy of the first volume of my trilogy. She told me she was soon to teach a class on art at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas and would reach me by email. I received the following:

*Dear Jampa,*

*I have been meaning to write you all week to tell you how much I enjoyed our conversation at the Tea House a week and a half ago, the one that began with Nietzsche and moved on to many other things. I have to tell you it came as a particular gift insofar as I had been for the hour or two previous despairing over the dim intelligence of our world, having been subjected just before you*

*arrived to an hour of the most banal conversation imaginable by three very loud women at another table. To encounter someone as well read and thoughtful and insightful as you felt at that moment a minor miracle.*

*Also, I am really enjoying your book! I have to admit that after I left the Tea House, some hesitation set in and I wondered if I should have agreed to take it. It is something I usually avoid doing, due to the fact that I am an exceptionally critical reader and find myself hating most of what I read, particularly if it comes from someone who hasn't been dead for many years. To read something bad from a person I like is deeply unpleasant experience. But not only do I not hate your book, I am thoroughly enjoying it! This may come as no surprise to you, but as we were strangers, I couldn't have known. It has a wonderful liveliness; it's funny and odd and also insightful, and the poetry tucked within it is quite lovely.*

*I am also struck by a number of curious parallels with myself and my life, which is perhaps not surprising in light of our conversation. I read the "Boats" chapter today - Moby Dick is a very important book for me, and your writing reminded me of a little photo book project that I assembled but never got printed up. Have you read much Conrad? I've been enchanted with his sea novels lately (especially Nostromo [not purely a sea novel, but a brilliant novel that involves the sea] and Lord Jim), largely for reasons you point to in Melville. Also, I am writing a novel about a cattle baron ("Animals") and have written a great deal about art ("Art").*

*I will save more extensive commentary until I have finished, but in the meantime please know that I am enjoying it.*

*I'm writing from a hotel room in Las Vegas, Nevada. I'm here to teach a couple of four-week classes to art students at UNLV; I was nervous to come, for various reasons, but the first week went fine and at the moment I am happy for the quiet and the isolation. I deeply dislike Las Vegas, but there is a special kind of peace to a cheap hotel room - I am, in many ways, a monastic at heart - and the writing has been going well. As I said, I am writing a novel about a cattle baron in western South Dakota around the turn of the last century, and about his granddaughter, who is half Lakota. It was largely for this book that I was reading Nietzsche, because it is also a book about the story of western philosophy, and about American history. It's a book about a lot of things. It is my second novel. I should be working on getting the first one published but I am dragging my feet, so it languishes.*

*Most of my published writing has been art criticism. I lived in LA for fifteen years before moving back to Santa Fe (my hometown) last summer, and I wrote for the LA Times and various magazines - that is why I'm here in Las Vegas. But I've had a kind of crisis of faith with all that and I don't really know where it's going anymore. I'm supposed to be working on a book about art, specifically the concept of value in art - that is what my classes are based on. But every time I sit*

*down to try to do it, I spin out very quickly into despair - from why does art matter? to why does anything matter? It's been a problem. I have always wished I could be a scholar of some obscure and narrow field - but it was not meant to be: everything spins out to the existential. It's maddening.*

*Well, I hope you don't mind a long-ish note. Thank you again for your book. I've been noting, in pencil, typos here and there, as you suggested - though very few. Best of luck in your continued reading/revision/reflection with the other two.*

*Best, Holly*

I replied:

*dear holly,*

*thank you for your note, it touched me, meaning that i felt a sympathetic soul responding to my work, and it touched on some important philosophical, maybe spiritual, issues i too have been struggling with*

*yes, our lives do seem to have points of contact, like your writing about south dakota, because just before i went into retreat, i was at the pine ridge reservation, in my robes, dancing with the lakota under the arbor, while my son completed his sundance for that year*

*and one of my daughters is working on her dissertation to complete a doctorate in art history at the university of washington, her thesis on the italian art movement of arte povera, and she will soon travel to milan to interview germano celant, the organizer of that art movement and now artistic director of the prada foundation, believe me, she has similar concerns, and she is a "scholar of some obscure and narrow field" as you put it and she too has existential angst, yes, it is maddening, but she presses on with her work*

*i suppose i have a slight advantage in this angst business being a buddhist, since we don't get upset that there is no "meaning to things" and we just relax into the "emptiness" rather than freaking out, and i can do art for the sake of art, selfish of me to be sure, and my writing i do for the "invisible circle" and for "the process" rather than for any material reason, lucky me*

*as for meaning, well, guess what? right now, i'm trying to figure out a new system of ethics based on aesthetics, something stimulated by the quote from c.s. lewis, "beauty will save the world...but what kind of beauty?" hmmm, maybe you have an idea*

*you see, we are in a dark void without beauty, and it's no wonder we fall into despair and wonder about the meaning of life, and it doesn't help being told we think too much, since it is really the case that no one seems to be thinking at all, so there's a lot of work to do to change the moral*

*landscape rather than just leaving things in the messy mess they are at present, and a good place to begin is to "worship at the font of beauty" as Pound put it, since so few do*

*oh, well, how i do go on, an email is no place for this, and i hope we can talk later, when you return*

*in the meantime, keep the faith and teach well*

*your friend, Jampa*

"Beauty will save the world...but what kind of beauty?" Reflecting on Lewis's question brought me to a phrase in my poem "Patterns": *there is beauty in the moral order*, and I asked, Is there morality in the aesthetic order?

I proceed, as is the wont of the present generation, to surf the net, and I encountered a philosopher, unknown to me, by the name of Slavoj Žižek. I like the guy. He's on youtube. You can watch him fidget. He wipes his nose with one hand and pinches himself (perhaps, to be sure he exists) with another. He sweats. He complicates things. He turns out to be a superstar on the philosophical circuit, and in one of his online lectures, Slavoj Žižek (1949- ), a Slovenian Marxist introduces me to work of Fredrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854), a German Idealist who is the greatest philosopher of the Romantic Movement.

I looked for a copy of Žižek's *The Invisible Remainder: On Schelling and Related Matters* at the Meem Library on the St. John's campus, but it was not in the catalog. Schelling was there, and I found his *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Thinking*, or I thought I had, but, later, at the betterday coffeehouse, upon looking at the book I had checked out, I found that it was *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* by Martin Heidegger. Oh well, I thought, secondary material is frowned on at St. John's...Heidegger(!?)...might be alright (...even if he was a Nazi?... yes)...And so, I began in a reasonable manner to deconstruct my present sense of philosophical thought...in a reasonable manner, mind you...to be open to new themes and new memes and to generate God knows what.

The use of "God" here may seem odd for a Buddhist, but I thank God for all His blessings and for the many, many instructive lessons that I have received. I am grateful for this life, even if, as St. Augustine put it, we are born amid piss and shit. I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth, the better to feed off the offal.

How do I reconcile my Judeo-Christian faith with that of Buddhism? To me it is easier to be a Buddhist and a Christian than it is to be a Christian and a Buddhist. The First Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," is not a problem for a Buddhist, since we do not believe in a creator god. Gotama and other buddhas are men and women who are given respect

because they have attained the state of enlightenment, the true understanding of the nature of mind, comprised of luminous cognitive emptiness. And I do not presume to equate this enigmatic EMPTINESS with God, even if the mirror-like wisdom inherent in the natural state of mind (emptiness/well-being) allows us to create the concept of God in our own image.

Buddha-mind is said to be, by those who have attained this realization, to be beyond description, but the path to enlightenment can be communicated. The Buddhist approach to the meaning of Life is understood within a psychological context, and the metaphysical approach of Christians, with the emphasis on proving God's existence independent of humans, is abandoned. The ontological solution is: nothing really exists in and of itself. Even Heidegger's inquiry into "Being" could be considered an etymological tempest in a teapot, and Heidegger might agree, depending on where his mindstream rests. But I digress.

Freedom, according to Heidegger, determines true Being and transcends all human being. Man is grounded in Freedom, but the Ground (the inner-divine becoming which is the self-seeing of God) strives against itself.

Nietzsche also propounds this idea in *Beyond Good and Evil*, but he gets bogged down with the polemics of conceptual schemes and relative perceptions. He wants the freedom to think. To think beyond the box. To think with the feelings. To throw his body into the painting. To think with the feelings? Can this be the morality in the aesthetic order he speaks of, and, if so, can this type of morality be activated?

Can the appreciation of Beauty be the basis of right behavior? What foundation for morality is there beyond the Good? How can we separate the Good from the True from the Beautiful and expect right action? Without a lot of bloodshed and shame. Something beautiful. Donne's phrase: "eternal sunshine of the spotless mind." Not a bad metaphor for meditative absorption. *Rigpa*.

*Rigpa* is the knowledge of the fundamental ground or Buddha-nature. The opposite of *rigpa* is *marigpa* (*avidyā*, ignorance). Knowledge of the ground. Schelling raises the question of man's place in nature, one that does not serve any systematic purpose. Evil introduces a necessary imbalance into the system of the world, and this is the origin of life, life that is chaotic, dissonant and a threat to freedom. Through his analysis, Schelling attempts to reconcile God's necessary nature with his freedom. In their introduction to *Schelling's Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, the editors, Schmidt and Love, state:

God plays a delicate balancing act in his own self-revelation, which may (as conditioned by the ground) and must not (as somehow overcome this condition) end in a disastrous contraction back into the ground.

Compare this to Longchenpa's Dzog Chen analysis of the ground. Here I quote from page 66 of David Germano's introduction to his *Poetic Thought, the Intelligent Universe, and the Mystery of Self: the Tantric Synthesis of rDzogs Chen in Fourteenth Century Tibet* (a doctoral thesis at the University of Wisconsin – Madison) which is a translation and commentary on Longchenpa's *The Treasury of Words and Meanings*. Germano states:

While spontaneous presence itself forms a shimmering mandalic panorama utterly devoid of materialization, duality, or ignorance, the key lies in the emergent capacity for self-reflection and awareness deriving from the Ground's compassionate resonance, which in that instant of the Ground-presencing's manifestation is suddenly confronted by this swirling play of rainbow-colored lights. In this single instant, this capacity for awareness can either self-recognize the lights as its own self-presencing and hence in the second instance become liberated as a Buddha or fail to self-recognize the lights and hence inexorably move towards the dualist creation of the Other as it strays into dualistic existence as a "sentient being." This split at the Universe's first instant is expressed as the "freedom" of transcendence in contrast to the "straying" of cyclic existence, and hence it is said that the indeterminate, neutral Ground-presencing can either serve as the "foundation of freedom" (in the case of recognition) or the "foundation of straying" (in the case of non-recognition).

Buddha nature in Dzog Chen parlance and God in Schelling's conception teeter (are poised) on the edge of presence. The difference in interpretation is between a divine being risking a return to anarchy and an experience of self-recognition by a transcendental state of cognitive emptiness. This teetering is the enigma of phenomenal existence. Perfect. Or not.

Still, after all the palaver, after all the cups of tea, we are left with unanswered questions, and the answers cannot be read in the tea leaves. Here follows a short poetic essay into the history of precept ethics (with the help of *Wikipedia*):

Is it possible to have knowledge of what is right and wrong?

Socrates admonishes us to look inward

Toward our humanness, not toward the world—

Character is the key to virtue

If we can reach our full potential

Become real, we will do good, says Aristotle

Self-realization is the key to virtue

For Stoics, peace of mind is the goal

The inviolate will is the means to this goal

Freedom from attachments is the key

Fulfilling the momentary desire or pursuit  
Of spiritual bliss is the principal of Hedonism  
“Eat, drink & be merry! Fear not death!”

Confucians emphasize relationships  
As the most important consideration in ethics—  
To be ethical we do what our relationships need

Nonviolence towards all sentient beings  
To find happiness and the causes for happiness  
Discipline is the key to our Buddhist virtue

“You may wind up in another’s shoes  
In the next incarnation—be selfless  
And kind,” say we Hindus

Moral responsibility is the key to Heaven for Muslims  
“Keep God in your heart and the world in your hand”  
God grants us the faculty to discern good from evil

Love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness due to sin.  
With divine assistance, we Christians are called  
To become virtuous in both thought and deed

Go to the Bible, to the wisdom narratives  
To answer Judaic moral questions—note the  
Dynamic interplay between law and ethics

From a Consequentialist standpoint,  
A morally right action produces a good outcome—  
“The ends justify the means”

Utilitarianism argues the proper course of action  
Maximizes a positive effect, such as “the greatest happiness  
Of the greatest number,” according to Bentham

Kant argues that we must act from duty—it is not  
The consequences but the motives that are important  
And the only good is a good will

Pierce, James, and Dewey, pragmatists, believe  
We should emphasize social reform over attempts  
To account for consequences, individual virtue, or duty

Postmodernists study the conditions of actions—*a simple*  
*Alignment of concepts and actions is impossible*—  
Accept the messy nature of humanity as unchangeable

So, where does this leave us? Is it possible to have knowledge of what is right and wrong? The best Kant can come with is “Don’t use people.” Hood says, “It seems that the best we can do is to admonish everyone to be nice.”

The solution would have to be not only an intuition of feelings, but an intellectual intuition. A meditative experience of bliss-emptiness. Not a thought—resonate compassion as an intellectual-physical intuitional experience of the Ground as an undifferentiated aesthetic continuum. Resonate compassion as the aesthetic foundation for right behavior.

I began to formulate my feeling that a meditational experience of emptiness is an aesthetic experience. And not only were they analogous but there was a tendril of thinking leading out of the Platonic tradition through Schelling to Heidegger to my poetry?

Knowing full well I might be positing a false premise and thereby wind up proving almost anything, I proceeded to (1) look to the authorities, even as a weak form of argument, to see if there was any consistency in their thinking on a subject that can only be verified subjectively; (2) satisfy myself that my personal meditations were on par with these authorities in quality, if not in complete stability, and so confirm their conclusions myself; (3) build a framework that would bridge the gap between eastern and western thinking on this subject, defining terms and trying to give concrete examples. I had recently come out of retreat. I had the courage.

The next stage of this saga took me to Ellensburg, Washington, a town with which I have had a forty-year connection. I came to visit my family and decided to move back to this valley of peace and plenty. I attended The Northwest Philosophy Conference at Central University, home of the Wildcats, in November of 2014. I went not to beard the philosophers but to see what the contemporary mind-set is like. If I was going to convince anyone that mindfulness-awareness meditation could be a tool to reveal aesthetic morality as a function of human consciousness, I would need to structure my argument within the context of current ideas.

Beginning with Descartes—his tree of knowledge with its metaphysical roots, its trunk of physics, its branches of ethics, aesthetics, and so forth.—I would move to Leibniz’s theodicy and God’s plan for the human race, where evil is not an individual human’s responsibility—to Kant’s critiques of truth, goodness, and beauty, wherein he takes a radical step by seeing that the Good

is man's responsibility, that humans can make evil decisions—to Schelling accepting Evil as necessary, much like Goethe's notion in *Faust* (Prologue, Part 1), where God knows what's what and wants Faust to know Him, and Mephistopheles is a puppet helping Faust have this experience. For Schelling, Evil is a dissonance in God, a tension resonating through Nature between God and Man.

Nietzsche's madman kicks God out of the equation with his exclamation "God is dead!" and falls into existential despair, and once the language analysts and the deconstructionists get through with the history of ideas, the logos is left floundering and philosophy seems to be as dead as ash. However, Heidegger, following in the footsteps of Schelling, asks, "Why is there anything at all and not just nothing?"

Hard not to point a finger at Descartes. It is claimed that his methodology set science on a firm footing, and Western nation states went the way of science in a big way, and even Schelling (as suggested by Žižek in one of his lectures) seems to have contributed to the concept of dialectical materialism and the eventual rise of global capitalism;— but if this trend is to be modified and mindfulness-awareness meditation is to be a pedagogical tool for a wisdom ethic and not just a means of stress reduction, I must show that this form of meditation is a method by which one can experience the ground of the philosopher's God, and that this "God" is the same as resting in Dzog Chen *rigpa*. The problem is, of course, that these are subjective experiences, and each philosopher-meditator will be on their own.

At the Pacific Northwest Philosophy Conference, I attended lectures on German Idealism in the 19th century. Fichte dismissed the need for things-in-themselves and embraced his ego. Hegel became more and more entangled in his system by focusing on Geist. Only Schelling could see that metaphysics did not need to be a study of things-in-themselves but could be about our spontaneous understanding of things. His belief that transcendental philosophy finds its full expression in the philosophy of art shifts the focus from metaphysics to ontology and aesthetics.

Therefore, I had three points to make: (1) find a parallel between Dzog Chen and a western stance, say existentialism or phenomenology; (2) determine the relationship between meditation and art; and then and only then (3) ask if there could be morality in the aesthetic order. Because this is a cross-comparison between eastern and western concepts, my question becomes six-fold. It is never simple.

### **Outline of my summation**

1. Role of beauty in the moral order
2. A misunderstanding of Kant's *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*

- 2.1 Kant's definition of the beautiful
- 2.2 Kant's definition of taste
- 2.3 Belief that the beautiful is inherent in the object
- 3. Kant and Schiller
  - 3.1 Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*
    - 3.1.1 Redemptive use of art
    - 3.1.2 Play impulse
  - 3.2 Shriner's *The Invention of Art*
    - 3.2.1 Schiller's play impulse
      - 3.2.1.1 Harmony of freedom & necessity
      - 3.2.1.2 Artist as embodiment of play
    - 3.2.2 Aesthetic appreciation
- 4. Role of morality in the aesthetic order
  - 4.1 Morality inherent in the aesthetic order
  - 4.2 Inquiry by Bugbee
    - 4.2.1 Ethical inquiry and action in flow of our lives
    - 4.2.2 Faith and openness in ethical reflection
- 5. Meditation as an aesthetic experience
  - 5.1 Procedures to be followed
    - 5.1.1 Meditation is a subjective experience
    - 5.1.2 Eight-fold path
    - 5.1.3 Yogic practices
      - 5.1.3.1 Guru yoga
      - 5.1.3.2 Inner heat yoga
      - 5.1.3.3 Vase breath yoga
  - 5.2 Aesthetic Morality
    - 5.2.1 Control of ventilation
    - 5.2.2 Biological-ontological foundation of morality

## **Beauty in the moral order**

It appears to me, now, that my novel idea is based upon a misunderstanding of *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* by Immanuel Kant. The reference in my poem "Patterns" to there being beauty in the moral order came from an outline of topics contained in the *Critique* as organized in the *Syntopicon* of the *Great Books*. I believed that Kant claimed the beautiful plays a large role in moral judgments.

In his *Critique*, Kant says the beautiful is "what pleases immediately." (*Great Books of the Western World*, Encyclopedia Britannica, Chicago, 2nd edition, 1990, Kant, Volume 39, page 478b.) He says further that "Taste is the faculty of estimating an object or a mode of representation by means of a delight or aversion apart from any interest. The object of such a delight is called *the beautiful*. He goes on to define *the beautiful* as "that which, apart from concepts, is represented as the Object of a Universal delight" (ibid. 479d). Next, Kant notes that we mistakenly believe that because *the beautiful* can be appreciated by others as well, the beautiful is deemed to be inherent in the object.

For Kant, the thing-in-itself cannot be known; only appearances are accessible to the mind. So, at first, we receive sensuous pleasure from the appearance of an object (for Kant, "a rose"), and in the second moment, our taste, developed by way of our cultural upbringing, gives us the concept that *the beautiful* can be validated objectively when we are in agreement with others with similar taste. The logical judgment, based on taste (or a canon of acceptable values of the beautiful), that roses in general are beautiful is founded upon the original subjective, individual evaluation that roses are agreeable, and we are delighted when the inner and outer representations are united, making *the beautiful* universal. In this, we are mistaken. The only attributes *the good* and *the beautiful* have in common, other than *the beautiful*, in a limited sense, being a symbol of *the good* (ibid. 546d) is in the delight. *The beautiful* pleases, whereas the good is esteemed and has objective worth (ibid. 479b).

Kant concludes *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* by an appeal to moral ideas as the basis of taste: "For only when sensibility is brought into harmony with moral feeling can genuine taste assume a definite unchangeable form" (ibid. 549a). This, for Kant, is the role of beauty in the moral order. On the other hand, if *beauty* is posited as the foundation on which a moral structure is built, it is moral feeling that must be brought into harmony with sensibility.

### **Kant and Schiller**

Another auspicious error. In the process of developing my idea, I ordered books from amazon, and I found a copy of Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (translated by Reginald Snell, Dover, Mineola, New York, 2004), a book which I had thought was to be by Friedrich Schelling. The title had intrigued me, and I had not looked closely at the spelling of the

author's name. But Schiller's ideas were in line with my own.

In his introduction to Schiller's book, Snell says (ibid. p. 8), "It was a casual remark of Kant's that art compared to labour may be considered as play, that originally prompted him to develop his own theory of play..." Schiller believes that the aesthetic experience can resolve the conflict between the intellect and the senses, as well as between nature and reason. He believes that art can be a means to educate us and bring us into the realm of moral harmony, and he proposes a union between the spirit and the sensuous through the play impulse. By play, Schiller means "everything that is neither subjectively nor objectively contingent, and yet imposes neither outward nor inward necessity. As our nature finds itself, in the contemplation of the Beautiful, in a happy midway point between law and exigency, so, just because it is divided between the two, it is withdrawn from the constrain of both alike." (Fifteenth Letter, ibid. p.78).

In the eighteenth letter, Schiller writes, "Through Beauty the sensuous man is led to form and to thought; through beauty the spiritual man is brought back to matter and restored to the world of sense" (ibid. p.87), and In the twenty-fourth letter (ibid. p.120), Schiller writes, "Contemplation (reflection) is Man's first free relation to the universe which surrounds him. If desire directly apprehends its object, contemplation thrusts its object into the distance, thereby turning it into its true and inalienable possession and thus securing it from passion."

My daughter Lu Auz, who teaches art history at the Memphis College of Art, brought to my attention a book she uses in her classes, *The Invention of Art: A Culture History* by Larry Shiner (University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 2001). In chapter 7 ("From Taste to the Aesthetic") of part 2 ("Art Divided"), there is a section entitled "Kant and Schiller Sum up the Aesthetic." In discussing Schiller's belief in the redemptive power of fine art, Shiner says:

In the genuine work of fine art there is already a harmony of freedom and necessity, duty and inclination, the "spiritual drive" and the "sensuous drive," a union that Schiller calls "play." The artist-genius embodies the transcendent truth about life in the work of art as play, yet this truth is not a specific content but resides only in the form of the work. "In a truly successful work of art the contents should effect nothing, the form everything, for only through form is the whole man affected...only from form is there true aesthetic freedom" (Schiller 1967, 155). True fine art never aims at some particular result like stimulating emotions, teaching beliefs, or improving morals. Only when people renounce all such instrumental aims and exercise "a disinterested and unconditional appreciation of pure semblance" will they have "started to become truly human" (Schiller 1967, 205).

[Shiner references the Oxford 1967 Clarendon Press edition of Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*.]

It is this “disinterested and unconditional appreciation of pure semblance” that Schiller speaks of that I plan to equate with the resonant compassion, a compassion without aim or object, that arises during calm abiding meditation in the Buddhist tradition.

### **Morality in the aesthetic order**

Leaving Kant and Schiller, it is my contention that morality (using the term in its broadest sense) is inherent in the aesthetic order and that the need for moral precepts to enable the individual to make right decisions on how to act is unnecessary. It is generally accepted that knowledge of moral precepts educates us to act morally, however when situations demanding moral judgment arise suddenly, there is not time to make moral reflections before we act. As William Blake points out in a *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* : “Jesus was all virtue , and acted from impulse not from rules.”

My close friend, Webster Hood, introduced me to a book written by his teacher: *The Inward Morning* by Henry C. Bugbee Jr. (Bald Eagle Press, Pennsylvania State College, 1958). Bugbee is writing a journal, and on Friday, September 26, 1952, he asks, “...can we assume that we may deliberately place ourselves in the vein of the categorically imperative flowing of our lives? Can we credit the possibility of realizing the root meaning of being under obligation, wither in thought or in action, according to methods of inquiry or of action?” He notes that “for purposes of ethical inquiry of the conditions of justified action can hardly be due to the following of ‘a proper method of inquiry.’” On Saturday, September 27th, Bugbee notes, “It would seem that faith, in the sense of a certain openness and trustiness on our part, is as essential in ethical reflection as in action.”

It is my contention that there are “procedures” that can be followed, but that these procedures are not typical aids to reflection in the Western philosophical tradition. Instead, these procedures are those developed in the yogic tradition.

### **Meditation as an aesthetic experience**

Meditation is a subjective practice, and if compassionate resonance can spontaneously effect our actions without recourse to the logical cognitions of moral imperatives, it must arise within the confines of the meditative experience itself. The training in meditation must make this reflexive, if it is to be any more than a half-hearted attempt at being good. In Tibetan Buddhism, this process is kick-started through Guru Yoga. It requires the student, as Bugbee suggests, to have faith. But not a faith without investigation of the teacher; indeed, the student must observe the teacher to be a 24/7 dharma machine and a master of meditation. Then, and only then, should

the student follow the teacher, for there are psychological dangers in the process of deconstructing the encrustation of indoctrinated moral precepts and cosmological concepts through the radical yogas of tantric Buddhism.

Utilizing peaceful absorption, the meditator experiences a state of well-being as the natural expression of emptiness, and this experience resonates as compassion. After completing the prerequisite trainings to establish the physical side of meditative stability (calm abiding), I practiced Guru Yoga, which involved hours of deep imagining (visualizations) and the repetition of specific sound formulas (mantras). These rewire the neural circuitry of the brain in a dramatic way. In this sense, there is an analogy with Heidegger's phenomenological scrutiny of the historical ontology of man's Being, but the yogic path is more rigorous and extends beyond an intellectual understanding into a final experiential condition. For example, the yogi or yogini can learn to dry sheets that have been soaked in freezing water while he or she sits in meditative equipoise. Such a practice is not for the faint of heart and must be learned in stages. All tantric teachings require a formal, ritual transmission by the lama (*wang*), along with verbal explanations (*lung*), without which the instructions in the manual are meaningless at best and could well lead the uninformed practitioner into dangerous psychological territory.

At each stage, I found myself confused by the recent instructions, but as I progressed with the training, I realized that I could not have advanced without having accomplished the previous stage of training. This understanding gave me confidence in the training and renewed my faith in and devotion to my teacher. Tulku Sang ngag once asked me, "What do you think I want from you?" and I answered, "Devotion." He shook his head in the negative and said, "Courage." In my training, I had begun with faith and devotion, moved forward with courage, gaining more confidence because of my accomplishment, and this in turn renewed my faith and devotion. The attentive contemplation pertaining to the attributes of the outer guru, in time, brought about an awareness of the same attributes being a part of myself. Inner guru and outer guru became one.

During the stage of learning vase breathing, where I was required to suspend the breath for increasing longer periods. I had analyzed my resistance to this practice as connected to my fear of drowning. As a boy at summer camp, in northern California, I had nearly drowned in the Gowalla River. Connected to this experience, I remembered a 1998 sci-fi film, *Sphere*, (directed by Barry Levinson and starring Dustin Hoffman, Sharon Stone, and Samuel L. Jackson), where the members of a crew of marine biologists, living at the bottom of the ocean, learn to ingest water infused with chemicals into their lungs so that they can withstand the ocean's pressure and explore an alien spaceship imbedded in the coral. The expression of surprise on Sharon Stone's face, when she discovered the validity of breathing with her lungs full of water, reinforced my determination to proceed. My ability to develop this yoga would not be accomplished through reasoning (in fact, the process is counter-intuitive), nor through the process of intellectual

judgments (or only in so far as I could judge my progress). It had to be done with the basic exertions of faith and courage.

Control of ventilation is normally controlled by the autonomic nervous system, with only limited voluntary override. Overcoming fear, I shifted my understanding of my yogic process of “holding my breath” to one of simply “not breathing.” A subtle difference, here, but it had a profound effect. The first method required an effort of my muscles, and the second did not. “Not breathing” requires no effort of the body but does require an effort of the mind.

I sat on my meditation mat and did my preparatory practices. My breathing slowed and then ceased. I overcame my fear of not having enough air and continued to sit. After twenty minutes, allowing for a few adjustments of returning to the non-breathing state (but not considering this a break in the practice), I stabilized the practice and remained in calm abiding. The candle on my altar went out. It was a night without a moon and intensely dark. I was sitting alone in the mountains with no one nearby, and I was feeling well-being in the cosmic void. No angst, no anguish, no agony. Luminous cognizance. My face before I was born. My original face. The face Dante Alighieri speaks of in line 108 of Canto XXXI of *Paradiso*, after peering into the image of the white Rose during his visit to the Tenth Heaven, the face which Jorge Luis Borges mentions in his poem “Of Heaven and Hell” (*Selected Poems*, Penguin, New York, 1999, translated by Alastair Reed, page 157):

and the sheer contemplation of that face—  
never-changing, whole beyond corruption—  
will be, for the rejected, an Inferno,  
and for the elected, Paradise.

Paradise. Nirvana. God. Buddha nature. Evolution. Intelligent Design. Intelligence. Just concepts. We can “think” with our feelings, and we have the innate biological-ontological (if not metaphysical) foundation for developing an esthetic morality. But, we don’t trust our inner natures.

A rose is a rose is a rose. –Gertrude Stein

A ~~rose~~ is a ~~rose~~ is a ~~rose~~. –Martin Heidegger

~~A rose is a rose is a rose.~~ –Longchen Rabjam

## PART 2

### REVERIES OF A EUDAENOMIST

Today, I can trace one tendril of thought to Bertrand Russell not being able to teach at Cal because of his free-thinking and his eye for the ladies. I had just finished reading *Why I Am Not a Christian*, bought in a Sausalito bookstore on a weekend outing with my drinking buddies, and I was intrigued and asked my dad, a man in his late fifties, born in 1900, what it was about and was told that Berkeley was overrun by the fifth column. Whatever that meant. I knew then that I needed more knowledge. Felt Russell's frustration when he asked his mother "What is matter?" and she told him, "Never mind."

Another tendril: "Dzog Chen can't be done with concepts!" I took the lama literally. As a post-structural ontological purist, I would never contaminate the I-in-itself with the Thing-in-itself, unless, that is, I wanted to eat a burrito.

Walking in the shoes of German philosophers. Trying on time and space as a pair of sensible shoes and walking along University Avenue. Turning into the campus, wearing hiking boots, I climb Hegelian heights. Sitting on a bench in Fichtean loafers...flapping with Schelling's flippers underwater...sprinting in Nietzschean racing shoes...slogging along in Schopenhauerian hip boots...

Those banners along the main drag, "What Did You Do Today?" Colored flags. A tiny piece of the Geist admonishing us to make ourselves relevant. I wonder if these inspirational banners that ask "What Did You Do Today?" with a photo of a CWU alumnae and their job title (Civil Servant, Nurse, CEO) could be a part of Hegel's concept of Geist. Spirit. Mind. A purpose to history. All these graduates of the institution, having been prepared to enter the outside world with knowledge of the arts and sciences, will leave the walled city to further the purpose of history to realize Reason. Or be exploited.

Jumping to Marx in my 12-league boots. What would Marx think of a yogi sitting in his cave? A waste. Unless he can come out of Samadhi and ease our suffering, otherwise, just selfishness. My lama said, "If you stay in your cave too long, you will become a cave bug."

Time and space. I put my left foot forward in space, followed by my right foot in time, trying not to step on a crack and break my mother's back. She's been dead for years, and I'm still doing

this. Clicking my fingernails to the palms of my hands in a one-two-three-four rhythm in rhythm to my steps, like a baseball player getting ready to bat. Moving into a concentration mode. Feeling time. Time, a superstition, but still double checking my positing of my will. Willy-nilly-ness, the idea-in-itself in all its glory. The Force is with me, today. My chi is achillin' while my Tao is adoin'.

But to eat that burrito I'm taking us back to Descartes. Descartes' proof of God based on the idea of perfection not being found in the world, so the idea must come from somewhere. Ergo, God. Professor Altman finds the argument an intriguing one. Melanie, his student, wants the idea of perfection to be accessible to her without the need for an Old Guy with a white beard. The discussion moves to the term Infinity. Melanie finds the source of her concept for Infinity in the positing of its counterpart, the finite. She thinks she sees Infinity implied in mathematics, the Fibonacci sequence, but Professor Altman tells her this is another attempt to compound parts to reach a whole, in this sense Infinity is a hole that can never be filled. All the same, where does that thought come from?

I suggest Infinity is a point where parallel lines meet; where tautologies snicker behind their masks; where  $n+1$  is 1; where new buddhas arrive and old buddhas return to the ground of being.

I posit the term "Completion"—a reference to Dzog Chen's Great Perfection. A view of the nature of mind and the nature of the moment. Everything perfect. I get a blank look. I take a poet's approach and reference Blake's "Infinity in a grain of sand, Eternity in a wildflower", but Professor Altman claims that is just poetic license. Me thinking it is revelation...but no matter. This would lead to a discussion of intellectual intuition, and we're discussing Descartes, so, no matter. And we are in Professor Altman's office after class. We had heard his initial lecture on Schopenhauer, and there are still unanswered questions. There always are.

### **Invocations of Geist.**

Rainbows of the five Buddha families.

Earlier, Professor Altman had shown the philosophy of Kant branching in two directions: one branch to Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, to Marx, and one branch to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Professor Altman says there are neo-Hegelians in Pittsburg.

Where Hegel goes, so goes Fichte and Schelling. Schelling, Boehme, Blake plunging to the heart's core, while Hegel soars thru the stratosphere in the Red Baron's bi-plane.

After Kant, to the extent that dogmatists critiqued themselves and understood the limits of their thinking, scientists continued to reach for the-Thing-in-itself, while poets critiqued themselves in

negative light and plunged into unreason following their imaginative energies, William Blake waving his arms above his head as though he had been attacked by bees.

Except for Coleridge, who took opium to get negative delight. Negative Capability. For Keats beauty is truth, not truth is beauty. Somewhere I read that that line in his "Ode to a Grecian Urn" was written especially for the eyes Samuel T., who Keats felt placed Truth higher than Beauty. Angels and Demons in brain wars.

And these 18th century capital nouns. Reason. Spirit. Truth. Like handling concepts the size of boxcars and moving them around one's neurological confines with the deftness of a stage magician.

### **Correspondence between Holly and Jampa:**

Dear Jampa

Nice to hear from you. I fear I dropped the ball again and I apologize, though I'm glad to hear you finished your project. You're much faster than I! I'm about midway through my art essay, and wrestling with Schopenhauer these last few days. I look forward to reading yours. I have been thinking that in the terms that you were looking at it - from the perspective of morality - the disinterested observer does have a different, perhaps more meaningful aspect. Thinking of it maybe as a state worth striving for rather than as a present condition. A judge should try to be a disinterested observer, right? There are times when it is a useful (and potentially true) ethical position. In terms of art, I guess I've just been more interested in how hopelessly entangled it all is - the observer, the artwork, the artist. Also, studying Dewey. We'll see where it goes - I've still got a way to go in sorting it out.

I came across this passage of Schopenhauer today and it made me think of you because, while he's talking about absorption in the art object, he might as well be talking about meditation, it seems to me. I was curious what you would think of that. He too touches on the brief nature of this state of mind.

*This freeing of knowledge lifts us as wholly and entirely away from all that, as do sleep and dreams; happiness and unhappiness have disappeared; we are no longer individual; the individual is forgotten; we are only pure subject of knowledge; we are only that one eye of the world which looks out from all knowing creatures, but which can become perfectly free from the service of will in man alone. Thus, all difference of individuality so entirely disappears, that it is all the same whether the perceiving eye belongs to a mighty king or to a wretched beggar; for neither joy nor complaint can pass that boundary with us. So, near us always lies a sphere in which we escape from all our misery; but who has the strength to continue long in it? As soon as any single relation*

*to our will, to our person, even those objects of our pure contemplation, comes again into consciousness, the magic is at an end; we fall back into the knowledge which is governed by the principle of sufficient reason; we know no longer the Idea, but the particular thing, the link of a chain to which we also belong, and we are again abandoned to all our woe.*

That course sounds great! I'm envious. I think I am trying to train myself slowly, painstakingly in philosophy, but it is slow going and I often wonder what it would be like in a proper university environment. I will be curious to know how it goes.

H.

. . .

Hi, Holly

*A History of a Novel Idea* baffles most people—"why all these philosophical passages that I don't understand in the story line?" or "I don't get this post-modern stuff" or "it's a bad imitation of *Tristram Shandy*" (which I take as a complement)

like you, hopelessly entangled in all the art - the observer, the artwork, the artist - back to myself, studying now the process Duchamp used to develop "the large glass", making collages, and reading Kant's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*.

I can see three themes going here: (1) aesthetic contemplation/detachment, (2) void/emptiness and will, and (3) aesthetic morality. I share your concerns, and I hope this helps the two of us to make sense of all the materials we have been trying to tie together and the various excursions our minds are taking as we sort and evaluate it. Thank you for the Schopenhauer and Dewey quotes; I have been avoiding both thinkers. I think I need to look at the three theme separately.

The directions of our pursuits are a bit different. You attempting to write philosophically and critically on art and me using what I'm calling "aesthetic contemplation" as a bridge from the West to meet "mindfulness-awareness meditation" from the East, hoping thereby to reveal a new way to understand morality, which in turn can help us make wise decisions.

The first paper I sent, "A History of a Novel Idea," attempts to track the development of the seed of the idea over a period of years, an idea that resurfaced lately in the question "Is there morality in the aesthetic order?" The word "novel" in the title has two meanings—you and I are alike in the way we are both "philosophers" and "artists," and it is interesting how we think differently in these realms, or at least I do—so, the last piece, "Echoing Keats," is more of an attempt to write a rigorous philosophy piece without sacrificing my historical approach to the idea and the way it came to the page.

"Echoing Keats" begins with a confession that I misread Kant's *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* but

notes that, indirectly it led me to read Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. I love the way Kant thinks, his a priori synthetic ramblings, the form without the content, the content without the form, but I could not find the link I was looking for to hold together the ideas I was proposing.

Schiller is a poet, and in the process of digesting Kant against the backdrop of the French Revolution, he was bold enough (poets!) to suggest "disinterested and unconditional appreciation of pure semblance" to lay the foundation for a new approach to right behavior that he believed could lead to an Aesthetic State (and by this he means not just a mental state but a political state. High hopes he had. He seems to falter when he realizes that only an elite few could attain this "detachment," and it is here, I am sure you are right, he's another Enlightenment dummy when it comes to women. From my readings in Shiner's *Invention of Art*, I see the cultural bias of the late 17th and early 18th century philosophers would believe that only white, property-owning men could attain this level. "Race" is just becoming to be considered a concept, and "Art" is becoming "fine art", and we're calling arts, such as vase painting and embroidery, "crafts" or "womanly arts"—not fine arts.

I found a book, *Psychology of Contemporary Art* by Gregory Minissale, Cambridge U Press, NY, 2013. The blurb by Gerald Cupchik says, "...The author explores experimental aesthetics, neuroaesthetics, and cognitive psychology in depth, incisively pointing out problematic issues in each area related to processes underlying the creation and appreciation of contemporary art. A pleasure to read."

Unfortunately, it's hardback and \$99, but my friend Philippe had a copy, and so I borrowed it and read chapter 3.9.

"Losing oneself: mind wandering." Minissale has a theory about art viewing. The chapter begins, "It might be possible to understand how certain artworks help us to think about different subject positions and selves, and they might even help us to think differently about the concept of a self, but how far is it possible to 'lose oneself' in contemporary art?" He suggests "mind wandering"—although usually thought as negative in education could be useful in art understanding. He quotes studies that show that creative insights occur during resting states of the mind, and he shows that "absorption does not have to be premised on logical, linear procedures, egocentric experience or direct observation of the artwork, even though the artwork will provide the occasion for the mind to wander." Another study shows that "mind wandering is most pronounced when there is a lack of metacognition or self-awareness and executive control." Further on he says, "If one assumes that art can cause the mind to wander and also to be attentive, this would create different kinds of absorption: being absorbed and knowing one is being absorbed, where the latter is more likely to be as a disinterested or distance experience [my emphasis], and there are aesthetic arguments that can be mobilized in favor of one kind

over the other.”

And this, Holly, brings me to consider contemplation and meditation as being aesthetic experiences, the work of the artist communicating “whatever” — the beautiful, the ugly, the harmonious, the inharmonious, just as a meditator uses a statue, a mandala, or the breath to find bliss/emptiness.

As regards emptiness, the Nyingma School holds “emptiness” to mean impermanence. Schopenhauer is, at first, abhorred by being awash in “nothingness”, then shores up his courage with compassionate will-less-ness; but a sense of being dissatisfied seems to linger in his bliss.

For Schopenhauer, the will turns in upon itself and becomes detached, and the reason to feel compassion is to transcend a meaningless universe, as will has no teleological purpose. Different from Buddhism, where the thrust of Buddhist psychology is to be a better person.

Dewey’s, “When artistic objects are separated from both conditions of origin and operation in experience, a wall is built around them that renders almost opaque their general significance, with which esthetic theory deals” reminds me of Heidegger’s holistic approach that entails, the artwork, the artist, the art observer (and critic-philosopher), and the making of the art are all critical to the understanding of art. “The artist makeS the art, and the art makes the artist.” But note that Dewey is concerned about how, when the continuity is broken, “a primary task is thus imposed upon one who undertakes to write upon the philosophy of the fine arts.” Well and good, but this may be a problem for the philosophic mind with an article to write and not a problem for the general art observer. Here “aesthetic appreciation” is more neutral. What is that damn “Fountain” of Duchamp’s about? Is it art? Is it beautiful? What’s it doing there?” And the mind wanders and comes back...the mind becomes a still mind and a mind wandering...the attention shifts...there’s sustained focus for a moment...then the mind wanders. This is like what goes on during a meditation session, only there is only the focus on the breath...and moments of sunyata (emptiness).

Allow me one more long passage, this time dealing with aesthetic morality and Schiller’s concept of play. This a piece on Frederick Schiller (1759-1805) by Robert Audi from the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*:

*In “Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man” (1794/5), Schiller examines the relationship between natural necessity and practical freedom and addresses two problems raised by Kant: How can a creature governed by natural necessity and desire ever become aware of its own freedom and thus capable of autonomous moral action? And how can these two sides of human nature—the natural, sensuous side and the rational, super-sensuous one—be reconciled? In contradistinction both to those who subordinate principles to feelings (“savages”) and to those who insist that one should strive to subordinate feelings to principles (“barbarians”), Schiller*

*posited an intermediary realm between the sphere of nature and that of freedom, as well as a third basic human drive capable of mediating between sensuous and rational impulses. This third impulse is dubbed the "play impulse," and the intermediary sphere to which it pertains is that of art and beauty. By cultivating the play impulse (i.e., via "aesthetic education") one is not only freed from bondage to sensuality and granted a first glimpse of one's practical freedom, but one also becomes capable of reconciling the rational and sensuous sides of one's own nature. This idea of a condition in which opposites are simultaneously cancelled and preserved, as well as the specific project of reconciling freedom and necessity, profoundly influenced subsequent thinker such as Schelling and Hegel and contributed to the development of German idealism.*

With you in emptiness,

Jampa

Dear Jampa

In my essay (on futility, which I just finished) I hold Nagarjuna up against this passage from Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer is really a pill, but he sure is a beautiful writer.

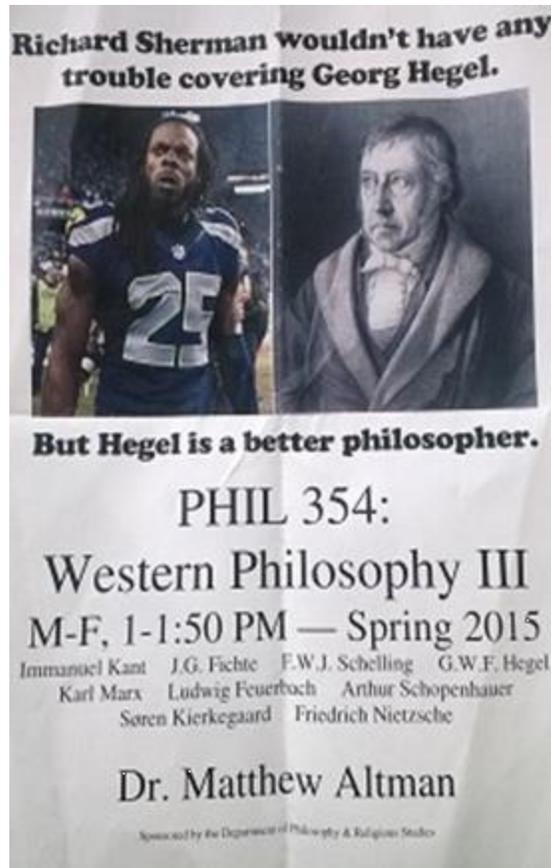
*That we abhor annihilation so greatly, is simply another expression of the fact that we so strenuously will life, and are nothing but this will, and know nothing besides it. But if we turn our glance from our own needy and embarrassed condition to those who have overcome the world, in whom the will, having attained to perfect self-knowledge, found itself again in all, and then freely denied itself, and who then merely wait to see the last trace of it vanish with the body which it animates; then, instead of the restless striving and effort, instead of the constant transition from wish to fruition, and from joy to sorrow, instead of the never-satisfied and never-dying hope which constitutes the life of the man who wills, we shall see that peace which is above all reason, that perfect calm of the spirit, that deep rest, that inviolable confidence and serenity, the mere reflection of which in the countenance, as Raphael and Correggio have represented it, is an entire and certain gospel; only knowledge remains, the will has vanished. We look with deep and painful longing upon this state, beside which the misery and wretchedness of our own is brought out clearly by the contrast. Yet this is the only consideration which can afford us lasting consolation, when, on the one hand, we have recognized incurable suffering and endless misery as essential to the manifestation of will, the world; and, on the other hand, see the world pass away with the abolition of will, and retain before us only empty nothingness. Thus, in this way, by contemplation of the life and conduct of saints, whom it is certainly rarely granted us to meet with in our own experience, but who are brought before our eyes by their written history, and, with the stamp of inner truth, by art, we must banish the dark impression of that nothingness which we discern behind all virtue and holiness as their final goal, and which we fear as children fear the dark; we*

*must not even evade it like the Indians, through myths and meaningless words, such as reabsorption in Brahma or the Nirvana of the Buddhists. Rather do we freely acknowledge that what remains after the entire abolition of will is for all those who are still full of will certainly nothing; but, conversely, to those in whom the will has turned and has denied itself, this our world, which is so real, with all its suns and milky-ways—is nothing.*

Holly

I recognize Holly's quote from Schopenhauer now that I have taken Matt Altman's class on 19th century German philosophy. For ten weeks, one hour each day, five days each week, Professor Altman rigorously drove home the tenants of the philosophers that evolved their understanding of mind and reality from Immanuel Kant's "Copernican Revolution" in thought, his critical idealism. As a Buddhist, I had the hardest time with Schopenhauer. His ideas seem to be the most influenced by Buddhism, but he only comes to the door of understanding the concept of emptiness without passing through, and to critique Schopenhauer, I had to follow a long passageway.

In the stairwell of the Language and Literature Building on the campus of Central Washington University, I came upon Professor Altman's advertisement.



Looks great! Why not take the class? See if I can piece together the fragments of Eastern and Western Philosophy I know. Remember having read Kant's *Prolegomena*, but I'm unfamiliar with Fichte and Hegel. Want to learn more about Schelling. Brush up on my Marx. Borges often quotes Schopenhauer, whose quotes are very literary, and I enjoy reading Borges. I've heard that Schopenhauer was influenced by the wisdom teachings of the East. Another link, maybe. Not sure I could say "I know my Nietzsche", but I've read some. *The Birth of Tragedy* still reverberates with me. I reread Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* and his *The Sickness Unto Death* back to back with *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Genealogy of Morals* in the three-month retreat I took after my three-years practicing the *Dzinja Rangdröl*. Needed some balance.

Later.

Kant had a revolutionary insight about time and space being forms of consciousness, the means of how we know what we know. Fichte felt the *a priori* beat and turned it into a song and dance routine, and then Hegel expanded the tune into an opera fit for the Festival at Bayreuth.

As much as one may criticize the airy, emptiness philosophy of Buddha as the abstractions of an exotic subjectivist, Buddha does not point to the dialectical operations of Geist as the subject of

his inquiries. Buddha is talking about sentient beings that are actually suffering, not abstract beings in a historical process.

I'm still thinking that Schelling is the feminine side of a Jungian equation, and Hegel is the masculine. We are abandoning our aesthetic feeling for things in lieu of mental wanderings, wisdom obscured by skillful means rather than united.

Another day.

In the '60s, I was a young Marxist. It may be I was really just a Young Hegelian, but I thought Leary's "Tune in, turn on, drop out!" slogan was the basis for a philosophy, and that my critique of society, my desire for non-violent action, ecological consciousness, alternative foods, communes, and so forth were the path to follow. Psychedelics seemed a viable method to deconstruct my Hegelian mindset. As the Furry Freak Brothers said, "Dope will get you through times of no money better than money will get you through times of no dope." Marx's theory of alienation revealed to me that I needed more than a job; I needed the "oceanic feeling" of love.

LEARY PROCLAIMS TUNE IN TURN ON DROP OUT (1965)

I had already dropped out  
And turned on to my own tune.  
Radical Dzog Chen spontaneously arose  
In America and Europe in the Sixties  
And Berkeley was ground zero  
With street poets the vanguard.

We had no discipline, but we had l'espirit.  
We had no patience, but we had the grit.  
Body—we believed in Free Love.  
Voice—we believed in Power to the People.  
Mind—we believed Make Love Not War.

We saw the body as a temple.  
We opened the doors of perception,  
And we abused 4:4 time  
To where you couldn't march to it.

You may scoff, but we found power  
In the streets, enough to stop a war  
And set the establishment on its ear.

A day or two later.

Arthur Schopenhauer wrote *On the Basis of Morality* as a response to a question posed by the Royal Danish Society of Scientific Studies in 1837 for an essay contest. The question was, "Are the source and foundation of morals to be looked for in an idea of morality lying immediately in consciousness (or conscience) and in the analysis of other fundamental moral concepts springing from that idea, or are they to be looked for in a different ground of knowledge?" Schopenhauer submitted the only entry to the contest in July 1839 but failed to win. On January 17, 1840, the society published a response to the essay, in which they refused to present him with the prize, claiming that he had misunderstood the question. (Wikipedia) I can feel his anguish.

Schopenhauer is grim. Pessimistic. Kierkegaard feels Schopenhauer is not pessimistic enough. Schopenhauer is happy when he wins one essay prize in Denmark and then is mad when he doesn't win another.

And the Will as what's driving things. Blind force! Still, this is a Newtonian universe Schopenhauer is describing. The universe of a sleeping man. Will rather than compassion at the heart of things. Yes, Schopenhauer acknowledges compassion as knowledge that redirects the path of will, but this is still the universe moving through time and space in sequential fashion. No sense of the spontaneousness of Brahman-Vishnu-Shiva, arising-sustaining-dissolving quantum dance of energy or the uncontrived, timeless, spontaneous here-and-newness of Samantabhadra. Schopenhauer is intriguing, convincing, but I don't believe a word of it.

. . . .

Hegel says, "Logic is consequently to be understood as the System of Pure Reason, as the Realm of Pure Thought. This realm is the Truth as it is, without husk in and for itself. One may therefore express it thus: that this content shows forth God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of Nature and of a Finite Spirit." Hegel says this in his "General Concept of Logic" (*Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, edited by Patrick Gardiner, The Free Press, 1969, p. 67). He's just trying to show us how to think outside the Aristotelian box.

Dear Reader, this may seem obvious to you, or it may not.

OK, Crazy to some! But...

Look at this bit from Longchen Rabjam (14th c. Dzog Chen yogi-philosopher-monk):

Therefore, it is in the naturally occurring state without transition or change / that the most majestic perfection of goals is experienced as nonduality. / The total freedom of the three realms—the ultimate meaning of the nonduality of samsara and nirvana— / is the fortress of dharmakaya, the nature of being that arises inherently from within, / such that it is completely pure like space, yet is in fact beyond all metaphors.

[*A Treasure Trove of Scriptural Transmission: a Commentary of the Precious Treasury of the Basic Space of Phenomena*. Padma Publishing, 2001, Junction City, California, p. 171.]

Longchempa is speaking of non-duality within the awakened mind. In his commentary to the above stanza in his poem, he gives the following instructions to the meditator on how to reach the understanding of this stage of meditation:

Given that the true nature of phenomena and mind itself are inseparable, on the strength of your becoming familiar with this and refining it in your own experience, a state of realization that is like space arises naturally from within; this is referred to as “building the vajra fortress of dharmakaya”

—that is, this realization is spontaneously present as great perfection beyond limitation.

I turn again to ye olde Wikipedia, where I pick a bit of data and cut and paste a set of terms.

SAMSARA. Repeating cycle of birth, life, and death.

NIRVANA. The imperturbable stillness of mind after the fires of desire, aversion, and delusion have been finally extinguished.

THREE REALMS. In Buddhism, the three worlds refer to the following destinations for karmic rebirth: DESIRE REALM, WORLD OF FORM, FORMLESS REALM. These three worlds are anciently identified in Hinduism and appear in early Buddhist texts.

KAYA. Level of manifestation. Dimension of being.

DHARMAKAYA. One of the three levels of manifestation of the Buddha in Mahayana Buddhism. Dharmakāya constitutes the unmanifested, "inconceivable" aspect of a Buddha, out of which Buddhas arise and to which they return after their dissolution. Buddhas are manifestations of the dharmakāya called nirmanakaya ("transformation body"), which is the historical, relative level.

SAMBHOGAKAYA: has been translated as the "deity dimension", "body of bliss", or "astral body".

Reginald Ray, a Buddhist scholar, writes of Dharmakāya as "the body of reality itself, without specific, delimited form, wherein the Buddha is identified with the spiritually charged nature of everything that is." [Reginald Ray, *Secret of the Vajra World*, Shambhala, Boston, 2001, p. 13.]

Nice, complicated dharma terms that can be interpreted six ways to Sunday. It is the term *non-duality* that needs to be unpacked. Longchenpa, in the previous stanza, had admonished the reader:

Without any realization of equalness in its naturally occurring state, you may obsess on the word “nonduality” and place your confidence in some state that you speculate has no frame of reference whatsoever. This is truly a mistaken notion—the dark realm in which awareness is not recognized.

Within the expanse of spontaneous presence is the ground for all that arises. Empty in essence, continuous by nature, it has never existed as anything whatsoever, yet arises as anything at all. Longchenpa says,

Within the expanse of the three kayas, although samsara and nirvana arise naturally, they do not stray from basic space—such is the blissful realm that is the true nature of phenomena. [Ibid. from the section “The Adornment of Basic Space”, p.13.]

On Wednesday, May 13 at 5 PM in Black 152, Dr. Michael Fletcher gave a talk titled: *The Incoherence of Buddhism: A Tourist's Guide*.

His blurb read: “Buddhism makes a number of initially alarming metaphysical claims, one of which is that persons do not exist. This would seem to make the Buddhist an anti-realist about persons. But that’s not all. Buddhism is not only a body of doctrines but also a religious practice, one guided by its own distinctive normative ethic. Buddhist ethics is in large part a moral response to the existence of suffering. But can Buddhism coherently claim on the one hand to be a normative practice, one that recognizes the moral significance of suffering, while on the other claim that, whatever else may be true of our world, ours is not a world containing persons?”

I went to that talk, and I later emailed Dr. Fletcher, who I had talked to after the talk, believing that he had been skating on thin ice.

### **Emails between Jampa and Michael**

hi, michael, jampa here, the following may be of use to you, thanks for listening to me...

checking on my selves, i find i can have quite a number and quite a number of no selves, as well;—mainly, the Self is the "I am" (like how Descartes uses the term) which is what the Hindus call "Atman" (a permanent self), but there are divergences in the meaning in some schools of Buddhism, however the emphasis is for the most part on it's unsubstantial nature, the impermanence of it as an entity

buddha nature is usually referred to as the true self, but even here it is tricky to pin the sucker down.

the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* uses the term Self in order for the Buddha to win over non-Buddhist ascetics, as Buddha says: 'The Buddha-nature is in fact not the self. For the sake of [guiding] sentient beings, I describe it as the self.'"

it is at this end of the spectrum that the yogi must pull back from his inward explorations to keep from becoming a cave bug

and this alludes to why i cautioned you to be careful with trying to fit the term into a single

concept, as there are pedagogical difficulties in guiding students to awakening from their dogmatic slumbers so they can discover their essential natures, since, on a practical level, we all have a sense of self, mere selves, social selves, and spiritual selves, each with more or less reality (or none, in the absolute sense)

it appears that some Buddhists believe that, while there is no Atman, there is a pudgala or "person", which is neither the same as nor different from the skandhas, so your use of "person" in the sense of self holds up, as i was thinking of person more as the incarnation (the embodied mind) with or without a self

really, it is selfishness that is the problem, it is the self as a central player that is the false belief, and from this self-centeredness arise negativity—harmful desires, hatred, ill will, conceit, pride, craving, attachment—so how to get it to chill out is the focus of the teaching that will help the student discover the Buddha's nature

Self, or no self, whether or not one has compassion is what is important, being a kind person rather than a selfish one, and it is through meditation that one peels back the layers that seem to be a self that manifests in its essence as emptiness and resonates in conduct as compassion, the skillful means by which the wisdom of emptiness is put into action

the fourth noble truth, which is the 8-fold path, is not exactly a set of precepts, in the sense of the biblical ten commandments—they are a series of steps to begin meditation practice

the path begins with the first noble truth, there is suffering, which is meant in the sense of things being out of alignment, and the second noble truth, that this state of affairs, this suffering, is due to our ignorance of not realizing that our desires cause us to attach and cling to what is impermanent, and the third noble truth, that suffering can be overcome, leads to the means to accomplish this, and the means to reach wisdom is through meditation by developing mental discipline, ethical conduct, and wisdom

in order to begin to meditate, one has to create the right environment: having right understanding means understanding that wisdom and compassion are one, not dry metaphysics, but to begin to develop compassion for all sentient beings

with right understanding comes thought, which allows for ethical conduct of right speech, action and livelihood—to arrive here requires mental discipline, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration, that of keeping an energetic will in whatever we do, be it work or meditation, and right mindfulness with regard to the body and the mind, and right concentration, such as applying the breath as a mode of meditation, thus one begins the training

another element in the mix: you must deal with the Trikaya of the Buddha, the three bodies of buddha, the three aspects of buddhahood: dharmakaya (the emptiness aspect of buddhahood);

sambhogakaya (the spontaneously luminous aspect, only visible to realized beings), and the nirmanakaya (that which manifests out of compassion for sentient beings)

and then, Emptiness, and here too there are variations, and if we combine different kinds of emptiness with the various kinds no-selves, the problem is complicated, and confusion magnified, SO, here are three further areas you might explore in relation to buddhism's concept of subjecthood:

MINDSTREAM as the medium or vehicle for maintaining intention without a self, the continuum of consciousness in and beyond incarnation as a physical form

FIVE DHYANI BUDDHAS as a model for personality (in lieu of a self, given the true nature of the individual is their buddha-nature, which the buddha cautions is not a self, and as such is just another concept)

ADI BUDDHA the primordial self-originating buddha

Since everything is but an illusion,  
Perfect in being what it is,  
Having nothing to do with good or bad,  
Acceptance or rejection,  
One might as well burst out laughing.

—Longchempa

Dr. Fletcher thanked me with a quid pro quo:

WHAT THE BUDDHA GOT RIGHT

Your worst enemy cannot harm you  
As much as your own thoughts, unguarded  
But once mastered,  
No one can help you as much,  
Not even your father or your mother.  
You are the source  
Of all purity and impurity.  
No one purifies another.

—Dhammapada

### **Romanticism vs Dogmatism: A Man in Conflict.**

Buddha-mind is beyond description, but the path to enlightenment can be communicated. The Buddhist approach to the meaning of Life is understood within a psychological context, and the metaphysical approach of Christians, with the emphasis on proving God's existence independent

of humans, is abandoned. The ontological solution is: nothing really exists in and of itself. Even Heidegger's inquiry into "Being" would be considered an etymological tempest in a teapot.

Raised in the Christian faith, I attended, first, a Methodist church and then, Presbyterian churches. I was uncomfortable in church. The light coming through the stained-glass windows was beautiful, but the wooden pews in the Methodist church were as hard to sit on as the sermon was hard to listen to. The pews in the Presbyterian churches were padded. This was a comfort, but the liturgy still seemed interminable. "That man, nailed to a cross, hanging on the wall, he must be in agony," I thought. "Is this what it's all about—torture? I would prefer to sleep in on Sunday morning." I eventually got my way.

Attending church for my parents was a social obligation, something they felt the family was expected to do. Their true belief system was derived from the Masonic institutions: The Order of Free and Accepted Masons, for men, and The Order of Eastern Star, for women. For young men, there is The Order of DeMolay, and for young women, Job's Daughters. My sister, Lynda, and I were initiated, but it didn't take for me—too stuffy. And formal attire was required, and I didn't find the girls I was asked to escort to dances attractive. (Dance couples were paired by a drawing of names sent from one Lodge to another.)

After a surprise baptism in the basement of the High Street Presbyterian Church, in Oakland, I began to seriously question the whole rigmarole of religion. It is true that Freemasons do not consider their brotherhood to be a religion, more a system of morality taught through signs and symbols, but they do recognize a Supreme Being, who is the "Great Architect of the Universe." Upon acquiring a copy of Bertrand Russell's *Why I'm Not a Christian* in a Sausalito bookstore, I decided Skepticism was the most sensible course for me to follow.

The doctrine of skepticism, that nothing can be proved absolutely, served me well when I entered the University of California Berkeley and began a serious study of literature and the sciences. Kept my mind open. And when I began to delve into Philosophy, I could suspend judgment and accept the views of diverse thinkers. In both chemistry and physics, the empirical method is the Holy Grail of research, combining as it does the use of reason and experiential data. In literature, all the old gods appear and are carried forward into the present through literary allusions. It seems to me that just as science proceeds to dispel the realm of mystery, poetry and fiction renew the fountainhead. Past is always present.

I was unable to maintain a pure skepticism. I mingled the philosophies of the ancients with the moderns and combined mythologies into a form of Hedonism, highly spiced with mushy mysticism, after my legendary peyote trip. Poetry became my path, my pride, and my pitfall. The classes that I took from Walter Benesch at the University of Alaska in Eastern and Western Philosophy and from Bob Allen in English and Canadian Literature helped me firm the mysticism

into a metaphysical foundation for the poems that I hoped would synthesize visionary consciousness with a social conscience.

STRIVING WITH SYSTEMS  
TO FREE OURSELVES f/SYSTEMS  
As Blake saw

I find a place where rent is low  
Gardens grow, pace is slow  
Mushrooms blow

Whitehole/blackhole continuum  
Rivers evaporate on Mars  
40000 BCE at 8 'til eulenspiegael  
While a child discovers its feet  
A legislature extends its session

Into a series of telemetric sequences  
Another unconscious police action  
Uniting conditionally imagined  
Noun phrase verb phrase strings  
La Illa Ha Il Allah Hu

Either/or & both

GURU KHAN  
HUM PHAT

KRAZIGNATZKAT  
PUPPIGDUNGFUNGI  
X-RAY CRISTALGRAPH

Pendulum haronographic  
Alpha-particular articulation that  
I= an elliptical metaphor 4  
Misononeismhystic Presbyterianism

Bohem's exegesis of Genesis  
Buddhist Logic of Exists

Differential equations

5'2 (eyes blue) 35-19-33

5'9 (legs sublime) 36-24-35

6'3 (relativity) 42-30-44

This anarchistic shotgun blast of imagery is from “intergallactic69pornoputer,” a selection of *Islam Bomb* (D Press, 1998). It dates to 1972, when I lived in Preston, Washington, and was decompressing from two intensive years of studying an array of subject matter. The poem traverses outer space and inner dimensions, hops from the funny papers to the holy scriptures, taps meta-language and mantra, hints at a government of cruelty and a garden of earthly delights. But what exactly is “misononeismystic Presbyterianism”?

*Misononeismystic* is a made-up word. “Mis” is a prefix that means mistaken, wrong, or simply acts to negate, as in “misprint”; “miso” is a word element referring to hate: “misononeism” means the hatred or dislike of that which is new, and “misnomer” is a misapplied name. “Mystic” has a variety of meanings, ranging from pertaining to something spiritually significant to something obscure or mysterious. I would guess that here it could apply to someone who has attained insight into transcendental knowledge, a protestant mystic of some sort, one who has reached beyond systems of correspondence. As for a connection with “Presbyterianism,” remember, I was baptized Presbyterian. Once a Presbyterian, always a Presbyterian.

So, does “misononeismystic” mean anything? Probably not in a literal sense. I liked the sound, a kind of linguistic onomatopoeia of philosophical babble. I needed rest from the rigors of argument and let animal sounds arise without reference and return to where they came from into sound-emptiness-Buddha speech.

I came of age in the vortex of a time when social values were in upheaval, the Vietnam Era, and I partook of mind-expanding drugs, practiced free love, protested war, torture and tyranny, and sought meaning to my life.

At the Berkeley Poetry Conference, in 1965, when I told Gary Snyder that I was going to Alaska to make money to start a bookstore in Berkeley, Gary told me to start a Berkeley bookstore in the hinterlands, somewhere that could benefit from my experiences. Ellensburg is the geographical heart of Washington state, and this is where I set up shop and was a bookseller. After a labyrinthine journey through dakini realms, I’m again back in Ellensburg.

## **PART 3**

OWL LIGHT TEXTING WITH ATHENA



*Only when the dusk starts to fall  
does the owl of Minerva  
spread its wings and fly.*

Is freedom a property of our Being  
or are we a property of freedom?

**So many thoughts, so many feelings entangled in them**

A bird outside a window singing and a dark-haired woman washing a teacup go on dreaming  
new dreams

**This evening's sunset, twilight's birth**

Somewhere in the dream, the dark-haired woman speaks of  
twilight, and I feel purple shadows travel from her eyes to mine

**Thank you for the light, the lightness you bring,  
makes the task at hand joyful**

Stay light and bright, my sprite

**As the flower's face follows the sun, so do I**

A river fell in love with a maid/ Her image penetrated deeply/ When her image is gone/ His soul  
floods with longing, and the longing returns the longer you're gone, be this right or wrong, I'm  
leaving these songs—as the Zen poet, Ikkyu, once wrote— “I still worry about how I look my dry  
white hair oh age wanting to fuck but I'll sing no matter how things are”

**Watch twilight approach on lavender wings awaiting lover luna.  
Stars fall to their knees and praise the coming of night\*\***

I want to make art with you under the stars

**Our colors mix well**

Luminous matter in hollow air/ spontaneous flight

**Waxing crescent dream  
Goodnight**

Looking for my face before I was born  
I found the woman of my nameless love poem

**whispered names breeze the same  
a flirtation or two  
thinking of you**

I caught a thought, a serene serenade  
before the burg's busyness began

**My day has already gotten that way,  
unfortunately serendipity escaped**

If the day releases its grip, whisper  
I would like to talk to you before I talk to anyone

:)

To be undressed next to you  
Exploring your aura  
Questions answered  
And new questions  
To be addressed  
Or arrested next to you  
Driving way over the limit

**Undressed arrest may be addressed  
Regardless the limit posted**

Sending a whisper

**Thanks for the softness  
Tender emotions front and center  
Wanted you to know I know you feel me  
I received your whisper just as I  
Was beginning to cry, a timely gift,  
Your intuition, your text, your love  
You are beautiful to me**

Hope your spirit is revitalized  
Sending Medicine Buddha mantra  
Freeing you from all ailments  
TAYATA OM BEKANDZE

BEKANDZE MAHA BEKANDZE  
RADZA SAMUDGATE SOHA

:)

I'm here having a cup of tea in morning light  
Wishing you were here, feeling you close  
Just a whisper away

**Strange to feel like I'm standing between two worlds  
in a moment**

Worlds within worlds  
But not to worry  
There's world enough and time

**Do you know that you glow? You should look in the mirror**

Thank you for polishing my mind, and you, sweetheart, glow from a kind heart

**It's deeper than your mind, and thank you**

My lady is gone  
Leaving only the air  
I draw to me the air  
Everything she's touched  
Rejoices me

**words not  
kiss want  
tantrant  
slip knot  
feeling**

One kiss is worth a thousand words, yet a thousand kisses no truer than this poem, and as these words slip pass the sentry of your heart, I count the seconds of my imprisonment till I am

hung. I may have misread your poem. I do not want to go beyond what you want. I hope you do not feel trapped

**Oh sweet. Don't worry. We understand one another very well. I have lots of thoughts that I haven't been able to put together yet, but I will. And I'll share. Soon.**

A singer sings in a court of singers a song of love amid false songs sung to a lady beneath a gaze that changes. The singer sings of being unable to sing. He complains, and his lady knows he's steadfast since false lovers sing the same, so singing praises sounds suspicious. This is one strategy. The singers sing of the lady's aloofness, yet claims she's faultless. She knows he's lying or a fool when he claims he only wants to serve her and promises he will worship the ground she walks on, yet he persists by reaffirming his devotion. This is another strategy. The singer can sing of another lady and how his lady's charms fall short in hopes of turning her vanity towards her like a mirror. This may backfire and the singer receive her ire. I'm a fool for revealing strategies when love can't be won through strategy

**There seems no strategy to win that which is truly a mystery, a gift**

Only to being open and honest and humbled

**Depression desiccates  
Passions purpose barely lift  
Eyes to sun  
Lengthening shadows  
Threatening sorrows  
Fearing darkness  
Has won  
Isolate  
Hibernate  
Keep everyone away  
Die alone  
Then go home  
Call it a rainy day**

**So humble I stumble on my heart  
Fear of loving, of attachment,  
Of falling in love, of mixing up my mind  
And heart and losing it all. In my mind,  
I'm lying on the bank of a river under  
The bough of a moist cedar tree. I am**

### **Having a hard time but holding on**

For now, lift your eyes and give your blues to the sky  
You're close to hope and close to despair, past and future fears  
To retreat is defeat and advances mean more conflict

So, there you are in wonder at your emerging  
Life takes a new course, but life is not a love story  
It's a gamble

Brace yourself and flight  
Choose light or night  
Knowing rightly a knight

**illuminating her premonitions  
the knight hangs the moon and stars  
within  
without  
with love**

one flame ignites another flame  
two lights too light  
floating heavenward with words burning

**periwinkle velvet  
twixt light  
and night**

You are becoming more precious to me every day.

**Soleil is shy  
Hides her face  
On silver high  
In deep embrace  
Crimson sweets  
Hung in June  
Almost black  
Most maroon**

Tempting to pick and taste this luscious fruity flesh

It's been said, "Life is a chair of bowlies."

**I'm here now. Would you like to come over?**

Earlier in the day  
We picked raspberries and talked of the path  
Our feelings have taken

Earlier in the day  
I had been asked if I had anything planned  
And I said I was looking forward  
to picking raspberries with a pretty girl

And now, I use my wordsmith way  
to mold this prose into thanking you  
Not just for the deliciousness of your presence  
But for the nectar of your lovely words

And uttered so no one would think that much had transpired,  
A strategy, but I read in the foot I held the flow of flames  
That consumes me on my path to reach your lips

**Diesel trucks**  
**Jackknifed trailers**  
**Lips wagging**  
**Cowboys hats**  
**Rainbow sparks**  
**Twinkling eyes**  
**Two lights**  
**Take a carpet ride**  
**On Main**  
**X**

On Main down  
This way, the day  
Relaxes after a fax  
Sent to UC Berkeley

Seeing you sent an X  
Hoping my beard

Wasn't rough

**Soft as a whisper :)**

I was watching a film I like, and I want you to see a part, where a man shaves his beard

**I would like that, sounds interesting.**

Petrarch sang the world  
Is but a flitting dream  
Impermanent, Buddha said

Reaching you in dreams  
With dreamlike words  
To tell my dream

Is momentarily real  
But lasts until the last  
Dreamlike truth dissolves

**Dreaming of a cool mid-summer eve**

Yes, I can perform Tantra on the level you asked about, I just haven't had a suitable partner. And as to "falling in love," by this I mean I needed to choose between remaining as a monk or moving towards you with the serious intent of having intimate relations, and I can't do both in good faith, and your unique characteristics have determined my path [and, I have decided on giving back my monastic vows]

**You are precious and I thank you for your explanations. I feel honored that you find unique characteristics in me that are attractive to you. Likewise. Our whole relationship is unique, and I value it very much.**

I was sad, and now I'm happy again.

**Don't worry, be happy :)**

You want to converse in verse  
Just not light verse  
But you ain't seen the reverse  
Cause you can't yet trip w/o rules

Let's flip our wigs and bop w/o stop  
Let our hair down, lay it down across town  
We've gone round and round  
And you blow me a kiss like you're blowing me off

We move a step or two and you get distracted  
Round and round we go, no time to think  
No time to know  
No time  
What's next?

I won't lie to you  
I want you to lie next to me  
Midnight passions, be careful what you ask for

:)

We go a step or two, and you  
sidestep— lead on, my lady

**Thinking of you and your appointment [with the doctor for *Viagra* ] today.**

**Love,**

**Your dakini**

**In a bikini**

:):):)

the writer pens  
magic memories  
fiery fingers  
burn the sun  
into the ground

**my door is open to a sound like a sigh  
your feet could bring you but you evaporate  
my gaze lifts to the stars  
hoping I see you in my dreams**

**\*\***

Moonlight gleamed through,  
and though the living wears down,  
he finds a luminous, stubborn joy

**Good morning, young man, your tenacity for life always inspires me. I look at the reflection of my naked body and am amazed how narrow my hips and petite, my frame. I remember being so pregnant that I could balance a bowl of ice cream on my belly.**

Riding the wind your way

**Meditative morning light and a cacophony of crows causing chaos. Shotgun?**

There is crow language, are they to your right or to your left, east, west, north, south? If east, your prayers will be answered, overhead, a guest will come

**As the crows fly, they switch and bank from this side to that. I bid the "guest" adieu and sleep.**

**Coiled angel...I'll never be the same**

A group of crows is called a murder of crows, you should have used the shotgun

**Seriously? Murder? How appropriate. Those barking birds could wake the dead. Your poetry is mind altering. Coiled angel...wow**

Ikkyu was awoken by a crow with no mouth.

**He was having a wet dream. Sorry, I couldn't resist...**

Of Orpheus's body, only the head was left, it bobbed away on the swirling surface of the river, still singing

**Now, that's tenacity. The women of Thrace are shredded in their next lifetimes by Eurydice who is reincarnated as a Leo.**

Eurydice, for you I am building a brand-new world, wonder if love can exist between us, what

you are I want, feel this gushing through these early morning whispers

**I am thinking of you and all that is, seeing new light through old windows**

The perfect poem has only a few words and is whispered in the ear of the beloved— a little  
Windex goes a long way

**Take it from a pro window washer, Windex sucks...It's all in the blade and the one who wields  
it...New Light from Old Windows was an album by Chris Rhea...I've always like the idea of  
new from old, rebirth**

Life is not that opaque. Your words lighten my mood and illuminate my mind, that Athena  
knows well from whence to draw her metaphors

**I liked to hear your difficulty pronouncing Eurydice. And that you made the effort to learn to  
say it a different way. That's cool, I thin. You are different and that makes all the difference  
to me.**

New light through an old window, an old song  
New love through an old heart, a new life—  
August and November eternally return

**Okay, you take the cake, that's beautiful, truly**

As are you, and the frosting is delicious

**Mmmm:)**

**Curvular wisp  
So ginger there  
The blushing wine  
He drinks of her  
She plaits  
His silken hair**

Morning tangle  
And a new angle  
An angel with angleness  
Or an angle with angelness

**Rolling along  
Not minding the signs  
To my surprise  
Time stopped  
I stood down the  
Gentle breeze that blew my mind  
To thought and imagination**

Poetry comes up from our hearts and tangles in our brains— an angel arises, then devises a morning inspection of dreamland's reflection— how perfect you were, moonwalking last night, as was I

**Perhaps our steps will cross and circle again soon**

Any chance swift-footed Athena will put in an appearance?

**She is scaling rays of light and will come down from her loft before night falls. Feathering a nested heaven.**

Odysseus sings to Athena, love me, love me as much as you can. Her owl replies whooo. He orders the crows to guard her, as her owl in its lofty nest rests from the lofty light.

**I'll be on my way to your door soon**

Athena, chaste and circumspect, goddess of art, wisdom, and the craft of war  
Hot in battle, hot between the sheets, if you can get her between the sheets  
You blinded Tiresias but gave him second sight  
If I were to choose to whom to give the golden apple  
I'd choose you

**A challenge only approached by the confident and tenacious :)**

**And here we are  
With bare feet**

### **And a beginner's mind**

I take a step into space  
A foot of space, a foot  
Of time, in time with you

### **Good morning**

Ah, bright eyes, your radiance  
Rivals old Sol, invigorating my mind

### **Your silver tongue**

**Relects the sun**

**We shine**

Oh, entwined bodies and entangled minds  
My silver tongue is far from through with you  
Praises, I speak of praises...

### **Mmmm, hmmm:)**

Although your absence has not been long,  
The lack of your presence means I can't  
Take pleasure in anything

**My heart is sore. Someday I will be able to be light-hearted [about relationships] like you are with yours. Just not there yet. I think about when you left town to get away from the torment. Sometimes I want to run too. I've run inside and I've run outside. I've always come back around. It's tuff to live without attachments.**

It takes time, my love, to love those that are insensitive to your real Being, not realizing how raw and vulnerable you are. Sit quietly, breathe, and with each breath reclaim your confidence in the truth of who you need to be. I wish I could make this anguish vanish, but it is the cost of growth. Don't run. Sit until the ground trembles.

**Confidence is who I need to be**

**Anguish**

**The cost of growth**

**I thank you for your words**

**I know you understand**

**I draw strength from their truth**

The meaning of Tantra is continuity

The Buddha's last words

All is impermanent, keep on keeping on

**If all is impermanent, then there doesn't seem to be a point or purpose to anything. That feels empty in a lonely way. It's hard wrapping my brain around that when I feel sad and crave assurance and security...Thank you for your text earlier. You must have felt led. I'm glad you followed.**

There's freedom with impermanence, we can liberate with this, rather than be held back, trapped by our ideas of permanence, try to relax, you are secure, I have your back, you make the meaning you want, now is the time to get real with the Four Noble Truths, thus becoming one with your training

**So it begins**

See you at noon at the zendo, do you want to swim, after?

**Can't decide which suit to wear**

Whatever SUITS you

**I'll play it safe, save the bikini for another time, when we won't have company**

I sing of what I desire

Though it makes me wonder

Will this blunder

Bring me asunder

She makes me hope and wait

I loll about her gate

Kissing her feet and knees

And not what I please

Clouds have cooled the air  
Though not my ardor  
My heart is clear  
My mind in disorder

**Sometimes**

**But mostly**

**Then and again**

**And twice on Sunday**

**More or less**

**I'm sure**

One minute she's serious  
The next, she's whimsical  
She's a lady fair with snakes in her hair  
A tragic heroine, a musical comedian

:)

In morning light I reflect upon the tender  
wisdom of your embrace  
That briefly held me in a caring caress

**I read that the Gnostic description of God's name is The Shadow of the Turning. I've never thought of God and shadows, only light. An unusual and beautiful description. Just thought of you and wanted to share this new and interesting find.**

With this new knowing you can have a better understanding of the opening stanza of Yeats's poem, "The Second Coming" and you might google that poem for the full impact of what you've discovered.

Turning and turning in the widening gyre/The falcon cannot hear the falconer/things fall apart,  
the center cannot hold/Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world

**Sounds intense. I'll look it up after I drift back to sleep for a while. Reading made me sleepy.**

She whispered, God is the turning of the shadow  
And in return, he quoted Yeats  
Then they drifted off to sleep  
Theirs is a happy marriage of minds

**And dreams**

Dreams in which our lips touch

**A fantasy**

**A dream I'm told**

**Of days when we were young...**

**Ok, where is this coming from**

**Sounds old and like someone else**

**Now I'm all nervous**

You're just touching into poet lore, ours  
Is an ancient lineage of mind trippers,  
And we're all present

**On an ordinary day**

**Your extraordinary way**

**Takes what I give**

**And treasures it**

**What if you saw a manatee fly**

**By your house while popping glitter**

**As it screamed "Holy fish paste!"?**

In that instant, the emotion would become an object to be transferred into poetry.  
And the treasure of your ways merge in the poetry of your smile.

**Do you feel cute? Or handsome?**

I feel pride in being myself, handsome is as handsome does, but cute will do

**I think you carry more handsome than cute. Cute is the twinkle, the playful boy. Handsome is the man behind the fur. Serious is the guy in the beard and robes with pinpoint pupils. Sexy is he guy I'm peeking at from behind the curtain. Watching thru blue. I'm glad we finally have met. I've looked for you without even knowing I was.**

Hoping to share many sunrises and sunsets with you and to sit with you in silence

**I might make some sounds**

A giggling at the seriousness is permitted

**I might not take it seriously enough. My playful nature might turn into a sexy nature and the silence be broken. You are only two blocks away and I think my walls are vibrating. (Newsroom beeps in background: There's going to be an earthquake that will take part of the continent away.) Everything seems to be vibrating on an atomic level. Like the table of elements are dancing my day.**

As a being of flesh and spirit, you are many atoms and many sprites united

Body, voice, and mind, you are blessed with the ability to go far but keep in step to the music

**Yes, in step so I don't slip off the edge of an astral plane**

**I have tripped the edge of sanity and recognize the razor's edge**

**I think I know, but know I don't, it's that slick**

**And I know that you get it**

**You are precious to me**

**So there!**

Will we have fun?

It's my experience

The fun will come

What I have done

Given the choices

Is chosen Athena

As the most fair  
What I have done  
Cannot be undone

**\*\*thinking\*\***

Your visage is before me when I sleep  
When I awake, through the day's travails

This sudden change, my lady, is a cloud  
Covering my hope for your heart's kiss

**My kisses will be kept for a time when they can be released and enjoyed fully. I am practicing respect and honor of self and of you and am finding the woman I want to be.**

**I appreciate your patience with me as I know you would like to spend more time together. I am needing to have time alone. Try not to be nervous. I am still here.**

:)

**Good morning, sunshine. Sending love. I'm looking forward to seeing you.**

Had we but world enough and time, this coyness, lady, were no crime...but at my back I hear time's winged chariot hurrying near, and yonder lie deserts of vast eternity...let us, then, roll all our sweetness up into one ball and tear our pleasures with rough strife through the iron gates of life. [Apologies to Andrew Marvell]

**Light wings ring**

**like a bell**

**thru the dark**

**would he love**

**to love her**

**She rules the night  
like a bird in flight  
who will be  
her lover  
All his life  
he never saw  
a woman  
taken by the sky**

**Would he  
stay  
if she promised  
him heaven  
or give up  
the fight**

He'd stay until the conversion of the Jews

:)

Were I to try and explain this feeling  
Seeing your face in my heart  
As I sit in my wicker chair  
Listening to traffic on Main  
Knowing you are but a whisper away  
I'd say it was a miracle

**We both are blessed. I am honored you feel the same.**

That was a lot of data, yesterday  
you are always an inspiration

**I'm glad I was able to share my thoughts with you yesterday evening. It's important to me to be clear about where I am so you don't think I'm playing games. Thank you for hearing me and for being a gentleman.**

At this juncture, it's hard to know which direction you'll go— romantic love, tantric sex , or a mercy fuck

I don't have Ikkyu's libido

He was blessed Love is blind

I still enjoy a good blowjob

Even if it's in my dreams

## **PART 4**

### **TRANSGENDER PLAY AND THE BUDDHIST MIDDLE WAY**

#### **ATUHOR'S PREFACE**

Transgender people may identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual, or they may consider sexual orientation labels inappropriate. Coming to terms with one's gender, where an individual feels authentic and is comfortable within their appearance and can accept their identity, requires time and patience.

I will try to describe the transgendered condition in which I find myself. I started to say "transgendered position" and realized the ambiguity, the pun, in the term "position" when gendered. Am I on top or the bottom, in front or behind? "Conditioning" as a term is not much better. Just as the "positioning" term sets up a binary sexual polarity, "condition" as a term posits

a “state” or “stage” of consciousness associated with the gender identity, and when the condition or position is analyzed, it appears always in all ways to be in process.

My world-traveling is a project in process, wherein the dualism of ethics and aesthetics, thinking and feeling, body, voice, mind, all gendered male and female, plays out in my intellectual history. For the time being, I’m moving along the path beneath my feet.

## **JAMPA DORJE’S GENDER AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

ONCE

we would go  
backhorse riding  
when the horses

were boys  
and the cows  
were girls  
the dogs were boys

and the cats were girls  
et cetera  
the ducks and the geese  
the birds and the bees

et cetera  
I was also sure  
Einstein wrote the Bible

later things got complicated

The above poem was written to my sister, Lynda, remembering that, when we were children, she called horseback riding “backhorse riding,” and ignoring any innuendo of incest, the main thrust of the poem has to do with a child’s interpretation of how to assign gender to familiar animals. Determining the gender of people during my formative years, in the 1940s, did not, in retrospect, seem that complicated. Men wore suits, and women wore dresses, and each had the appropriate undergarments and shoes. I can see Katherine Hepburn in pants, but I can’t imagine Humphrey

Bogart in a dress.

My first encounter with homosexuality came when I was 18, in Berkeley, as a freshman at Cal. A graduate student that I admired, while helping me sort out the meter in one of Thomas Hardy's poems, put his hand on my thigh, and I was terrified. I did not know how to respond, as my orientation had always been to court the female sex. I married a woman when I was 19. She was 21, an older woman, Sicilian, and we had, within a period of three years, two daughters. Gender roles in Italian culture are very traditional. Men are supposed to work hard, and women tend the home. I was an aspiring poet—as my father-in-law so aptly put it, “You want to be a bum!” Still, I knew he liked me; he showed me his way of cooking calamari, and he might even have been slightly envious of my bohemian lifestyle; but all the same, I knew I was expected to be a “man” and take care of his daughter.

I have married three times. I experimented with homosexuality, but my compass turned toward having a woman as a sexual partner. I have had, with my wives, four children, who have born us six grandchildren and two great grandchildren. Since I am the oldest person in my father's family and the only male progenitor with his name, I am, by definition, for better or for worse, the family patriarch. A loaded term.

Without going into the possibility that the whole difference between sex (male and female) and gender (masculine and feminine) is a complete sham, that biologically the boundaries between sexes is not that easy to determine and that chromosomes, hormones and external sex organs do not completely determine sexological situations, I will accept the definition of a person's sex as someone who is either male or female and that this is thought to be a biological fact in any culture. We need these categories to talk about this subject. Also, I will accept that the gender roles of a “man” or a “woman” in society can be different from culture to culture. What it means to be a “real man” means having a penis and distinguishable masculine characteristics and behaviors, and a “real woman” means having a vagina and feminine characteristics recognizable by other members of the same culture. Deviations from these norms for an individual can have punitive repercussions.

In my culture, I have been/am seen as a man. But with qualifications: as a poet, since poetry is associated with “sissies” and because many male poets are gay, being a poet is to be open to suspicion and the question lingers if it is a true masculine pastime. But then, what do most men know about poets? When a guy needs a tip on courtship, who are you going to ask for advice? It was, after all, the troubadours who invented romantic love. Perhaps, the poets are the worst of oppressors with their insipid love songs.

Being a poet-monk is another matter. A midlife role change to celibacy. I discovered I had prostate cancer. Nature, telling me that I was now merely flotsam in the evolutionary wave. But

my will to live is strong, and I fought back with radiation therapy. However, to accomplish the procedure called brachytherapy, I was injected with Lupron, a drug used in sex transformations that lowers testosterone levels and the size of the prostate, thereby enabling the implantation of radioactive seeds in the gland. A side effect of the Lupron was that it wiped out my libido in the process. Fencepost, man, woman, tree, chair, no difference. My recommendation is for every man to have this feeling, and you can be assured their view of women as sex objects will be completely altered.

For the past twenty-five years, I have practiced Tibetan Buddhism, which is Tantric Buddhism, or Vajrayana. I have studied under many lamas, but my main teacher has been Lama Tsultrim Allione. She is an American woman, who is the author of *Women of Wisdom* and an advocate for the recognition of the Divine Feminine in the Vajrayana. She had been a student of Chögyan Trungpa at what is now Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado, and she had been the meditation teacher of Allen Ginsberg, who I knew from my Berkeley days. I met her in 1989, and she inspired me with her vision of creating a retreat center in the Rocky Mountains where people could do long meditation retreats in the Tibetan tradition. We found land near Pagosa Springs, Colorado, 800 acres between the San Juan Forest and the Ute Indian Reservation. We camped in tents. Slowly, Tara Mandala Retreat Center began to manifest. With the arrival of Adzom Paylo Rinpoche, a monastic lama from Kham, in Eastern Tibet, we felt that there should be more monastic presence at Tara Mandala. In 2005, I was ordained as a novice monk.

Monks of the Nyingma School wear robes: a maroon-colored skirt, called a chuba, and a large shawl, called a zen, along with sleeveless shirts of a saffron color. I had already begun to wear robes. I found that it aided my practice to be reminded of my Buddha nature, but I had also decided that it was a political statement, after the election of George W. Bush as president, that there was another path. Becoming a monk only added fuel to the immolation of my old Self.

At first, wearing robes was a bit scary. I read poetry in my robes before audiences in art galleries and bookstores, and I became comfortable in public in my robes. Sure, an occasional passerby would make a comment about me being a terrorist. A beer can was thrown at me, and I was told to go back to where I came from. People are afraid of the Other. However, after the Dalai Lama made a visit to Seattle, in 2008, sentiment seemed to shift. Checking into a Motel 6, the clerk asked, "Is there anything I can do for your people?" When ordering a Grand Slam at Denny's, the waiter said, "You people are awesome." While taking a leak in the restroom of a Shell Station, the guy next of me went, "OM MANI PADME HUM." I wasn't sure whether or not it was a flag for a pickup, but I said, "Tashi delek," which is a Tibetan greeting more or less meaning "fine" or "well." With a pronounced swagger, I was able to wend my way through redneck towns in Utah, Idaho, and Eastern Oregon. A cowboy stepping out of his truck said, "Nice skirt you're wearing." I didn't correct him. After ten years, daily wearing a chuba, I had concluded that it is not the

dress that matters but how you wear it. My gender was masculine, a man in a skirt who was not cross-dressing. Edgy, but still masculine.

The time came for me to enter long retreat. The traditional Tibetan three-year solitary retreat consists of completing preliminary practices, called Nyöndro, which has five parts: along with the visualization of the appropriate tutelary deity, the repetition of 100,000 refuge mantras, chanted while doing 100,000 full-body prostrations; the practice of raising *bodhicitta* (compassion for sentient beings), which consists of the repetition of 100,000 mantras, the purification ritual which consists of 100,000 repetitions of the 100 syllable Vajrasattva mantra, all leading to the repetition of one million guru yoga mantras. This took me approximately five months, practicing five two-hour sessions per day. Once completed, I began the main practice.

I had been given instructions by Adzom Rinpoche on the practice I was to do before he left for Tibet in 2008. While he was in America, there was social unrest in Tibet as China hosted the Olympic Games. When Rinpoche arrived in Tibet, his passport was confiscated, and he was unable to return to America. I needed a new Vajra Guru to complete my retreat. Lama Tsultrim had recently been recognized in Tibet as a manifestation of the White Dakini, Machig Lapdrön. When she returned to Tara Mandala, she asked Tulku Sang ngag Rinpoche, who lives in Santa Fe, if there was a White Dakini practice she could do. He said there was one known as *Dzinpa Rangdröl*, but that it had to be done as a complete cycle of practices while in a three-year retreat. Thus, the *Dzinpa Rangdröl* lineage was transmitted by Tulku Sang ngag to me and my friend, Beth Lee-Herbert.

*The Jatakas*, which are stories of Buddha's former lives, tell of divine beings that can travel through the air. In Sanskrit, such a being is called a dakini, a term generally translated as sky walker, celestial woman, or cloud fairy. Sky, or space, in the context of Buddhism is related to Emptiness, and Emptiness can be understood to refer to the potential for Enlightenment inherent in all sentient beings. In Tantric practice, the emphasis is on the intrinsic purity of all being. The process of realizing the White Dakini through meditation involves two stages, creation and completion. Deity practice does the purifying. The visualizations of the creation stage undermine one's sense of the solidity of the material world. In these practices, the true nature of mind is considered to be beyond intellect and description, and it is the power of devotion that allows the practitioner to accomplish the practice. Recognizing that the visualization of the creation stage is an illusion, the wonder of this creation dissolves back into the ground. The use of the deity, called a *vidam*, is to bind the mind while it is in the process of purifying mental obscurations, such as the idea of a permanent ego, or self. Each of the five buddhas in the White Dakini mandala represent a kind of wisdom and meeting these wisdoms allows each practitioner a means to deconstruct the paradigm of a permanent self.

In parallel, over a period of years, I had developed a number of literary personae: Bouvard

Pécuchet, a critic, probably gay; Jubal Dolan, a gangster-type; Richard Denner (moi), a bookseller, father and poet; Jampa Dorje, monk and scholar; and Thuragania, a pre-Socratic woman philosopher. The personalities of these characters seem aligned to the weakness and strengths of the five Buddha dakinis. The white dakini of the Buddha Family is intellectual; the red Padma Family dakini is magnetic and dramatic and tragic. Blue Dharmakaya dakini purifies with space. The yellow Ratna dakini, is artful and nurturing. The green, All-accomplishing One is powerful and successful, and each liberates the self from attachment and clinging. After much practice, I wind up with five literary personae/dakinis occupying my empty mindstream continuum. And then, my libido returns, and I give back my monastic vows, put on britches, and... but this is another story.

On the first day of Dr. Cynthia Coe's Women and Philosophy class at Central Washington University, I discovered I could have a new gender identity, a they or a them. Someone could now say of Jampa, "They has been initiated into a new cult." For a young person, choosing the form of gender neutrality might enable her or him to decide to which lifestyle they are best suited, but for an old person, being a they can be a way of summing up the facets of one's oneness.

## **TRANSGENDER PLAY AND THE MIDDLE WAY**

Times have changed since the protests around China hosting the 2008 Olympics and the Dahli Lama's visit to Seattle, which the Seattle Times headlined "A Love Feast." I'm ordering a Grand Slam at Denny's, and the waiter says, "You guys are awesome!" I'm checking into a Motel 6, and the desk clerk says, "Can I do anything to help your people?" I'm in City Market. I'm in line, and the man next to me asks, "Do you guys beg for food?" I'm taking a leak at a Shell station, and the guy in the next stall goes, "OM MANI PADME HUM." Is this a flag, I wonder? The Tibetan flag, sure, but a "flag" in the sense of a sexual innuendo. Life, if anything, is a continual processing of ambiguities inside innuendos.

Inside the ambiguities of the San Francisco International Airport, I'm waiting to pass through the security check point before boarding my flight to Seattle, when I hear a distant voice shout, "Kelly, you're in the wrong line." I see a tall man in a suit with somewhat curly hair ahead of me turn toward the person calling. There is a great distance between them, an almost infinite distance by Zeno's reckoning, but Love wins, and the tall man turns, and I see he has large breasts and is wearing makeup. Now, he's a woman: lips red, cheeks rouged, eyes with long lashes and eyelids artfully shadowed. I like curly hair. When done right, it speaks a lot about your personality and aesthetic outlook. Looking directly at hir, the curl was coming out of hir hair.

And the curl was coming out of the line we were in, as Kelly made hir way towards me. Ze was

tall and broad shouldered and moved with force. People stepped aside, and as ze passed I could smell amber or something from the Orient, perhaps the perfume Shalimar or Opium. There was a lot of man in this walk. Transgender or transvestite? Was ze being a she or a he? Ze waved, and the nails on hir hand were long and manicured. I realized how doubtful and uncertain I was of this person's meaning and intention.

The small, thin man outside the line, calling to Kelly, was wearing black pants and a white undershirt, the wife-beater style. Was ze the woman or was ze butch and he the femme in this relationship? Rigid bi-polar gender makes it impossible to play with truth. In the gender game, the gigantic playground is not marked with chalk; however, the line I'm in is defined, and my driver's license lists me as male. I am guessing I will be searched or asked to stand inside a glass chamber where air will circulate and detect any sign of explosives. Because of my robes, I'm listed as "bulky." I prefer the chamber. I like to say, "I'm the flying monk." Kelly waves, and says something I don't hear. Hir voice is husky and deep; and ze walks with hir feet shoulder-width apart. There's attitude in hir walk. I'm going to abandon what I think I know and watch.

The police are alert. What I take to be a man in a security guard's uniform, and a woman, perhaps, both observe the scene from a distance—no movement—guards merely observing the confusion. Both have guns. One has close cropped hair; one has hair pulled back in a ponytail; their sex is indeterminate, but their uniforms represent authority.

Points of view are social constructs. In attempting to describe a gender model that allows for full play of its diversity in everyday life, Judith Butler contends that we must overcome our biases in how we interpret reality and says, "The prescription is invariably more difficult, if only because we need to think a world in which acts, gestures, the visual body, the clothed body, the various physical attributes usually associated with gender, *express nothing*" (FPR 106).

I make it through security this time, seems there's a pass-through for me; maybe it's facial recognition from the monitoring. I'm safe. Am I to thank George Bush? I still must take off the cord around my neck, which has a silver locket, called a *gow*, that holds protection mantras against all kinds of demons, and for a moment, I'm vulnerable. I accept this. It's only security: so, I feel secure, just to feel secure.

Now to restrooms, where, supposedly, there is no monitoring. As yet, I haven't had a problem, a bearded monk in full robes, in an international airport, or anywhere else, but I wonder about Kelly. Ze going into a San Francisco International Airport restroom, either with the sign for male or the sign for female, would probably not cause a disturbance, but after the defeat of the heroic "bathroom ordinance" in Huston, Kelly could be at risk in many parts of the country. Dr. Ben Carson, who is presently running for president, believes in segregation. According to Tierney McAfee:

Ben Carson proposed his solution Thursday to the public debate over transgender people using public restrooms that correspond with their gender identities – transgender bathrooms. The GOP presidential hopeful is already under fire for the suggestion he made during an interview with Fusion's Jorge Ramos on Thursday. "How about we have a transgender bathroom?" Carson said. "It's not fair for them to make everybody else uncomfortable," and he added, "I think everybody has equal rights, but I'm not sure that anybody should have extra rights—extra rights when it comes to redefining everything for everybody else and imposing your view on everybody else.

<http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/nov/04/houston-equal-rights-ordinance-transgender-lgbt-discrimination>

*Redefining everything...*a lot of that going on...Tucker Carson, a Fox News pundit, claims such redefining by the Fairfield, Virginia, School Board's policy change recognizing "something called transgender" is part of "the Left's continuing war on biology"

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIFGy7ubCZg>). Matters are getting complicated, as the rigidity of gender identity becomes unstable. As Judith Halberstram says in "Transgender Butch: Butch/FTM Border Wars and the Masculine Continuum":

Specificity is all. As gender queer practices and forms continue to emerge presumably the definitions of 'gay,' 'lesbian,' and 'transsexual' will not remain static, and we will produce new terms to delineate what they cannot. (FPR 161)

More people are beginning to play with or deconstruct their gender identities. In *Gender Outlaw*, Kate Bornstein asks, "Where's the fun?" and quotes a Zen poet: "All roads in life lead nowhere. So, you might as well take the road that has the most heart and is the most fun" (CP 30). She posits "high camp" behavior as a means to bring about change in the self and in society: "High camp can be a man in full nun drag, with great showgirl makeup, on roller-skates in the middle of town. Does that man really want to be a nun?" (CP 31) and goes on: "Camp can be a leading edge in the deconstruction of gender, because camp wrests social control from the hands of fanatics. Camp in fact reclaims gender and re-shapes it as a consensual game" (CP 32).

*World-traveling* is another form of play that assists in the reshaping of gender identity by traveling to other experiences of lifestyle and consciousness. The term "world-traveling" I take from Mariá Lugones' essay, "Playfulness, 'world'-travelling, and loving perception." She admits to "worlds" that one cannot enter playfully, nor would want to...

But there are "worlds" that we can travel to lovingly and travelling to them is part of loving at least some of their inhabitants. The reason why I think that travelling to someone's "world" is a way of identifying with them is because by travelling to their "world" we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes. (FPR 79)

Gender is not stable (Butler, FPR 97) and is therefore the perfect playground for personal transformation. As a high camp group having fun breaking down barriers, Bornstein referenced the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, street-performers in San Francisco, who began dressing in drag as Catholic nuns, and whose original appearance now includes exaggerated make-up that accentuates their rebellion against gender roles. Fausto-Sterling (FPR 132) suggest that ultimately, concepts of masculinity and femininity might overlap so completely as to render the very notion of gender difference irrelevant and, she references Roshblatts' chromatic system that differentiates hundreds of different personality types which could translate into "shades of gender" (FPR 133).

Kelly might be a sister in the SPI order. I can relate to hir. I feel a bit of hirness in myself. I've been in a neutral place for the last decade, and I just gave back my vows as a monk in the Nyingma lineage of Vajrayana Buddhist. This is the Old School, the School of the Ancients, full of magic and mystery. Tibetan Buddhism is a theocracy, known as Lamaism, and since the monastic structure is central to the government and the religion, it is patriarchal. The patriarchal rule, however, is not (except for the Sakya Lineage) passed on from father to son but through the complicated process of determining rebirths by the recognition of re-incarnated lamas (tulku). I hold the title of lama by virtue of my three-year retreat. I am called a *drupla*, a lama who accomplished the Buddha's teachings in retreat. This is a title far removed from a *vajra lama*, a high lama, who is a *tulku*, one of the original heart sons of the 8th century Indian yogi-exorcist, Padmasambhava, who overcame the demonic obstacles preventing Buddhism from taking root in Tibet. As for me, I'm trying to make a transition from being a Nyingma monk immersed in Tibetan culture to living in an American college town with cowboys and philosophers.

. . .

Is being what Bornstein calls "transgressively gendered" (CP 30) an extreme in thought and action, if that is how you find yourself thinking and acting? By including myself in a transgender community (transgendered defined here as including neutral, chaste monks) I belong to a larger community than when I am a lone, wandering yogi-monk. And if I come out from being a monk and still wear my robes, which is fine with the Buddhist community, am I now cross-dressing?

I had not read Matarrese's article in the Daily Record on the day I gave back my vows, the same day that I had an appointment for my annual physical checkup. Taking advantage of the opportunity, I asked my doctor for a prescription for Viagra, which he sent, via his computer, to a local pharmacy. When I picked up my script, the pharmacist smiled and said, "We read about you in the paper." When I got to the front counter, I saw my picture on the front page, and I was embarrassed—a Buddhist monk picking up a prescription for Viagra, what is the world coming

to? It is possible that no one thought anything about it? Or thought it was ok?. Zen monastics can marry, but this is an exception to the general rule. There are reasons, but this is an anomaly. The vows I had taken included chastity. And now, I was caught out, at least by myself, in my transition from being a monk to an old fool in love.



The readings in Dr. Coe’s Women and Philosophy class cover a lot of material in feminist philosophy. By mid-term we are questioning the binary notion of sexuality and after reading Judith Butler’s “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” we are questioning whether, not only gender, but the body itself might be a cultural construct. I’m reminded of something one of my lamas said about the metaphysical foundation of the world (in its physical sense) resting on an elephant which rests upon a tortoise, and when asked what the tortoise rested on he said, “It’s tortoises all the way down.” The study of gender for me, at the moment, is the metaphysics of metaphysics, and the field theory of play is a means to ease, unify, and harmonize tensions, dissonance, and contradictions in the polarities of the body, voice, and mind.

After moving from Berkeley to Oakland, in 1948, I attended Sequoia Elementary School. Oakland had its White neighborhoods and its Black neighborhoods, and this was a school in a White neighborhood with the playground segregated by gender. I think it was segregated because the boys played too rough. Many of their fathers had survived WWII, and their tales of valor and battle filled the air. A decade later, when I entered Cal Berkeley, the civil rights movement was well-underway. Sitting at a table in Sproul Plaza, “manning” a booth for C.O.R.E., the *Zeitgeist* was palatable.

Patience, dear Reader, while I take a side trip. It may be that we are born Socialists, Republicans, Democrats, Anarchists, or Libertarians. I may have given back my monastic vows, but I’ve still got my Bodhisattva Vow—to not step entirely off the wheel of karma but to return to the world of suffering and assist beings attain enlightenment, down to the last blade of grass—and so, I

guess I was born a socialist, who was adopted into a Republican family (although my mother may have been a closet Democrat), and this tendency emerged when I entered Cal and began signing petitions, marching with signs, and reciting poems on the streets to bring about change in the so-called System. Yes, I did carry an I LIKE IKE sign around the school grounds when I was in the sixth grade, but I was also drawn to Adlai Stevenson, even after I was told he was “soft on communism” and way too liberal. Stevenson said something along the lines of, “A free society is where it is safe to be unpopular.” I agree with this maxim.

Outwardly, I can join the camp parade, but inwardly I must deconstruct my gendered self, and being a tantric yogi, I know the way to go about this.

### **An Essential Point of the Middle Way**

In the Inner Tantras, known as Ati Yoga, or Dzogchen (Great Perfection teachings), the reality continuum is posited as unborn, hence perfect, complete (*dzog*). Since there is neither being nor non-being, it is pointless to cling to notions of self and other, when one is alone in the vast space of the deathless swastika. I know, it sounds like I’m going all Aryan Nation on you, but in Tibetan Buddhism the *gyung drung*, or swastika, is a symbol of indestructibility and immortality. One proceeds in the deconstruction of the transient self and the immutability of the material world from the stance of the unborn unborn. As Vairotsana says, in *The Cuckoo’s Song of Gnosis* (ES1), “Exertion is redundant and spontaneity is ever-immanent.”

I wonder if Kelly made hir flight. Ze might have been en route to Thailand to complete hir surgery.

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### **Dr. Coe’s response to my paper**

She wrote:

*Part of what is at stake in critical gender theory/feminist theory is identifying how our naming*

*and judging of reality both creates harm of various kinds and masquerades as the only legitimate way to name or judge. In that sense it has an anti-dogmatic and therapeutic function—if working towards justice is therapeutic. But what that justice looks like, and how we should name reality are much-contested. Play is important, but it can't all be play—at certain points claims, stances, actions (and justification for all of that) are required of us.*

Continuing in non-doing, I'm not, for the time being going to take a stance. I return, instead, to my speculations, realizing that the problem with aesthetic morality is the one that Schiller realized in his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*—the difficulty of finding anyone able to be a detached observer while viewing a work of art, and the same goes for observing the mind in meditation.

The meditator finds the monkey mind, the chatter, the static without seeing the background, the nature of mind, gnosis, the ground. Can't get any leverage. First of all, can't think about thinking, let alone observe the process. Kant could. Fichte could. Schelling did, moving further inward, and Hegel a lot further outward. Schiller has his "play function" as a resolution of the mind-body dualism, finding the identity between thinking and feeling, suggesting thinking with the feelings, or at least attempting to understand the conscience and the will, the feelings in relationship to the thoughts, their interrelations, as well as distinguishing between the kinds of feelings and thoughts.

The disinterested observer critiques a painting or a performance, and the Self looks at the work of art as a representation of something other; then, it looks at the work of art as an expression of an individual artist, another mind out there, rather than being a-thing-in-itself. The mind wanders, processes another draft, another scenario, another strategy. Dissonance—distraction. The Spectator moves around. Touches. Thinks. A thinking Eye. Another eye sits behind this eye, a primal Eye. The Third Eye. Gnosis. The metaphysical basis for the ground of consciousness. The ground of the ground. The Base. That which, no matter how it is supposed to be, isn't and yet is rationally experienced as present awareness. Behind existence. Self-reflective cognitive emptiness.

At one end of the spectrum I compare bigness with smallness, blackness with whiteness, and accept the contradiction, their identity being a pointing to what cannot be conceptualized and spoken of in abstract terms, because one abstraction refers to another abstraction ad infinitum, until one reaches beyond the a priori continuum to the-thing-in-itself, that which Schopenhauer calls the Will and Hegel the Geist, which Fichte feels in his Ego, and Schelling expects to find in Freedom, and Kierkegaard touches with his blind faith and Nietzsche experiences in madness. At this point in the spectrum, I go beyond common logic to an older logic in order to think with feelings, because feeling is coincident with thought. Mind doesn't have primacy over Body.

## A gendered logos

Aristotle (384-322 BCE), in the *Ars Rhetorica*, gives *logos* a technical definition, as an argument from reason. According to Aristotle, *logos* relates to speech itself, in so far as it proves or seems to prove a line of reasoning.

Syllogistic reasoning would be the ideal form of arriving at truth for the West in the centuries to come. This form of cognition is based on a two-value system, the law of contradiction. In classical logic, the law of contradiction claims that contradictory statements cannot both be true in the same sense at the same time, e.g., the two propositions "A is B" and "A is not B" are mutually exclusive.

A three-value system of both/and might speak to a feminine form of *logos*, but the Middle Way supports no definitive conclusion. Asked such metaphysical questions, a yogi answers neither yes, or no, nor yes and no, nor neither. The pedagogical approach to the understanding of emptiness is taught in three stages: the first turning of the wheel of dharma teaches the four noble truths, the second turning of the wheel teaches the idea that all things are empty of self-nature, and the third turning teaches that concepts are merely labels for appearances. If things-as-they-are could be experienced as they really really are, our application of the masculine valence of the *logos* would be self-evident, along with the phalloprojective aspect of the Renaissance space perspective and the phallogenerative aspect of time factoring.

Kant makes a salient point about time and space being the conditions of consciousness without seeing the male bias. Fichte feels the beat of the *a priori* and turns it into a song and dance routine, and then Hegel expands the tune into an opera fit for a Wagnerian festival at Bayreuth. Patriarchal con jobs.

As much as one may criticize the airy, emptiness philosophy of Buddha as the abstractions of an exotic subjectivist, Buddha does not point to the mysterious operations of *Geist* as the subject of his inquiries. Hegel may consider our thinking capacity as paramount, but Buddha is more of a materialist in caring about sentient beings that are actually suffering.

Altman again:

There seems to be a tension, though, about what's essentially us. If suffering can be overcome by us by right thinking etc., then this is idealism and not materialism. We make our world with our *thinking*—after all, the cause of suffering is desire, not the way things *are*.

I rambled on: "We are abandoning our aesthetic feeling for things in lieu of mental wanderings, wisdom obscured by skillful means rather than united."

Altman: "This is going to be the trick, right? Is there a way to bring reason and aesthetic feeling together, or is one a refusal of the other?"

## **ORIENTALISM AND THE FEMINIST STRATEGEM**

In a previous life, I was Sultan Almansur  
And I had three hundred wives, all pure.  
I did everything I could contrive to keep  
My brides satisfied. In this, with modest  
Success, I took pride.

Some sultans first take the maiden head  
And then cut off the maiden's head  
When they are through. I can think of one  
Of mine, or two, who deserved the blade  
Which my conscience forbade.

A new wife each night is both a curse  
And a delight. I was careful not to  
Favor one and incur the harem's spite.  
With age, I turned my duties over  
To my eldest son, and then

I lived my final days, grateful that  
I could reflect and pray, and I thanked  
The Great Progenitor for my many lays.  
In lovemaking I was truly blessed  
And lucky now to get some rest.

My poem has an orientalist point of view and is a monologue by a character somewhat like the king in the collection of tales known as *The Thousand and One Nights*. In this Persian classic from the Islamic Golden Age, the beautiful Scheherazade, entertains her husband, Shahryar, with fantastic stories, and this artful contrivance prevents her from being dispatched with a sword.

Without going into Edward W. Said's controversial thesis (*Orientalism*, Vintage, 1974) of how the science of orientalism developed and how politicians may well have used characterizations of the East by western scholars to justify their desire to colonize Africa, India, China, and Arabia for commercial gain, it is reasonably clear that the West has had a fascination for these far-flung, exotic cultures since the time of Marco Polo. Oriental themes permeate the literature, architecture, painting, and music of the late 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries: Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem, "Kubla Khan; or, A Vision in a Dream: A Fragment" (1797), The Royal Pavilion at Brighton, designed by John Nash between 1815 and 1822, Eugène Delacroix's painting, *The Women of Algiers* (1874), and the opera, *Madame Butterfly*, by Giacomo Puccini (1904) are a few examples.

One of the main criticisms of orientalism is that the Orient is characterized in static terms with stereotypical descriptions of people and places. The seraglio, or harem, is an example of such a place, it being a secured place (Arabic, *harām*, forbidden because sacred or important) occupied by wives and concubines and forbidden to most men. However, in the mind of a poet, such a place is dreamed of as a place of pleasure, as Coleridge adapts the idea in his poem. He sees "a damsel with a dulcimer in a vision" and he claims that her song (if he could only remember it) would inspire him to build that "dome of pleasure." The harem was thought by Europeans to be a type of fancy whorehouse, and paintings of women in harems, with the possible exception of Delacroix's, because he claims in one of his journals that he managed to gain access (Wikipedia/*Women of Algiers*), are depictions of pure fantasy.

The concept that Oriental culture as static, inflexible, underdeveloped, and weak carries over into the various interpretations of feminine gender and sexuality by Western philosophers, thereby allowing them to claim their culture's superiority. There is general agreement by male philosophers, from Aristotle through Aquinas to Schopenhauer, who concur that the female state is a deformity (PW 28), that the female is a misbegotten male (PW 54), and that women are a second sex, inferior in all respects to the first (PW 141).

Two philosophers who hold opposing views on the nature of women are Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). Wollstonecraft reasons, with clarity, against the idea of there being a "feminine nature" with separate virtues such that it makes women inferior to men, and that, if such a condition did exist, it could be changed through proper education. The idea that women are only valuable as mothers and nurses, valued when young and charming and useless after they are beyond the stage of childbearing, would change if the rights of men were extended to women, and women were treated as independent, rational human beings (PW 115). Schopenhauer, in a most abusive manner, holds forth that women are mentally and physically weak and exist only for the propagation of the species (PW 139).

The tenets of Schopenhauer's thought can be found in earlier philosophers. Wollstonecraft is, in part, writing a rebuttal to the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, while Schopenhauer's view, although extreme, comes closer to that of the status quo. It was the prevalent view of 18th century enlightenment philosophers that women and men had different roles to play in society; worldly affairs were the prerogative of the man, while household affairs were to be administered by the woman. Both Wollstonecraft and Schopenhauer reference Oriental cultures to substantiate their opposing viewpoints.

Wollstonecraft: "In a seraglio...the epicure must have his palate tickled, or he will sink into apathy; but have women so little ambition as to be satisfied with such a condition? Can they supinely dream life away in the lap of pleasure, or the languor of weariness, rather than assert their claim to pursue reasonable pleasures and render themselves conspicuous by practicing the virtues which dignify mankind? Surely she has not an immortal soul who can loiter life away merely to adorn her person, that she may amuse the languid hours, and soften the cares of a fellow-creature who is willing to be enlivened by her smiles and tricks, when the serious business of life is over" (PW 122).

Wollstonecraft is critical of the type of woman that is only interested in acquiring a husband and shows no interest in cultivating her mind. Schopenhauer, on the other hand, sees women as needing to be kept in their place and only capable of fulfilling the role of a plaything for the more dominate sex.

Schopenhauer: "When Nature made two divisions of the human race, she did not draw the line exactly through the middle. These divisions are polar and opposed to each other, it is true; but the difference between them is not qualitative merely, it is also quantitative. This is just the view which the ancients took of woman, and the view which people in the East take now; and their judgment as to her proper position is much more correct than ours, without old French notions of gallantry and preposterous system of reverence—that highest product of Teutonico-Christian stupidity. These notions have served only to make women more arrogant and overbearing; so that one is occasionally reminded of the holy apes in Benares, who in the consciousness of their sanctity and inviolable position think they can do exactly as they please" (PW 141-142).

Now, if, as by magic, I could get Mary Wollstonecraft and Arthur Schopenhauer on the same plane—say, the Sufi 4th Heaven of the Innermost Heart—and, after a glass or two of vintage ambrosia, they would converse without her trying to strangle him or he trying to kick her down the stairs, their dialogue might develop to a point where he conceded that a woman can make

reasonable arguments, that Nature has drawn the line dividing the sexes more equitably than he thought She had, and he might even tentatively nod in agreement when Wollstonecraft says, "Nature, or to speak with strict propriety, God, has made all things right; but man has sought him out many inventions to mar the work" (Alison Bailey and Chris Cuomo, *The Feminist Philosophy Reader*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 2008, page 122). But would the continuation of their argument actually lead to a clearing in the dense forest of ambiguities between the gender roles of the sexes?

Andre Lorde, in her comments at the Second Sex Conference in New York, in 1979, pointed to lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender roles, along with racial and multi-cultural considerations, as missing elements of the dialogue. Realizing differences between white, gentrified women and men of European descent barely does justice to the overall problem. And coming to agreement with Wollstonecraft that once women have been properly educated and have developed equal virtues they can return to their traditional roles with supposedly higher rank and respect is only a chimera of freedom from patriarchal control (FPR 128). Lorde's insight that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" is a critique of the view of how change can be implemented. To quote Lorde, "As women, we have been taught either to ignore our differences, or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion rather than as forces for change," and she claims that different strengths can "spark" creativity (FPR 50). By extension, not only is recognition and utilization of difference necessary, but women should use whatever tools are available in many different ways.

. . .

The fortitude of Scheherazade, who distracts her husband for one thousand and one nights, is a case in point. Just considering the situation of being a virgin bride on the night of her nuptials with the prospect of being executed upon the completion of this ceremony is horrifying. A synopsis of the framework will help. King Shahryar, who rules China and India, discovers that his wife has been unfaithful and orders her to be executed. Grief-stricken, he believes all women are unfaithful and decides to marry a virgin daily and execute her the next morning before she can bring him dishonor. After a succession of executions, the kingdom runs out of virgins, and Scheherazade, the vizier's daughter, proffers herself. On the night of their marriage, Scheherazade begins to tell the king a tale but leaves off the ending. Spellbound, the king postpones her execution to hear what happens next. The next night, she begins a new tale and again leaves the tale unfinished, and the king, eager to hear the conclusion, postpones her execution once again.

The method Scheherazade uses to survive would seem to Wollstonecraft to be a degrading means to find freedom. She would understand the situation and that it required an immediate

solution and that the one chosen was clever, but she would see its limitations for the liberation of all women as being a continuation of the curse of inequality laid upon them (PW 115). Schopenhauer would see just another man being “clouded by his sexual impulses” (PW 140) while believing that the state of polygamy is proper, whereby a woman is “reduced to her natural position as a subordinate being” (PW 144).

Does Scheherazade degrade herself by using her storytelling art to ward off decapitation? Was her method a mere feminine wile? Is all fair in love as well as war? Remember, that among the Greek heroes, Odysseus used cunning in building a wooden horse, showing a great degree of intellect by disobeying normal rules and conventional behavior to dismantle the master’s house, in this case the City of Troy. Any such cunning accomplished by a woman will be judged as one of the nasty aspects of her feminine nature, whereas in a man it will be judged to be a crafty stratagem. And what of Helen of Troy when Menelaus, her husband, at the end of the Iliad, crashes into her boudoir? After twelve years on the battlefield and the death of so many heroes, Menelaus would like nothing more than to decapitate the unfaithful wretch, but he takes one look at her go-ahead breasts and drops his sword. And, just to add injury to insult, the woman was a stand-in, a phantom, as Helen was in Egypt throughout the whole affair (H.D, *Helen in Egypt*). Following this tangent, it appears that the master is dismantling his own house with his own tools without even knowing he is doing it.

In his essay, “When Fiction Lives in Fiction” (*Selected Non-Fictions*, Penguin, 1999, page 161), Jorge Luis Borges writes about one tale told by Scheherazade that is unique: “On that strange night, the king hears his own story from the queen’s lips. He hears the beginning of the story, which includes all the others, and—monstrously—itself. Does the reader have a clear sense of the vast possibilities held out by this interpolation, its peculiar danger? Were the queen to persist, the immobile king would forever listen to the truncated story of the thousand and one nights, now infinite and circular. . .In *The Thousand and One Nights*, Scheherazade tells many stories; one of them is, almost, the story of *The Thousand and One Nights*.”

Joining Wollstonecraft and Schopenhauer in the Sufi 4th Heaven, I say to them, “Perhaps, we are experiencing a form of eternal return in the process of human sexual evolution, a revolution within the dynamic of biological polarity, a rainbow of gender possibilities, whereby the male and female sides of the equation are recognized as mere abstractions, the one interpolating with the other, as they open to a spectrum of possibilities and the re-establishment and affirmation of her story within the context of so-called history to be more of a their story. And concurrent with the breakdown of bi-polar stereotypes, there comes recognition of the value of the emotional component in decision making.



## PART 5

### CHEEK TO CHEEK

*If a lover of truth finds a theory reprehensible and does not find plausible premises which remove its reprehensible character, he must not at once believe that the theory is false but must inquire how he who has put it forward had arrived at it, must employ much time in learning this, and follow the systematic order corresponding to the nature of the topic.*

—Averröes, TAHAFUT AL-TAHAFUT

**W**e landed in the Second Heaven,  
the Sphere of Mercury, where we  
encountered Lao Tzu, Bertrand Russell,  
Socrates, Parmenides, Thuragania and  
Plotinus discussing the interrelationship  
between the physical and the eternal world of forms

& I saw many *tigles*, or stars  
& we formed a crown at the center.

Parmenides asked Socrates if he held  
*that the Form*

*as a whole, a single thing,*  
*is in each of the many.*

And Ol' Soc asked a question in return:  
*Why should it not be in each?*

Parmenides replied that if it were so,  
*a Form which is one and the same*  
*will be at the same time, as a whole,*  
*in a number of things which are*  
*separate, and consequently will be*  
*separate from itself.*

Ol' Soc questioned this.

*What,* he asked,

*if it were like one and the same day, which is in many places at the same time*

*and nevertheless is not separate*

*from itself?*

Parmenides replied with a metaphor,

telling Socrates:

*You might as well spread a sail over a number of people and then say that the one sail as a whole was over them all.*

Ol' Soc agreed.

*Only a part would be over each one,*

and here he let the argument rest.

(Jones, *The Classical Mind*, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1952)

But Russell admonished the sage:

*(The History of Western Philosophy, S&S, New York, 1945)*

*Socrates, there is no logical reason for you to capitulate*

*because the distinction*

*between reality and appearance cannot have*

*the consequences*

*attributed to it by Parmenides.*

*In his poem, ON NATURE, (Russell, op. cit.)*

*Parmenides set forth the argument that*

*the thing that can be thought and that  
for the sake of which the thought exists  
are the same; for you cannot find thought  
without something that is, as to which it is uttered.*

Thuragania, a gleam in her eye, spoke next.

*This argument is based  
on two premises: What is is,  
and what is not is not,  
and I realize that  $A=A$  therefore  $\sim A=\sim A$  is more than  
an idiosyncratic hang-up on the law of identity for you,  
Parmenides, it's ontological  
argument that nothing  
is, as Heidegger, if he were present, might put it,  
nothing, [Here she drew lines through the word "nothing" on  
a small chalk board] ~~nothing,~~  
a something  
for which no thought  
corresponds and, as such, has no  
being, existence, or reality*

*whatever.*

*Believe me, a soul can experience bliss,  
even in lowest level of heaven*

*but here our discussion revolves around  
an argument from language  
reflecting your realist view  
that what names name are real.*

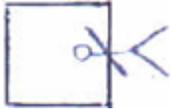
*Socrates might argue that the sail  
covers the man in the same way  
as the day,*

*given we have definitions that determine  
when a man can be said to be wholly under  
the sail and when the sail can be said  
to be wholly covering the man,  
whether the man be*

[And here she, again, drew  
on a small chalkboard]



*or be*



*for, if the latter,*

*then it can as well be said*

*that the man is covered by only  
a part of the sail.*

*Now, if the sail is cut apart, then it could be said that the whole  
part*

*covers the man*

*but not the whole sail.*



At this point, Russell jumped in.

*The problem derives*

he explained,  
*from a misunderstanding of  
relative terms,  
from a belief that it is a contradiction  
that if something, say A, is greater than B and less  
than C it must be both great and small, part and whole.*

Yes, said Thuragania,

[http://petermaxlawrence.com/Art/WEB/PLAG/PLAG\\_L\\_AOthuragania.htm](http://petermaxlawrence.com/Art/WEB/PLAG/PLAG_L_AOthuragania.htm)

*the basic premise of monism  
is that the real is essentially one.*

*For Parmenides,  
the only true being  
is the One, which cannot be divided because the whole  
is everywhere present.*

*That nothing changes follows  
from his argument that what is is, for  
if it came into being, it is not: nor is it  
if it is going to be in the future.*

*Consequently, there is no change  
in Nature, as defined as things*

*coming into being or ceasing  
to be. And so,  
to return to the sail,  
if the whole is everywhere present,  
then the whole sail  
covers the man,  
even if part of the man is  
uncovered.*

Because the living light that pours from the Source is so bright, I had not noticed a shade at my elbow.

Lao Tzu spoke:

*I have an alternative solution to the paradox. In my view, the  
One is known as  
the unknowable. It is the way which is forever nameless,  
which, as a thing, is  
shadowy, indistinct.  
Indistinct and shadowy,  
Yet within it an image;  
Shadowy and indistinct,  
Yet within it is a substance.*

*dim and dark,  
Yet within it is an essence.*

*(I,xxi,49, Tao Te Ching, Penguin, Baltimore 1963)*

*No term can be applied to the tao  
because specific terms impose  
limitations on that  
which is manifold.*

*The One, for Parmenides, is unchanging because there is no reason for it  
to have become or to pass away.”*

*Parmenides: That is so.*

*It must either be altogether or not at all.*

*Ah, continued Lao Tzu, for me it is  
altogether and not all.*

*This is known as  
the mysterious sameness. (I,I,3a)*

*Your One, Parmenides, seems  
to be a  
substance,  
like Thales's Water*

*and Heraclitus's Fire; it is indestructible and eternal, but unlike Heraclitusian flux, it is unchanging."*

Russell: *Yes, it is the persistent subject of varying predicates. And so, the argument becomes a matter of words.*

There was a murmuring sound.

*As I recall, said Ol' Soc, just the other day Feibleman (Ontology, Greenwood, NY, 1968)*

*made the point that the later Platonists*

*opted for the idealistic side of Plato, yet Plato does not contend*

*the illusory world has no being; he contends only that it*

*has no reality. Both worlds*

*exist— the world of Forms*

*(based on the unchanging One of Parmenides) and the world*

*of Appearances (based on the flux of Heraclitus)*

*are two parts of one world.*

*The other day*

*I was hanging with Mañjushrimitra,*

*The Master of the Chariot of the Nine Yanas and he showed me a great commetary he has written on Plato's work.*

*Mañjushrimitra feels Plato was  
unable to unify the plurality of Forms,  
even with his concept of the Good.*

*His insistence that something must be either A or ~A to be real  
is derived from the assumption that*

*the wholly real must be  
wholly knowable. I, as you are well aware, take the opposite position—  
for me there is no reason to suppose the real to be  
knowable, especially when the*

*real is considered as  
transcendent, yet even this conclusion is  
insufficient.*

*The ineffable tao as an  
either/or proposition leads to confusion.*

Opening a tattered thesis binder, Lau read:

*What cannot be seen is called  
evanescent;*

*What cannot be heard is called rarefied:*

*What cannot be touched is called minute;  
And so, they are confused and looked upon as one.*

(I,xiv,32-32a)

*Mañjushrimitra contends my use of negative terms are preferred  
because*

*they have the same  
limiting function as positive terms  
and so give an indication  
of the nature of the tao  
being unfit for specific terms of any kind  
or degree. He contends, then,  
that this is the difference between  
Taoism and Platonism.*

“Your words are clear,” remarked, Plotinus, who, up to this point had kept his own council.

He spoke with a lisp.

“Now, let your eyes hold fast to my insight.

The difference in the terms used to describe the *tao*  
can be used to distinguish

the nature of the *One*, for

the *One* transcends being.

As Russell points out, being is the first  
sequent upon it.

The *One* is  
unpredictable: we can only say,

‘It is.’”

Thuragania, bowed to Plotinus and said,

*You are an idealist, Plotinus,*

*in that you contend Matter*

*has no independent reality from Soul.*

“Yes,” he replied, “Soul generates

its image, which is the sensible world,  
and at the same time

it is intent on elaborating order  
on the model of what it has seen in  
the Intellectual-Principle.”

He touched his fingertips to her hand,

“The intellect, what I call *nous*, is

intermediate between the *One* and the *Soul*.”

He paused,

and we stood transfixed,

while he sang:

*To live at ease is There; and to these  
divine beings (the gods) verity  
is mother and nurse, existence and  
sustenance; all that is not of process  
but of authentic being they see, and  
themselves in all; for all is transparent,  
nothing dark, nothing resistant;  
every being is lucid to every other, in  
breadth and depth; light runs through  
light. And each of them contains all  
within itself, and at the same time sees  
all in every other, so that everywhere  
there is all, and all is all and each  
all, and infinite the glory.*

(Tractate V,8 *Enneads*, Russell, Op. Cit.)

Lao Tzu, cheek to cheek w/ Plotinus, sang:

*Gods in virtue of the One have their potencies.*

*The valley in virtue of the One is full;*

*The myriad creatures in virtue of the One are alive;*

*The myriad creatures in the world are born from Something and Something from Nothing.*

*There you go, Socrates, said Thuragania,*

*now, you can see that the part*

*and the whole,*

*which are two,*

*are one in the vision of the Intellect,*

*and that it is There that*

*all is all and each all. Each of them is great; the small the great.*

*And, thus, it would follow*

*that the great would be the small and each would be the all in all; and, further,*

*the many would come from the One*

*as the One from nothing,*

*or more precisely, from nothing,*

*the thing*

*showing itself*

*as itself.*

*Oh, exclaimed Socrates with sarcasm to his voice, I get it, now—  
the opposition of terms is a relative matter.*

Russell, who loves to get in the last word,

*Given you begin with a false premise, anything can be proved.*

Unable to contain himself, Ol' Soc

rose to the bait:

*If  $2 + 2 = 5$ ,*

*prove you're the Pope!*

Russell shot back,

*4 = 5;*

*subtract 3 from either side;*

*1 = 2;*

*the Pope and I are two,*

*ergo, I'm the Pope.*

Socrates grabbed Russell and gave him a good shake, saying: "There's no point in discussing anything with you. Your ideas are only logical analytics and puns at that."

Russell, smarting from this rebuke, replied: "I do like to play with ideas, and as Shakespeare had Hamlet aptly put it, 'The play's the thing.'"

Thuragania spoke softly, trying to pacify the two philosophers: “I adore you both, but be nice to one another. Let us apply what we have discovered to the task of finding the ground for a new ethics, one based upon aesthetic appreciation arrived at through contemplation—feeling and thought harmoniously playing their roles and guiding us in the making of our decisions. And you, Jampa, you’ve been here a considerable period without entering into these dialogues; what are your thoughts?”

Jampa: “Lately, I’ve come to another problem in developing aesthetic morality. I refer to a case, at the University of Ottawa, where, according to the report posted online by Heather Dockray at iTruck News on November 23, 2015, the Hindu American Foundation has put pressure on a yoga teacher to cancel her free class for students with disabilities *because it could be seen as a form of cultural appropriation*. How are we to move forward with the idea that mindfulness-awareness meditation is a form of aesthetic experience and then develop the idea of aesthetics as being a suitable ground for ethics, if meditation techniques cannot be taught because they have been taken from Eastern spiritual cultures by Western colonialism and are improperly taught out of context? Who is excluded? Or is it I don’t want to be included?”

Thuragania: “Don’t be silly, and don’t lose heart, Jampa. There is fertile ground under your feet. You should take Professor Altman’s class on the Philosophy of Art in the Winter quarter and see where it leads you.”

**This is art.**



**This isn't art.**



**Philosophy of Art**  
(PHIL 403)  
MTWThF 1-1:50 PM — Winter 2016  
Dr. Matthew Altman

In this class, we will survey classic writings in ancient and modern aesthetics, with particular emphasis on how those philosophies emerge in contemporary theory and criticism, and how they help us to appreciate the work of artists themselves.

Sponsored by the Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies.

## PART 6

ART IS MEDITATION MEDITATION IS ART

### AUTHOR'S PREFACE

There is irony in a Buddhist writing an autobiography. There cannot help but be ego-gratification, even as one reveals the absence of a Self—a sort of succor to assuage the sense of loss of something non-existent. The Tibetans call obstacles to one's path *maras*, and a memoir can be a weapon in the War against the Unfavorable Maras. Confession assuages the conscience and is a form of purification, a kind of homeostatic resetting of moral plasticity, to adapt a phrase from

neurobiology. There are the maras of sexual pleasure in excess. There are the maras of negative views. There are the maras of seeking to be recognized, to be understood, to leave a mark (hopefully not a smudge), that from one angle is pride and from another is the bodhisattva's wish to alleviate suffering by the contribution of something remarkable that enables each sentient being to find their original face.

In this essay, I will reveal how the activity of consciousness for a viewer of art can be considered an informal practice of mindfulness meditation and, in turn, how a formal practice of mindfulness meditation is an aesthetic experience. I will compare Eastern and Western descriptions of meditation experiences and aesthetic experiences to show how the approach of mindfulness meditation, as described by cognitive science and Tibetan Buddhist practices can enhance the enjoyment of art, and how theories of Western philosophy are useful in understanding Eastern meditational practice, as well as to enhance the creative process.

There are a complex set of interrelated components which make up the world of art. Museums and their curators, critics, art historians, philosophers (What would art be without theory?), gallery owners, auction houses, concert halls, bookstores, coffee houses, churches, parks, streets, subway platforms, wherever paintings can be hung, poetry read, music played, dances danced;—and then there are the artists, art viewers, and, of course, the artworks. John Dewey compares art to language. He notes that each art has a language of its own. “The hearer,” he writes, “is an indispensable partner. The work of art is complete only as it works in the experience of others than the one who created it...There is the speaker, the thing said, and the one spoken to” (A 211). A visual language is a system of communication using visual elements. Just as people can verbalize their thinking, they can also visualize it using a diagram, a map, or a painting that involves elements such as line, color, form, motion, texture, pattern, and space.

On one side of the equation, we have the viewer, the transmutation of the viewer's consciousness, and that which the artist has expressed; and, on the other side, we have the artist, the process of making the painting, and what the artist wants to express. Somewhere, in between, is the artwork. Benedetto Croce writes, “The artist produces an image or picture. The person who enjoys art turns his eyes in the direction which has been pointed out to him, peers through the hole which has been opened for him and reproduces in himself the artist's image” (CP 116). For Croce, what we feel, what passes through the work of art, is what is important. Art does not represent emotion; it expresses emotion. The matrix of a meditation involves the meditator, a non-active space (awareness), and the inner expression of feelings, sensations, and

ideas. Those practicing meditation are attempting a close and harmonious interrelationship with themselves to experience and, in turn, understand their feelings and ideas. In this sense, a meditation is also an aesthetic experience.

I am a thinking being, and I can ask questions about the nature of my very existence in the universe. I might ask myself, as Martin Heidegger asks in his famous question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” Heidegger argues that Western thinking has lost sight of the significance of the meaning of Being. Human beings take their existence for granted, and do not understand what it means to Be. For Heidegger, there is a difference between beings, spelled with a lower case “b” and Being. The first deals with separate things (things that can be described) and the latter helps explain with how these things are understandable as things. In this sense, Being (with a capital “B”) is more of a verb than a noun. The real question, for Heidegger, is what is it to be a being, and he feels that an artwork can give a viewer an insight into this kind of knowledge. I am not arguing for the correctness of Heidegger’s idea, only that it is one way of looking at an artwork that resembles a mindfulness meditation. A meditator is a being, for whom the meaning of Being can be experienced in the process of meditation.

The meditator finds what Buddhists call the “monkey mind”—the chatter, the static, the tumbling of thoughts and feelings, without seeing the background, the nature of mind, the ground of consciousness. The main difficulty is in observing the mental process, let alone is in being able to think about thinking. The means to this end lie with mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness meditation can be done sitting, standing, walking, or lying down, although beginners tend to fall asleep in the prone position. Keeping your back straight is important for form’s sake and for helping you to breathe evenly. Take a breath and notice your breath. Don’t change your breathing but focus on the sensation of the air moving in and out of your lungs. As thoughts come into your mind and distract you from observing your breathing, acknowledge those thoughts and return to focusing on your breathing. Don’t judge yourself or try to ignore distractions. Merely notice that your mind has wandered and bring your attention back to your breathing.

The trick is to develop a disinterested attitude about physical and mental discomforts and remain interested in the process of meditation. The key is to relax, and this is accomplished by what might be called a process of constructive rest to bring about an attunement of the activities of the body and the mind. In meditation, as mentioned above, there are two sides of the practice. The first, *Vipassana*, in the Buddhist tradition, means insight into the true nature of reality where impermanence, suffering, and the absence of any unified sense of self are realized to be our human condition. *Samatha*, in the Buddhist tradition, is the practice of calming the mind and allowing the formation of conceptual frameworks (ideas) to be diminished. As shown above, this is done by practicing the kind of single-pointed meditation most done through the practice of mindful breathing. The combination of these two approaches to the mind, in the Western

cognitive sciences, is called mindfulness meditation.

Training this monkey mind is discussed by Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch in their book, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*:

How can this mind become an instrument for knowing itself? How can the flightiness, the nonpresence of mind be worked with?...The purpose of calming the mind in Buddhism is not to become absorbed but to render the mind able to be present with itself long enough to gain insight into its own nature and functioning...[As] the meditator again and again interrupts the flow of discursive thought and returns to be with his breath or his daily activity, there is a gradual training of the mind's restlessness. One begins to see the restlessness as such and to be patient with it...Eventually meditators report periods of a more panoramic perspective. This is called awareness (24).

Although not a typical practice while viewing art, it would be helpful to develop the *samatha* focus, since the average time that many viewers look at a piece of artwork is between two and three seconds. Conversely, looking at the mind in a more playful fashion, like one looks at a painting, would take some of the heavy ponderousness out of the meditational procedure.

Questions will arise concerning the artist's intent, the artist's life experience, and who or what influences the artist's art practice. One can compare the artwork to other artworks (standard categories) and how they differ from those categories, compare the artwork to other works by the same artist, compare the works to other works in the same gallery, look to see if there is a narrative or whether the work makes a statement or is a symbol of something else. And then, there is the artwork's construction, how the paint is applied, its texture, the colors and shapes in the composition, whether the composition is balanced, if there is one perspective or many or none. Whether information from a broader context is used to better understand a piece of art or whether one stays within the formal constraints of the artwork itself, the viewer's personal interaction and response to the literal and expressive qualities of the artwork are engaged.

These questions about a work of art can also be asked about a meditative experience, about the meditator's own awareness, of her mental and emotional activity. What color is the mind? Does the mind have a shape? Where do the thoughts/feelings appear from? Where do they go? Is there a steady rhythm? Is there clarity or are the thoughts/feelings muddled? Is there a point of view? Who is viewing? Where is the viewer in all of this? For Buddhists, there is no isolated, permanent self that is a viewer. This has been a contentious point for many Western philosophers and psychologists. There are some post-structural philosophers who reject this belief, and new research from the fields of neuroscience, psychology, and artificial intelligence has also revealed the tenuousness of this belief in an integrated self. Daniel Dennett presents a model of consciousness based on information in his book, *Consciousness Explained*:

There is no single, definitive “stream of consciousness,” because there is no central Headquarters, no Cartesian Theater where “it all comes together” for the perusal of a Central Meaner. Instead of such a single stream (however wide), there are multiple channels in which specialist circuits try, in parallel pandemoniums, to do their various things, creating Multiple Drafts as they go (253-54).

The multiple drafts are the different ideas that arise in the mind and are held for a period. An idea arises; then, this idea liberates itself, and another idea arises. Ideas keep arising, until enough data are accumulated to form a more comprehensive understanding; then, the earlier ideas are abandoned. Likewise, in Dzog Chen (or Ati Yoga in the Tantric Buddhist tradition), concepts are resolved in openness, or self-liberated. In his *Treasury of Natural Perfection*, the 14th century meditation master, Longchen Rabjam, better known as Longchenpa, writes:

*Here is the essential meaning of resolution in openness:*

*Coming from nowhere, abiding nowhere and going nowhere,*

*External events, unoriginated visions in empty space,*

*are ineffable;*

*Internal events, arising and released simultaneously,*

*Like a bird’s flight-path in the sky, are inscrutable (15).*

In the activity of an aesthetic experience, the viewer looks at a painting and finds that this is a space for the play of consciousness, a place to get lost, a place to spend time and learn something new. The viewer, becoming a thinking Eye, can experience the painting as communicating something in a different language than words through the aesthetic experience. With practice, the viewer can sense another Eye sitting behind this eye, a primal Eye, sometimes referred to as the Third Eye, or gnosis (in the sense of insight into the metaphysical basis for the ground of consciousness). This is the ground of the ground, that which, no matter how it is supposed to be, isn’t and yet is experienced as present awareness, a kind of self-reflective cognitive emptiness. Again, Longchenpa, describes thoughts resolved in pure vision:

*The intangible Samadhi that lacks any field of meditation,*

*Pristine, simple, intrinsic gnosis,*

*Consumes all events in consummate resolution,*

*And all experience spent, itself is consumed.*

*Since the consuming or non-consuming is resolved in absence,*

*Its existence as ineffable is never in question.*

*What is, is a vast non-referential panorama,*

*All experience consummate, 'no mind!'*

*And that is the yogin's delight! (113)*

Concentration brings about a blockage of external and internal distractions, and the normal experience of time, as moving from one moment to the next, is transcended, wherein the yogin shares the same consciousness as the Buddha. Thought does not cease; indeed, if it did, you'd be dead. Awareness of the nature of mind is present, but the attachment to ideas and feelings are overcome and cease to be of primary importance and begin to recede into the background. If the mind wanders, no matter—an artist might suggest you shift your focus to the negative space. Or, take this printed page you are presently reading, and think of the white space as “contemplative awareness” and the printed words as “ideas” or “feelings” in consciousness. If all the ink that the words are made of was pressed together at the corner of the page, it would take up a very small area of the white space of the literal page, and in terms of the focus of the mind (bare awareness), the ink (ideas) could be considered as insignificant.

In his book, *The Psychology of Contemporary Art*, Gregory Minissale reports that “various psychological studies suggest that creative insights occur in the state when the mind is relaxing from tasks that require our full attention. Normally, it is assumed that it is harmful to the learning process for the mind to wander or that errors can occur in the processing of information if attention is not paid to details. However, as Minissale points out:

In an art exhibition, in the process of examining a particular artwork, or when watching a film, there is no pressure to process incoming stimuli in a particular order, and quite often mind wandering is encouraged (240).

The mind wanders, and, then, comes back into attentiveness; and when this attentiveness is extended over a period of time, a sense of losing of oneself becomes a state of absorption. In a mindfulness meditation one tries to observe whatever comes into awareness, feelings and thoughts, without holding onto or pursuing them.

An experiment: I posit my extended viewing of Darwin Davis's untitled sculpture in front of the Language and Literature Building on the CWU campus. My viewing has both objective and subjective elements:

This metal sculpture is made of a rising, continuous, visual line. This “line” is formed of fabricated

steel with a dimension of eight inches on each side. The line rises six feet from a concrete base and curves outward three feet and returns in the opposite direction before turning in a converse direction and then curving again upward to a height of fifteen feet. The sculpture has a strong design element, reveals fine welding technique, and displays a natural patina of rust. I walk around it, and it seems to change shape, the vertical and horizontal converge into different patterns and shapes, as my movements around the sculpture seem to compose it, bringing different aspects of the sculpture into view as a form of active involvement, helping me to feel the sculpture's dimensionality, and this perceptual awareness is accompanied by intuitions of passing time, time seeming to unfold in experience and space within what I perceive in the immediate present being a retention of perceptions just past, and this retention in the present overlaps in the perception that is coming to be, not isolated from others or fixed alone in time but flowing into each other, continually becoming different, going nowhere, and I returning to where I began with the sculpture not having moved from where it began.

Here, past, present, and future coalesce in my meditation, as I process ideas and impressions. The usual way of looking at art does not normally involve breathing exercises and is generally just a random looking at an object until the viewer "gets" something from it. With the use of a more developed meditational approach, a deeper aesthetic condition presents itself. This is not a cognitive state but an intuitive state of consciousness, arrived at through a creative process of looking. Here, the mind can wander and become an aid to experiencing a level of reality that is free of all endeavor, where appearances and sensations are neither good nor bad, where everything can be experienced without naming, without discursiveness, without fixation, and without any point of reference. This is where meditation and art viewing coincide, and the utterly ineffable experience of body and mind is unified.

Dzog Chen takes the mindfulness meditation a step further, where the viewer simply cuts through the ego with direct experience, after having the nature of mind pointed out by a master;—then, one sees that the relative and the absolute are concepts of the mind. The essence of mind is emptiness (transience, impermanence), but still awareness manifests. The same is found to be true for the nature of reality. The essence of objects is emptiness; yet their nature is to arise spontaneously in the mind. As Longchenpa says in *The Treasury of Natural Perfection*, "When nothing whatsoever is perceived as real in essence, the duality of delusion and freedom from delusion is resolved, and thereupon we lose any preference for samsara [the relative] or nirvana [the absolute]" (116). In this sense, the meditator is a disinterested viewer of self and other.

The aesthetic experience can be characterized mainly by disinterestedness, as Kant supposes, and this is true for the meditative experience, as well. But the focused aesthetic and meditative experience also produces what Baumgarten calls a vivid experience and Longchenpa calls a clear, luminous experience. It could be said that all experience is aesthetic experience, based on the

perspective that all experience is perception. Like Croce, I take the position that art does not exist independently of the experience of art. Therefore, an understanding of the aesthetic experience is important in arriving at a definition of art.

George Santayana, in *The Sense of Beauty*, developed the idea that an aesthetic experience is one that does not involve pleasure for a specific part of the body, but is rather “a lifting out of ourselves” and an appreciation that involves no wish to possess what is being appreciated:

A first approach to a definition of beauty has therefore been made by the exclusion of all intellectual judgments, all judgments of matter of fact or of relation (20).

Aesthetic and moral judgments are classed together in contrast to intellectual judgments; they are both judgments of value, whereas intellectual judgments are judgments of fact. Santayana makes a distinction between aesthetic and moral values, between work and play—work will be action that is necessary and useful, while it will seem that the play is frivolous. To the contrary, he argues, “For it is in the spontaneous play of his faculties that man finds himself and his happiness” (27). It is in the contemplation and appreciation of beauty that man is most himself.

The interplay between mind openness and mind focus is echoed in the concept of play by Friedrich Schiller. In *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (a collection of letters addressed to Friedrich Christian, a Danish prince, at the end of the 18th century), Schiller tries to show the development of mankind through a series of stations, from the physical to the rational, and he believes that the aesthetic experience will develop a human being’s moral behavior. In the fifteenth letter, Schiller claims that “play” is the principal expression of the human spirit and that it reconciles the divisions which civilization has produced in the human condition. Schiller divides the creative impulse into the desire for sense (the body), the desire for form (the mind) and the desire for play. He believes that the development of the play impulse reconciles the dichotomy:

Reason demands, on transcendental grounds, that there shall be a partnership between the formal and the material impulse, that is to say a play impulse, because it is only the union of reality with form, of contingency with necessity, of passivity with freedom that fulfils the conception of humanity (77).

How to raise human consciousness to this level is the challenge, but a sustained aesthetic appreciation of reality and the nature of mind through meditational stability would be a start. Meditation allows one to freely relate to both the inner and outer worlds.

. . .

I have shown that the process of a formal meditation and of an art viewing experience are much alike. It seems to me that the process of creating an artwork also has a meditational component once bodily movements come into play. In terms of applying meditational techniques to the creative process, as well as the psychological process, I have worked at deconstructing my

identity using Tantric Buddhist meditation using deep visualization and mantra in my traditional three-year retreat combined with the literary device of playing with multiple personas.

In this post-postmodern age, one of the tenants is the continued dismantling of structures and analysis of them from different perspectives. If we have abandoned the idea of an author, if the concept “author” is dead, as suggested by Roland Barthes and echoed by Michel Foucault, and I am writing my autobiography in a third-person persona, and the role of this subject, and the subject of the subject, in this pseudo-biography is another persona, masked by the author, something like an *authonomous* (half-anonymous and half-known) being is calling me to account for myself; and this, then, challenges my assumption of being free and autonomous in the world, as well as in the writing. If I peel away the layers of the façade of the author, I find a dialogue with myself as I experience the world.

In Tantric practice, the emphasis is on the intrinsic purity of all being. The process of receiving a transfusion of information from a tutelary deity through meditation involves two stages, creation and completion. Deity practice does the purifying. The visualizations of the creation stage undermine one’s sense of the solidity of the material world. In these practices, the true nature of mind is beyond intellect and description, and it is the power of devotion that allows the practitioner to accomplish the practice. Recognizing that the visualization of the creation stage is an illusion, the wonder of this creation dissolves back into the ground. The use of the deity, called a *yidam*, is to tether the mind while it is in the process of purifying mental obscurations, such as the idea of a permanent ego, or self. Each of the five buddhas in the deity mandala represent a kind of wisdom and meeting these wisdoms allows each practitioner a means to deconstruct the paradigm of a permanent self. This process of deconstruction can be thought of as a kind of play activity, an activity that involves active meditational practices in the process of creation.

Over a period of years, parallel to my Buddhist practices, I have played with developing a number of literary personae: Bouvard Pécuchet, a critic; Jubal Dolan, a gangster-type; Rychard Artaud, a collage artist; Jampa Dorje, monk and scholar; and Thuragania, a lesbian, pre-Socratic philosopher. They each have their own body of artwork—paintings, poems, novels, critical works, and letters—and the personalities of these characters seem aligned to the weakness and strengths of the five Buddha deities. The white deity of the Buddha Family is intellectual; the red Padma Family deity is magnetic and dramatic and tragic. Blue Dharmakaya deity purifies with space. The yellow Ratna deity is artful and nurturing. The green, All-accomplishing One is powerful and successful, and each liberates the self from attachment and clinging.

After much practice, I wind up with five literary personae/tutelary deities occupying my empty consciousness continuum, and I recognize that there is only the text out there, as there is no here in here. This author must be a reflection in your mirror-like mind.

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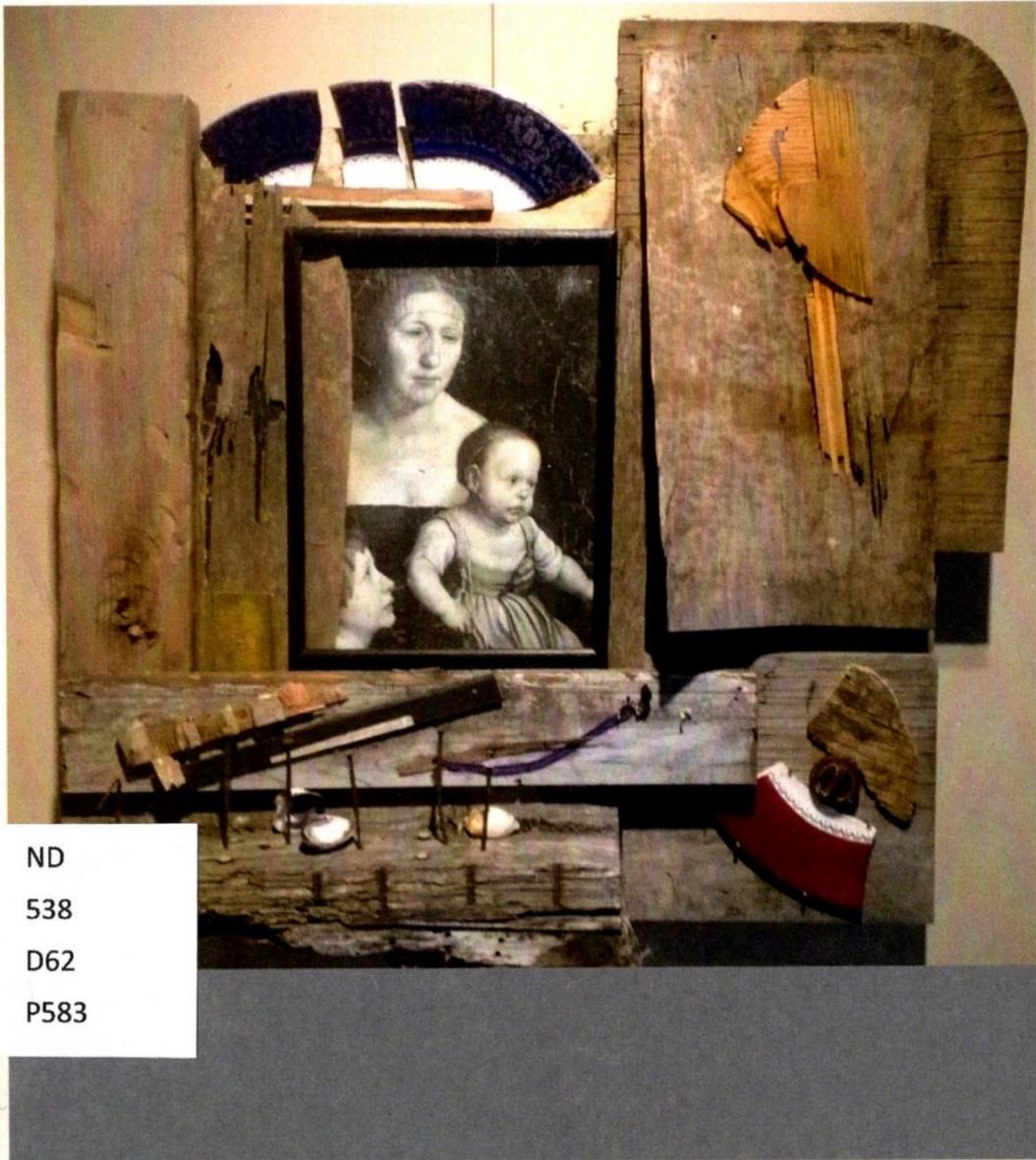
KICKASS PRESS



# DENNER/DORJE

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# DENNER/DORJE



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## WHAT'S IN A NAME

Andy Matarrese / Daily Record

When Jampa Dorje first came to Ellensburg some 40 years ago, he was Richard Denner.

Dorje, the former owner of the Four Winds Bookstore in Ellensburg, says he has about six names, from multiple pseudonyms he's taken as a writer, the "Rychard" with which he'll sometimes sign his artwork, and the several names he took in his journey through Tibetan Buddhism.

A new name is often conferred through each milestone in Buddhism, he said.

Jampa Dorje is his “refuge” name, he said, the name he took after taking refuge with the Buddha, similar to a baptism.

He introduces himself as Jampa. Some people who knew him as Richard Denner like the Jampa name, while others don’t, he said.

“Well then, call me Richard,” he said.

The name Jampa Dorje means “indestructible loving kindness,” he said.

“Hard to live up to, but they always give you something to aspire to,” he said.

Dorje joins local Zen Buddhists for worship services at the Unitarian Church, but he’s the only Tibetan Buddhist in Ellensburg, as far as he knows.

The robed, bearded and long-haired Dorje understands that he stands out, but has, a few times, gotten a “go back to where you came from” from passing drivers.

But this is where he’s from, he said.

Part of his garb, he said, has to do with showing people there are other paths to take in life.

“Some of it has to do with sexual genders,” he said. “Are you so hung up on your masculinity that you couldn’t wear a skirt? What’s wrong? It’s like, free yourself from your constraints.”

Jampa Dorje, Ellensburg’s resident Tibetan Buddhist monk, leafed through one of his volumes in search of a poem.

He found one he wrote during a trip between his parents’ home in California’s Bay Area and his Buddhist retreat center in Colorado.

“I’ve already written my autobiography,” he said, rifling through one of the nine hand-illustrated and written volumes that comprise it.

Times have changed, he read, since people were out protesting China’s selection as host of the Olympics following outcry over its treatment of Tibet.

“I’m ordering a Grand Slam at Denny’s and the waiter says, ‘You guys are awesome.’ I’m checking into a Hotel 6 and the desk clerk asks, ‘Is there anything we can do for your people?’”

Dorje, bespectacled and wearing his orange shirt and red robes, goes on:

“I’m taking a leak at a Shell station, the guy next to me goes ‘OM.’ I mean, what is this? I’m only trying to relieve myself!”

He ended the poem laughing.

“As you can see, it’s not a totally serious religious path. I’m a bit of a renegade in a way,” he said. “I just feel that some of that seriousness is just so unnecessary. If you’re not having fun in your religion, I mean, why do it? ... You’re burdening yourself with such unnecessary seriousness over things that should bring you joy and happiness.”

That’s part of Buddhism, he said, avoiding extremes in thought and action.

“It’s not as though people aren’t suffering, I mean they are! But part of it is, they’re not happy, and so much of that not-happiness is their own inability to be happy, and it’s the suffering on top of the suffering,” he said Monday in his small, simple house near Ninth Avenue and Water Street.

We all suffer, he said: It’s hot out; my butt itches; “I’d rather be fishing, but I can’t because I’m Buddhist.” “Am I good enough? Will I have the security? I hate my boss. All of this is the unnecessary suffering that comes from attachments to ideas and forms and things that are impermanent, which in turn disappoint, fall apart, die.”

To the hinterlands.

Many in Ellensburg might know Dorje better as Richard Denner, the former owner of the Four Winds Bookstore.

Dorje has been back in Ellensburg for about a year now, after leaving for some time to care for his parents and pursue Buddhism.

He’s been doing found artwork, nailing and gluing together bits of junk, for some time. There’s likely still assembled bits of detritus leaning against remote fence poles around the county he and everyone else has lost track of.

“I wanted to be an artist, and it was easier than learning to draw,” he said.

He said he first tried assembled art while spending time with Bohemian artist-types near Santa Cruz, Calif., in the 1960s.

“One day I swept up a floor and I swept up all the pieces of what they were doing into a box, and then I looked at it and thought, huh,” he said. “And I poured a whole quart of glue into it, and I wanted to see what that would be as a piece of art.”

Many artists of the era were hands-on with their work, he said, talking about how they’d throw paint around and get physical with their creations.

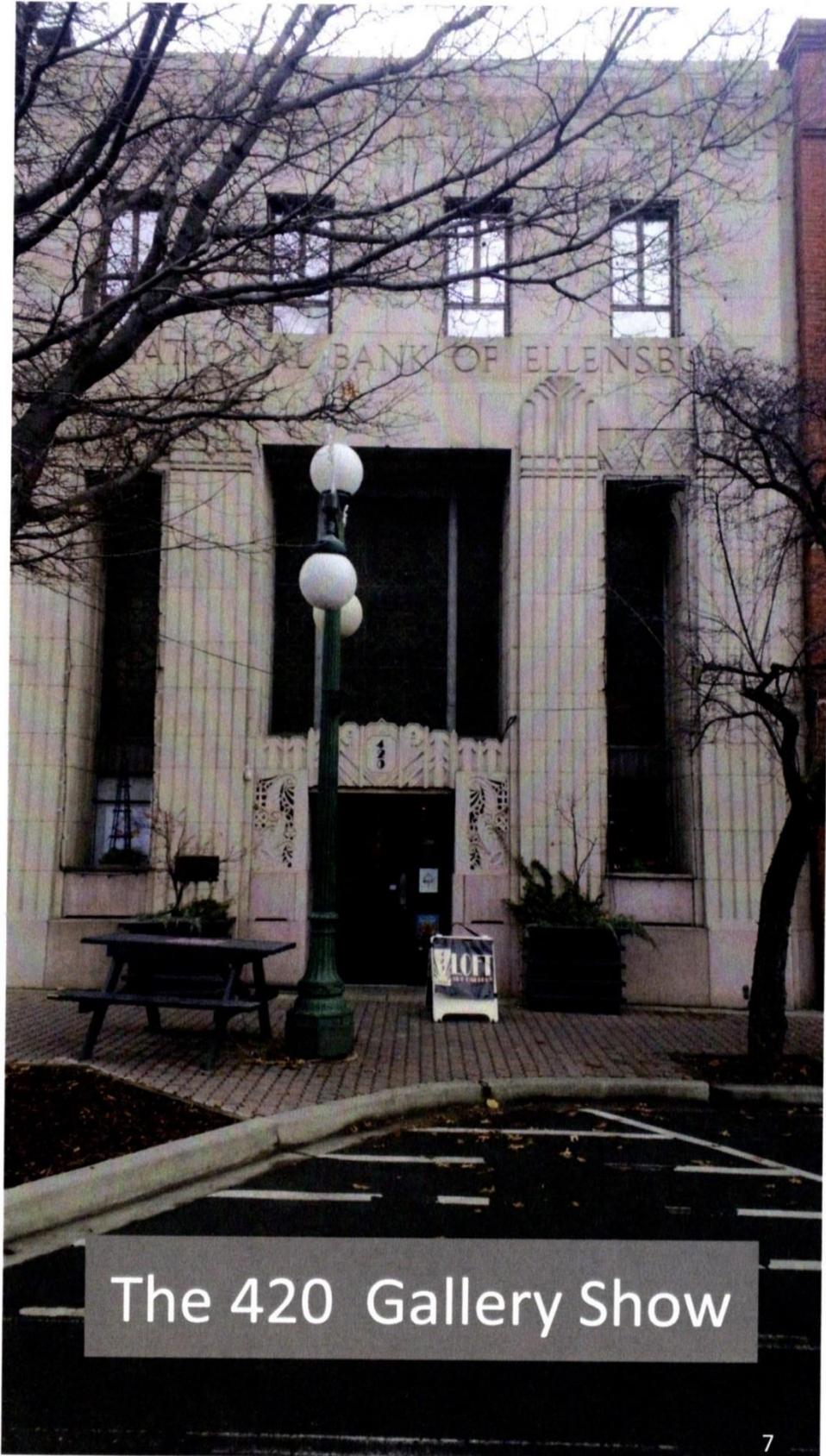
He grew up in Oakland, near the epicenter of the free speech movement and ‘60s culture.

In 1965, he met the Beat writers Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder.

He told Snyder he wanted to open a bookstore in Berkeley. Snyder told him Berkeley had plenty of bookstores, and he should “find a place in the hinterlands,” Dorje said, one that needed such a store.

Ellensburg is that place.

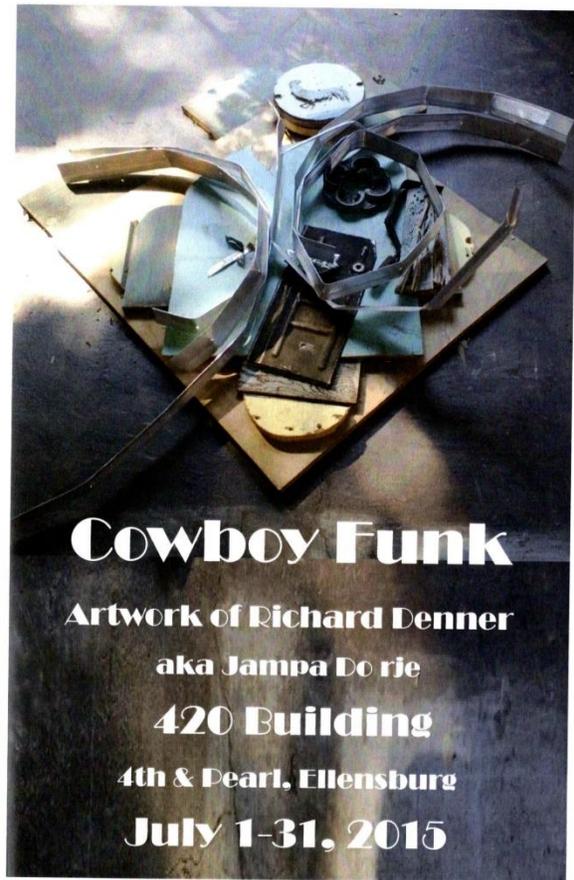
The self-described printer-poet-yogi will present a series of his found junk assemblages and collages — titled “Cowboy Funk” — through this month at the 420 Loft gallery downtown, and the pieces range from the mid-’70s, when he first lived in Ellensburg, to art made in the past year.



The 420 Gallery Show



Megan Gustafson at the 420 opening reception.



Poster for Cowboy Funk show at 420 Building , designed by Oberon.

### An Art Historian's Perspective

Drawing inspiration from his experiences as a poet-monk, his travels zigzagging across the American landscape and the rich conversations that arose in each locale, Rychard Denner created a body of work that ranges from the fragile and ephemeral to the rugged and enduring. These assemblage sculptures recall the Neo-Dada combines of Robert Rauschenberg as well as the funk art of Bruce Conner. Entering into each new environment, Denner collects life's detritus and fragments of the site. These humble, broken objects are then later imaginatively reworked to draw the beautiful and brutal closer together in an improvised and spontaneous creative moment. These works are then left in the original environment – hung on a fence, leaned against a shack, lying in a field – and the elements of nature are allowed to leave their final signature.

Lu Auz  
Memphis College of Art



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

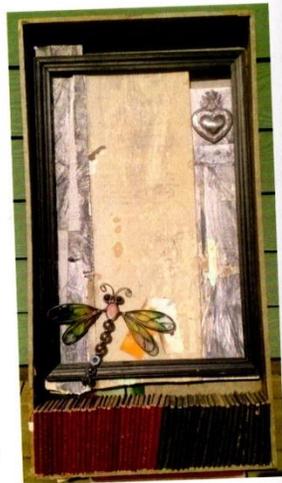


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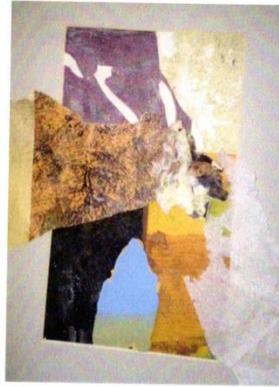


Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

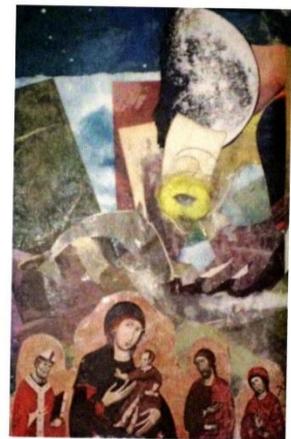


Figure 11

13



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17

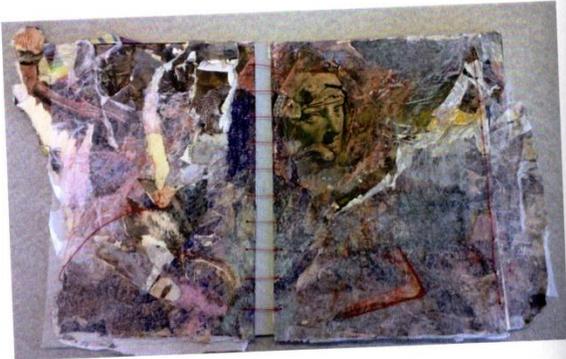


Figure 18



Figure 20

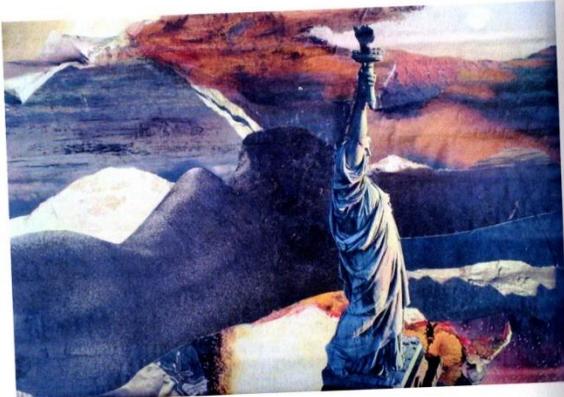


Figure 19



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23



Interior of 420 Gallery



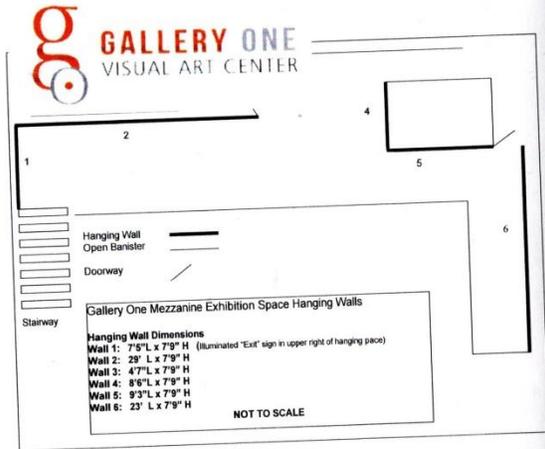
Photographs by Julie Prather

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- Untitled combine on 420 Gallery poster created for Gallery One 2015 *Paint Ellensburg* event in collection of Karen Johnson.
- Figure 1: "Construction w/Peacock Feathers" (2014) Mixed Media, 24x34, Collection of Marlene Chaney.
- Figure 2: "Construction w/Brass Ornament" (2014) Mixed Media, 26x34, Collection of Gail Chiarello and Alan Singer.
- Figure 3: "Homage to Miro" (2015) Mixed Media, 26x26.
- Figure 4: "Homage to Mondrian and Rauschenberg" (2014), Mixed Media, Collection of Mollie Edson.
- Figure 5: "Renaissance Altar" (2015), Mixed Media, 26x26.
- Figure 6: "Garden Girl 20 Years Later" (2015), Collage, 18x24, Collection of Michael Tumulty.
- Figure 7: "Library of Little Books" (2015) Mixed Media, Collection of Webster Hood.
- Figure 8: Untitled (1990) Collage, 7x10.
- Figure 9: "Buddha" (2014) Mixed Media, 7x10, Collection of Kate Horowitz.
- Figure 10: "Little Indian" (1990) Collage, 9x14, Collection of Philippe.
- Figure 11: "Leviathan" (1978) Collage, 8x10, Collection of Michael Tumulty.
- Figure 12: "Philosopher's Stone" (2015), Mixed Media, Collection of Webster Hood.
- Figure 13: "Battery Critically Low" (1990), Collage, 9x14.
- Figure 14: "Gone Afar" (1994), Collage, 9x9.
- Figure 15: Untitled (1990), Collage, 8x10.
- Figure 16: "Geist w/Falling Cat" (1994), Collage, 10x14.
- Figure 17: "Dionysus" (1989), Mixed Media coated in plastic resin, 14x18.
- Figure 18: "Pages" (2015), Collage with string, 12x16, Collection of Gail Chiarello and Alan Singer.
- Figure 19: "After the Blast" (1985), Collage, 8x12.
- Figure 20: "King Leopold Portrait in Vegetables" (1980), Collage, 34x48.
- Figure 21: "Portrait of the Artist as Albrecht Dürer" (1980), Collage, 34x48.
- Figure 22: "Cosmic Unraveling" (1980), Collage, 34x48, Collection of Gordon and Jane Macdonald.
- Figure 23: "Gibson Girl's Reverie" (1980), Collage, 36x48.



Gallery One, Ellensburg, Washington



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 JANUARY 16 THRU FEBRUARY 27, 2016

**RICHARD DENNER**



Poster for Gallery One Show



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www.gallery-one.org

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**Austin Smith** - *Inside Out*

Mezzanine:

**Richard Denner** - *Spacializing the Inner Eye*

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**Annual Members' Show**

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**Have a Heart Members' Celebration**



Invitation card for Gallery One Members' show

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT: SPACIALIZING THE INNER EYE

These are conservative paintings in that I trace my daubs to the 1950s and 1960s and the mature work of Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and Phillip Guston. I pair the action of Abstract Expressionism with the informalities of Antoni Tàpies, the asymmetrical harmonies of Piet Mondrian, the absurdities of Marcel Duchamp, and the mirth of Jean Miró.

There's a lot of unknown to explore, fraught with the usual dichotomies— so the guru points the way into the forest. Everything is out there to explore, and there's nothing in here to explore. There's no in here, here.

I'm thinking spatially. I'm spacializing the inner eye and knowing gnosis.

John Cage once remarked, "Isn't it amazing that one can paint a picture about nothing?" Or, as I would argue, about everything. A work of art is about purposefull purposelessness; it is also about social justice. The painter is somewhere in between, harmonizing what is thought with what is felt.

I speak in the language of things.

## AN ART HISTORIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Richard Denner, aka Jampa Dorje, works with a variety of diverse media, yet traced throughout his oeuvre is the desire to identify a transcendent, harmonious experience underlying a fragmented, often brutal reality. Perhaps this is most present in his mixed media artworks that use appropriated materials taken from everyday surroundings. Beneath the literal associations of these found objects are subtle references to literary sources, art history, philosophical queries, and Buddhist teachings. These works contain unintentional and surprising connections that arise and are given form as the artist layers, alters, and manipulates the dense assemblages. Mixing disparate objects produces remarkable analogies. These materials, detached from their common purpose, are now free to signify on multiple levels. By employing a poetic language, Denner/Dorje creates compositions that establish a space in which one can be attuned to the present moment and the fluctuations of time and meaning. A spiritual world meets a stark reality in these works as past and present coalesce.

—Lu Auz  
Memphis College of Art



Gallery One interior



Figure 1



Figure 2



Prayer flag set on fence at Theo & Melissa Denner's house in Ellensburg



Figure 3



Figure 4



Mezzanine at Gallery One in Ellensburg



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15

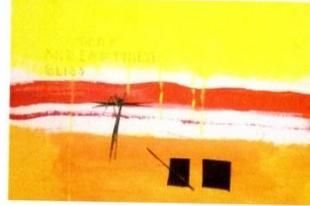


Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20

### Gallery One list of illustrations

- Figure 1: "Prayer Flag—Vajra Family" (2015) Combine, 35x48, Collection of Theo and Melissa Denner.
- Figure 2: "Prayer Flag—Buddha Family" (2015) Combine, 35x48, Collection of Theo and Melissa Denner.
- Figure 3: "Prayer Flag—Padma Family" (2015), Combine, 35x48, Collection of Theo and Melissa Denner.
- Figure 4: "Prayer Flag—Karma Family" (2015) Combine, 35x48, Collection of Theo and Melissa Denner.
- Figure 5: "Prayer Flag—Ratna Family" (2015) Combine, 35x48, Collection of Theo and Melissa Denner.
- Figure 6: Untitled (2015) Combine, 14x16.
- Figure 7: "Athena" (2015) Combine 48x48 (recycled).
- Figure 8: "Portrait of Athena" (2015) Collage, 19x21.
- Figure 9: "Zendo" (2015) Collage, 18x18.
- Figure 10: "California Coast" (2015) Collage, 19x21.
- Figure 11: Untitled (2015) Combine, 24x52, Collection of Sam and Ren Albright.
- Figure 12: "This Is a Pipe" (2015) Combine, 5x5.
- Figure 13: "Logic Suffices" (2015) Combine, 5x7.
- Figure 14: "I Look Eye" (2015) Combine, 5x7, Collection of Brock Jensen.
- Figure 15: "O, Love" (2015), Mixed Media, 8x12.
- Figure 16: "Bliss" (2015), Mixed Media, 8x12.
- Figure 17: "Triptych" (2015) Combine, 19x21.
- Figure 18: "Soul Exists" (2015) Mixed Media, 12x14, Collection of Matt Altman and Cynthia Coe.
- Figure 19: "Evocation" (2015) Mixed Media, 9x13.
- Figure 20: "New Gravity" (2015), Linoleum block prints on rice paper, 18x72.



D & M Coffee  
and The Jug  
Art Shows



Posters for two shows, running back to back, at The Jug Juice Bar



Poster for the show at D & M Coffee

**List of illustrations**

Figure 1: "Emblem" (2016) Combine, 22x36

Figure 2: "Philosopher's Chair" (2016), Combine, 24x72.

Figure 3: "Tick Tock" (2016) Combine, 18x36.

Figure 4: "I'm With Her" (2016) Combine, 24x40, Collection of Mike Burtness. This piece was not in the show; it was created for Gallery One's *Paint Ellensburg* event, in September, 2016.

Figure 5: "Put a Bird On It" (2016), Combine, 21x30.

Figure 6: "Pacifying Space" (2016) Combine, 12x15, Collection of Ellen Avitts.

Figure 7: "Tyger, Tyger" (2016) Combine, 12x15.

Note: Many of the artworks from the Gallery One and 420 Gallery shows circulated in the D & M Coffee and the Jug shows. The pieces shown here were not in the other events.



Figure 1



Figure 3



Figure 2



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Interior of The Jug Juice Bar



Interior of D & M Coffee, Downtown Ellensburg

## THE ASSEMBLAGE ART OF JAMPA DORJE

by Bouvard Pécuchet

William Blake would consider Jampa's art ugly, the work of Fumble and Bungle, but Jampa is undeterred. He admires Blake's bold pronouncements, his iconoclastic beliefs, his view of the eternal artist and the imaginative principal, and above all his perseverance in an age that dismissed his art as old-fashioned, when in fact it was modern and revolutionary.

Most of Jampa's artwork is signed "Rychard." Jampa says, "The y can simply replace the i in Richard, and the pronunciation stays the same, or it can have a French affectation and be Reechard, as you wish." Here is his artist's statement from Rychard's Assemblages, D Press, 2007:

I contemplate and move objects around until things "fall into place." I like there to be a fit, and I try to interlock the shapes of the objects to give structure to the piece—an architecture of mind—keeping nails, glue, wire, staples, screws, welding to a minimum. I bring disparate objects

together—eggshell Styrofoam, curtain lace, blurry photos and plastic water pipe—hoping for a most fortunate accident of composition. Look for nothing behind the junk.

Although there are examples of combining found-objects and of pasting together paper images in the folk art of the 19th century, as well some mixed media in the early work of Picasso, it is Kurt Schwitters, a German artist of the 1920s who is considered the father of collage. He created what are known as "Mertz," after finding a scrap of newspaper torn from the word "commertz." The idea that this lowly fragment of commerce could be recycled into the economy intrigued him. That which is rejected, ignored, cast aside, is still a part of the system, and the artist threads it back into the fabric of society. This art was considered decadent, meaningless by the Third Reich, so Schwitters's work was burned, and he had to flee to America.

I am not a trained artist. I took printmaking and a class in drawing from Terrance Choy at the University of Alaska in the early 1970s. Mainly, I have hung out with artists that eat, drink and dream art, and I've watched them work and sat in cafes and walked the streets, talking with them. I go to museums and galleries and look at the pictures. I was 19 when I went to my first art show at the San Francisco Modern Museum of Art and saw Robert Motherwell's blue collages of Gualois cigarette wrappers mixed with paint. I saw an exhibit of Brancusi and Giacometti sculptures and a retrospective of Kandinsky paintings. All of these exhibits strongly affected me—the "tearingness" of collage in the work of Motherwell, the solid presence of the Brancusis, the organic economy of the Giacomettis, the ethereal precision of the Kandinskys. Later, other famous and not so famous artists would have effect on me. Luis Garcia's collages, for example, revealed to me that materials are everywhere, and I still strive for the sense of alignment I feel in his work.

I have used the skills of a carpenter, a plumber, a printer, a painter—trades I work at and enjoy—to make my artworks. The best carpenter is the one who can hide his errors. However, here I like to see the "errors," the crustiness, the broken, bent, wrinkled, burnt, twisted materials, the wire, thread, nails, and the seams in the cut paper. I paint with junk, exploring space, positioning this "trash" to reveal its overlooked beauty.

#### INTERVIEW WITH JAMPA DORJE

I made my way, wearing snowshoes, along the faint traces of a trail in the deep snow to Luminous Peak, the cabin where Jampa is in retreat. He has finished his three-year retreat, but he remains ensconced. He welcomed me with a big smile and a hot cup of tea.

BOUVARD: This tea has an interesting flavor. What is it called?

JAMPA: Lapsang Souchang. It comes from the Fujian province of China. Smokey, some people say it tastes like boot polish. I have some other choices, if you'd prefer.

BOUVARD: Don't yogins avoid becoming attached to fine teas?

JAMPA: Well, there's no reason for throwing away good tea. Enjoy your tea, and then we'll get down to business.

BOUVARD: Do the Tibetans have a ceremony like the Japanese?

JAMPA: Not that I know of, but they do use tea as an offering, and I have heard that, if there is a limited amount of tea available, the first steeping is called the "nirmanakaya" and the second is the "sambhogakaya" and the third is the "dharmakaya." Each kaya, or dimension, is progressively more rarified, until it is tasteless. (Jampa laughs.)

BOUVARD: Can you tell me about your assemblages?

JAMPA: Assemblage is a process of making a painting by combining found objects. Assemblage has its roots in collage, and collage has its roots in folk art. Picasso added real newspaper and pieces of a guitar to one of his paintings. Schwitters used found materials. Philip Whalen said, "Kurt Schwitters tore it all into COLOR." Abstract Expressionists, like Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg took assemblage to new heights of composition and absurdity. It is not all to be viewed in a serious vein. There is also humor in this work, although some critics see it as "anti-art" or "the end of art." A gallery curator told me that my Cowboy Funk pieces were too dirty to hang on her walls. The outdoors does cling to my combines, which is another name for these objects, and I feel they are akin to environmental artworks.

BOUVARD: Many of your assemblages hang on sheds and fences. I saw a number of these, as I walked towards your cabin. Do you see them primarily as belonging outdoors? You also make collages and boxes, right?

JAMPA: Yes, the collages and boxes are made of more delicate materials. They are more intimate. The junk pieces I like to see outside. They highlight an otherwise overlooked structure, and the various objects around old buildings seem to become a part of the assemblage itself.

Once, when I visited Don Webster, an artist I knew in Aptos, I swept up a bunch of debris into a wooden box, and I decided to pour in some glue. Why not? Of course, it didn't hold together, but it was a start. If you want a combine to hold up under the force of the elements, you have to give some consideration to how you construct it. I often begin by laying the parts I have collected on the ground and leaving them. I rearrange them a few times, taking into account how they fit together, structurally and esthetically, and how I am going to eventually mount them, what wire, nails, screws will be used.

When I am satisfied with my composition, I start with the background level and begin to build, changing things as necessity dictates, as the materials demand. It never comes out as I planned, but that is half the fun. I do tend to overwork my pieces, not to let well-enough alone, to get cute, "to put a bird on it." Literally.

At the gallery I mentioned earlier, where the curator was concerned about the crustiness, the rustiness, the flakiness, I did get three works accepted in a community show and won first, second

and third prize in the mixed-media category. I asked the judge, later, why the one piece received third place, and she told me that the little hand-crafted bird I had added to a projecting piece of metal was silly. Maybe so, maybe not; I had added it mainly because I didn't want someone to poke out their eye. There's a bird in Rauschenberg's "Canyon." Maybe, if I had spray-painted my bird black, it might have flown.

BOUVARD: Where do you find your materials? How do you choose?

JAMPA: There's a lot of junk out there to choose from, too much really. I set rules for myself, like I will only pick up pieces of stuff I find along the roadside on my morning walk. Occasionally a piece "presents" itself and goes to complete a work still unfinished. People give me things: "Jampa could use this," they say. Sometimes, I find a huge stash of materials, on a ranch or in a junk pile. I get excited. I want it all; but I settle on pieces that interest me. Another rule is to use things from other projects I'm working on, say, doing some plumbing or fixing a garage door. I may incorporate the broken parts or the left over materials in my art.

When I lived on a ranch near Ellensburg, Washington, there was a mound of junk out in the desert. The guy I worked for had problems, work pressures, girlfriend pressures—he was a man in a mid-life crisis—and he used my shoulder to cry on. We had a good working arrangement, a rent-free house and a monthly salary, but the added "psychologist" part on my days off had not been part of the original deal, and it became oppressive. I continued to do my chores, but I took out my frustration by covering a large shed with junk. This was my first big work. My boss sold the spread, and the man who bought it was going to bulldoze the "Tack Shack," as it was called, but his wife said it was a treasure, that she loved it, and it was saved from destruction. Kind of a happy ending, unlike the fate of the wall in *The Horse's Mouth*.

The opening scene of Sam Albright's video, *The Collage Artist*, takes place in front of the Tack Shack. I appear in a black tweed overcoat and fisherman's cap, working on my art. I get in a battered GMC van and drive down 4th Parallel Road towards Ellensburg. Mt. Rainier can be seen above the Manastash Hills, and there's a great shot of a hawk cutting the air in front of the van. The video follows the activity of an artist preparing a retrospective art show. There are three parts: the ranch scene and trip to town; a café scene, shot in the Four Winds with a part that is an interior monologue; and a final, Chaplinesque scene with Chris Shambacher and myself, accompanied by Craig, Chris's three-legged dog, carrying a mysterious box around town. The video was shot just prior to a show I had at Gallery One with Don O'Connor and Bruce McNaughty. If you go to the gallery at my dPress website, you can see photos of this show by Julie Prather.

BOUVARD: Jampa, what is the source of your inspiration? What makes you create?

JAMPA: That's harder to describe than how I make my art. You know that I am also a writer. I go back and forth and sometimes combine both mediums. When the poetic muse takes a vacation, I do visual art. They're related activities. In collage, you cut and paste images; in poetry, you take an image from your mind and put it, in the form of a word, on the page. The brain might function differently, but the impulse to make art is the same. Both are means of expression, like giving

birth to something that wasn't there beforehand, an urge to procreate. There's a time for flirtatious-like curiosity with an idea or image, and then of conception, gestation and delivery—even before I begin to work—then, you have to nurture this baby. The actual making of the poem or collage involves all the trials and hopes and disappointments of getting this baby to grow, but I don't like this analogy much. Maybe the drive to create is something more transcendental, like communing with the Absolute. Or it might be totally mundane, like wanting fame. If you think too much about this, you'd never do it.

BOUVARD: What might set you off, be a catalyst?

JAMPA: Anything. As Borges points out, everything has its poetry, its beauty, even if you can't see it. A blank page is a formidable thing, perfect in its blankness, but once you make a mark on it, you are committed. The work moves, changes, and you can find yourself lost, weary and confused. Stop. Leave it. Sleep on it. It's easy to botch things. Or, go on. It's your call. Sometimes, from a mess, a masterpiece emerges. I recall Henry Miller's short story, "The Angel Is My Watermark," where an image of an angel appears in his ruined watercolor. After he had tried several ways to save it, he tried scrubbing it in the bathtub; and presto!

BOUVARD: There's a question I've wanted to ask someone who is both a creative artist and a meditator. Do you find there to be a conflict between these two activities?

JAMPA: I didn't quite finish answering your last question, but I think what I have to say will lead to that, ok?

BOUVARD: Of course, go ahead.

JAMPA: William Blake said a work of art consisted of three parts: one part came from myth, a part from the art tradition, and a part from your own genius. It is my view, a work of art also has its source in three locations: in an outside place, an inside place, and a secret place. By the "outside," I mean the context for the work to be done, perhaps a commission or an upcoming show, and this imposes a deadline. This pressure acts as a stimulant. The "inside" is your own personal standards and the methods, the skillful means, you have developed to make art.

For example, my way of writing is described in *My Process* (dPress, 2002, see Vol. 8 of *The Collected Works of Richard Denner*). I explain how I write into the book. I use linked text boxes in a computer program to create a book format. The open pages "call out" to be filled; and from here, it is out of my hands. The book becomes an editing process. I print out a copy, sew it up, edit, and print it again, until I am satisfied. There are usually pieces left over, and these start the next book in a series. The "book" is never done. It is done when you put a cover on it and call it done. With my assemblages, I may begin with a frame and fill it. Or, a wall demands attention. I make a few strokes, and the composition begins to expand and take on a life of its own. This is why it's hard for most people to dedicate themselves to art, to live in the moment and give up their structured lifestyle.

Then, there is the “secret” place that is a source for the work of art. I may be inspired by a beautiful woman, or I may find I am writing or making a picture to please a friend. I discovered recently that I wrote many poems to Allen Ginsberg and Jack Spicer. I want to be in that Circle of Hell where Dante put the poets. As Jack once said, “Poetry is a conversation among the dead, and the poets get it second hand.” It is in this secret place that strange knowledge comes to the artist, and it is here that meditation is helpful.

Is there a conflict between making art and meditation? My experience is that there is room for both, that they are compatible and enhance each other. Aspects of the creative process are meditative: there is the focus of shamatha, of maintaining a mindful presence in your work; and there is a kind of seeing, or insight, that arises from the vipashyana aspect. It is impossible for the mind to reach complete stillness when making art, especially with writing, where logic and the law of contradictions are in play, yet the mind stream is channeled, directing the flow of energy toward realization of what is really real.

After a session of meditation, where the discursive mind is given rest, I find my creativity enhanced, my hand steadier. The continual search for bliss in visionary fantasy, addiction to the god-like power of creativity, the revelatory ecstasy of epiphany are all mistaken directions to pursue, if you want lasting transcendental wisdom. Finally, there is no meditation; all dualistic notions are subsumed under equanimity, in a simple state of awareness. Blah, blah, blah!

If you have brought your art onto the path, then it is a form of practice, and your view, your practice, and how you carry this out in your life are unified, were always a unity. You need to develop confidence in this. It doesn’t mean having a Big Ego. You develop what the Tibetans call Vajra Pride, which also requires you to maintain humility and compassion for others. You don’t need to be acknowledged by others. You acknowledge yourself. I could go on, but I think this is a good place to stop.

BOUVARD: Thank you, Jampa.

JAMPA: You are entirely welcome. Blessings. May the two-fold accomplishments of mine and others be of benefit—no, that’s not it—through the two accumulations, may the two-fold benefit of mine and others be accomplished.

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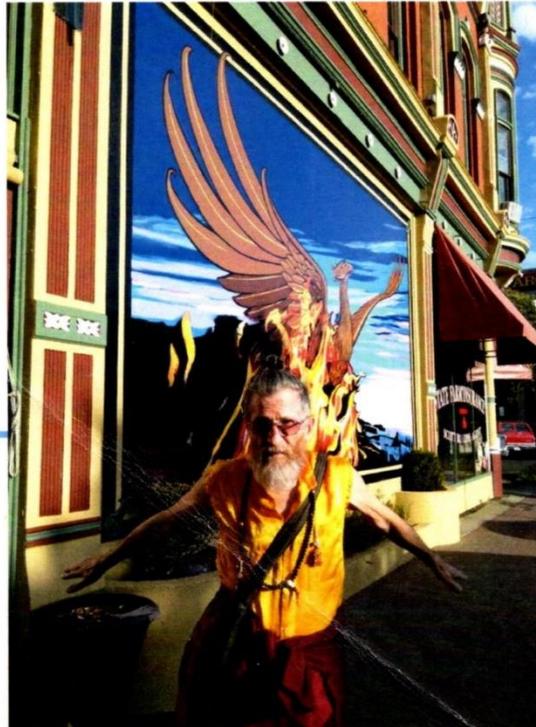
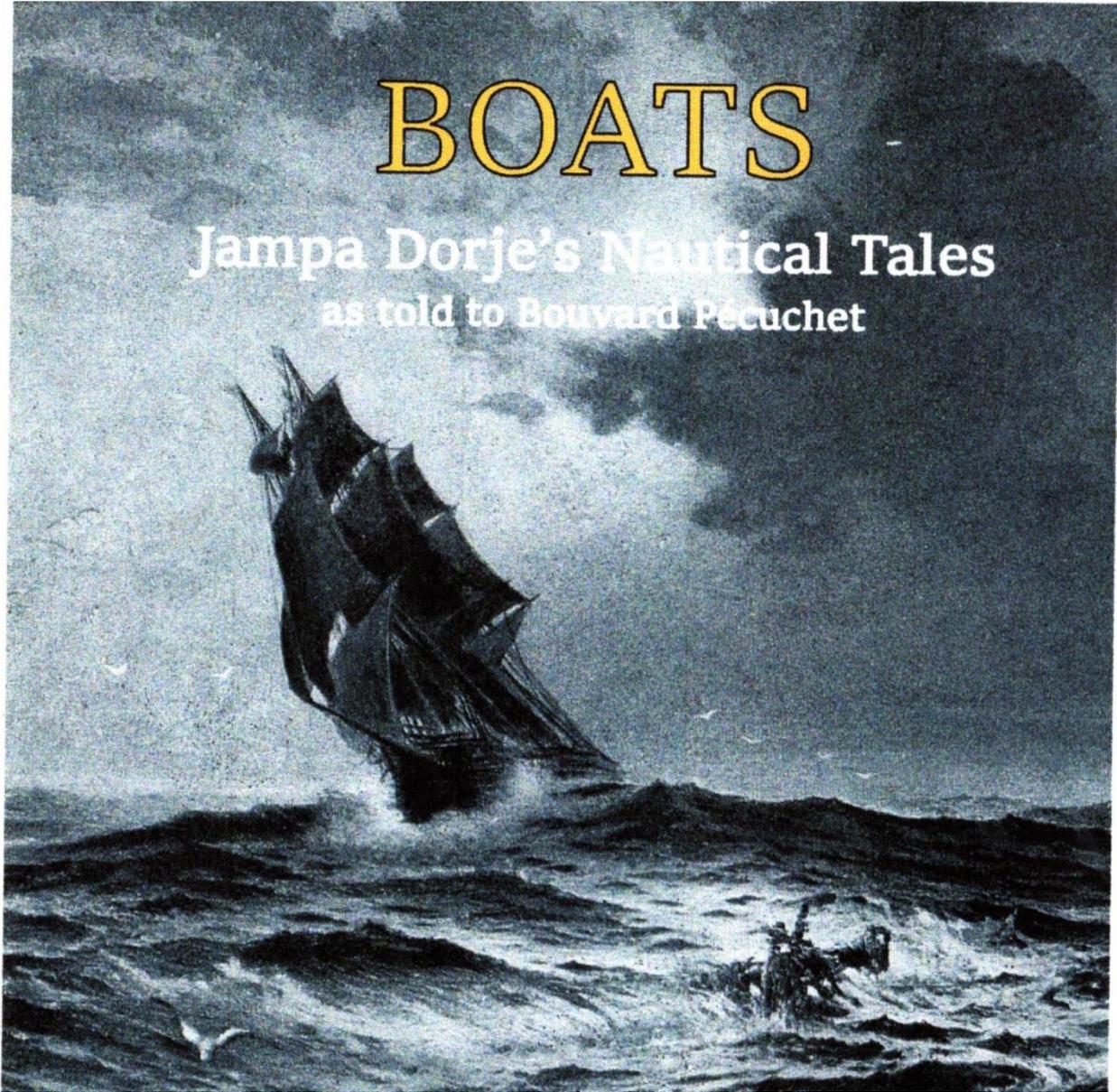


Photo by Susan Waddle



# BOATS

Jampa Dorje's Nautical Tales  
as told to Bouvard Pécuchet





## JAMPA DORJE'S NAUTICAL TALES

AS TOLD TO BOUVARD PÈCUCHE

D PRESS <2016> ELLENSBURG

Watercolors and drawings by the author.

Cover: Detail from *The Morning after the Storm in the Bay of Biscay* by Edward Moran, 1888.

"Boats" previously appeared in *Jampa's Worldly Dharmas*

Kapala Press, Santa Fe, 2014.



## BOATS

BOUVARD: Why boats? You could count the number of boats Jampa has sailed on with your fingers and the number of boats he has skippered on the fingers of one hand—a couple of dinghies and one 14-foot outboard motorboat. What can Jampa have to say about boats, be it sailing vessels, gravy boats, or “being in the same boat”? I’m going to let Jampa tell it.

JAMPA: Thank you, Bouvard. I have always loved boats. I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area. Lots of boats, coming and going. I was born a couple of weeks before Pearl Harbor was attacked. Lots of boats sunk. As a little kid, I played with boats in the bathtub. I remember a blue and red, plastic tugboat, a version of the tugboat from the children’s book, *Tuffy*, a little boat, not so handsome, but muscular, who shows he has special talent by rescuing a gorgeous ocean liner in distress. This rescue fantasy has always been modified by another aspect of my character, represented by the story line of *Ferdinand the Bull*, the slacker mentality.

But to boats. I was always excited when we boarded the ferry boats between Richmond and San Rafael on our family’s excursions north. The clanking of planks, the grace of the maneuvers to the dock, the smell of diesel, the throb of the engines, while climbing the narrow passages to the upper deck, the transition from being on land to being on water, the screech of seagulls, the salt air, the sense of departure with a blast of an air horn; and then we were underway. Thirty minutes, across the bay on a ferry boat, a boat with bows at either end, but still, I would get the sense of plunging into a new destiny with sea breeze in my hair and the gentle roll of the waves beneath the boat.

And there is always the chance for romance, even on a ferry. My second wife,

Cheri, and I drove our VW camper to Prince Rupert, British Columbia, after we had been married by a Justice of the Peace in Reno, Nevada. We debarked on a ferry, named the Prince Rupert, for a trip up the Inland Passage to Ketchikan, Alaska. It was a honeymoon cruise. And then, after two years of living in a cabin near Deep Bay, in the Tongass National Forest, we took another ferry further up the passage to Haines, where we began our drive up the Alkan Highway to Fairbanks.

Long after Cheri and I had divorced, I met Cheryl Wentworth on a ferry ride between Port Angeles and Seattle. I had been visiting David Pond, my astrology teacher and friend. When he dropped me off at the terminal, he said that he knew the lady in the gray van ahead of us in line, and, if I wanted a ride from the terminal to the bus station in Seattle, to introduce myself, give his name as a reference, and she would assist me. Assist me she did, and a passionate time we had of it in the weeks to come.

BOUVARD: Jampa!

JAMPA: Yes?

BOUVARD: Boats.

JAMPA: Right. Well, I like nautical terms, which make up an entire language of objects and actions. Take this passage from Melville's *Moby Dick*, for example:

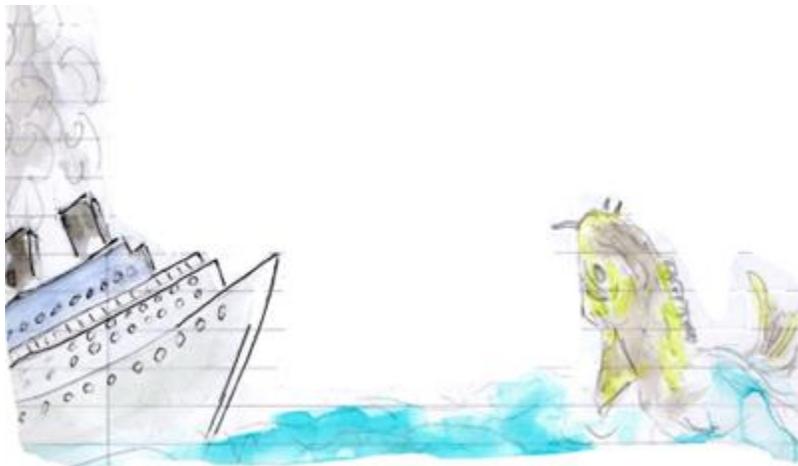
...Ahab, troubledly pacing the deck, shouted out—"To the braces! Up helm!—Square in!" In an instant the yards swung round; and the ship half-wheeled upon her heel, her three firm-seated graceful masts erectly poised upon her long, ribbed hull, seemed as the three Horatii pirouetting on one sufficient steed.

A bit literary, I know. I'm not sure who the *Horatii* are—perhaps circus riders—but the "braces" are ropes belonging to all the yards of the ship. The "yards" are long, cylindrical timbers suspended upon the mast of a vessel to spread a sail. "Up helm—Square in": "helm" is a term for all steering arrangements of a ship. The definitions

are from my Norton edition of *Moby Dick*. [The Horatii were male triplets who saved Rome in battle during the reign of Tullus Hostilius, the legendary third king of Rome. BP.]



Captain Ahab's ship, the *Pequod*, was a whaler, circa 1850, but sailors' vocabulary is still in use and as salty as ever. On an ocean liner, like the Titanic (1920s)—a horror story if ever there was one—"abaft" would still be towards the "stern," which is at the back, and "abeam" is still a line at right angles to the vessel's length, as "aft" is toward the stern and "athwartships" is across the ship, or across anything, and is opposed to "fore-and-aft." "Aloft" is a term for below, but is only used for alliteration, as "She had studding sails aloft and aloft." The term "Avast!" is an order to stop doing anything, as in "Avast! An iceberg!"



On one of my nautical adventures, in Alaska, Cheri, Theo and I went to Ketchikan, 20 miles from our cabin, in the 14 ft. outboard we had borrowed from our friends, Al and Mimi Kotlorov. We stopped at the pier, and I parked the boat with the front pointed toward shore, which had I known the terms, would be "docked with the bow leeward," or opposite to that from which the wind was blowing, "lee-shore," and as the tide came in, water lapped into the stern, and the boat sank.

We were watching Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* on the tube and drinking

homebrew at Kent Edmond's place, when Al phoned to say the harbormaster had phoned him that his boat was underwater. It was dark outside. I knew the boat was going nowhere. We spent the night at Al and Mimi's, and the next morning we went to the pier to look. Only the roof of the cab was above water, that and a couple of life jackets. Nothing to do but bail. With work, the boat was afloat, and Al and I lifted his 30 horsepower Johnson engine out of the brine, took it to his place in town and stuck it upside down into an oil drum filled with fresh water in order to flush it out before it began to corrode.

I was tinkering away at the engine, when I looked up, and there stood Rachel, a smile on her lips like a sunrise, breasts straining the buttons on her blouse, hips designed to recline.

BOUVARD: Jampa!

JAMPA: I know, but it is related to boats. She was camped out on a seiner in the marina and was trying to catch me in her net.

BOUVARD: And?

JAMPA: And nothing. Cheri came down the stairs, saw that we were standing much too close, gave the chick a piercing look, and Rachel disappeared into dream dust.

BOUVARD: What did Cheri say?

JAMPA: She said that I was going to flirt with one deva too many sometime; but it wasn't that day. We went back to Deep Bay after I got the boat shipshape.

BOUVARD: Back to your yarn, Jampa.

JAMPA: Cheri and I named our son, Theo, after a converted gill netter that made passage between the airport on Matanuska Island and the bigger island of Ketchikan. The Theo was sometimes moored to the pier next to the Sourdough Bar, where Cheri worked as a waitress. She was one of the first women to serve drinks in a bar in Ketchikan, a town where bartenders carried firearms.

It was after hours, like 4 am; we'd been dancing to the jukebox. We had a bottle of wine and were walking down the pier. The deck of the Theo was awash in moonlight and seemed to invite us to board. We lay midships, drank our wine, and looked at the constellations. I will spare you the graphic details, Bouvard, but the stars were very bright and the water exceedingly calm, as we heaved to.

BOUVARD: Funny, to name your boy after a boat.

JAMPA: It was that or Allen Ginsberg Denner. We chose Theodore Dylan. Cheri also had a great uncle named Theo, and Bob Dylan, as well as Dylan Thomas, were heroes of ours. Theo means God in Greek, and Dylan, "of the sea" in Welsh: a gift of God and the Devil.

BOUVARD: Do you have another boat story?

JAMPA: I could talk about reading Rimbaud's "The Drunken Boat" on the crumbling bulkhead of the experimental concrete ship Kaiser built during the Second World War that protruded from the beach at Aptos.



And there was the crabber our friend, Dale Smith, brought out to the cabin, which proceeded to sink in our cove. Some passing hunters reported this, and one day while we were tripped on mushrooms,

a Coast Guard cutter loomed over us, and an air horn blew, awakening us to ordinary reality. The captain of the ship said he could ticket us for several violations, but he was lenient, raised the crabber, and towed it away.

There was the old trawler Dale brought out, which we took to town to get stove oil. On the return trip, we were nearly swamped by the wake of a Japanese oil tanker. Another close call was the time our friend, Ron Arnce, took us to town in his motorboat, and we ran into bad weather. Whirligigs, or waterspouts, nearly capsized us, and we took shelter in someone's summer cabin along the inlet. When the storm subsided, the tide, fourteen feet of it, was out, and we spent the night marooned.



I rowed my dinghy with a 5 horsepower Eska engine across Moser Bay to Deep Bay, about a half mile, where, weather permitting, the weekly mail plane landed. That week, a friend, Kristi-Lee, was coming to visit. She was flying in from Ketchikan and planned to spend the week. It was one of those rare days when it wasn't raining (150 inches per year is not uncommon), and the water was calm.

Gliding through this calm, I looked at Kristi-Lee, sitting in the stern, clutching her purse, her bags at her feet, and she was looking at me, not exactly with panic in her eyes, but with an understanding that the water line was close to the upper edge of the gunwale, and we were without life preservers. It's hard to describe the mood we shared, a feeling of being on a small boat on a great body of water, calm, quiet, serene—a mystical moment. Melville gets close:

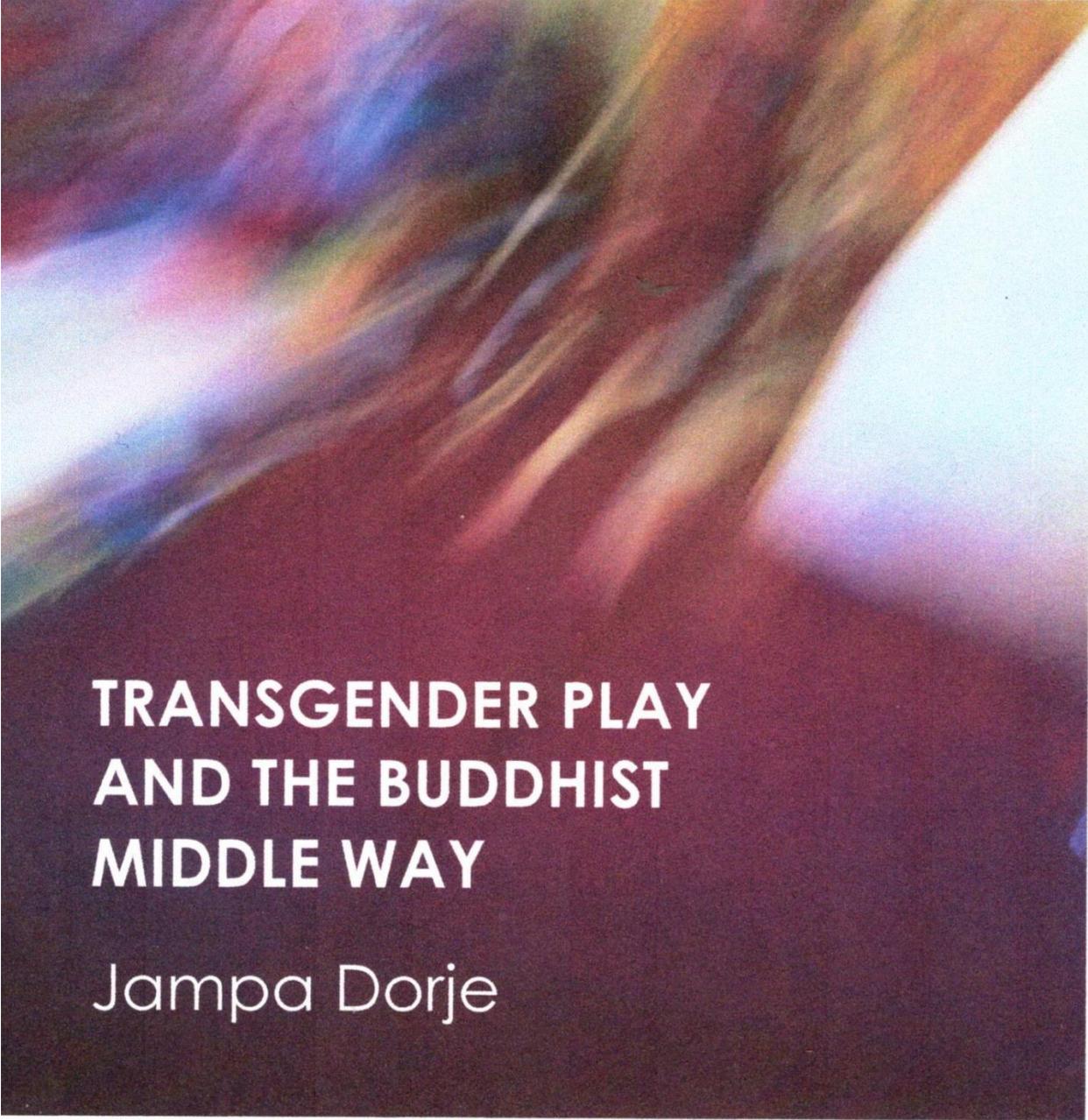
...seated in his boat, light as a birch canoe; and so sociably mixing with the soft waves themselves, that like hearth-stone cats they purr against the gunwale; these are the times of dreamy quietude, when holding the tranquil beauty and brilliancy of the ocean's skin, one forgets the tiger heart that pants beneath it; and would not willingly remember, that the velvet paw but conceals a remorseless fang.

—*Moby Dick*, Ishmael's reflection, Chapter 114.

I believe that a paw conceals a claw, and a jaw conceals a fang, but the rhyme would have ruined the passage. Also, a "fang" is a long, tapered part of a thing, and this is a good place for me to taper off.

BOUVARD: You made a simple moment seem cosmic.

JAMPA: Well, you can have a high nautical adventure in the bathtub. Have I told you about the time I found my girlfriend in the bathtub eating a bloody buffalo steak?



**TRANSGENDER PLAY  
AND THE BUDDHIST  
MIDDLE WAY**

Jampa Dorje



# Transgender Play and the Buddhist Middle Way

Jampa Dorje

Kapala Press 卐 2016 卐 Ellensburg

Title page sculpture: "Lely's Venus"

Linoleum block by Rychard

This essay originated from discussions in  
Dr. Cynthia Coe's Women and Philosophy  
class at Central Washington University.



Times have changed since the protests around China hosting the 2008 Olympics and the Dalai Lama's visit to Seattle, which the Seattle Times headlined "A Love Feast." I'm ordering a Grand Slam at Denny's, and the waiter says, "You guys are awesome!" I'm checking into a Motel 6, and the desk clerk says, "Can I do anything to help your people?" I'm in City Market. I'm in line, and the man next to me asks, "Do you guys beg for food?" I'm taking a leak at a Shell station, and the guy in the next stall goes, "OM MANI PADME HUM." Is this some kind of flag, I wonder? The Tibetan flag, sure, but a "flag" in the sense of a sexual innuendo. Life, if anything, is a continual processing of ambiguities inside innuendos.

Inside the ambiguities of Sea-Tac Airport, I'm waiting to pass through the security check point before boarding my flight to Colorado to attend Tara Mandala's White Dakini Drup Chen, when I hear a distant voice shout, "Kelly, you're in the wrong line." I see a tall man ahead of me in a blue suit with dark curly hair turn toward the person calling. There is a great distance between them, an almost infinite distance by Zeno's reckoning, but Love wins, and the tall man turns, and I see he has large breasts and is wearing makeup. Now, he's a woman: lips red, cheeks rouged, eyes with long lashes and eyelids artfully shadowed. I like curly hair. When done right, it speaks a lot about your personality and aesthetic outlook. Looking directly at her, I feel the curl coming out of my hair. Ze was tall and broad shouldered and moved with force. People stepped aside, and as ze passed I could smell amber or something from the Orient, perhaps the perfume Shalimar or Opium. There was a lot of man in this walk. Transgender or transvestite? Was ze being a she or a he? Ze waved, and the nails on hir hand were long and manicured. I realized how doubtful and uncertain I was of this person's meaning and intention.

The small, thin man outside the line, calling to Kelly, was wearing black pants and a white under shirt, the wife-beater type. Was ze the woman or was ze butch and he the femme in this relationship? Rigid bi-polar gender makes it impossible to play with truth. In the gender game, the gigantic playground is not marked with

chalk; however, the line I'm in is defined, and my driver's license lists me as male. I am guessing I will be searched or asked to stand inside a glass chamber where air will circulate and detect any sign of explosives. Because of my robes, I'm listed as "bulky." I prefer the chamber. I like to say, "I'm the flying monk." Kelly waves, and says something I don't hear. Hir voice is husky and deep; and ze walks with hir feet shoulder-width apart. There's attitude in hir walk. I'm going to abandon what I think I know and watch.

The police are alert. What I take to be a man in a security guard's uniform, and a woman, perhaps, both observe the scene from a distance—no movement—guards merely observing the confusion. Both have guns. One has close cropped hair; one has hair pulled back in a ponytail; their sex is indeterminate, but their uniforms represent authority.

Points of view are social constructs. In attempting to describe a gender model that allows for full play of its diversity in everyday life, Judith Butler contends that we must overcome our biases in how we interpret reality and says, "The prescription is invariably more difficult, if only because we need to think a world in which acts, gestures, the visual body, the clothed body, the various physical attributes usually associated with gender, express nothing" (FPR 106).

I make it through security this time, seems there's a pass-through for me; maybe it's facial recognition from the monitoring. I still have to take off the cord around my neck, which has a silver locket, called a gow, that holds protection mantras against all kinds of demons, and for a moment, I'm vulnerable. I accept this. It's only security: so, I feel secure, just to feel secure.

Now to restrooms, where, supposedly, there is no monitoring. I haven't had a problem, a bearded monk in full robes going to a restroom in an international airport, or anywhere else, but I wonder about Kelly. Ze going into a restroom, either with the sign for male or the sign for female, in an international airport would probably not cause a disturbance, but after the defeat of the heroic "bathroom ordinance" in Huston, Kelly could be at risk in many parts of the country. Dr. Ben Carson believes in segregation. According to Tierney McAfee:

Recently, Carson proposed his solution to the public debate over transgender people using public restrooms that correspond with their gender identities – transgender bathrooms. The GOP presidential hopeful is already under fire for the suggestion he made during an interview with Fusion's Jorge Ramos on Thursday. "How about we have a transgender bathroom?" Carson said. "It's not fair for them to make everybody else uncomfortable," and he added, "I think everybody has equal rights, but I'm not sure that anybody should have extra rights—extra rights when it comes to redefining everything for everybody else and imposing your view on everybody else.

Redefining everything...a lot of that going on...Tucker Carson, a Fox News pundit, claims such redefining by the Fairfield, Virginia, School Board's policy change recognizing "something called transgender" is part of "the Left's continuing war on biology." Matters are getting complicated, as the rigidity of gender identity becomes unstable. As Judith Halberstram says in her essay, "Transgender Butch: Butch/FTM Border Wars and the Masculine Continuum":

Specificity is all. As gender queer practices and forms continue to emerge presumably the definitions of *gay*, *lesbian*, and *transsexual* will not remain static, and we will produce new terms to delineate what they cannot (FPR 161).

More people are beginning to play with or deconstruct their gender identities. In *Gender Outlaws*, Kate Bornstein asks, "Where's the fun?" and quotes a Zen poet: "All roads in life lead nowhere. So, you might as well take the road that has the most heart and is the most fun" (CP 30). She posits "high camp" behavior as a means to bring about change in the self and in society: "High camp can be a man in full nun drag, with great showgirl makeup, on roller-skates in the middle of town. Does that man really want to be a nun?" (CP 31), and goes on: "Camp can be a leading edge in the deconstruction of gender, because camp wrests social control from the hands of fanatics. Camp in fact reclaims gender and re-shapes it as a consensual game" (CP 32).

World-traveling is another form of play that assists in the reshaping of gender identity by traveling to other experiences of lifestyle and consciousness. The term

“world-traveling” I take from Mariá Lugones’ essay, “Playfulness, ‘world’-travelling, and loving perception.” She admits to “worlds” that one cannot enter playfully, nor would want to, but there are “worlds” that we can travel to lovingly and travelling to them is part of loving at least some of their inhabitants. The reason why I think that travelling to someone’s “world” is a way of identifying with them is because by travelling to their “world” we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes (FPR 79).

Gender is not stable (Butler, FPR 97) and is therefore the perfect playground for personal transformation. As a high camp group having fun breaking down barriers, Bornstein referenced the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, street-performers in San Francisco, who began dressing in drag as Catholic nuns, and whose original appearance now includes exaggerated make-up that accentuates their rebellion against gender roles. Fausto-Sterling (FPR 132) suggest that ultimately, concepts of masculinity and femininity might overlap so completely as to render the very notion of gender difference irrelevant and, she references Roshblatts’ chromatic system that differentiates hundreds of different personality types which could translate into “shades of gender” (FPR 133).

Is being what Bornstein calls “transgressively gendered” (CP 30) an extreme in thought and action, if that is how you find yourself thinking and acting? By including myself in a transgender community (transgendered defined here as including neutral, chaste monks) I belong to a larger community than when I am a lone, wandering yogi-monk. And if I come out from being a monk and still wear my robes, which is fine with the Buddhist community, am I now cross-dressing?

After reading Judith Butler’s “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” I begin to question whether, not only gender, but the body itself might be a cultural construct. I’m reminded of something one of my lamas said about the metaphysical foundation of the world (in its physical sense) resting on an elephant which rests upon a tortoise, and when asked what the tortoise rested on, he said, “It’s tortoises all the way down.” The study of gender for me, now, is the metaphysics of metaphysics, and the field theory of play is a means to ease, unify, and harmonize tensions, dissonance, and contradictions in the polarities of the body, voice, and mind. Outwardly, I can

join the camp parade, but inwardly I must deconstruct my gendered self; and being a tantric yogi, I know the way to go about this.

A Tantric practitioner lives in a view, not a point of view but a kind of seeing of the world in indestructible splendor. This sounds romantic, and there is passion involved, but this view is unclouded and luminous, and its sublimity is the seal of its authenticity. The essence of this luminosity is wisdom, and its resonance is compassion, or Buddha's heart-mind, which is the motivation for Bodhisattvas (who recognize their essence) to help all sentient beings attain enlightenment.

Tantra is the path of sacred union. Its methodology utilizes the union of form and sound (deep visualization and mantra recitation) to facilitate, in short order, the recognition of the nature of mind. The ritual items always present with a Tantric practitioner are a bell and a vajra ("thunderbolt" symbol). The bell is a symbol of emptiness-wisdom and is held in the left hand, whereas the vajra is the symbol of compassionate, skillful means and is held in the right hand. The crossing of the right and the left hands during formal practice represents the union of compassion and wisdom.

Reflecting on an event I witnessed, while at the Great Accomplishment Ceremony at Tara Mandala celebrating a tutelary deity in the form of a White Dakini, I can see that Buddhist training does not totally prepare one to assimilate the accelerating changes in gender identification. Yes, the concept of equanimity and "one taste" are foundational to the path, but what is a lama to do when an openly gay practitioner wants to be blessed by a ritual item that traditionally has the opposite gender valence? To perform a ceremonial blessing for someone claiming an alternative gender identity, in the pomp of a tradition that hardly recognizes homosexuality, is enough to make a knowledge-holder's nosebleed. I told my friend that he had taken a giant step for the liberation of all queer Buddhists.

Two themes I have heard at conferences over the past year—at the Human Behavior and Evolution Conference, in Vancouver, and at the Washington States Art Commission con-fab, in Ellensburg—are co-operation and reciprocity. How can we get along and help one another? Again, we must overcome our biases

in how we interpret the world. And what better way to start than tolerance?

Transgender people may identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual, or they may consider sexual orientation labels inappropriate. Coming to terms with one's gender, where an individual feels authentic and is comfortable within their appearance and can accept their identity, requires time and patience.

I have described the transgendered condition in which I find myself. For a young person, choosing the form of gender neutrality might enable her or him to decide on an appropriate lifestyle, but for an old person, being a they can be a way of summing up all the facets of one's oneness.

I wonder if Kelly made hir flight. Ze might have been enroute to Thailand to complete hir surgery.

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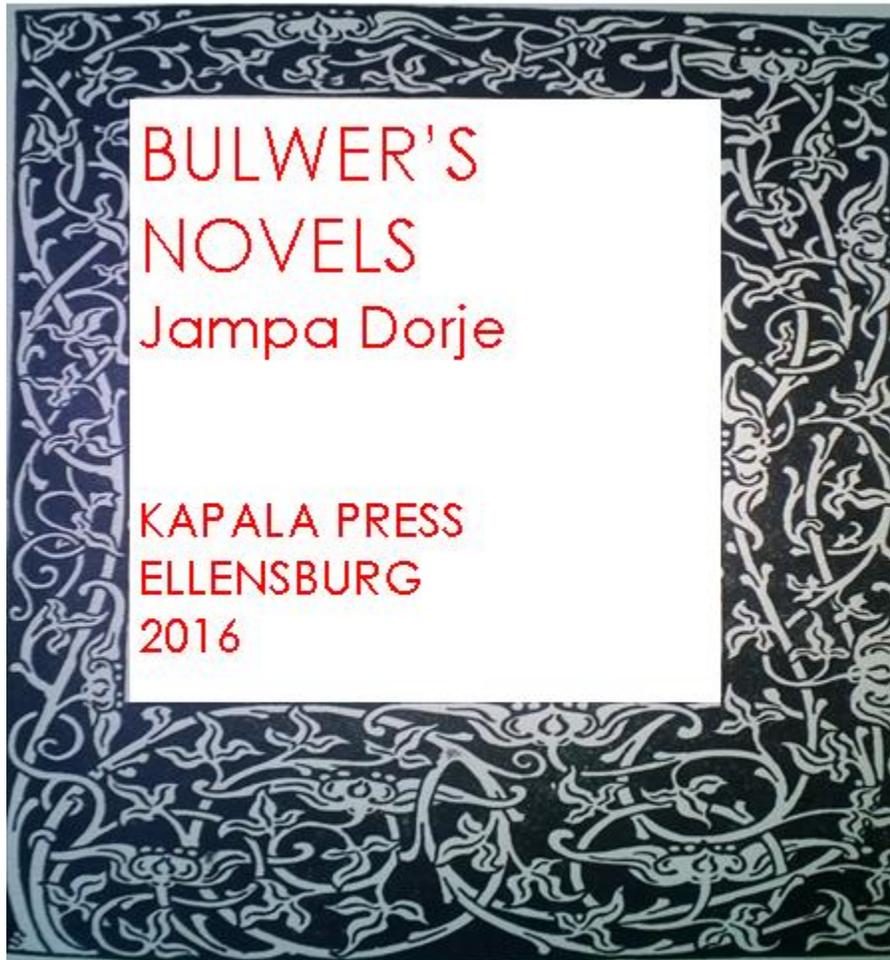
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BULWER'S NOVELS Jampa Dorje



Cover design by Oberon



A book is a thing among things, a volume lost among the volumes that populate the indifferent universe, until it meets its reader, the person destined for its symbols. What then occurs is that singular emotion called beauty, that lovely mystery which neither psychology nor criticism can describe.

—Jorge Luis Borges (Prologues to a Personal Library)

Most books and their authors are forgotten. Literary obscurity is to be consigned to oblivion. What we see is light. But sometimes the darkness becomes visible.

My name is Jampa Dorje. I am a monk in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. I am not Tibetan. I am an American, and my profession before I took up my present vocation was as a bookseller. A good friend of mine, Brome, asked me to appraise his library. He was selling his house near Telluride, a resort town in the Colorado Rockies, and he was unsure of what to do with a large collection of books that had been in his family for many years.

I assumed the collection would be like many I had encountered over the years, containing run-of-the-mill novels with, perhaps, an occasional first edition of a noteworthy work, along with the usual covey of old books having more of an antique value than any real worth as rare editions. I was in for a surprise.

I was reluctant to make the trip, but when Brome said he was hosting some Geluk monks that were traveling across the country giving empowerments and creating sand mandalas I was persuaded to go. Being inexperienced in the ways of monastic life, this would be an opportunity to find out something about how monks live and behave daily, even if it was to take place in a setting like Telluride.

Brome picked me up from Tara Mandala Retreat Center, near Pagosa Springs, on a Friday morning, and in a few hours, we arrived at Crestview, on the outskirts of Telluride. We stopped in front of an imposing wood-frame house in a wooded residential neighborhood. We pulled into a three-car garage, and while Brome was unloading some bags of groceries, I peeked under a tarp in the next stall—a

red Maserati, gleaming like a wish-fulfilling jewel. We entered the home through the garage and were greeted by five monks preparing to eat a meal in the kitchen. One of the monks, like myself, was an American. Brome introduced me to John, and John introduced me to Lama Norbu, Geshe Kalsang, Yeshe, Tenzin, and Phuntsok.

In modern times, at the insistence of the Dalai Lama and in the spirit of non-sectarianism, the traditional rivalry between Nyingmapas and Gelukpas has, at least at formal gatherings, ceased. Still, there is a strict hierarchy in monastic behavior. It may have been that I was the eldest combined with being a friend of their host, or perhaps I was a curiosity, but I was given the honor of being served after the lama.

After lunch, we all settled in front of the TV to watch the Olympics. Although the news from Tibet was grim—many demonstrators had been jailed following protests against the Olympic torch being carried through Tibet—all the monks in the big house among the snowcapped mountains in Telluride watched with avid enthusiasm the athletes performing in China.

The swimmers were breaking records, and the gymnasts astounded us with their feats. Later, we left for the evening's presentation at a yoga studio. We drove a short way to the public transit which is a high-wire chairlift with small, covered cars that took us high above the valley floor. I rode alone with Lama Norbu and shot video of him for the incredulous audience that awaited him back home, in Lhasa.

The following day, the monks went off to paint a sand mandala at the Community Hall, and I began my researches on the library. Brome showed me to the basement where there were cardboard boxes full of books and more books in stacks on the floor. My eyes beheld grandeur. This was not your average collection. Here were treasures I had only dreamed of—first editions of Charles Dickens and Lewis Carroll in Moroccan leather bindings with the original covers sewn into the endpapers. Full sets of Balzac, of Stevenson, of Browning, of Kipling, of Defoe, also in fine bindings. Here, also, were large folios of colored lithographs of birds and plants, along with volumes of engravings of 18th century German

artists, and works in philosophy, history, and literature.

I went to work carting armloads of books upstairs to a room with more light, something I imagined other monks had done in monasteries in times past. The monks upstairs were curious about what I was doing, and when it was explained their admiration for my role increased. Lama Norbu smiled and let me be first in line at meals, so I could get back to my task.

Once this kind of work was done by deciphering the details about individual books from catalogs of auction records; now, it done with a computer. The job is essentially the same—search and compare and appraise. Arduous but lovely labor. The details in how I determined “condition” and “value” and “nearest approximate edition” are not relevant to this narrative, but this was the stuff of my hours, with short breaks only for meals and to sleep, for three days.

Obviously, this was a library of men who could afford the highest quality books. I must admit I had always associated Brome's name with some species of grass—California Brome, Ripgut Brome, or the like. This was the family library of H. Mansfield Brome (1849-1919), manufacturer and philanthropist, friend and confident of robber barons, and this library had come down from father to son.

But I digress. I worked diligently and time seemed to disappear. Then, a peculiar thing happened. I had just finished cataloging a copy of Milton's *Il Penseros* and *L'Allegro* with illustrations by William Blake, and, laying it aside, I bumped a stack of books causing them to fall to the floor. One book landed with the cover splayed. Straightening a crumpled page, I read, “All events in the Universe occur at Once, but we Experience them Sequentially. Take a forest, for example; —the Trees have had to Grow; but we did not Observe them, and now it is a Forest.”

This seemed to me an odd notion, a mixture of David Hume with the *Upanishads*. I read a little more, and the thoughts were revealed to be those of a student in a state of despondency after being rejected by a reigning beauty beyond his station in society. The title page: *The Courageous Cadet* by Sir Henry Bulwer,

published, 1831, in London by Fishburn & Hughes, Ltd.

Who was Sir Henry Bulwer? A search for 19th century English authors let me to the *Cyclopedia of British Literature*, edited by Dr. I.S. Noval, where I found this entry:

Bulwer, William Henry Lytton Earle (Baron Dalling and Bulwer) 1801-72, British diplomat and author, known as Sir Henry Bulwer. Popular in his lifetime for his novels, he is now chiefly remembered for the speculative ideas in his plots, making him a precursor of the modern genre of science fiction.

So, for the most part, Sir Henry is only remembered by literary historians interested in dates and changes, but once he had been the preferred reading of my friend Brome's grandfather. I needed to put a price on this book, but I admit I was also interested in whatever these "speculative ideas" entailed.

The computer, a labyrinthine maze of information, is like the sands of the Sahara, shifting and growing every day. My day wound its way into night. Anything resembling science fiction in *The Courageous Cadet* was only in embryonic form—the passing thoughts or musings of the protagonist. Otherwise, the plot was pedestrian and the writing style dated.

The student, Horatio, preparing for a commission in the army, stays holed-up in his room after his love interest has disappointed him; and, when he can no longer stand the isolation, he wanders the streets of the city in ever-expanding circles. What he experiences is predictable, but every so often his musings go off in an odd direction. Looking into the window of a haberdashery, he considers the possibility of "a spiral of time" and the nature of "standing still in the present," of how this "resembles Infinity" and how "Infinity resembles a pool of water."

Another time, after nearly being run over by a stagecoach, he sits on a bench in a park to catch his breath, and he compares time to "a triptych of canvases on which you can paint the past any color you want." Time is simultaneously objective, subjective, and "canny" (secret or supernatural), and he divides time

three ways: time for rest, time for work, and time to devote to the Deity.

It was at this point I remembered seeing a small engraving between the endpapers of a scythe leaning against a broken Doric column that I recognized as a Masonic symbol for the precariousness of life and the impermanence of material reality. Needing a break, I let the computer rest and put an entry in my notebook for Monday: "A long day with not much accomplished on the library. Still, I am making progress."

At the bottom of the stairs, there was a pile of suitcases and travel bags. The monks were ready to depart. Brome and I were given sweatshirts with the logo of the Garden Monk's Tour. We went out on the porch and waved our goodbyes. Back in the house, I sat down in front of the TV and ran through the channels looking for the Olympics.

"No Olympics on Sunday," Brome said.

"Sunday?" I asked. "I thought this was Monday. Friday, we drove up here and went to the empowerment, and Saturday I started work on your library, and Sunday I worked some but got sidetracked by a novel by an obscure author. Isn't this Monday morning?"

"For one thing, this isn't morning: it's afternoon. Last night, I saw your light on, in the early hours, when I got up to pee. I think you worked all night and forgot to sleep."

I went back upstairs and looked at my notes. The entry was there with the date. I had even made a sketch of the Freemason's engraving, but no matter how hard I looked, I couldn't find the copy of *The Courageous Cadet*. Instead, I found twenty-six volumes of Bulwer's novels: a set with gilt pages and lettering and blue cloth covers with leather corners. However, the publisher was Collier, not Fishburn & Hughes, Ltd., and the set was in the bindery style of the late 19th or early 20th century.

Trying to backtrack my pages on the computer, I could find no trace of the *Cyclopedia of British Literature*, and yet I knew something about the life of Sir Henry Bulwer and had read (or thought I had read) one of his novels.

I went back downstairs. "I guess you're right," I said. "Somehow, I got out of step in time. Do you think that ice cream parlor next to the yoga studio is open on Sundays?"

"Sure," said Brome, "do you want to go?"

"Can we take the Maserati?"

"We can, and you can drive."

I don't know if His Holiness would approve of a monk behind the wheel of a red sports car, but I couldn't resist. When we hit a stretch of open road, I shifted into high gear and made up for lost time.



**The Christmas Books: A Christmas Carol -- The Chimes --  
The Cricket on the Hearth -- The Battle of Life -- The  
Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain**

*Dickens, Charles*

**Bookseller:**  
Printers Row Fine and Rare Books  
(Chicago, IL, U.S.A.)  
**Bookseller Rating:**

**Book Price:**  
**US\$ 42500.00**  
[\[Convert Currency\]](#)  
**Quantity:** 1

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**1843-1848**  
**Publication Date:** 1848  
**Binding:** Hardcover  
**Dust Jacket Condition:** Dust Jacket Included  
**Edition:** 1st Edition

**Description:**

Charles Dickens -- 1st Edition 1st Printing -- FINE/NONE -- copy of The Christmas Books: A Christmas Carol -- The Chimes -- The Cricket on the Hearth -- The Battle of Life -- The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain. 5 vols. 12mo. "A Christmas Carol. In Prose. Being a Ghost Story of Christmas.": Rare Trial Issue, with the title page printed in red and green, the half-title printed in green, "Stave I" as the first chapter heading, and all necessary typographical errors. Chapman & Hall, 1844 (i.e., 1843), 166 pp. Illustrated with 4 in-text woodcuts and 4 delightful hand-colored etchings by John Leech. "The Chimes: A Goblin Story of Some Bells that Rang an Old Year Out and a New Year In.":

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copies on the first day alone. In his critically acclaimed biography of Charles Dickens, Peter Ackroyd writes of "A Christmas Carol" and its influence on the holiday: "Typically it was still a one-day holiday when presents were given to children, but there was no general orgy of benevolence and generosity. It was a time of quiet rest. Acting. Reading aloud. Music. Games. What Dickens did was to transform the holiday by suffusing it with his own particular mixture of aspirations, memories and fears. He invested it with fantasy and with a curious blend of religious mysticism and popular superstition" (436). This particular copy of "A Christmas Carol" is one of only a handful of rare proof copies. Dickens set out to write and design the perfect book for Christmas, a project that was produced to his own specifications. This included printing the title page in festive red and green, as well as the half-title in green. In the end, however, Dickens was dissatisfied with the appearance of the red and green; he opted for red and blue instead, with blue for the half-title. At the time, it was also customary for books published in November or December to bear the date of the next year, as. Bookseller Inventory # 14197