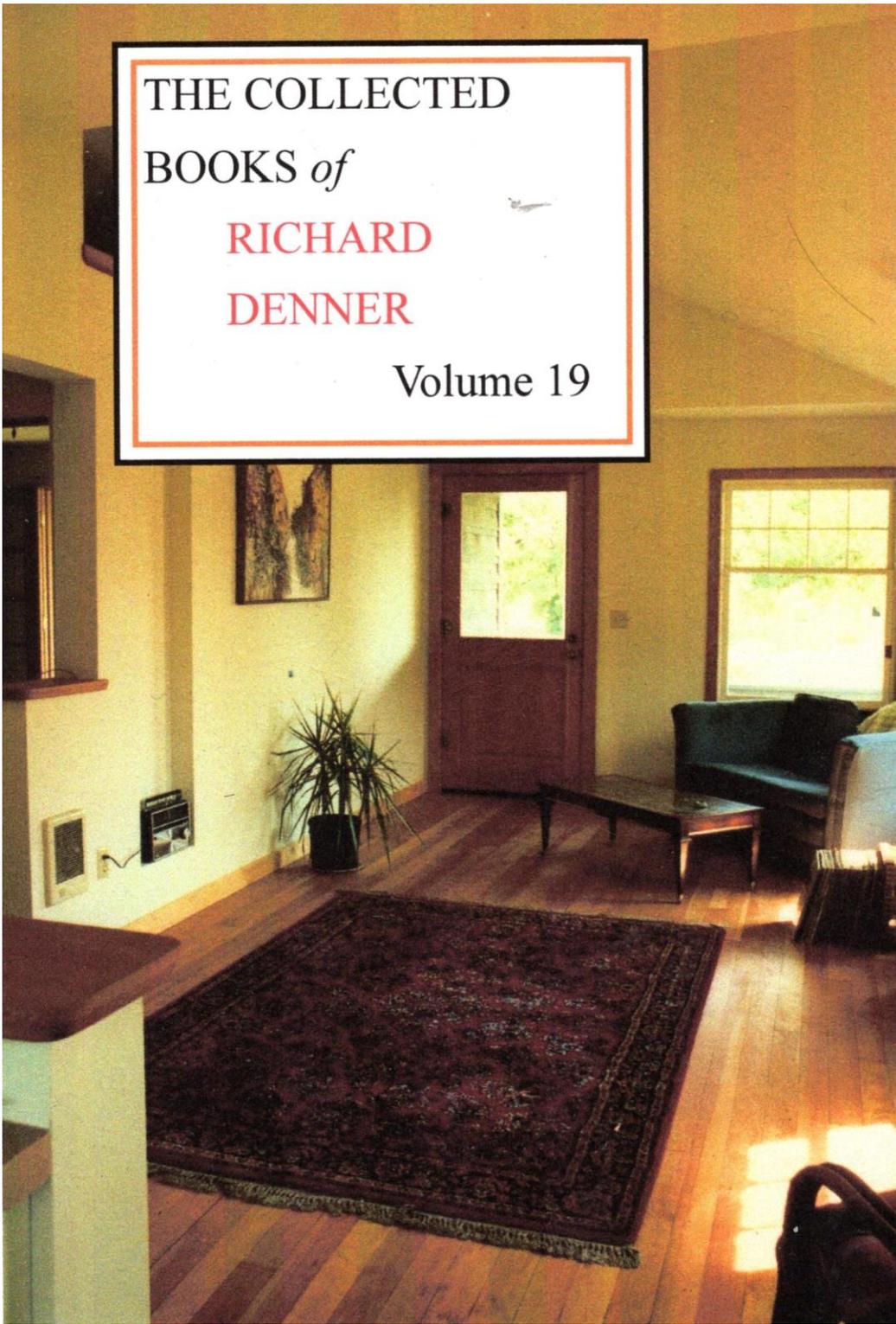


THE COLLECTED
BOOKS *of*

RICHARD
DENNER

Volume 19



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BOOKS of

RICHARD
DENNER

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dPress 2018 Ellensburg

Where one is is in a temple that sometimes makes us forget
that we are in it. Where we are is in a sentence.

—Jack Spicer HEADS OF THE TOWN UP TO THE AETHER

Book design by Oberon

Cover photos by Julie Prather

Title page sculpture by Dawin Davis



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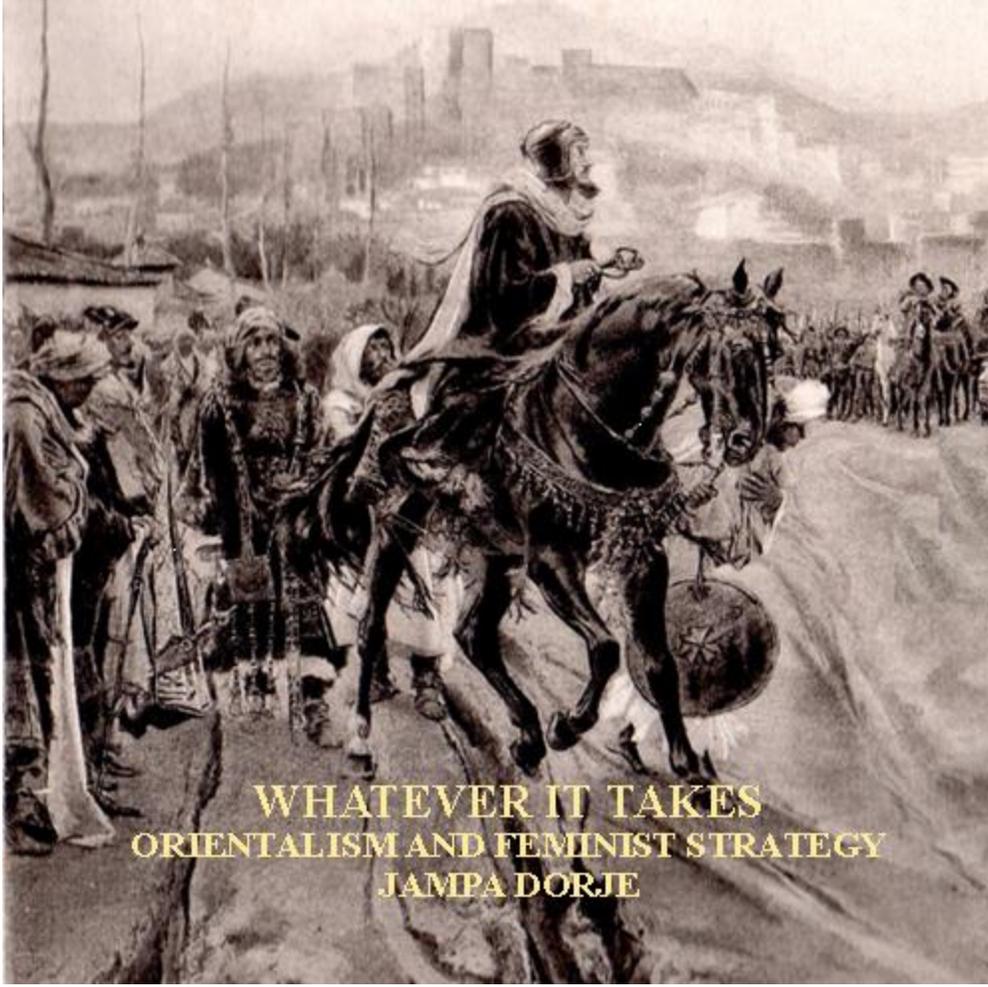
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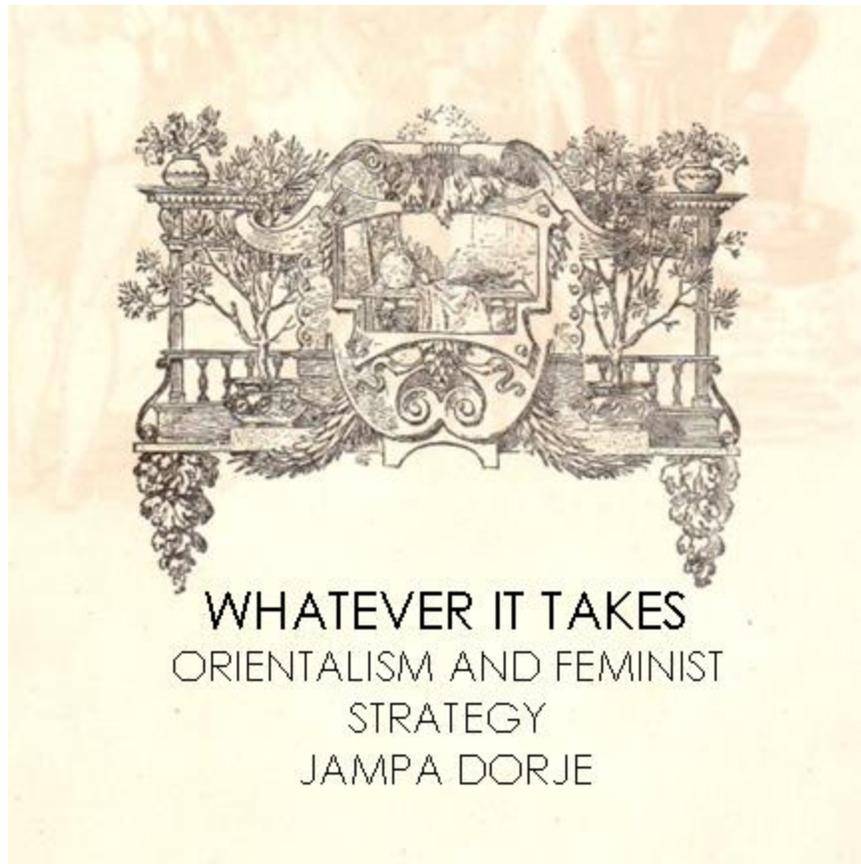
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WHATEVER IT TAKES
ORIENTALISM AND FEMINIST STRATEGY
JAMPA DORJE



Cover art: a section of F. Pradilla's 1888 engraving,
The Surrender of the Moors at Granada, A.D. 1492



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 a misogynistic point of view and is reminiscent of a character 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 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 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, *ḥarām*, 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 might be 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, are depictions of pure fantasy (*Wikipedia/Women of Algiers*).

The concept that Oriental culture as static, inflexible, underdeveloped, and weak carries over into the various interpretations of feminine gender and sexuality in Western philosophy. There is general agreement by male philosophers, from Aristotle through Aquinas to Schopenhauer, who concur that the female state is a deformity, that the female is a misbegotten male, and that women are a second sex, inferior in all respects to the first.

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. Schopenhauer, in a most abusive manner, holds forth that women are mentally and physically weak and exist only for the propagation of the species.

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 reflects 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, I grant, that all these arts are necessary; 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).

And she explains the arts necessary for seduction:

Gentleness, docility, and a spaniel-like affection are...consistently recommended as the cardinal virtues of the sex...She was created to be the toy

of man, his rattle, and it must jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused (PW 124).

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 she 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” (PW122). 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. 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 night, 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 in order 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. At the end of one thousand and one nights, Scheherazade presents Shahryar with a son.

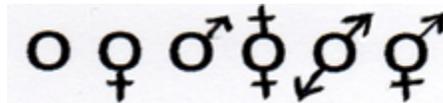
The method Scheherazade uses to survive would seem to Wollstonecraft to be a degrading means to find freedom. She would understand the situation and that it required an immediate solution and that the one chosen was clever, but she would see its limitations for the liberation of all women as being a continuation of the curse of inequality laid upon them. Schopenhauer would see just another man being "clouded by his sexual impulses," 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? 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.

In his essay, "When Fiction Lives in Fiction", 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 also—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 suggest to

them that we are experiencing an upheaval in gender identity within the process of human sexual evolution—a dynamic phase in the eternal return of biological polarity—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 gender possibilities and the re-establishment and affirmation of her story within the context of so-called history to be more of an all-inclusive *ourstory*.



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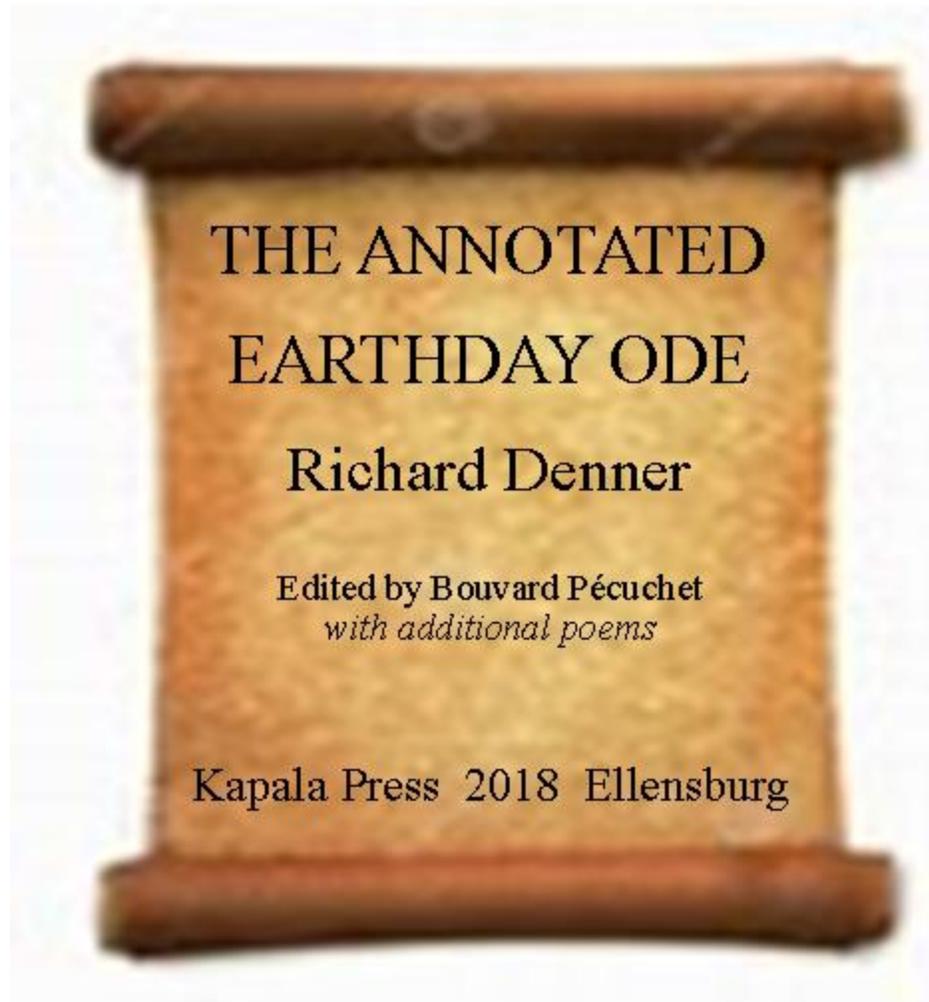
THE ANNOTATED

EARTHDAY

ODE

Richard Denner

EDITED BY BOUVARD PÉCUCHE



Watercolors by the author.

Earthday is a revised version of *Too Many Horses, Not Enough Saddles* by Richard Denner, D Press, Ellensburg, 1994.

The Annotated Earthday Ode was submitted as a midterm paper for Dr. Lily Vuong's Legacy of the Hebrew Bible course at Central Washington University, Ellensburg, Winter, 2018.

Assigned text:

The Jewish Study Bible, ed. by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler
Jewish Publication Society, Tanakh Translation

Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014.



PREFACE

“Earthday” is an irregular ode, based on a creation story told by a Ute Medicine Man. The Medicine Man’s name is Richard Running Deer. He was born October 16, 1939, in Colorado Springs, Colorado, the son of William Jewell and Virginia Meyer, and he died on October 20, 2012, in Mancos, Colorado. He was known worldwide for his ceremonies. This creation story was told to poet Richard Denner, as well as to a group of American Tibetan Buddhists, sitting around an evening campfire, in 1992. During the pioneer days, before there were any permanent buildings at Tara Mandala (a Buddhist center, near Pagosa Springs, Colorado), the retreat season opened with native American practices—a sweat lodge, a vision quest, and initiatory ceremonies. That night, Richard Running Deer was dressed in traditional garb. He was wearing buckskins ornamented with elaborate bead and quill work, a breast plate decorated with red and white trade beads, and a full eagle feather ceremonial headdress.

After the ceremony, Denner received a condensed transmission of the story in a dream. Upon awakening the following morning, he transcribed the dream. He says, “I wrote without a stop, and after I read what I had written, I wrote a few lines of my own to connect the tale to the evolving Tibetan Buddhist culture on the land.”

Being the proprietor of Tara Mandala’s bookstore, Denner was dubbed Richard Sitting in Bookstore by Richard Running Deer, after the medicine man approved the new telling of his creation story, saying, “This is your poem. Carry on with it.”

—Bouvard Pécuchet

Before anything

there was dirt

a breast-shaped mountain

a valley, a plain

just dirt 5

Mother Nature wearing
a dress with many pockets
looks over the land
and bends low
moving her hands 10
she makes clouds

Taking seeds from her pockets
she throws a few here
some there, some in the valley
pfff, pfff, pfff 15
some on the plain, pfff, pff
and on the mountain, pff

She stands up and the clouds leave
and she calls Father Sky
“Bring the sun over here” 20
this is on the first day
On the second day
she takes a look
and makes adjustments

She says to Father Sky 25
“Take the sun back
back further, over there!”
and she takes some seeds
from a pocket way in the back
that she’s never used before 30

pfff, pfff, over here
pfff, pfff over there
Mother Nature is a lot like us
she’s never satisfied
always making corrections
pfff, pfff, pfff 35

Then she takes the water people
from a pocket near her hem
and sets them to one side
and the winged people

and the four-legged people 40
from yet other pockets
She takes the two-legged people
and sets them to one side
and says, "Pay attention
don't say anything 45
watch what I do, and I'll explain later"

This story goes on
Mother Nature adds
and subtracts, she points
the water people toward the valley 50
and the four-legged people
to the mountain and the plain
The two legged people
beg her to have their place
but first she tells 55
the winged people
to fly over the land
and report back to her

She invites the leaders
of the peoples to a circle 60
the Bear tells the humans
"I will give you wisdom
but you can't hunt me"
The Elk offers bones
for tools and hides for clothes 65
and meat for food
the Fish promises
to keep the river water clean
and the Eagle to carry
messages to the Great Spirit 70

And the story goes on
for a long time
and I may have forgotten
a part, like Coyote
promising to be a teacher 75

The Conquistadors come
with their firesticks and
the Bluecoats with their rifles

Now, we're in the time
of the third language—TV land 80
and Mother Nature looks over
the breast-shaped mountain
at Bobcat bounding
from an altar at Tara Mandala

A new moon 85
yip yap of Coyote
screech of Hawk
and drumming sounds
from a yurt at the base
of the Continental Divide 90
east meets west

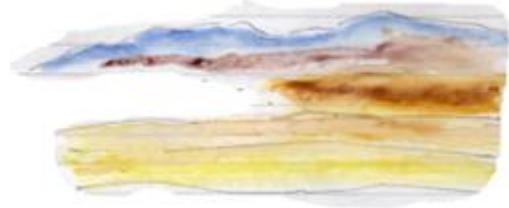
We're back to basics
wood and water
water and wood
the energy of Vajra 95
song and dance

Our love of the land
is our comfort and strength
this the Ute people know
this the Buddha people know 100

The Sangha is a circle
here is where we're from
awake to the scent of rabbit ear sage
ears hear fire, eyes see light
all one taste 105

Garden of fire
garden of stars
garden of air

FIRST DAY (lines 1 thru 21): The planet Earth has already been created before the story begins; there is barren earth (“just dirt”) with contour lines. When compared to the creation stories in the Torah, the structure at this point resembles *Genesis 2.5*, where “no grasses of the field had yet sprouted”—however, rather than a single creator god, there is a primordial pair, named Mother Earth and Father Sky. They work in tandem, with the female deity doing the design and the male deity doing the heavy lifting by moving the sun from place to place, so Mother Earth can proceed with her work. Mother Earth is anthropomorphic. She wears clothes and uses her hands to make clouds and plant seeds. The *fff* sounds indicate her breath, similar to where God breathes life into Adam (*Gen. 2.7*). For a contemporary poet reciting this story into a microphone, there is a dramatic effect because the *fff* sound causes a *pop* sound (called “popping your Ps” by techies) to come from the speaker system. At first, ME is seated; the clouds leave; then, she stands and commands FS to move the sun closer, bringing heat to what she has planted.



SECOND DAY (lines 22-32): ME makes adjustments. After her work passes inspection, like in *Gen. 1.18* (“And God saw that this was good”), she continues working and commands FS to position the sun at a specific location. She selects some seeds (line 30) that she has “never used before,” suggesting that there have been previous cosmologies or different attempts at this creation. The

conclusion of the landscaping activity, following a seven-day pattern for the creation story, marks the end of the second day. In *Gen. 1*, God creates by verbal command. Like God, in *Gen. 2*, ME, is more of a physical laborer; here, rather than being like a potter she is a farmer. The aspect of “always making corrections” (lines 32-34) posits a similarity between humankind and their creator, echoing *Gen. 1.26*, where God creates humans in His own image. This implies that the long-term creation will be a work-in-progress.

THIRD DAY (lines 36-46): ME takes various animals (“peoples”) from pockets in her dress. How and when the animals were created is not related. There is a Ute creation story told by Alden Naranjo, a revered Southern Ute Elder and a member of the Mouache and Caputa bands, (Utes who live on land adjacent to Tara Mandala) about a primeval time when Sinawava, the creator, sent the spirit, Coyote, with a bag of sticks, on a mission. Curious, as always, Coyote opened the bag, and humans escaped and ran in different directions. Coyote closed the bag. Later, after being asked what happened and Coyote had given his excuses, the bag was again opened, and the few remaining humans became the Southern Utes, who say they are without a migration myth, because they have always lived on this land(<https://www.southernutensn.gov/history/creation-story>). To the west, in Zion National Park, is a canyon (a natural amphitheater) worthy of the name, The Temple of Sinawava. Utah is Mormon country, so there are biblical names mixed with the indigenous people’s names. People have special needs. Note bene, after placing the various animals including the humans, to the side, she tells the humans to shut up and focus on what she is doing (lines 44-46). Like the Israelites following Moses, they are grumbling (*Exodus 16.8*). Like the Israelites, these people want to be sure of their place in the scheme of things. In making a transition, ME does some fine tuning before giving each animal a place.

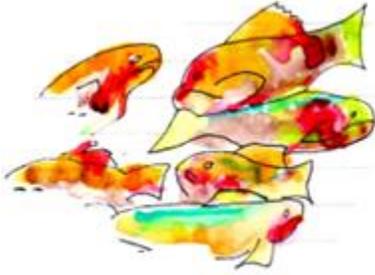


FOURTH DAY (lines 47-58): ME places various animals in their natural environments, but she does not allocate a place for the humans. Instead, similar to what Noah does in the biblical flood story (*Gen. 8.7-10*), she sends birds out to do reconnaissance.

FIFTH DAY (lines 59-70): Mother Earth invites the leaders of the peoples to a con-fab, where the people make promises (ref. God’s covenant and the peoples’ oaths of allegiance in *Exodus*). Mention of The Great Spirit (line 70), known as Wakan Tanka among the Sioux, is an abstract conception of a universal spiritual force (see *Sundance*, Jampa Dorje, D Press, Sebastopol, 2005) and is more in line with the omnipotent God of *Gen. 1*, predating ME and FS in this telling; or it is an import from another source.

SIXTH DAY (lines 71-78): At this juncture, the style of the narrative changes from an exposition about a related

group of events to a highly compressed timeframe. This accordion-like shift in narrative structure is done in oral traditions to segue into a different story for a different occasion. Here, the poet confesses to memory loss as a means to bring forward the story from primeval times to the present. The evolution of types of firearms, those first used by Spaniards and then by U.S. Army troops, symbolize the historical eras from the time of the first people to now. This



sixth day can be considered the antistrophe of a classical Greek ode, where the chorus moves from west to east behind the altar, before the members sing in unison. The *vajra* (line 95) is a Tantric ritual implement, symbolizing skillful means. It may also be a nod to Namkai Norbu's "Song of the Vajra," an esoteric sound and movement practice that embodies the essence of the Vajrayana Ati Yoga teachings. These teachings relate to our potential to realize our true nature.

SEVENTH DAY (lines 79-108): A 20th century voice emerges with the mention of television, and this indicates where Richard Running Deer transmitted the story to Richard Sitting in Bookstore. These lines highlight local color and celebrate complicated social interactions. Coyote is still present, but Mother Nature is now related to the Great Bodhisattva, Tara, who can manifest in twenty-one forms and is the central tutelary deity at Tara Mandala Retreat Center.

At the Continental Divide, there is not only a geographical divide, there is a cultural divide; coming from the East, you are now in the Old West. The seven hundred acres of Tara Mandala lie wedged between the Ute Indian Reservation, the San Juan National Forest and a large cattle ranch. Tara Mandala's organizational values, as espoused by Lama Tsultrim Allione in the Tara Mandala 2018 newsletter, *Vast View—Open Heart*, consist of recognizing the sacredness of all life, supporting a just and equitable world, promoting balance in environmental and political activities, and honoring the re-emergence of the Divine Feminine.



The concluding lines, with their equivalence of elements, have the feel of a mystical experience. There are 108 lines in the poem and 108 prayer beads in a Buddhist mala.





MAKE IT NEW:
A RESPONSE TO ARONOFSKY'S *NOAH*

JAMPA DORJE



MAKE IT NEW:
A RESPONSE TO ARONOFSKY'S *NOAH*
JAMPA DORJE

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This essay was written for Dr. Lily Vuong's
Religion 410, Legacy Of the Hebrew Bible class taught at Central Washington University,
Winter, 2018.

Text assigned: *The Jewish Study Bible*,
edited by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler
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Cover photo from Dreamstime.com

Drawing, watercolor and collagework by the author.



MAKE IT NEW: A RESPONSE TO ARONOFSKY'S *NOAH*

Darren Aronofsky's 2014 film, *Noah*, has generated considerable controversy for deviating from the original depiction of events in the flood story, as related in the *Tanakh* (or Old Testament). How much of the film is an accurate portrayal of the episodes detailed in *Genesis* 6 through 9 and how much of it is the creation of the director and his co-writer, Ari Handel? The four chapters in *Genesis* that concern Noah take about ten minutes to read, while the run time for the film is 138 minutes. After analysis, much of the physical activity and character development in the film is the product of Aronofsky and Handel's imaginative story telling.

Why would they make changes to the original story? In an interview in *The Atlantic*, "The 'Terror' of Noah:

How Darren Aronofsky Interprets the Bible," Cathleen Falsani claims that it is the messages, not the history, that matters. She quotes Aronofsky:

I think it's more interesting when you look at not just the biblical but the mythical that you get away from the arguments about history and accuracy and literalism. That's a much weaker argument, and it's a mistake. But when you're talking about a pre-diluvian world—a pre-flood world—where people are living for millennia and centuries, where there were no rainbows, where giants and angels walked on the planet, where the world was created in seven days, where people were naked and had no shame, you're talking about a universe that is very, very different from what we understand. And to portray that as realistic is impossible. You have to enter the fantastical.

(<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/03/the-terror-of-em-noah-em-how-darren-aronofsky-interprets-the-bible/359587/>)

I am going to focus on Aronofsky's development of characters not present in the original story and how these changes allow him to develop both an exciting visual narrative and a convincing solution to some of the enigmatic elements in the events as they unfold.

First, the involvement of the giants (*Nephilim*), called "The Watchers" in the film, in the building and defense of the ark, allows Aronofsky to introduce one of the first fantastic highlights in the story. Next, the initial infertility of Shem's wife, Illa, and Noah's later attempt to sacrifice her twin daughters, allows Aronofsky to develop a coherent psychological and consistent temporal narrative. And, lastly, the role of Tubal-cain as Noah's nemesis allows Aronofsky to pit father against son, as Tubal-cain encourages Ham to murder Noah, which creates a backstory to help explicate and resolve the ambiguity in Ham's response to his father's nakedness in the post-flood events.



In *Genesis* 6:2, “divine beings saw how beautiful the daughters of men were and took wives from among those that pleased them.” In verse 4, “It was then, and later too, that the Nephilim appeared on earth.” Scholars debate whether the Nephilim were the offspring of fallen angels and human women or whether they were a separate race of giants or whether they were the lineage of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve, or whether they were aliens from another planet. Aronofsky portrays these large “transformer-type” creatures as made of huge chunks of rock that have a core of light, portraying these creatures as made of light that has become deeply materialized. There are, also, tell-tale signs of their having once had wings. Regardless of their genealogy, they serve Aronofsky well as characters in a modern action film. There are no battle scenes in the biblical version of the Noah story, but the epic battle in the film foreshadows the upcoming stories in *Judges* and *Kings*. Aronofsky

conflates the different interpretations of the Nephilim. During the battle to protect the ark from the wicked men who God regrets having created (*Gen.* 5-8), the Nephilim, upon being defeated, are suddenly “beamed” into the heavens. Their fallen, embodied nature is redeemed by having helped Noah and his family.

In both versions of the Noah story (*Gen.* 6 and *Gen.* 7), Noah’s sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, have wives to take onto the ark. Aronofsky departs from this traditional depiction. Much of the dramatic development of the film revolves around finding wives for the young men. Early in the film, Noah and his wife rescue a young girl, named Illa (portrayed by Emma Watson), who is still alive after a brutal rampage of her village by the warriors of Tubal-cain. Illa has an abdominal wound; later, she finds herself to be barren. A romantic interest develops between Illa and Shem. Noah goes to a village to find wives for his other sons, but he is repulsed after seeing young women sold for food, and he returns empty handed to tell his family that they will be the last humans. My favorite new character is the one-eyed crone, played by Aronofsky’s seventh grade teacher, Vera Fried, who confronts Noah in the village and gives him her fierce English teacher look, shouting, “You! You!” In a video-interview with the Palm Beach Post News, she tells of her reaction in getting a cameo in the film with Russell Crowe www.mypalmbeachpost.com/news/vera-fried-reenacts-her-scene-with-russell-crowe-HLniBFvp1oHjWbvXQFgGuO/.

Noah is in the firm belief that God wants all humanity dead, but Ham rebelliously runs away to find a wife. Meanwhile, Noah’s wife, Naameh (Jennifer Connelly) connects with grandfather Methuselah (Anthony Hopkins) and explains the dilemma; later, searching for berries in the forest, Methuselah bestows his blessing on Illa, and she becomes fertile. Ham (played by Logan Lerman) befriends a young woman, but in the commotion before the flood, she is abandoned. Disheartened by his loss, Ham blames his father, and a rift develops between father and son.

Beyond extending the theme of romantic love (a modern and not a biblical notion), the conflict

between Ham and Noah extends the theme of the transfer of the father's lineage to his sons, a theme that was posited at the beginning of the film. During an interrupted ceremony, where Noah's father, Lamech, is passing his lineage to his son, a sacred snakeskin talisman is lost. In Aronofsky's rendering, this heirloom is stolen by Tubal-cain (Ray Winstone) and is later given to Ham, who, at the end of the film, gives it back to Noah. Rightfully, it belongs to Shem, since he is the firstborn. Ham relinquishes his place in the family structure and, like Cain, becomes a wanderer. Aronofsky works in another touch of Cain and Abel allegory, when Shem (Douglas Booth) is sent by Noah to find his brother and returns without him.



Tubal-cain is mentioned in *Gen. 4:22*, as the one who “forged all implements of copper and iron.” Not all Tanakh lists agree, but in *Gen. 4:22*, Tubal-cain is listed as a son of Lamech; in *Gen. 5:25*, Methuselah is said to have begot Lamech; in *Gen. 5:29*, Lamech begot Noah;—so, Tubal-cain would be Noah's older brother (or older half-brother, since the name of Noah's mother is not mentioned). Aronofsky's understanding of Tubal-cain being a worker in metals connects to the iridescent material that is being mined in the film. There seems to be shifting technology in play.

One of the most tenebrous parts of the Noah story is in the post-flood stage, after Noah has become a drunkard (*Gen. 9:21*). It is here where Ham views his father's nakedness. These events have spawned an ongoing debate around whether there was a rape of Noah by Ham, a castration of Noah by Ham, or that Ham “seeing his father's nakedness” (*Gen. 9:22*) is to be interpreted only as sign of disrespect in seeing Noah in an immodest pose. Aronofsky has set the stage for the latter, more literal interpretation. Noah feels he has failed God by not keeping his promise to end humanity because he failed to sacrifice Illa's twin daughters. Aronofsky does not emphasize God's command, “Be fertile and increase, and fill the earth” (*Gen 9:1*). Noah's failure to understand God's plan, combined with a full dose of post-traumatic stress, has led him into drunkenness. In the Falsani interview, Aronofsky says:



Noah just follows whatever God tells him to do. So that led us to believe that maybe they were aligned, emotionally, you know? And that paid off for us when you get to the end of the story and [Noah] gets drunk. . . What do we do with this? How do we connect this with this understanding? For me, it was obvious that it was connected to survivor's guilt or some kind of guilt about doing something wrong.

This is plausible enough, although the film raises as many questions as it solves. Whose brilliant idea was it to get the animals to lie down? Is the curse of Canaan (*Gen. 9:23*) now extirpated? How does Methuselah, a mortal, become the healer of infertility and not an Angel of the Lord?

What might happen with this altered gene pool? With the seas rising due to global warming, is God rescinding his covenant?

But, as they say, "It's only a movie." Regarding the last question, only time will tell.





Slam
Dunk
Jampa Dorje



Slam Dunk

Jampa Dorje

D Press 2017 Ellensburg



DIVISIBLE BY FLOWERS

1. inner secret secrets

theoretically the absolute p(ohm)e
is defined in a self-consistent way
the unit of resistance
determined with a coil

spinning in a field

passion-love-beauty formula
the passion of love
the catalysis of beauty
the passion of beauty
the crystallography of love
the beauty of love
the musicology of passion
the of of beauty the passion love
passionlove of the the of beauty

expressed concretely
in terms of smart bombs
(a form of intercourse protected
under the cuntstitution)
Kenning equations concocted &
cunninglingously composed
paradoxically pertinent when
accepted as parts of patterns
suspicious as it sounds
using Euler's formula $L+2=P+A$
& correcting for obscured areas

let us begin w/the premise
when we take care of ourselves
participants are swept along
in unacknowledged harmony
true Taoist cyberneticism

ask & thou shall receive
what is matter?
never mind
what is mind?
it doesn't matter

sometimes wordgames seem flippant
& worldgames when so are malignant
yet the awesome Silence prevails

Andillusion dogmaradarwowgod
i
begin this line
knowing particular
themes elude development

and on the and in the
and on the and in the
and on the and in the

magnetic whispers
from the heart of a moth
a frog in a muskeg
evolves into a dinosaur
in the twit of a newt it
(knew(i)t) quantumleaps

we are meat such that
we are primemovers such that
the primemovers & the meat
are the same, and

whatever Beta may be
(Beta is a cow of mine)
is true when
and only when
a prime mover
is prime rib

overheard in the Safeway line
“They don’t believe in God;
they believe in something called
Allah”—and, so, we go to war
over another word for The Almighty

2. intergalactic69pornoputer

your Honor, i will speak my peace
i confess to fucking-up

convicted as i was arrested
a bag of predigested meat (that i am)
incorrigible & incapable of rehab
corrupt & spreading contagion

your major premise
worth is self-evident
is a 2waymirror
pimping your nose w/yr tongue
you sniff my rectum
& blame me for bad taste

NOT FLOOD FIRE OR ICE but
A Deluge of Smutmirth
f/Interpornogallatic Cyber-Messenger

grit of shit for breath
gobs of swarming cum emit
f/throbbing organs against aghast
esophagi, burning bitters
dripping in eyes, ears, on breasts
acrox continents

now my blood bdellatomically runs
f/opened veins, a feast

OM MATRIX
MANTRA VORTEX
ABEL BAKER
CAIN DOZEN

she who meditates on the penis of sorrow
has to ball The Jack
he who dreams of Wombman
must come to rack and ruin
in the Spanish boot of time

words of our bodies
seeds of our minds
statements of elements

ejaculations of truth
tables of turns
tricks of trades

in that Silence our lives are mingled
& in my mindheart there is terror

across the sea of abyss
over the pass of bandits
thru the valley of the beast
i fill in the blanks

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

i find a place where the rent is low
gardens grow, pace is slow
mushrooms blow

whitehole/blackhole continuum
rivers evaporate on Mars
40000 BCE at 8 'til eulenspiegel
while a child discovers its feet and
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 harmonographic
alpha-particular articulation
that i = an elliptical metaphor 4
misononeismystic Presbyterianism

Bohem's exegesis of Genesis
Buddhist Logic of Exists
differential equations

3. plug them in and stand back

dinosaurs grazing in pastures of hemp
micro-organisms under an airtight lid
færie-dæmon foxfire dynamos
bunraku hooded trinities
section Xn relative to Yn
Gemini martyrdom
Sze indications of good fortune
soon June vine design
synergistically synchronized valve/relay
yin/yang daisycrazy turkeyjerky
a posteriori experience related
a fortiori in terms of significance

KALI APPEARS WITH A NECKLACE OF MANY FLAVORED HEADS

atom fudge spinach nicotine
pie are squared double negative delight
phallic fluff interarticular fibercartilage
cosmic grout alimentum ornamentum
Pythagorean lotus bean jade attle
fissigemnation chainshot

psychedelic pink psychodelphi
pink psychoracle lick pink ink pink
the color of lips the color
of the cheek the color of
intestines eyes of insects
winged bleeding things in inner space

substantives hold their own
adjectives depend on substantives
holding their own
STOP
NO U
TURN

ONE
WAY

ARE
YOU

PUTTING
ME ON?

automatic replication analogue of
passion-beauty-love
analytic pre-molar political
intersubjective meta-aleatoric
patramorphosis

on the blue pole of the South Moon
Venus has a hot cushion

4. business reply mail

postage paid by addressee
octahedrally this RLD
molecule circles the news that stays news

THE SCARLOSIS DAILY SCOOP
THE THERMONUCLEAR CARBUNCLE
THE ABYSS
THE WASTING TIMES

Planetarium Depicts
First Christmas

Council Studies

Concrete Lid
For Reservoir

the war is over/it never was/the
war is not/the war is over
Merry Kissmyass the real cost
was the cost of the cost
2 + 2 being more
Christus-Falcon entalloned
Mithras cutting the throat of the Bull
with a zip code

CHAPTER TO

on my way from the 12th planet
in n minus 1 (n = 0) solar system
of RLD-59 Andasinwand Galaxy
to the Labor Temple on 2nd Ave
i encounter an old friend
“Whashappeninmon?” i inquire
“Got a vasectomy, remarried
my first wife & found Jesus”
“Does this frequently happen
after vasectomy?” i ask
but before he can answer
the effect of the experience
inhibits my memory
from recalling the event
to which the question pertains

daze of trauma stretch to kalpas
until interrupted by the mantra
HARE MARX KARL KARL
HARE BODY HAIRY BODY
SPIRITO MESCALERO
SANCTAS IMMUNITA

rainforest/pastureland equation—
MacDonald’s boasting billions dead
has a walk-in fantastic replica
of a Big Mac guaranteed to be

a short path to Sipa Bardo
if piped with Allen Ginsberg's
Holy Soul Jelly Roll & what else?
just a 1929 ordinance
forbidding moonlight & shadow dancing
invoked by antediluvian assholes
to prevent psychedelic light shows

CHAPTER TOO

in this chapter the flop quickens
...the the figuring as formula, the the
imparting stature to the the
...tautological hokermoker...
just thrust into the thick of the quick
as the media snowballs into ametropia

CHAPTER of the OVERALL ORDER of HUGGERMUGGER

deaf dumb hungry & blind
the eater that is eaten
i am a plucked biped cooked in my juices
by atomic tantra evolutionarily predicated
a as in as b as in be
every effort forever formed given grace
however haphazard i imagine an alder tree
under which a really real rishi rests

HEAD WATER

for Robert Duncan

Syntactic order brackets
word relationships,
but this should not prevent us
holding hands

Asked what
prevented him when asked

what prevented
him from
internally reallocating
functor categories
f/internally
reallocating functor
categories from non-
exigent conditions
from non-exigent
conditions, he replied

Oh, potato chip
prime mover of palatability
bugaboo to step on in the dark
cosmic potato of parabolic curves
let me lick your salty thighs

S/Seys
E/Cexy
X/Son of Lucifer
Oh, so sexy
Darth Vader, bringer of light

When asked what
prevented the potato chip
f/attaining inter-subjective
metamorphosis, he replied

*Birds of calm
rest on the charmed wave*

PRINTER'S DEVIL

When l is
a sentence
and e is
a sentence

followed by
a sentence
and H is
a sentence
followed by
three sentences
Hell will be
a sentence
in more than
one sense

CALENDAR OF THE MOON

Moon of soft dreams
Moon of sweetness and smoke
Moon of wax and tar
Moon of scaffolds
Moon of the charnel grounds

Well-hung moon
Full-bosomed moon
Moon of a face I sometimes hate
Moon, Moon of a face I adore
Moon that turns to flame
Moon that turns in pain
Moon that goes as far as I go

Bandaged moon bruised and bloodied
Tangled-tooth moon with a mouth of cotton
Babylonian moon hiding in a cloud rack
Old man moon sitting in a chair

Moon covered with lost socks
Moon with astronauts in her mustache
Moon cruising in her black Mercury convertible
Moon dancing in a diaphanous gown
Moon peeping in at me through my window

Cryptic moon
Perfumed moon
Drunken moon

Moon of the raven who sat on the flagpole
when a bolt of lightning struck
Moon of the Humpies jumping in the stream while
I'm doing the venison jerk to the stove rag band

Moon on a hill in a tree in the heart
Moon in a place I've made
Moon just beyond my hand
Moon, will you be free after work?
But, no, you have to work a double shift

**THE FIVE POEMS
JAMPA DORJE READ AT
DICK & JANE'S SPOT**





**THE FIVE POEMS
JAMPA DORJE READ
AT DICK & JANE'S SPOT**

D PRESS 2017 ELLENSBURG

These five poems were read at Dick & Jane's Spot during the Inland Poetry Prowl: *Edna's Second April* in Ellensburg, Washington, on April 8, 2017. Jampa read with Kathy Stancik and Belle Randall. www.inlandpoetry.com



FLAGS EVERYWHERE

What comes next?

Betrayal, theft, disease?—a calamity, likely or what comes next might be appetizing.

Make a cake—

 Bob's birthday tomorrow
 bake him a spice cake

And decorate it with tiny army men—

 he's so into the war right now,
flags everywhere. I told Bob, "Your American flag decal
 is not going to get you into heaven."

He just stared and said, "Well, my Earth in Upheaval
 license plate holder might." He's got a point.

 Seems like upheaval—and while the cake bakes,
I'll go down to the creek.

A flood came through—lots of trash on the banks. Looks like the contents of a store.

 Overturned shopping carts and a tattered
sleeping bag flapping in the branches.

 Pussy willows and the stalks of last year's anise.

 Limbs and vines, a slab of blue plastic, reflected, the water clear, and the
reflections, perfect, until a breeze rips

 the surface and warps the images.

Like moons in water, sights deceive us.

 Bob will soon be home.

I'd better check the cake, the cake, God, the cake, and after that, what?

CURVE OF WIND

Rosco and I wait for the fishermen to return.

I sit on a bench and watch the clouds change shape.

Rosco has my belt around his neck
 and tow chain hooked to a tree.

A sign with painted letters: Dogs must be on a leash—
ducks and rabbits loose.

A teenage girl wearing white shorts sunbathes in the light breeze.

I see one cloud as Tristram reclining and a small cloud
as a cup proffered to Isoude.

The girl, listening to music on her cell phone, taps her toes.

Challenging to transpose her pubescent curves
into mythological planes.

A tall, burly boy with his gray tee-shirt cut along his ribs
carries an armload of boxes and kicks a couple towards a fire pit, a dramatic and disruptive act.

Above them the clouds move in a larger current.

The breeze takes up the huge cardboard ashes and sprinkles them on the girl.

“Thanks, Ron,” she says, getting up and shaking her towel.

“I’m just trying to help out,” he snickers from his pickup truck.

A couple of rabbits hop by.
Rosco can’t lift his head with the weight of the tow chain.

The rabbits disappear under the porch of Mt. Baker store.

Still no fishermen, and the cloud that was Isolde, now a free spirit,
does not drink from the cup.

The poet utilizes the text box to make line breaks, and the final line floats away in concrete form.
The fishermen return empty- handed.

DIVISIBLE BY FLOWERS

Theoretically the absolute p(ohm)e is defined in a self-consistent way
the unit of resistance determined with a coil
spinning in a field

Passion-love-beauty formula = the passion of love = the catalysis of beauty
the passion of beauty
the crystallography of love

the beauty of love
the of of beauty the passion love passionlove of the the of beauty

If word games are flippant, world games are malignant
expressed concretely in terms of drone strikes
paradoxically pertinent when accepted as parts of patterns
suspicious as it sounds
using Euler's formula $L+2=P+A$ & correcting for obscured areas

Overheard, "They don't believe in God; they believe in Allah"
and, so, we war over a word for The Almighty

AN OLD MAN SITS AMONG GRAVESTONES EATING SNOW

He has risen with the sun, arguing with darkness.
He sets his hand to move
willy-nilly through a repertory of cyclic gestures, assembling
lines which wittily approximate
a sea, a tree, a hill, a face.

He realizes this is the best day to be alive
because if he is dead, he is dead
and even if he's dying while he is alive
creation is making room for him.

Glory! Glory! Glory!

THIS POEM

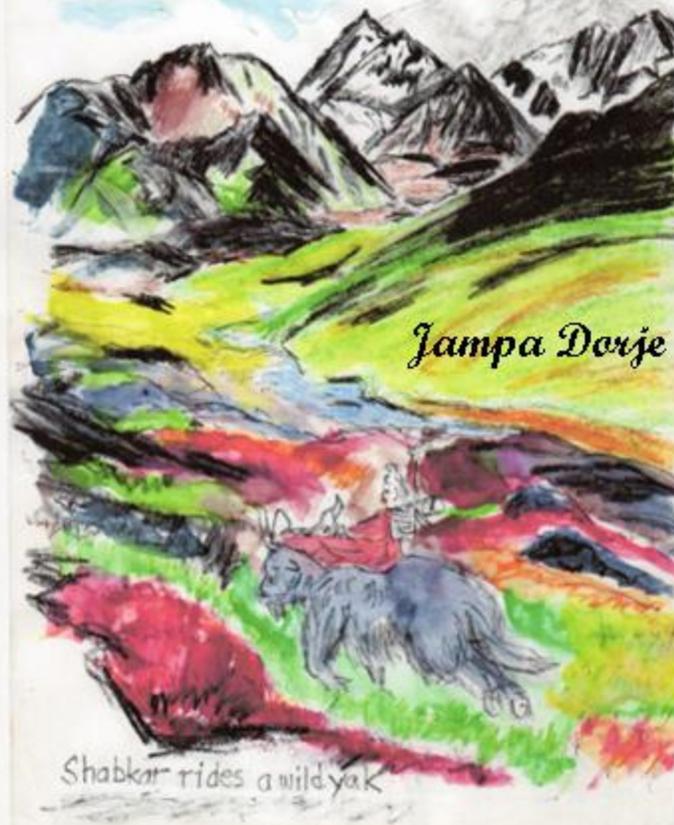
I'm in a room with a door you can go through but I can't.
You're in a room with a door I can go through but you can't.
Now, you hear the echo of my voice.
Even so, the candle burns, the candle burns.



*Art is meditation
Meditation is art*

Jampa Dorje

Shabkar rides a wild yak





ART IS MEDITATION
MEDITATION IS ART

Jampa Dorje

Kapala Press 2017 Ellensburg

for Lu Auz

Artwork and photo of Davis sculpture by the author

Essay originally written for Dr. Matt Altman's
Philosophy of Art Class, CWU, Ellensburg, 2016



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 and contrast 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, book stores, 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” (CP 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 in an attempt 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, as did Martin Heidegger, “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 deals 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 still 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 as a means 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 commonly 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 or not 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. Yet, there are philosophers, as well as researchers in the fields of neuroscience, psychology, and artificial intelligence who have revealed the tenuousness of this belief in an integrated self. Daniel Dennett presents a model of consciousness based on "verifiable" 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 of time. 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 definable 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 letters are made of is 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 main 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” (240). 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 (ibid.).

The mind wanders, and then, comes back into attentiveness; and when this attentiveness is extended over a period of time, a sense of losing 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 is located.

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,—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. 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).

Kant characterizes the aesthetic experience as an act of feigning disinterestedness, and this is true for meditation, 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.

AFTERWORD

I have shown that the process of a formal meditation and of an art viewing experience are much alike. It seem to me that the process of creating an artwork also has a meditational component. In terms of applying meditational techniques to the creative process, I have worked at deconstructing my identity through the use of Tantric Buddhist meditation using deep visualization and mantra in my traditional three-year retreat combined with the literary device of playing with multiple personas.

If I understand post-structuralism, in this post-postmodern age, one of the tenants is about dismantling structures and looking at them from different points of view. 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 *authoranamous* (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 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 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 coming into contact with 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 pre-Socratic woman 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 Dhramakaya 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.

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 the 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.

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An Ontological Circumambulation
of Walden Pond *by* Jampa Dorje



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of Walden Pond *by* Jampa Dorje

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Photos taken, in 1994, at Walden Pond while Jampa and his daughter, Lulu, and his friend, Jon Springer, visited his elder daughter, Gina and her family, in Weston, Massachusetts, about a mile down the Boston Post Road from the site of Thoreau's cabin.

Map source: *The Portable Thoreau*.



Henry David Thoreau may have been looking for a middle way between being a hermit living in the woods and, at the same time, being someone who appreciated the arts and sciences and found them useful. As he donned an ascetic's mantle and moved to Walden Pond, he was looking for solitude and the freedom to think his thoughts without the cacophonous energy of the industrial landscape that he found himself immersed in. Throughout his book, *Walden; or Life in the Woods*, first published in 1854, Thoreau admonishes his countrymen to realize how disconnected we are from Nature and how technology has added to our numbness and distress.

Thoreau deliberately chooses the woods as a place to deliberate on the meaning of life, a place where he can, as he puts it, *live deliberately*,—and I began to wonder about concepts like accident, adventitiousness, freedom, determinism/indeterminism, all the ways he “deliberately” went to the woods, when I flashed on his mention of *Atropos* at the beginning of his eulogy about the railroad in the chapter entitled “Sounds”:—

We have constructed a fate, an *Atropos*, that never turns aside. (Let that be the name of your engine.) Men are advertised that at a certain hour and

minute these bolts will be shot toward particular points of the compass; yet it interferes with no man's business and the children go to school on the other track. We live the steadier for it. We are all educated thus to be sons of Tell. The air is full of invisible bolts. Every path but your own is the path of fate. Keep on your own track, then (PT 294).

A long quotation, I know, but there are pithy themes, herein...let me weed a couple of them out.

Atropos was the elder of The Three Fates of classical Greek mythology. Atropos cuts the thread of life spun by Clotho, the same thread that her sister, Lachesis had measured (Wiki). Thoreau plays with the word, "bolt." A woven length of cloth is a bolt, as well as the shuttle that shoots a weft of thread. An arrow (especially from a crossbow) is a bolt,—and the engine of a train (that "shuttles" the children to school) "bolts" down the track in a straight direction. Thoreau links the fabric of life as fated, an education that keeps us on track, to a general description of all of us as sons of Tell, the legendary Swiss patriot who saved his son from the threat of death by shooting an apple off his head. Amid this wild mix of metaphors, the William Tell bit is a doozy. Why are we sons of Tell?—and sons who, like Tell's son, remain steadfast? Tell's act was deliberate, his aim was straight,—as was Thoreau's, when he wrote:—

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived (PT 271).

The sage in Thoreau is saying that we can be free of a fated life, a life imprisoned by necessity, the clock-like Newtonian universe, if only we get in touch with our original selves. In the railroad eulogy, it might seem that his praise of all the new technology is off track, but the poet in Thoreau sees glory in all things. However contrary to his own inclinations, he's fascinated; he has a World View for an instant, followed by ambivalence. He has looked the creator god, Brahma of the Hindus, in the face, but he knows his own path leads another way,—across the tracks. Thoreau looks at the continuum of commerce coming and going before his eyes and asks himself, at the beginning of a poem, "What's the railroad to me?" And, at the end, he answers himself,

It sets the sand a-blowing,
And the blackberries a-growing,

but I cross it like a cart-path in the woods. I will not have my eyes put out and my ears spoiled by its smoke and steam and hissing (PT 297).

In a very loose sense, you might say Thoreau was practicing *pranayama*, a yogic discipline that uses the breath to activate the “life force.” Just by getting out the coal smoke, he was developing fresh-out-of-door lungs, which, in turn, allowed him to get into the flow of his life force, that is called *prana* in Hinduism, *chi* in Taoism, and, perhaps, *God*, in the sense of Spinoza’s pantheistic concept of God’s immanence in Nature. Let the mystics sort that out.

Once the pranayama techniques cleanse the esoteric channels, called *nadis*, and the prana is free to flow, the yogi is poised to liberate himself from *karma*,— or the rutted road of circumscribed causation (Wiki). Thoreau has this insight in “Solitude”:—

By a conscious effort of the mind we can stand aloof from actions and their consequences; and all things, good and bad, go by us like a torrent. We are not wholly involved in Nature (PT 307).

Meandering further on his ontological ramble, Thoreau invokes *Indra*, another Hindu deity, and again takes a God-eye view, all in order to get around to saying that he isn’t lonely in the Universe.

Thoreau went to the woods deliberately, which is to say he made a conscious choice,—but another meaning of the word in the phrase *to live deliberately* is to say that he wanted to be in touch with his life in a more authentic way. Once he was alone in Nature, he could see another strata of consciousness, *a certain doubleness* (PT 308), which was his mere self beneath the layer of his social self. When he is leaving Walden Pond, he reflects on what he calls his “experiment” of living in the woods:—

The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men; and so with the paths which the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then must be the highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity! (PT 460).

And, then, with a pre-Jungian flourish, he notes that,—

...if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success

unexpected in common hours (PT 460).

This he accomplished,—and having spent two winters in Alaska’s Tongass National Forest, living off the land, as well as completing a solitary three-year meditation retreat in the Colorado Rockies, I can testify from personal experience that what he claims is so.

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A MEDITATION ON HIGHER FREEDOMS
AND
A LETTER TO THOREAU

Jampa Dorje



A MEDITATION ON HIGHER FREEDOMS

Between University Avenue and E.7th Street and between Samson and Walnut, in Ellensburg, there's some wild Nature;—not exactly Wilderness,—but a patch of land left alone and gone to seed. The trail is about seventy paces, along the edge of a

creek. A piece of cardboard in the bushes gives me a dry place to sit on the dewy grasses. I've brought food from Safeway's deli, and my plan is to step off the grid for an hour and find solitude.

My first urge is to start naming the plants and animals. Even put in the Latin,—*Pseudotsuga menziesii*, and so forth,—but to get in contact with the nature of mind within the nature of reality, naming things isn't going to get me there. I have to go beyond the tree and the forest to where there is no perceiver or perceived,—just for an inconceivably wondrous instant.

A few lines of Wordsworth's come to me from "The World Is Too Much With Us"—

The world is too much with us, late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—
Little we see in Nature that is ours...

And these meters lead me to appreciate the gap that exists between people living in society and what it is like to live alone in the woods. I'm making a concerted effort to step out of my "city life" mindset and be still.

Reecer Creek, emerging from under the pavement, makes a couple of dramatic bends through this part of town. By slightly turning my head, I can see a landscape without any man-made objects. There is a mix of birch saplings and older, gnarly cottonwoods on the north shore, a few young pines, maybe a sub-species of *Pinus Ponderosa*, to the south. One large standing tree, an evergreen, standing there before this area was a park, maybe standing in the front yard of a farmhouse, with the trail being here when the Psch-wan-wap-pams lived here. Anyway, the tree gives off an old vibe. (www.co.kittitas.wa.us/about/history.asp)

Sitting on my sheet of cardboard, I make a *tsok* offering—a Tibetan Tantric feast, where one is blessed in a sea of senses—sight, sound, touch, taste—all tastes as one taste—the crunch of coleslaw, the saltiness of ham, and the sweetness of berry pie—the rush of the water, the verdure of the foliage, the limpid blue sky. A male mallard duck flies through! My eyes follow its path, the hunter in me taking aim,—and the drone of construction sounds in the background becomes that of furiously flapping wings.

Deep memory follows a beaten path, and my feet lead the way;—I'm up for an adventure. I have on a couple of sweaters to shield me from the gusts of frigid air passing through the trees. The density of the undergrowth increases, and the bushes snag my clothes. And, then, I come upon a renegade shrine to a dead teenager, a memorial tree covered with friendship ornaments—a tree with a plaque that says,

“Wish You Were Here,” and I think, “Lucky, to be here now,”—but how cross the creek in the marsh? As I approach the upended root structure of one of the trees that bridge the creek, a tangle of wings, powerfully rising from the reeds, disturbs the air. I am prepared for another mallard—see lots of them along the Ganges, on campus,—but a Great Blue Herron, yikes. Escaping the entanglement of Nature, I cross the log and set foot on concrete, still trembling from the excitement of my encounters. Across from me is Vinman’s Bakery. . . and I’m beginning to sense freshly baked croissants. . . and, voila, I’ve returned to the predictability of the grid.

A LETTER TO THOREAU

5/7/2017

Dear Thoreau,

Salutations from my outpost in the Pacific Northwest. I can imagine you snug in your cabin at Walden Pond. I know you’ve only received one or two letters in your life that you considered worth the postage, and I’m not sure this one will reach up to the standard you’ve set, but I feel compelled to fill you in on a few recent developments of philosophical themes dear to your heart.

I’ve been taking classes at Central Washington University, which is located in the City (really a small town) of Ellensburg. My present studies focus on the philosophy of wilderness as taught by Dr. Michael Goerger. He is a spirited individual and rigorous in his analyses of our contemporary dilemma relating to the conflicting demands upon the tracts of wilderness bequeathed to us through congressional bills and the whims of presidents since your time. In many ways, your experiment of going to the woods to live and your many writings on your experiences have been an inspiration to generations of naturalists and outdoor enthusiasts of all ilk.

What seemed, in your time, like an infinite expanse of land with a cornucopia of resources is becoming a limited commodity. I use the word “commodity” because so many of our countrymen consider the wilderness only as a material resource, something without value unless it can be exploited for financial gain. Any ethical appraisal or concept of esthetic nourishment the wilderness might offer is considered to be byproduct reserved for a privileged few (HZ 63).

The debate on how to manage the federal parks we call our “national treasures” (an idea not even a twinkle in anyone’s eye when you were living in your cabin) has been

continually raging since Theodore Roosevelt, our 26th president, made conservation a top priority by establishing an array of national parks, forests, and monuments intended to preserve the nation's natural resources. The realization came to us that our scenic wonders should be protected, and steady progress has been made by environmentally conscious individuals to ensure that some of this heritage will be protected for future generations.

After you so poignantly revealed in *Walden*; or *Life in the Woods* how nature opposes human society, others discovered that they, too, could find solace and renewal from the deadening existence of social intercourse. Dr. Goerger has had us read selections from your works and the works of your dear friend, Ralph Waldo Emerson, as well as from the works of John Muir, Sigund Olson, Howard Zahniser, and Edward Abbey. While Emerson is a true philosopher, Muir is a true outdoorsman, an adventurer, who explores the western United States and writes profoundly about the destruction of the forests and the beauty of untrammelled wilderness. (Check out his *Atlantic Monthly* articles.) He railed against the havoc caused by logging and mining in order to get Congress to establish protections and create some kind of management of our resources instead of just wasting them. He's forthcoming about his connection to God in the setting of the great outdoors, and he focuses on beauty and the esthetic value of his nature experiences. In 1903, Theodore Roosevelt camped with John Muir in Yosemite Valley, in California, and Muir convinced Roosevelt to establish a national park, while the valley was still pristine (Wiki). Today, it is overrun by tourists, but it is still a sublime vista. Come west, and we'll go see it before they build another dam.

Olson is susceptible to romantic nostalgia. So much of the vast forest was wasted between Muir's time and his. He has notions of history and a lost way of life and what he calls "a gap" between human nature and civilization (SO 120). Like yours and Muir's, his is a complete sensory experience, perhaps mystical; however, this is not to say Olson is not reasonable. He worked effectively as a writer and as an administrator in the Wilderness Society and the National Wildlife Federation. He was instrumental in getting Jimmy Carter, our 39th president, to sign a law, in 1978, granting the Boundary Canoe Area Wilderness full wilderness status (Wiki). Knowing your libertarian leanings, I can sense you raising an eyebrow upon my mention of these official groups, but an environmental movement was born from the incense that rose from your hearth, and I think you'd like Sig; he'd be a great companion on one of your huckleberry party excursions.

Now, Zahniser is a bird of a different plumage. Not much of an outdoorsman, he's more of a missionary on a quest to secure wilderness for future generations. He believes "wilderness is something to which everyone is entitled, including those that

are not yet born” (HZ 63). The battle to retain some semblance of wilderness has become desperate since you stood in the clearing near your cabin and listened to the sound of frogs along the banks of Walden Pond. Although Zahniser is not one to rough it, he concurs with your view that “the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation” (PT 103), but he doesn’t go so far as to say that “unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind” (ibid.), because he feels that, in these times, we need recreation like camping and sports in the wilderness as well as mystical experiences. He, too, is against development, in the sense of exploiting the wilderness for commercial profit, and he accomplished a monumental task by writing and husbanding through Congress what is now called the Wilderness Act.

In an exchange of letters between C. Edward Graves and Zahniser, during the drafting of the document, Graves asked Zahniser to change the word “untrammelled” to “undisturbed” in the definition of wilderness. In its final form, Section 2, Part c, of the act reads:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain (Wiki).

Graves had his reasons for making the change and Zahniser had his for leaving the word be in the definition, but I think the word “fucked-up” would be closer to the point, although I’m sure my version would not have passed through congress. The Wilderness Act (with the word “untrammelled” left in place) was signed by Lyndon B. Johnson, our 36th president, on September 3, 1964. The value of having such a place, so defined, continues to be debated among Americans with different interests.

During the Wilderness Act’s drafting process, another letter arrived on Zahniser’s desk from F.S. Baker, a forester at U.C. Berkeley, dated January 2, 1946. Baker accuses Zahniser (and the Wilderness Society of which Zanhiser was a leader) of being elitist in their dedication to keeping pristine wildernesses in perpetuity (HZ 63), and, in a further letter, Baker delineates the types of people who, he feels, desire this kind of wilderness: the “solitary minded,” the “man-against-nature fellows,” and a breed “who go in search of the strange and unusual” (HZ 67). In other words, there are those who merely want to take walks, those who want recreation, including hunting and fishing, and those who want something more, like Edward Abbey, who wants the chance

to confront immediately and directly if it’s possible, the bare bones of existence, want to be able to look at and into a juniper tree, a piece of quartz, a

vulture, a spider, and see it as it is in itself, devoid of all humanly ascribed qualities, anti-Kantian, even the categories of scientific description. To meet God or Medusa face to face, even if it means risking everything human in myself (DS 6).

The bullets fly back and forth even between those who love nature. Here's an example:—on his first day in office, March 2, 2016, Ryan Zinke, upon being appointed Secretary of the Interior by The Donald, our 44th president, an insensitive bore if there ever was one, signed an order overturning a ban on the use of lead ammunition on wildlife refuges, a policy implemented on the last day of the Obama administration by former Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. This might have been a symbolic act on the part of the new administration because of the outright hatred between members of our current political parties. You wrote, in *Civil Disobedience*, that the government, “which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it” (PT 75). We've reached a point where our government is dysfunctional, and our culture is in hyper-transformation.

But back to the invisible (as well as quite literal) bullets flying in the wilderness. I read opinion articles in favor, opinion articles against, and balanced articles on the subject of the ban on lead bullets and the promotion of “green” (safe or, at least, less-damaging-to-the-environment-type) bullets. A lot of this is not going to make any sense to you, and I know you are off the grid and don't have a computer, but I am going to reference these articles with their links to what we call the *internet* for your future access.

As reported in *The Hill* by Timothy Cama, Ashe's policy banned the use of lead ammunition and lead in fishing tackle on all the federal wildlife refuges that allow hunting or fishing. The ban was meant to help prevent plants and animals from being poisoned by lead left on the ground or in the water, but hunting and fishing advocacy groups condemned the policy an outright ban on their activities.

The overall situation of green versus lead bullets, like all situations that you look at closely, is a complex one. On one side there are the Second Amendment fanatics and certain hunting groups and, on the other side, environmentalists and health scientists. At *Patriot Update*, Jim Yardley claims that: (1) those wanting to ban are “pandering to rabid environmentalists”; (2) the cost to shift ammunition to copper alloys could cost about \$20 million, a 300% increase from current costs, and will raise electronics and house wiring costs; (3) a loss of jobs in the lead industry; (4) green ammo doesn't kill any better. Perry Chiarmonte, a *Fox News* contributor insists that lead bullets have: (1) no effect on environment and are not a hazard; (2) that green bullets costs hunters

more; (3) quotes the National Rifle Association that it is “restrictive legislation”; (4) hunters would have to reset guns. And there is more of the same, except that there’s a “Catch 22” (says Michael Bastsch, in *The Daily Caller*, and his use of this expression implies there’s a dilemma because of conflicting conditions), because the U.S. Army doesn’t want armor-piercing bullets in the public domain, while the State of California has a ban in place against lead bullets at a time when green bullets are hard to obtain.

The environmentalists are of a completely different attitude, and they posit an alternative interpretation of the data. Lori Ann Burd, writing for *Oregon Live* claims that lead bullets are: (1) toxic to humans; (2) poison wildlife; (3) the largest source of man-placed lead in the environment—3,000 metric tons of lead fired randomly into the wilderness and 80,000 metric tons of lead fired in shooting ranges—all a health hazard; (4) argues against the rise in retail costs, claiming that costs will come down; (5) green bullets have as good or better ballistics. Laura Geggel, writing for *Live Science*, reports: (1) toxicity of spent ammo eaten by animals that forage; spent ammo eaten from dead prey; (2) lead gets in water supply; (3) bald eagle, our national bird, and condors, an endangered species, are threatened; (4) 10-20 million non-target animals, dead, along with 2 million ducks dead from ingesting pellets. An article posted at the Humane Society website explains that: (1) animals at every level of the food chain are affected; (2) no safe level of lead for humans.

I remembered that Edward Gibbon included lead poisoning as one of several causes for the fall of the Roman Empire, so I investigated this. Thomas Sumner reports in *Science Mag* that lead levels ingested from the drinking water running through the lead pipes of Roman houses didn’t rise to a level high enough to be alarmed about. The Romans also made use of lead in their cooking utensils and added lead to their food for flavor. Still, Roman skeletal remains don’t contain half of the lead isotopes that exist in our bones today. Edward Gibbon’s prose in the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is known for its ironic tone, and from what I’ve told you, you can see that mankind is never going to get the lead out and do something about cleaning up the mess it is making.

All factions arguing over lead bullets insist they want there to be some kind of wilderness. They are not arguing over exploiting the wilderness for private profit, only how far to go with lead bullets. The argument gets bogged down in all the usual philosophical considerations. What is “wilderness?” How do you experience “wilderness?” Is “wilderness” within us or without?” So, there are a lot of intangibles to be debated, and I doubt there is a definitive answer to be given, because the problem evolves with each new dialectic. We have the New Gods of Olympus in the White House and the Old Gods in the tree roots, and now the Old Gods are the New Gods, and the New Gods are the old. We all agree we want something called

Wilderness, some to play in, some to work in, some to commune with,—and, for others, just some to piss on and exploit.

I've sat and meditated on a falling leaf in the Rockies, felled giant cedars in the rainforest of Alaska, planted trees on the moonscape of Mt. Saint Helen after she erupted, camped and fished in the Sierras, and simply meandered along the bank of the Yakima River by Peoples' Pond. I like it all. For me, this lead-bullets-in-the-wilderness-thing is a matter of esthetics. Does it make sense to continually shoot bullets, three or four or more metric tons, year after year, forever, into the woods? Take the Climate Change controversy; let's say we aren't the cause of climate change with our industrial footprint; does that mean we aren't trashing the planet? We all know there won't be anything like the wilderness that was, until after the next ice age. I doubt being on my knees can be considered a stance, but I pray that we will keep some of what wilderness is left. It would be nice to keep some of it, don't you think?

In all humility,
Jampa

From the desk of Henry David Thoreau: 5/9/2017

My Dear Jampa,

The cabin you mention that I'm snug in is, of course, a pine coffin. I hear you through the noosphere and offer my sincere condolences on your plight. Many of the items you mention, home wiring, electronics, the internet thing, I am familiar with through overhearing ghosts chattering. "Isotopes" still baffle me, but this is all incidental to what seems perennial in our discussions.

I was reading Zahniser's article, "Threat to Wild Lands" (HZ 135), and I came across a reference to Antæus, and it triggered an association with what you were saying about the new gods becoming the old gods and the old, the new. Hercules fought Antæus as his eleventh labor. Antæus was born from Gaia, and his source of strength was the earth;—so, as long as he was touching the earth, he could not be defeated. Hercules lifted him off the ground,—creating a gap,—and squeezed the life out of him. The Olympians represent the Modern Age, our scientific prowess,—and, as we explore these new realms, we sever the connection to our Ancient Source. As my new friend Abbey keeps harping, "Now is the time for some serious monkey-wrenching!"

To be continued...

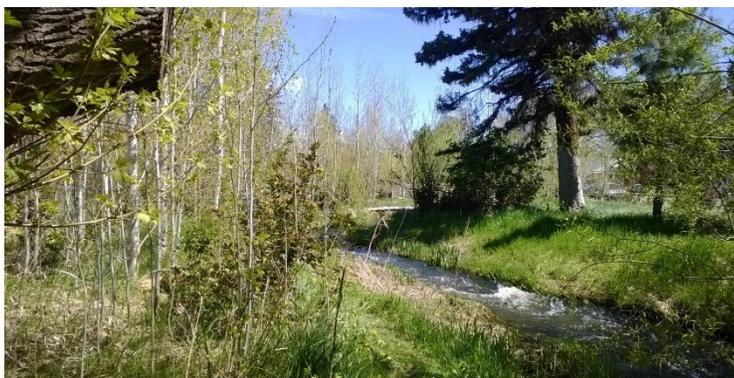
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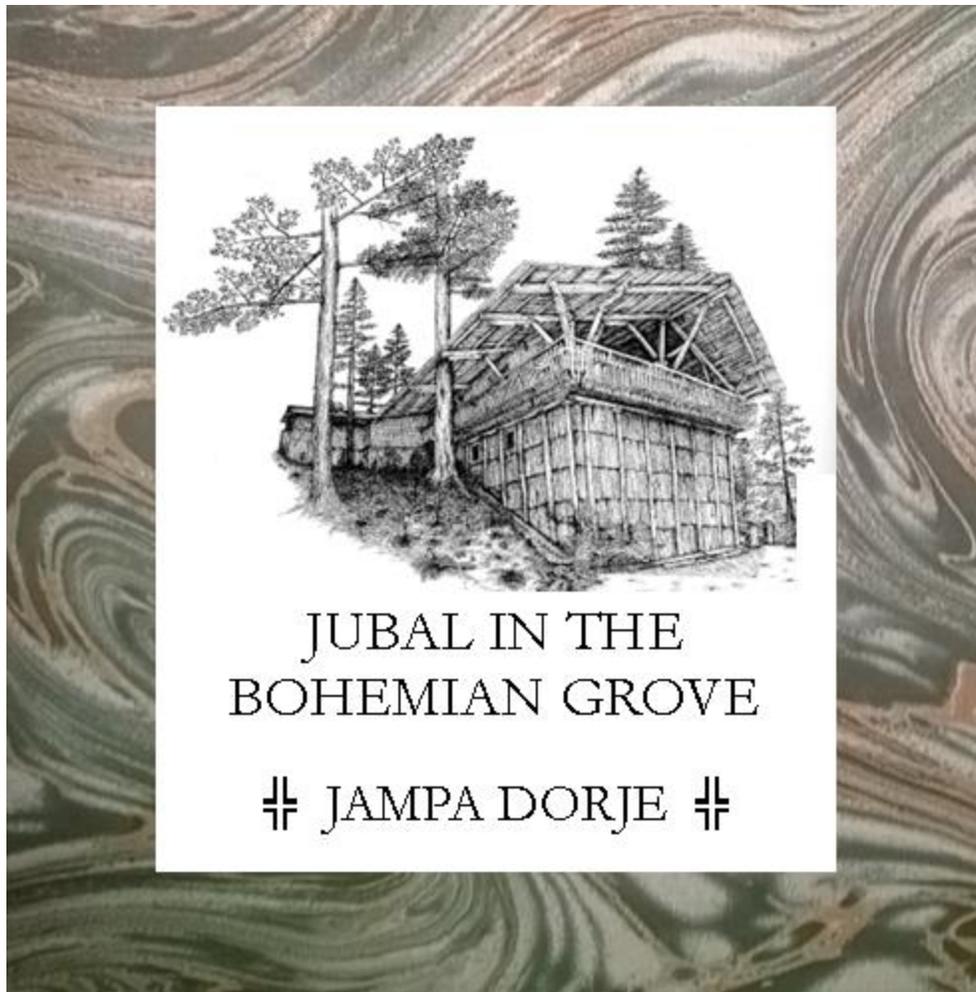
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Cover art: Line drawing of Bernard Maybeck's Bohemian Grove clubhouse
on the Russian River by Diana Woodbridge.

An earlier version of *Jubal in the Bohemian Grove*
can be found in *Garden Plots* as "Canto 93"
D Press, Sebastopol, 2004



Bohemian Grove is a 2,700-acre campground located at 20601 Bohemian Avenue, in Monte Rio, California, belonging to a private San Francisco-based men's art club known as the Bohemian Club. In mid-July each year, Bohemian Grove hosts a two-week, three-weekend encampment of some of the most prominent men in the world.

—*Wikipedia*

“Let my anguished soul fuse with the eternal regulations of nature,” prays Jubal. “The stars and moon reflect perfect order and fill the night with peace. Sure there are black holes and death stars galore. Phenomena are impersonal, ordained, universal. Could be twenty dimensions in this universe, and five versions of each dimension. And in each version, there is at least one realm where humans are in anguish.”

Jubal views the horizon and is blinded by the broad sun. He stands amazed, remembering how often he has been rejected in love and routed in business. He has a strong desire to rekindle his life's torch but is confounded by a sea of fire, a confusion of love and pain. He takes a swim in the river, and a filmy vapor arises. This is good for his eyes, better than the infinite power of the sun. The rainbow is a truer symbol of his achievements, now clear, now dissolving into mist.

In the Court of the Bohemian Grove, precedence is the one serious subject in the lives of the Bohos, and it is the source of much grief and distress. The command *Weaving Spiders Come Not Here* is posted at the entrance; regardless, the establishment is beset with intrigue. Not to be seen in The Bohemian Grove is to be condemned to obscurity. Not to be invited is to suffer ridicule and mimicry. It's a feudal scene.

Around the fire rings, any and all subjects are discussed. Jubal overhears a discussion among a clique of doctors that ranges from the newest techniques in nuclear medicine to whether a comet presages disease. The risks of biological attack are hotly debated. There is laughter about a purgative soup which has worked on Donald Rumsfeld ten times in as many hours.

Jubal listens to a discussion of the tax code, which reveals the present code to have been designed to ensure the most favor for the rich and the least return to the government and its poorer citizens. He needs backing if he is to make his film. He intends to keep his mind open and his ears perked. He had caught the pun about the poor being miserable because they are the base of the social pyramid—well, he'd see about that.

For now, he's reassessing what he needs in a producer. With Hung Chow he knows both too much and too little to know the whole man. Half the time Hung Chow

seems to be a pompous blunderer, a selfish man with little talent, and yet, he can rise to an occasion and be both confident and competent. Maybe he's just an actor, thinks Jubal. Hung Chow had gotten him the invite to the Iraqi's and now this job at the Bohemian Grove. This time, he would not mention Hung Chow's name.

While at work, Jubal's mind is elsewhere. He reflects, "Usually, when I'm confused, it's because my ideas are not based on personal experience, which, in turn, are not based on sense impressions and my reflection of those impressions. It's like I get disconnected from time and space and causality. I can't find any resemblance of my ideas to reality. Only by past experience can I guess what will come next, that the sun will rise tomorrow. I don't know this as a fact, but experience would suggest it might happen with some probability. But at best it's just a probability. Experience of the past is no proof of future events, for seemingly similar causes may in reality be different. What a fucking mess."

Jubal washes the wineglasses and gazes at the light filtering through the redwoods. "Just because I'm spiritual doesn't mean I not superstitious. Like I told Heinrich before he died, 'Carry some protection if you're going into the afterlife.' I believe in magic and mystery as well as logic. I know the attributes of the gods are extensions of my own consciousness, while I hope the prayers that I send into ten directions make my friend's path easier. I heard them in the second circle saying, 'Those yogis, what are they good for, sitting on their asses?' A butt is a good thing. Good for attracting the opposite sex, good for defecating, good for resting on a chair, but whether you're standing, walking, sitting or lying down, a butt is usually not thought of as a spiritual tool. Well," thought Jubal, "I've learned the yoga of inner heat. This is my spiritual exercise. Freeze my ass off to make Spring come a little sooner."

Jubal puts the glasses away. "What is reality? These dudes seem to understand. Look at how they live. They have every material comfort. There was a time when I lived in a world with no confusion. When people said something, I took it at face value. As a kid I learned to understand the world by imitating adults. But now that I'm an adult, I wonder what's going on. It seems the world is entirely different from the words used to describe it. I hear these people talking to one another, and they seem to agree that the names they use to describe what they are talking about are attached to these things in such a way that the words do not change. It also seems that it is assumed that the object a word names is the meaning of the object, or at least it is the meaning of the mental image corresponding to the object perceived. And, finally, it is assumed that the meaning of a state of affairs corresponds to the relationship of the words in a sentence used to describe that state of affairs. I feel like I have suffered collateral damage along the information highway. Everything seems to be in flux. I wish I could put it all behind me. I walk around. I hardly recognize people I know. Everything

seems erased from my memory. Given my distress about the situation in the world, I don't know whom to blame. The terrorists? The politicians? The human condition?"

Jubal has been a valet in the Bohemian Grove for a week. Although the sun is shining, Jubal shivers in the eternally cold shadows, which he knows are given off by the souls here. He is positive that his ancestors never lived under these trees. He keeps notes. "No point in placing blame on these heads. My dilemma is a problem of this moment and cannot be circumvented by a hypothetical rerouting of the sequence of events that led me to this dilemma. I came here thinking I might make a contact that would help me finance my movie, but it is as though I'm invisible, a non-entity, or, at most, a first name on a nametag. I understand this all too well."

Jubal can see that it will require more than an analysis of the multifarious uses of language and its relationship to his Self to discover the support of who he is and to get what he wants. He can see the seams in the furniture cracking open. There are stains on the enamel that bleach will not remove. The foundations of the buildings are disintegrating. There is a fine dust that seems to erode everything. And this is true for his Self, too. He finds no help or support. He is free to be what he will be, and he recognizes himself in the freedom of his choices, but like a headless chicken, he finds his choices are absurd. "I just feel funny," he says. "My consciousness alternates between pain and a feeling of being drugged. I shut my eyes. I fall asleep. I awake, and I experience an alarming widening of the world."

It's quite. The camp seems deserted. Some of the men have gone to a fly-casting demonstration. George Schultz and Colin Powell are shooting skeet. A couple of Secret Service guys are keeping their ears erect for the slightest noise in the underbrush.

Jubal looks at the program. This year the Lakeside Talks include: "The Landscape of American Politics," by David Brooks, a columnist for the New York Times; "College Athletics: Serious Business or Toy Department?" by Ted Leland, Stanford University's athletic director; "Flight," by Chuck Yeager; "The Long War of the 20th Century," by James Woolsey, a former CIA director; "The Coming Virtual Soldier," by Roger McCarthy, principal and engineer of Exponent Inc.; and "Bohemia," by author Herman Wouk. Jubal is interested in what Wouk has to say. It's past 4:30, the time when the talks begin, but his work is done and he is free until dinner, so he walks down the path leading to the artificial lake where the Cremation of Care ceremony was held. Men in robes are seated on logs, listening to the white-haired novelist talk about Robert Louis Stevenson, an founding member of the club.

Wouk is telling about how Stevenson had sat in the Bohemian Club in San Francisco

in his velvet coat, chain-smoking and reading. He was broke and unemployed and suffering from tuberculosis, when he met Fanny Osbourne. They fell head-over-heels and got married and settled near Mount Saint Helena, living rent-free in an abandoned mining shack, while he wrote *Treasure Island*.

Fanny Osbourne had married her demon lover. Stevenson could write undisturbed by any commotion. Fanny would check on him many times during the day. She made him dinners that went untouched. She might knock on the door to his room and no one answer. She knew he was there because she was sure she could hear him whispering and coughing and sometimes laughing. She found him magical, and he told her that the highest aesthetic was enchantment.

The light glistened on the lake. Jubal wished he had a demon lover, and as he turned back from the lake to look at the speaker, he noticed one of the waitresses. She was bent over, retrieving some wineglasses. "Now, there is backside that would melt some snow," he thought, and he began to feel a little lightheaded. "A lewd thought," he thought. "The magic of romance is in the intention. To ensnare this maid, I'll need to be polite, be a friend, be a poet. I'll need cunning, but I'll need to keep decorum."

He asked her name, and she said, "It's Fanny."

He smiled at the thought that he knew her name right when he saw her.

"All the women on my mother's side, as far back as the 18th century, are named Fanny." She paused. "You have Indian features."

"I'm Inuit, and my father's name like his father's was Atuk; but my mother took to Christianity and gave me a name from the Bible."

"Where's your tribe located?"

"The Inuit are mostly in northern Canada, but my family lives in Nova Scotia."

"What are you doing here?" asked Fanny.

"I've been going to school in Berkeley and doing odd jobs. How about you?"

"Born and raised in Monte Rio. I'm a dryad."

"What's a dryad?"

"A tree spirit."

"I see." Jubal looked closely for fins or horns. She had wonderfully innocent eyes and a knowing smile.

"I can't talk now. I'm supposed to be in the kitchen doing prep. I'll be in the library tonight, after work."

"Ok, later," he said.

She smiled, and the smile lingered in his mind after she had left.

"Jubal and Fanny." He said this over a few times after she left. "Jubal and Fanny. Jubal and Fanny." He had noticed she was quite bronze. A full-born beauty, a lady bright.

JAMPA DORJE'S WILD EDIBLE WORDS



An Archival Idyll
by Bouvard Pécuchet

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JAMPA DORJE'S

WILD EDIBLE WORDS
AN ARCHIVAL IDYLL
BY BOUVARD PÉCUCHET

KAPALA PRESS 2017 ELLENSBURG

For Matt



Author's preface

The Library is unlimited but periodic. If an eternal traveler would journey in any direction, he would find after untold centuries the same volumes are repeated in the same disorder—which, repeated, becomes order: the Order. My solitude is cheered by that elegant hope.

—JORGE LUIS BORGES, "The Library of Babel"

Let me give the context for presenting grocery lists as part of the Richard Denner archive. As a monk, Jampa Dorje, aka Richard Denner, completed a traditional Tibetan Buddhist retreat in a cabin, called Luminous Peak, near Pagosa Springs, Colorado, under the guidance of a Nyingma school lama. A practitioner is not able to go out into the world for supplies. Fuel, water, and food are delivered. Long retreat is done in a concerted effort to attain enlightenment. This requires the psychological support and physical help of persons outside of the retreat who

understand the point of being in long retreat.

Jampa's practice required him to follow the structure of four or five two-hour sessions of meditation each day for three years and to work his housekeeping, hygiene, and sleep into the interim moments. Meditation in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition (Vajrayana) is ritualistic and incorporates deep visualization along with rigorous mantra chanting and specific ceremonial actions. Between the meditation sessions, other ritual activities



are required—formal feasts (*tsoks*) for female and male tutelary deities, incorporating the offering of *tormas* (figures made of barley flour and butter), *sang* rituals (smoke offerings, also with prepared substances), and a charnel ground practice, called *chöd*, are performed.

One begins with the *ngöndro*, a preliminary practice composed of five sub-sets of practice: it begins with the taking of refuge (a recited prayer), while performing a full-length body prostration and visualizing the Guru Rinpoche Lineage Tree Mandala in full-detail, 100,000 times; followed by the practice of raising of compassion, *bodhicitta*, 100,000 times; followed by 100,000 recitations of the Vajrasattva purification mantra; followed by 100,000 mandala offerings; and concluding with one million recitations of the heart mantra of Guru Rinpoche. Once the *ngöndro* is completed, the main practices of the cycle begin. Depending on one's lineage, these can vary. Jampa completed the *Dzinpa Rangdröl* (self-liberation from clinging), a *mind-ter* (mind treasure) of Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje (1800-1866).



In the late fall, Jampa would prepare to be alone for six months. During the less inclement months, he would take teachings from his guru, Tulku Sang-ngag, at the temple at Tara Mandala Retreat Center, and then return to Luminous Peak, where he would ritually seal the boundaries, again, for one-hundred days.

Once a week, Jampa would take a plastic, zippered bag to a depository at the road-head, just inside his boundary, roughly 300 yards from his cabin. His grocery list and his credit card would be in the bag. This task was done on Wednesday, before noon; and, on Thursday, he would pick up his groceries. For much of his retreat, Jampa's gatekeeper was his friend, a nun, named Ani Kunsang. A letter from an administrative figure appears in the following sequence of communications; Cady assisted Jampa in a business matter with his bank. Although the point of being in retreat is to get away from the world, maintaining a yogic lifestyle in the United States, which is not supportive of dropping- off-the-grid, requires occasional maintenance. Samsara is samsara, whether you spend time in retreat or not. As

Guru Rinpoche says, “Samsara and nirvana are just concepts of the mind.” Luckily, Jampa had these *dakinis* looking after him.



Any archive can be expanded. What should be included? Skewed now with grocery lists—the 156 lists covering three years—along with other letters and detritus, make it seem like Jampa did nothing but eat and write poems during his entire retreat. Many masters of meditation spent the greater part of their lives in retreat,



living in forests and caves without possessions, surviving on *tsampa* (roasted barley flour mixed with yak butter) and the occasional turnip. So, Jampa had it relatively easy; and, yes, he did make an ice cream pie for his main *yidam*, Machig, when she was in her wrathful aspect...whatever she wanted!...and he did include a poem each week with his list, hoping Ani Kunsang would read it to the sangha in the temple; but he was unaware that she was also reading these poems at City Market, and that the cashiers asked for Jampa’s “wild edible words” each week when she passed through the check-out line.

Early into his retreat, Jampa was visited by Lama Tsultrim, the founder of Tara Mandala, who admonished him about trying to survive on Top Ramen and chocolate cake. I conclude this book with an excerpt from Jampa’s journal in response to that visit.

Before he entered retreat, Jampa copied the marque of each aisle at City Market, so that he could organize his list in such a fashion that the person shopping could save time finding the items he wanted. Anything to assist wandering sentient beings.



CITY MARKET

- produce
2 avocados, 1 tomato, 1 bag baby carrots
1 grapefruit, 1 banana, 1 kiwi, 1 tangerine

- bakery
1 loaf Rudi's raisin bread

- deli
1 container fried chicken

- aisle 1
1 container raisins (Newman's Own)

- aisle 3
1 jar bouillon cubes (B chicken)

- aisle 7
1 box Irish Breakfast tea (Twillings)
1 box Pancake & Waffle Mix ("just add water")

- aisle 10
1 pkg. Oreo cookies

- dairy
1 pint $\frac{1}{2}$ & $\frac{1}{2}$
4 Brown Cow (6oz.) yogurts

- aisle 13
1 pkg. (100 count) napkins

- aisle 17 (school supplies)
1 pkg. glue sticks

- photo counter
pick up 1 pkg. photos

CHECK OFF LIST

- groceries glue
- napkins photo

- mail letter
- incoming mail
- calendar
- 2 wash waters
- 2 drink waters

not yet

Tuesday 4 Jan. 2011

Dear Ani Kunzang,

I inclose your note to me from last week because it baffled me. I not sure you were writing to me, as I had made no mention in my note to you about any "magazines," especially not any kind in a "non-ani section of the literary world." Also, I do not know anything about "Lady Gaga CD's in the file marked Kali Yuga." Should I? It's good to hear that Jack Kornfield was here. I had thought all retreats had been cancelled. I'm glad you enjoyed it. Did many attend?

This week, while the weather holds, I want you to bring me 4 jugs of water (2 drink & 2 wash). If this is too much work for the Thursday delivery, do it later in the week and let me know when that might be. Don't fill the jugs to the top.

Happy New Year, 2011! Would you ask Ani Ferna if she has any Rigpa Calendars from last year and if I could have one cheap? On the last pages, there is usually next year's months & days on a simple spread, which is all I need to keep track. If not, I will buy a new 2011 Rigpa Calendar, when she gets them.

Much love, Jampa

There's no way to know whether the Universe is upside down or not but Earth is definitely at a tilt and Samsara, completely twisted.

Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2011

Dear Ani Kuzang,

Everything is ok in Luminous Peak.
Hope you are ok, too.

This week, besides groceries, I need a refill on the propane tank and a bit of information. If you are rushed for time, let the propane go until next week. I'm using my back-up tank. The info I need concerns the month of February. Is this year a leap year? & when is Losat? That does it. May your Tipping Karma produce perfect fruit. Love, Jampa

CHECK OFF LIST

- groceries
- propane
- info on February
- incoming mail
- 2 wash waters
- film

none

Dear Jampa,
This is not a leap year. - Feb. 28th (Monday) is the last day of the month. March 1 is Tuesday. Losar is Saturday, March 5th.

♥ Ani Kuzang

Then, one fine day you come face to face with your original face & no matter what direction you face this face stays in place.

Tuesday, Jan 11, 2011

Dear Ani Kunsang,
Happy 1.11.11, oh happy one!

All's well in Luminous Peak. Hope the same goes for you. Groceries and a few items to deliver are on the agenda. Two letters to mail, a note to Cady, and a package to Lizzy. Careful with the package, as it contains glass.

Thank you, Ani, you are so kind.
Love & blessings,

Jampa

You are conscious, but are you conscious of being conscious? You see, but do you see that what you see

are only appearances? These words are paintings on the air. The sense is not in the sentence.

Tuesday, Jan. 25, 2011

Dear Ani Kutsang,

Everything super in Luminous Peak.

This week:

- groceries
- 2 jugs drinking water
- 2 jugs washing water
- note to Cady
- incoming mail
- thank everyone for the nice card & delicious pasteries

SECOND CHANCES

oops! I'll copy this + hang on staff room announcements board

You may ask, "Don't I get another chance?" OK

"Of course — as many as you need.

Every time you stub your toe

every time you sneeze

every cut & bruise

can be construed as a kiss & hug

an opportunity, another chance
to attain enlightenment.

It may seem the Universe is indifferent
just a heartless food chain or chain gang
and it's easy to despair.

The poet said, "No one gets out of here alive,
but the compassion
of the Primordial Ground guarantees
YOU DO GET OUT."

my

Love, Jampa

Tuesday
1/11

12:10 pm

Dear Jampa, **UPDATE**

~~Hello. Robin said your bank called and needs to redo your accounts. They said no one else can do this but you and it needs to be done ASAP. ~~Or is there~~~~

Cady is TRYING TO DO THIS. I GAVE HER YOUR PIN# Last Night at TSOG.



Jampa
authori.

else

ANI
Emp

What do you think? And what can I do to help facilitate this? Please let me know.

♡ Ani Kunzang



Dear Sweet wonderful Janper,

I was able to complete the online transfer - one thing though - the system (see enclosed) asked for a new password, so your new password is: dakini108 - hope that's OK, it can always be changed again.

In regards to rent, the rate for the cabin is \$700/mo. (not \$800) so you can adjust the calculations accordingly.

Ani Kurzay read a poem of yours last night at 1009 and I was really moved by how much I miss and love and admire you. Thanks again for all your support. We'll keep doing our best out here.

Big hugs. love
Cody

Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2011

Dear Ani Kunsang,

All's well in Luminous Peak. Thank you for offering to help with my bank business last week. Cady handled the problem, I think. There is another note to her, as a follow up to Robin's message, as well as some other Tara Mandala business.

Among the things I asked for this week, there is a roll of "doubled-backed" tape that I want to mount some photos. If it's not with school supplies, maybe with the photo albums or aisle 15. However, if you don't find this item, don't go to extra trouble. Just get regular clear, plastic tape, and I'll loop it.

And so the days spin by. Hope you are enjoying the mild weather.

Peace be,

Jampa

Hard to get beyond
the City of Cyclic Existence
on the streetcar named Desire
or on the streetcar named Ignorance
or on the streetcar named Anger

There is a train — Habitual Tendencies —
expensive food on that one

And there's a ship of fools
actually a whole fleet —
a fleet of fools bound
for the Isle of Deception

CITY MARKET

- produce
 - 1 grapefruit, 1 banana, 1 tangerine, 1 red apple
 - ✓ bunch celery, 1 avocado, 1 tomato, 1 onion
- bakery
 - 4 bagels (assorted) ^{from cabinet} or 1 package plain (or ses. m. see)
 - ✓ berry pie
- aisle 3
 - 1 pkg. Bear Creek (8 cup) Soup Mix
 - cheddar-Broccoli was good; what other one might I try?
- aisle 6 (ethnic)
 - 1 jar salsa (medium)
 - 1 pkg. flour tortillas
 - 1 box Barilla Rotini pasta
- aisle 7
 - 1 box Kroger Pancake & Waffle Mix
- dairy
 - 1 doz. "cage free" eggs
 - 4 (6oz.) Brown Cow Yogurts
 - ✓ small container cream cheese
- meat (hot table in front)
 - 1 roasted chicken
- aisle 18
 - 1 bottle Crest Mouthwash (1 liter, wintergreen)

Wow! Fuji
 Braeburn Cameo
 Janna Gold
 Honeycrisp
 Gribant Red? Delicious
 Granny Smith
 Gala Rainier
 or Roma? (R)

Creamy Potato Veg. Vegetable Soup
 'Dinn Good' GHI? Chicken Noodle
 Cheddar Potato Tortillas

Ani Kunzang



Dream of Lama Tsultrim stepping out of a pine tree wearing caribou antlers

Later in the morning, there she is coming along the stepping stones, past pine tree wearing her black, widebrimmed hat, carrying a red linen shopping bag full of shaman treats

Gama-Sennin is a benign sage (sennin are immortals living in the mountains some are hermits, or visit hermits, and appear to mortals in dreams) Gama has a lot in common with Lama magical knowledge about medicinal foods



Gama is always accompanied by a three-legged toad Soga Shōhaku painted Gama Sennin with his toad upon his head a shapeshifter, he could take toad form, also change his skin and become young again www.artelina.com/articles/japanese_gods_and_goddesses.asp

Lama T. does not wear a toad on her head she does seem ageless, but to the point, she was concerned about Jampa's diet — doesn't like my starchy, sugarloaded menu gifted me with hemp protein fiber drink silken tofu and "perfect food" says I haven't been eating enough fresh vegetables I'm not sure I want to know what's in this super green formula

For many days it was that deep snow
which set the boundaries of my retreat;
I wasn't even able to boil any tea. I drank
melted snow mixed with a little tsampa,
and rested evenly in meditation.

- Shabkar MEDITATION ON MT. MALHEN



I went to sleep in order not to feel hungry and sad
I dreamed of my friends, the Ideal Library,
baby elephants & food
hungry in my dream

*
awake, I'm not hungry any more
I have the chance to steal some food.

MENU

{ choice rhododendron vinaigrette
melted mountains
live birds en masse
the whole cheese

- Philip Whalen MY SONGS INDUCE PROPHETIC DREAMS

Thinking I may have appeared contentious to Lama T, when
she visited, I sent her a short note and a ditty.

Dear Lama Tsultrim,

I did not mean to seem ungrateful
for your kindness in bringing me special foods.
It is hard to teach an old yogi new tricks, but
a yogi must be flexible; so, I bend, or rather
bow, to your wishes, realizing you only have my
best interests at heart. In a lighthearted vein:

LAMA TSULTRIM IS MY TREASURE
I TRUST HER IN WORDS + DEEDS
OF HER WISDOM I GET FULL MEASURE
SHE LOOKS AFTER ALL MY NEEDS

FOOD

Give up your desire
for fancy teas = once
you have on your robes
that's all you need
- shabbat's advice



①

The three-year retreat
I've been here three weeks
and eaten all the snacks =
Mila shakes his head in dismay



⊕

A sudden thaw =
food going to rot =
an opportunity to feast



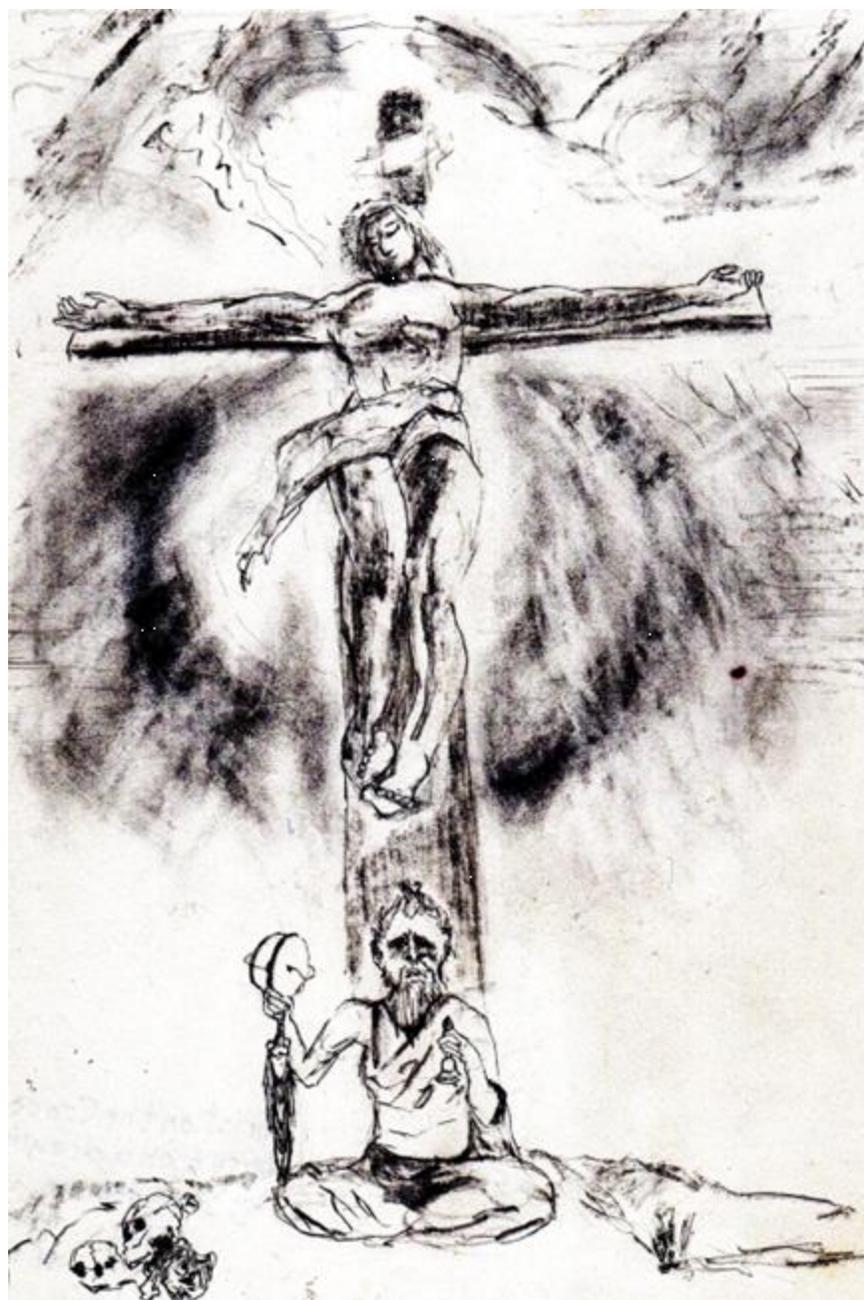
⊕

Tsoknyj said,
"The advertizements
are so good we could
eat plastic."

⊕

"Miso, I don't get it;
it's just like bouillon."
"Oh, no, my dear,
much more mysterious."





DANCING IN THE MOMENT

Jampa Dorje

Drawings by the author

Special thanks to Dr. Cynthia Coe
for her keen insights into my original paper
and to Dr. Michael Fletcher
for suggesting I take another look at
Søren Kierkegaard's
Concluding Unscientific Postscript.



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 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 a baby strapped in a car seat. 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 gripped me tightly. The air bag punched me. The impact sent my vehicle into a spin, and I writhed in a gyre of centrifugal force. In an existential cleft of my being, my left eye saw an abysmal blackness and my right eye saw an eerie light. I looked up and saw the flat top of Cerro Pedernal, a mesa I knew from the paintings of Georgia O'Keefe. This is a physical and spiritual sentinel 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 police officer 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, smiling either a greeting or a farewell. There was ethereal music coming from the speaker system. Beneath the photo was a gray-haired lady who 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 guessed from my feelings that I was out of my body and having an experience on a subtle level arising from poor judgment on the causal level. I checked myself for physical wounds and bruises; other than some aches, I was in one piece. The psychic dimension was another matter. I recognized a motif with my near dismemberment and descent connecting this accident at the base of Pedernal to the myths of Iannah and Dionysus, archetypes that, in turn, connected to Tröma Nagmo, the tutelary deity of my recent meditations, a wrathful, devouring wisdom dakini of primordial, transpersonal experience—and I concluded that it was bad spot on the highway to make an unnecessary U-turn. Suddenly, I was very appreciative of my life. Here I am, I thought, existing, in all this impermanence.

As Thoreau said, "There is elevation in every hour as no part of the earth is so low that the heavens cannot be seen from, and we have only to stand on the summit of our hour to command an uninterrupted view." I lay on my back, looking at the ceiling, and wept.

The next day, my friend Beth picked me up at the inn and drove me back to Tara Mandala. After a warm bath with Epson salts and many consoling words, I returned to Luminous Peak, the cabin where I had completed my traditional Tibetan Buddhist three-year meditation retreat. I had completed the training and had been recognized as a *drupla* (a lama who has accomplished the dharma in a mountain retreat). I had another level of training to complete, and that would happen at Tulku Sang-ngag's retreat land, called The Seat of Longchenpa, near Glorieta, New Mexico. Before returning to my cabin, I decided to read Western existential philosophy, to regain some balance, as I was throwing myself into the world in a rather chaotic way. I found well-worn copies of Søren Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* and *the Sickness unto Death*, Friedrich Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* and *The Genealogy of Morals*, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Underground Man*, and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* in the Tara Mandala staff's library.

When I take a class in Existentialism at Central Washington University, in Ellensburg,

Washington, these classics are among the texts assigned by Dr. Cynthia Coe, and one, Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, becomes the main focus of my final paper, "Is a Buddha a Knight of Faith?" The agenda which I set myself, to analyze western philosophical ideas and relate them to the Buddhist concepts I've explored in tantric practice, remains an active endeavor. My earlier work, *Ergo: A Treatise on Aesthetic Morality* (2016), contains a chapter that reveals similarities in ontological ideas expressed by the 19th c. German Idealist F.W. J. Schelling and the 14th c. Tibetan yogi-scholar Longchen Rabjam; there's also a chapter on gender identity, as described by a monk during his travels, and one on meditation as an art form that utilizes the concept of playfulness. The following essay furthers my research.

Is a Buddha a Knight of Faith?

In this essay I will compare Gautama Buddha's path with that of Søren Kierkegaard's knight of faith's path to determine what they have in common and how they differ. There are few exact alignments to these paths—in fact, they seem to be going in opposite directions—but I will consider three things they have in common: first, the focus on the importance of a self and the mind's ability to subjectively analyze itself; second, the focus on the nature of existence as being off-kilter (or in distress) and electing this condition to be a starting point for their analysis; third, a de-emphasis on reason and their use of faith in pursuing their aims. Is a buddha a knight of faith? This question is a *koan*. As is typical of these pithy and paradoxical questions, there is no definitive answer. I hope the following essay provides a satisfactory answer.

In *Fear and Trembling*, published in 1843, Kierkegaard (writing as Johannes de Silentio, a pseudonym), focuses on the gap between God and humans. In Biblical terms, after Adam and Eve's expulsion from the garden, awareness of our mortal condition bedevils us with distress. Kierkegaard wants to bridge the gap, and he believes the only way to do this is to have unwavering faith in the existence of God. Those who can follow this path are called knights of faith. However, Kierkegaard believes that it is highly unlikely that anyone is capable of the kind of faith that is required. He asks:

But really is everyone in my generation capable of making the movements of faith, I wonder? Unless I am very much mistaken, this generation is rather inclined to be proud of making what they do not even believe I am capable of making, viz. incomplete movements (FT 45).

If I am to discover something about myself and my place in the universe that is beyond my rational ability to understand, I will need to know what a religious path to God entails; to do this, I must look to our means of reaching God; and, if the means is to be faith, rather than

reason, I need to look at my capacity for faith. For this, I look at a “self” taking a role in the process.

It is an elusive task, trying to define the self and what it means for a self to exist. I ask myself, “What is the self in me?” I think of it as my essence, a part of me that can reflect on itself as a part of myself, as though it were an object—the conscious part of me that is the seat of my ability to think and feel—for example, me, here, in the present, writing these words or you, there, in another present-to-you place and time, reading these words. I may even have a soul, some immaterial part that is eternal, but the conscious part of me that is distinct from other persons and things, in this lifetime, is myself. However, when I look for this self in me, I have difficulty locating it. It is not my name, my place of residence, my job, the “author” of the books I have written, or the innumerable numbers (Social Security, driver’s license, etc.) that designate my identity. My self, in-itself, is not identifiable;—it has no color, no shape, no taste. And yet it suffers.

In *The Sickness unto Death* (1849), Kierkegaard (or Anti-Climacus, in this book) explains the self as a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of necessity and possibility (SD, p. 163). Kierkegaard gives elaborate descriptions of an individual’s disorientation while living in a world of impossible-to-resolve contradictions, in a world without God but with God touted.

Rather than the self being a person, Kierkegaard, in an elaborately dialectical way, reveals the self to be the process of the self’s concern with itself as an existing person:

A relation which relates itself to its own self, or it is that in the relation [which accounts for it] that the relation relates itself to its own self; the self is not the relation [but consists in the fact] that the relation relates itself to its own self (SD, p. 146).

The self is distinct from the external trappings of an individual. The delineation of self is in relation to self-consciousness, so despair “must be viewed under the category of consciousness: the question whether despair is conscious or not, determines the qualitative difference between despair and despair” (SD, p. 162). As this plays out, I am in despair, even if I don’t know that I am in despair.

A comparable sense of despair, involving an extensive meditation on the nature of self in relationship to a creator god, occurred in the fifth century before the Christian Era by a young Hindu prince, named Shakyamuni, who left the comforts of his home and family and ventured into a forest to practice austerities and ponder the universe. After years of rigorous practice, he finally attained a state of ultimate understanding, called enlightenment. After attaining enlightenment, Shakyamuni, became known as Gautama Buddha and was considered a perfect person. His teachings (*dharma*), however, go against some important teachings in Hindu philosophy. Two main tenets of Hinduism are the belief in a self (*atman*) and the belief in a

creator god, or unifying principle (*Brahman*), and the point of release from the cyclic system of causation (*karma*) is the union of the individual self with Brahman (Wiki: Brahman). Gautama Buddha denied the validity of either of these entities.

A buddha has other concerns. A buddha cares about the suffering of sentient beings and how to relieve their suffering. A buddha will admit that there is a mere self, or person, that says, “I am tired” or “I am hungry” or “I am afraid”—a self that refers to its condition as a human body—that this self is real enough; however, the created, social self—the one that T.S. Eliot referred to in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” as “the face I prepare for the faces that I meet,” (Swallow, p. 345)—this self, for a buddha, is a fiction, fun to indulge, perhaps, but a fiction, all the same.

Kierkegaard posits an individual self who is free to reach out to the infinite, just as one on the way to becoming a buddha initially acknowledges a self. There are descriptions of two possible knights of faith in *Fear and Trembling*. In the initial description, Kierkegaard believes (although he is dubious of this possibility) that a human majority can be knights of faith and that our access to God is within reach. He thinks of this knight of faith as follows:

With infinite resignation he has drained the cup of life’s profound sadness, he knows the bliss of the infinite, he senses the pain of renouncing everything, the dearest things he possesses in the world, and yet finiteness tastes to him just as good as to one who never knew anything higher, for his continuance in the finite did not bear a trace of the cowed and fearful spirit produced by the process of training; and yet he has this sense of security in enjoying it, as though the finite life were the surest thing of all. And yet, and yet the whole earthly form he exhibits is a new creation by virtue of the absurd. He resigned everything infinitely, and then grasped everything again by virtue of the absurd (FT, p. 51).

This self I can relate to. Here is someone who has lived a full life and who has experienced limits, both physical and mental, and is resigned to the human condition, more, is nurtured by the human condition of living with intellectual contradictions and feelings of abandonment, a knight of resignation—someone who has accomplished much but is yet to live a life of complete faith. This knight of resignation is nearing the shore of living fully the experience of absolute faith in God, or, in the case of one attempting to reach Buddhahood, the emptiness of self. Kierkegaard says:

Most people live dejectedly in worldly sorrow and joy; they are the ones who sit along the wall and do not join in the dance. The knights of infinity are dancers and possess elevation. They make the movements upward and fall down again; and this too is no mean pastime, nor ungraceful to behold. But whenever they fall down, they are not able

at once to assume the posture, they vacillate an instant, and this vacillation shows that after all they are strangers in the world (FT, pp. 51-52).

[This is how I felt after coming out of long retreat. My plan collapsed. I found myself stranded on the roadside, this knight's feelings and thoughts and faith discombobulated. I was brought face-to-face with myself, and I had to figure out my next move. If the knight of resignation is to evolve into the knight of faith and enter the religious stage of training, ze must, as the Tibetans say, "Leap into the lion's mouth!"]

But is a buddha a knight of faith? Buddhas are also dancers in intimate contact with their lives. Buddhas reveal that all sentient beings already have enlightenment, but their buddha-mind is obscured by false notions. A finite knight of faith is an individual, and this is a positive condition in the movement toward the infinite. For a knight of faith, the self's separation from God is to be in despair. For a buddha, no attachment to a self is freedom and a feeling of well-being. On one side is angst, and on the other, bliss. For a buddha, the movement is towards the formula: "no self, no problem." And this, also, is a positive condition. The self's relationship to itself is the central unifying factor between Kierkegaard's paradigm and that of a buddha's.

Both believe in our ability to interpret our experience in such a way that we can self-liberate ourselves from the absurdity of our situation. Kierkegaard says:

It is supposed to be the most difficult task for a dancer to leap into a definite posture in such a way that there is not a second when he is grasping after the posture, but by the leap itself he stands fixed in that posture. Perhaps no dancer can do it—that is what this knight does (FT, p. 51).

If it can be done, both a knight of faith and a buddha make their lives an artwork by utilizing their awareness of being in the present moment;—and both believe that it takes more than logical reasoning to resolve having one foot in the finite world and one in the infinite. This failure of reason to connect word to meaning is expressed in Emily Dickinson's reflection:

I felt a Cleaving in my Mind –
As if my brain had split –
I tried to match it – Seam by Seam –
But could not make it fit (Dickinson, p. 115).

I like to read "seam" as "seem" to reveal a cross-stitch of semantical observation about the difficulty of reason to solve a paradox. Asked why is there something rather than nothing, a buddha might answer with another question, "Why is there a something that is an illusion?"

After the Buddha's experience under a bodhi tree (his own tree of knowledge), he was

not sure of his ability to teach on the nature of mind (as being without a self) to humans. He was invited by the god Indra to teach the pantheon of Hindu deities, and for what it was worth, he did. His mission of teaching sentient beings, on all levels, throughout his many lives, led him to world travel in the hell realms, the realm of the hungry ghosts, the animal realm—there are buddhas in all realms—teaching from the point of view of their experiences and from their unique perspectives.

For Kierkegaard, faith is the key to living in the absurdity of this world, even though it's by means of the purifying cauldron of distress that the self comes to understand itself. He continues:

Faith, therefore, is not an aesthetic emotion but something far higher, precisely because it has resignation as its presupposition; it is not an immediate instinct of the heart, but is the paradox of life and existence (FT, p. 58).

Faith is an act by a free agent to choose a counter-intuitive solution to clarify dualistic confusion. A knight of faith and a buddha live fully the absurdity of this paradox, and each has an appropriate method to resolve the absurdity.

The story of Abraham's test of faith, after God ordered him to sacrifice Isaac, is Kierkegaard's example of the movements of a true knight of faith. Abraham had no second thoughts. Abraham pressed on regardless of the contradictoriness of God's commandment *Thou shalt not kill* and His demand that Abraham sacrifice the son given to him and Sarah in their old age (Genesis, 22). This is the type of knight of faith who Kierkegaard believed had sublimely absolute faith (not even Noah's or Job's faith coming close), so Abraham is on a very short list of candidates for this kind of movement in the dance of the cosmos. Kierkegaard describes other types of individuals who have made great sacrifices, such as the tragic hero, Agamemnon, who sacrificed his daughter, Iphigenia, for the well-being of the Greeks, and Queen Elizabeth, who signed Lord Essex's execution warrant—although, if I may be allowed the pun, she had an ax to grind with her former lover—and did this for the betterment of the State (FT, p. 89).

This is not the level of spiritual attainment Kierkegaard seeks. He believes:

Either there is an absolute duty toward God, and if so it is the paradox here described, that the individual as the individual is higher than the universal and as the individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute, or else faith never existed, because it always existed, or, to put it differently, Abraham is lost, or one must explain the passage in the fourteenth chapter of Luke... (FT, p. 91).

Kierkegaard is referring to the words spoken by Jesus: "If any man come to me, and hate not his

father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (*Luke 14:26*). These words exemplify the severe limits imposed on anyone who would choose to be a knight of faith. A terrifying maxim—and radical faith is required to meet the challenge.

Defining *faith*, there are essentially two types: first, the term faith refers to a belief system, represented by the general body of teachings that have been codified and ritualize for a community of believers; second, there is the use of the term faith as an individual’s understanding and use of the power of will to believe in a reality beyond the capacity of reason to determine. In Catholic dogma there are evolving stages of faith, such as *conjunctive faith*, where the individual realizes the limits of reason and accepts the paradoxes and, more evolved, *universalizing faith*, where the individual lives without doubts and has great care for others (Wiki: Faith). Closer to our concern is the Protestant theory (Fideism), propounded by Auguste Sabatier (1839-1901) and other theologians, which claims Christian doctrine to be the “symbolization of religious feeling” (MacGregor, p. 548) and rejects logical reasoning as a means of attaining knowledge of God (*Ibid.*, p. 250). The one seeking to become a buddha and the knight of faith are thrown into a tumultuous epistemological dilemma. How can I know life’s purpose on my own? How can I know if God exists? Will faith be enough? What else is there to go on?

On the way to Buddhahood, the need for faith, as well as focus, is of paramount importance to maintain meditative equilibrium. There are outside distractions, as well as distractions of cognitive origin, and, until one is familiar with the nature of consciousness (with the incessant demands for unchallenged supremacy that the role of a self demands), one is stymied. Through continual practice, self-fixation (and the “worry” accompanying it) becomes relaxed, and clear, lucid consciousness is recognized. Then, the individual evolves. Facing the absurdity of life requires incessant faith and is a necessary tool for Kierkegaard’s knight of faith to reach and maintain intimacy with God. Both the knight of faith and one on a buddha-ward journey must push against the currents of rigid beliefs and fickle fashion with a personal trust in the possibility of realizing the true nature of self on their own.

Kierkegaard expands on what is required to become a knight of faith:

Let us consider in somewhat more detail the distress and anxiety in the paradox of faith. The tragic hero relinquishes himself to express the universal; the knight of faith relinquishes the universal in order to become the single individual. As said previously, everything depends on one’s position (FT, p. 33).

According to Kierkegaard, religious faith is not about knowing if God exists; it is about surrendering to our ignorance of God’s existence. Kierkegaard explains this as having “to lose

the understanding to gain God" (SD, p. 171). Accepting our ignorance of God's existence and then recognizing this as our path forward creates a paradox. If the theological structure of morality no longer rests on a solid foundation, it is difficult to make moral decisions where there is only dank darkness as an absolute. The method for a knight of faith, driven by this realization, is to move toward God with increased intensity:

Similarly, there is required for a subjective thinker imagination and feeling, a dialectics in existential inwardness, together with passion. But passion first and last; for it is impossible to think about existence in existence without passion (CUP, p. 312).

Directing this passion, without it becoming psychic flagellation, is the task of the knight of faith.

The subjective thinker has the task of understanding himself in his existence. Abstract thought is wont to speak of contradiction, and of its immanent propulsive power, although by abstracting from existence and from existing it removes the difficulty and the contradiction. The subjective thinker is an existing individual and a thinker at one and the same time; he does not abstract from the contraction and from existence, but lives in it while at the same time thinking. In all his thinking he therefore has to think the fact that he is an existing individual (CUP, p. 314).

A knight of faith must be as nimble as Nijinsky to maintain such subjective reflection, since the reflection and the uncertainty, as well as the urgency of deciding, occurs in each passing moment of existence.

A buddha, too, dances to the music of the moment. Gautama Buddha, a perfect manifestation of in-the-moment presence, gave preliminary instructions that, if one has right understanding of the path, one can think clearly and articulate the path; if one can do this mentally and is able to have a lifestyle conducive to meditation, one can rigorously explore the nature of mind. At this point, the mind trainings begin. Buddhism includes many teachings and the applications of those teachings: the vehicle of renunciation (*Hinayana*), the vehicle of the spiritual hero, or bodhisattva (*Mahayana*), and the tantric methods of the Diamond Vehicle (*Vajrayana*), a branch of the Mahayana—all explore self and make the subjective movement to crook this actor (self) from center stage.

Sometimes, the metaphor of the self as a poisonous tree is used. A Hinayana renunciate would take many vows and try to dig up the many roots of the tree, one by one (habitual tendencies). Following the Mahayana path, where one focuses on developing compassion, one cuts the tap root of the tree (the self). A Vajrayana practitioner transforms the poisons of the tree into wisdom nectar. And a Dzog Chen yogi takes the direct path of self-liberation from clinging and attachment. By direct path, I mean a path that does not require future rebirths

over many eons. This path is known as the Third Turning of the Wheel, a teaching that is not part of the canonical texts that were handed down through the mainstream Mahayana Buddhist schools (Norbu, pp. 26-31).

This is a path within a branch of the Mahayana, called the Vajrayana, known as The Great Perfection (*Dzog Chen*) and has been taught in Tibetan tantric schools, since the eighth century. To maintain continuity in the canonical histories, it is said to be a teaching originally transmitted by Gautama Buddha, post-enlightenment, to the gods of the Hindu pantheon and then to a few of his close disciples. These are secret doctrines, and my lips are sealed about the whispered instructions given in advanced yogic practices; but, in broad strokes, the pedagogy begins with a pointing-out instruction by a realized master of the *Base*, or primordial state of every individual, which precedes one entering the *Path*, consisting of practices the individual will use to attain the *Fruit*, or the total realization of the qualities of one's being. The Base of every individual consists of an essence, which is empty of self and yet manifests as mind, body, and respiratory breath (voice). The Path is made up of practices related to these three energy fields (Norbu, p. 136-137). Following a circular presentation, the Fruit is the realization of the Base, the primordial ontological state, or ground, which is complete-in-itself. Clear, lucid awareness from which thoughts and feelings arise and into which they return is the *Dzog Chen view* (contemplation). Stabilizing the view requires faith in the pith instructions of the teacher.

A knight of faith doesn't have the luxury of a teacher. Abraham doesn't teach. He does. He creates. In his way of doing, the knight of faith is intimate with God—the Base, the perfect buddha nature, and the Fruit, the realization of the basic buddha nature, are in union. Kierkegaard offers what he can on how to accomplish this feat, but a Buddhist places his faith in a teacher who has been there, done that. In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, one who had great faith in his teacher was Naropa (11th c.), who renounced a successful career at a major university, in India, and set out to find Tilopa, a teacher with great powers. Naropa experienced many difficulties in his search for his teacher, and, while studying and meditating with Tilopa, Naropa had to face additional obstacles, like being asked to have enough faith in his teacher to jump off a building, which he did with the result of breaking his bones, that were, then, magically healed by Tilopa. These trainings were specially designed for Naropa to purify the obstacles on the path (cut through his false notions about his being). The use of hyperbole is evident in this story to make a point: there may be a direct path, but it's not, necessarily, an easy one.

Another point of alignment between a buddha and a knight of faith is that both need a bit of faith to jumpstart the process. The knight of faith is seeking succor from God; a buddha is seeking the cessation of suffering through the deconstruction of a suffering self and a substantive world. However, as you jettison your concept of a self, you find yourself sinking

into what Kierkegaard indicates is 70,000 fathoms of nothingness (CUP, p. 181). This is risking madness. It requires faith for a knight of faith to believe in God and faith for a disciple of Buddha to practice meditation.

[A later thought—Dzog Chen cannot be done with concepts. Buddha nature and God are concepts. One must have firsthand experience. The difference in interpretation is between a harmonious relationship with a transcendental Being, while all the time risking a return to chaos, and an individual's experience of self-recognition in a personal dimension of cognitive emptiness. This teetering on the liminal cusp of realization is the enigma of phenomenal existence. Perfect. Or not. Still, after all the palaver, after all the cups of tea, I have questions, and the answers cannot be read in the tea leaves.]

Returning to Eliot's poem (lines 38-39), Prufrock wonders, "Do I dare/ Disturb the universe?" Taking the first steps in practice means entering confusion. The first stages of practice are ponderous, but as the student progresses, the movement becomes easier. When one practice is complete, the student moves to another practice and more confusion, and the student begins to realize that the process is one of confusion followed by clarity and, thereby, gains confidence in the teacher and the dharma.

At the highest levels, the master still practices. Patrul Rinpoche (1808–1887), a prominent teacher and author in the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism addresses his teacher:

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 meditate 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 (Patrul, p. 283).

I unpack this as follows: first line—both the cyclic world of suffering (samsara) and the idea of liberating oneself into a state of non-suffering (nirvana) are realized to be concepts, and one realizes that, as there is really nothing that needs to be accomplished in the finite, relative world of here-and-now, ze is still the realized master and performs meritorious actions and continues to seek wisdom, if only out of a sense of form;—or, like an existentialist, ze creatively makes up the necessary value system; second line—again, since, at the absolute level, all things are of equal value, at the relative level, you still have to make it up as you go, living your life; and, in line three, even though you have actualized the state of inseparable union of

opposites—this line requires a shift, perhaps from Hegelian heights, from a two-value to a three-value system of logic (replacing an *either/or* with a *both and**)—you continue to practice dharma, which, if one has taken the Vow of the Bodhisattva, means returning in future lifetimes for the benefit of all sentient beings and bringing them all, down to the last microbes, to realization from whatever stage of development they have reached on the path toward Buddhahood.

A buddha maintains a middle way between believing in an eternal and infinite absolute and a rejection of such an absolute, which would result in abject nihilism. One who wishes to be a knight of faith utilizes the experience of fear and trembling, that Kierkegaard speaks of, in a positive way to reach God in the face of emptiness, just as one who wishes to be a buddha must accept the paradoxical phenomenon that there is no inherent self and that, regardless of the essence of reality being this emptiness, a really real world manifests in which one faces obstacles on the path to Buddhahood. This is the koan that is lived.

. . . .

As I was entering my traditional Tibetan three-year retreat, Tulku Sang-ngag, asked me, “What do you think I want from you?” I answered, “Devotion.” “No,” he said, “Courage!” Once, again, I was hit on the head by my guru.

P.S.

Scene Without Words

With Words

Stage. Spotlights illuminate two actors on cubes.

Stage right: A knight of faith, wearing black pants, a black turtleneck shirt (with appropriate undergarments), sandals, and a black beret, sits on a chair, in “the thinker” posture, with a copy of the Holy Bible, opened to Chapter 22 of *Genesis*, held in his left hand.

Stage left: A buddha, wearing white cotton yoga pants and tank top, wrapped in a white prayer shawl, sits in a full-lotus asana, holding a small flower in his right hand.

From the flies two signboards descend. Above the buddha: “Silence in the impermanence of the moment.” Above the knight of faith: “Faith in the possibility of the moment’s existence.”

No one comes. No one goes. Until there’s tedium.

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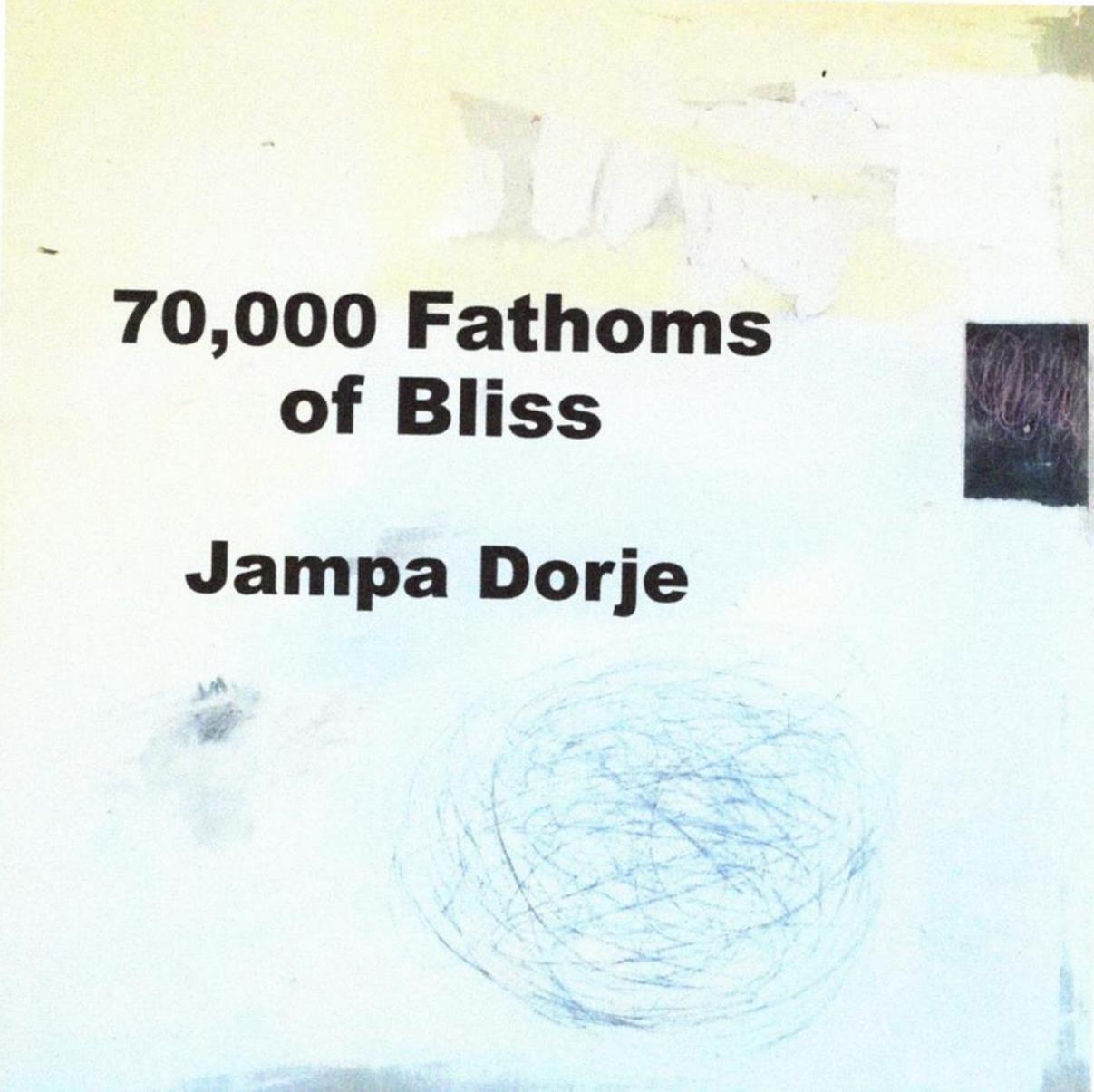
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**70,000 Fathoms
of Bliss**

Jampa Dorje



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**At any street corner the feeling of absurdity can strike any man in the face. —
Albert Camus (*The Myth of Sisyphus*)**

A sense of absurdity arises out of the conflict between our wanting a world of order and the world of random events that resist our understanding. We duck out of confronting the absurd because of our difficulty in resolving incompatible aspects of reality. Still, the absurdity of some events is undeniable. Recently, I saw The March of the Ducks at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee.

How did the tradition of the ducks in The Peabody fountain begin? According to the official legend:

Back in the 1930s Frank Schutt, General Manager of The Peabody, and a friend, Chip Barwick, returned from a weekend hunting trip to Arkansas. The men had a little too much Tennessee sippin' whiskey and thought it would be funny to place some of their live duck decoys (it was legal then for hunters to use live decoys) in the beautiful Peabody fountain. Three small English call ducks were selected as "guinea pigs," and the reaction was nothing short of enthusiastic. Thus began a Peabody tradition. In 1940, Bellman Edward Pembroke, a former circus animal trainer, offered to help with delivering the ducks to the fountain each day and taught them the now-famous Peabody Duck March (www.peabodymemphis.com/ducks-en.html).

I relaxed in a deep-seated chair, sipped tea from a cup with a saucer, listened to the cacophony of voices that has always proceeded this event—and, before tedium set in, I watched a man in uniform shepherd a team of ducks from the elevator, along a red carpet, to the marble fountain in the center of the lobby of the Peabody Hotel. The Peabody is a well-maintained bastion from the Gilded Age, and it resides comfortably in the decadence of the present. Because this hotel is a staid institution, I was not sure how to interpret the spectacle transpiring before me.

The ducks walked the red carpet, in their waddling manner, as the majordomo raised his cane and drove them along with dramatic gestures. Order of sorts—and continuity. Nearly a century after the inaugural march, ducks still visit the lobby fountain from their room in the hotel at the appointed hour each day. What is this ritual? Does it celebrate a prank? Is it advertising? Vanity? Or is it just another distraction in the tsunami of samsaric events? There's little one can do but embrace the absurd while also doing one's best in the search for meaning. This, according to Camus, is our absurd freedom.

Then she stood up, put her jacket back on with the same robotlike movements,

and left. I didn't have anything to do, so I left too and followed her for a while.
—Albert Camus (*The Stranger*)

I was in line at Safeway, and a woman ahead of me had four boxes in her arms that she didn't put on the conveyer belt, so I placed a plastic divider down with enough space for her boxes. She picked a small package of pretzels off the impulse rack and put them on the belt and lay a dollar on top, still holding the boxes in her arms. She moved a step ahead, but she seemed distracted. When her turn at the cashier came, she set down four boxes of organic quinoa. I wanted to ask her if she had seen the YouTube video of David Lynch cooking quinoa—very creepy—but I decided if I asked her, that might seem creepy. She moved robotlike, as a Lynch character might in one of his dream sequences. She was going through the motions of a person buying quinoa; perhaps, she was on medication. Each of the four credit cards she proffered was rejected, and she left the store with her pretzels after a cash sale, as though the boxes of quinoa were merely a prop in the theater of the absurd. I wonder if she might have anticipated that her cards would be rejected and felt that the small cash purchase would “exonerate” her from judgement.

I was reminded of a scene in Camus's *The Stranger*, where a woman sits and eats with Meursault in a cafe. The odd, little robotlike woman is convergent to his character, both live in their own worlds outside the judgement of others. The reader starts to wonder if Meursault is himself a robot going through the motions, while asking little else but to continue in these habitual patterns. Yet Meursault's apathy is of his own choosing, as he moves toward finding meaning in a meaningless universe.

**For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.**
(from “The Snow Man” by Wallace Stevens)

A snow man doesn't have feelings, but a poet can use words (perhaps employing Keat's *negative capability*) to transcend logical meaning and explore what it might be like to be a snow man. “The Snow Man,” a poem by Wallace Stevens, has a lot in it about nothing. Here, nothing is not nothing. To someone with an existential orientation, “nothing” is a something to be considered.

Kierkegaard, who believes a human being is spirit, experiences a gulf between himself and God, a nothingness that terrifies him and that drives him to despair. Dostoevsky's underground man, in his spiteful and contrary way, professes to believe that, after all, there's nothing to be done. Focused solely on the being of Being, Heidegger asks, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” Sartre conceives of nothing as the backdrop to what is. Nothingness is an open space that allows us, without God, to make choices. When Nietzsche's madman claims that “God is dead!”, a foundational element for society begins to crumble. The madman believes his prognosis is premature, but by the time Camus writes *The Stranger*, where a priest entreats the atheist Meursault to contemplate the Divine Face in a sweating rock (his own Sisyphusian hellhole), the dissolution of the meaning of “God” is well underway.

How, then, are we to act in a meaningless universe?

Behold the snow man beholding itself and not thinking of any misery! A happy thought. Another reading reverses this and reveals us as empty spirits dwelling in an inhospitable place.

The priest gazed around my cell and answered in a voice that sounded very weary to me. “Every stone here sweats with suffering, I know that. I have never looked at them without a feeling of anguish. But deep in my heart I know that the most wretched among you have seen a divine face emerge from their darkness. That is the face you are asked to see.”

—Albert Camus (*The Stranger*)

A priest visits Meursault in his cell and asks if he believes in God, and Meursault replies that the question has never crossed his mind. The priest persists in his mission to bring Meursault around to a belief in God’s mercy, but the condemned refuses to ask for any kind of help. The priest implores him to look at the Divine Face in the “sweating stones” of his cell. Meursault says that he had searched in the stones for a face—his girlfriend Marie’s, which is a refusal of the otherworldly—but he had never seen a face appear. The priest persists, and Meursault responds in a rage. He feels anguish because of the meaninglessness, the absurdity, of his existence. He judges no one, and he believes no one should judge him.

I am reminded of the face that Dante sees in line 108 of Canto XXXI in the *Paradiso*: “O my Lord Jesus Christ, true God, was then Your image like the image I see now?” Borges annotates this line in his poem “Of Heaven and Hell” (JLB 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.

I am also reminded of a concept in Zen Buddhism, “the original face,” which is a term alluding to the nonduality of subject and object—the nature of mind that would be there before you were born and will be there after you are gone: “When you’re not thinking of anything good and anything bad, at that moment, what is your original face?” (RP p.120).

In the concluding scene of the novel, Meursault is no longer in conflict and is prepared for his execution. He will “face” his death with clarity, with equanimity, even with joy, because he can now accept the indifference of the world as the way the world really is. In a mood of bring-it-on, he goes further and seeks the hatred of the entire human community.

Comments on the phrase “Sickness unto death”

By the time Kierkegaard reached adulthood, four of his five siblings had died. We are mortals and will die. Of this Kierkegaard is well informed, and this knowledge infuses urgency to his writing style. In every word, I can feel Kierkegaard’s trembling hands on my shoulders shaking me awake.

There has been death in my family. I watched my daughter, Kirsten, die of AIDS. My aged mother died in my arms. There is no denying impermanence and the ceaseless onslaught of decay. Looking inward, weariness and darkness pervade this landscape. Happy memories are found, but they are tainted by a sense of dislocation and uneasiness. Such dis-ease is an ontological malady, a malady which, for Kierkegaard, is due to the individual's inability to encounter God while on the earthly plane. This is what Kierkegaard means by "the sickness unto death (despair)."

In his elaborate, dialectical way, Kierkegaard reveals the self to be "a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation's relating itself to itself" (*BW* p. 41). This is a self that wants to be rid of itself and, at the same time to stay a self, a self that is fractured by and frustrated with itself in its internal conflict,—in the psychologically precise way that a self has of talking about itself in sentences,—but, then, one's self is the only archetype for a self that one has to perform the activity of a self that bridges two worlds.

And this can be a blessing! Even though Kierkegaard is ambivalent about his superhero, The Knight of Faith, realizing a human being is a spirit, uses the intensity of his faith to interface with the infinite.

Comments on the phrase "Notes from underground"

For Fyodor Dostoevsky, the term "underground" is used to delineate the psychological perturbations of the main character in his short novel, *Notes from Underground*. For me, I associate the term with the beginning of a life-long journey.

In 1959, I found a copy of Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* in City Lights bookstore in the North Beach area of San Francisco and recognized that the perplexing mind of his anti-hero articulated ideas about a perplexing state-of-affairs, and these ideas related to what I was beginning to experience in my young life. The Underground Man begins his rant with "I am a sick man.... I am a spiteful man. No, I am not a pleasant man at all" (*BW* 193). He claims the sickness is in his liver, but as I read I soon find that his sickness is in his soul,—in his very being,—in his consciousness of being a being.

The term "underground" has a variety of meanings. Up to that time, I had only known it as a word used to describe criminal activity, as in *gangster underground*, but with The House on Unamerican Activities protests in San Francisco (1960) I now saw it in a political light, as Anarchist and Communist forces attempting to subvert the government;—and, with the recent (1957) obscenity trial of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, as an experimental movement in literature that referenced a wider world than what I had hitherto been aware of. None of this knowledge relieved my angst.

However, the notes I read from the Underground Man were resonating in my intellect, and they gave clarity along with confusion, and this revealed a new sense of humor to me, a darker humor. I realized that I was suppressing my humor in the underground of my soul. To be sure, if I did not, I'd be laughing continuously, because of the cosmic joke we participate in.

I carried early paperback editions of *Notes from Underground*, *The Stranger*, and *Fear and Trembling* and *The Sickness unto Death* in my coat pocket and passionately

discussed them in candle-lit rathskellers. Now, these books are classroom classics, and in re-reading them, in the light of a life of self-examination, I conclude that angst, as one pole of a continuum, is the anus of happiness.

After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave—a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown.— And we—we still have to vanquish his shadow, too. —Friedrich Nietzsche (*The Gay Science*)

1 — “God is dead. . .”

I have a nit to pick with Nietzsche. Nietzsche realized that the context for a God-centered society had shifted, but to make his point he alludes to a 6th century BCE, buddha (Buddha Gautama) as being a god. Buddhas come and go. There were buddhas before Buddha Gautama, buddhas after him, and there will be buddhas in the future. Buddha Gautama is revered because he taught the *dharma*, an epistemological and methodological approach to a “a state of consciousness,” known as Buddhahood. Even though Buddha Gautama disavowed being a god, as Buddhism evolved into a religion, some sects worshipped The Buddha as an omniscient divinity; however, it would be more accurate to consider Buddhism as a form of psychology, or a spiritual philosophy, since it discards the notion of an Absolute Creator God, or Judge. In this absence, Buddhism differs from other religions.

As I have been taught by my lamas, Buddhism puts its emphasis upon a personal path of ethical precepts, the use of various meditational techniques, and the contemplation of the nature of mind (one’s buddha nature). The path, known as the middle way, tries to avoid all dualistic traps. Buddha Gautama articulated the path; his disciples got the message and passed it on. There is the path of the yogi, the monastic path, and the path of the householder. Buddha Gautama lived as a prince, as a skin-and-bones ascetic, and, finally, as a knight errant, or mendicant.

Nietzsche wants us to vanquish the gruesome shadow of Buddhism, but what I feel he is really railing against is asceticism and passivity, the life-denying direction some take to escape the world. Buddhism seems like a life-denying approach to our human condition by initially revealing that sentient beings suffer; however, there is a corollary truth that much of this suffering, this angst, can be eliminated. The Buddha directs us towards ourselves, in the here and now, as the locus for our investigations. We are not the result of a creator god; we are not a creation of randomly colliding atoms; we are embodied minds. No God, therefore no sin, therefore no pangs of guilt;—this aspect of Buddhism piqued Nietzsche’s interest, but he blurs the distinction between The Buddha and God.

2 – “. . .his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave—a tremendous, gruesome shadow.”

The transmissions of The Buddha’s doctrine could be construed as flickering

shadows of a belief system, handed down through tradition. I am, also, reminded of Plato's Allegory of the Cave, where the people in the cave believe the shadows of objects, they see are the true reality. Or, the shadows might be my own present state of neurological happenstance, forcing these semiotic fragments into intelligible form. What Nietzsche is getting at is that we are a gullible herd and easy prey to a plethora of ever-evolving scams, whether it's religious mumbo jumbo or pesky advertisements in the virtual domain. Indeed, we unconsciously do it to ourselves to fool ourselves out of believing that the universe is meaningless. No matter your perspective, as P.T. Barnum succinctly put it, "There's a sucker born every minute."

A comparison of the anxiety described by the madman in Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* with the position of the knight of faith in Søren Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*.

I will weave my argument with a single thread. Existential "anxiety" is a human experience, one that comes from recognizing that there is a dilemma unique to being human, something that arises from the very act of reflecting on the human condition,—an experience that is, unfortunately, made worse by extended philosophical reflection on what it means to exist. As a Buddhist, to be free of existential anxiety is to let go of this thread. Kierkegaard would not agree.

What does it mean to exist? A chair or a rock can be said to exist. As objects, they have attributes that can be described, but they do not have awareness of their existence;—they cannot observe themselves and make judgements about their condition in the spatial-temporal world. And, unlike other animals, humans have the capacity (or it seems to us, in our thinking processes) to make decisions. Unlike chairs, rocks, and chipmunks, we give ourselves laws to govern ourselves, and we are free to make changes in our behavior. Being aware of our existence is a unique way of being alive, although with this awareness comes a heightened feeling of uncertainty, of anxiety.

In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard denotes three ways of living: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. The aesthetic way is the path of avoiding pain and selfishly seeking pleasure, and the ethical way is to accept a universal set of rules as being true and attempt to live within their framework. All three ways ask, "What is really important about life!?" What distinguishes the religious life is the attempt to go beyond the individual self and the social self in order to establish a relationship with the infinite.

Understanding the rules and obeying them and thereby gaining praise from one's peers is a respectable way to live. Kierkegaard describes a tragic hero as one who is able to make a sacrifice for the general good, and he claims that this is just and good, but there is a higher calling, a higher amelioration of the self, to be accomplished, if one is to be a friend of God. To achieve this, one must become a *knight of faith*, which is the ultimate level of moral development. The knight of faith knows

. . .that up higher there winds a lonesome trail, steep and narrow; he knows it is dreadful to be born solitary outside of the universal, to walk without meeting one single traveler. He knows very well where he is and how he relates to men. (BW 34).

The knight of faith is thrown into an epistemological dilemma. How can I know there is a purpose to life on my own? Does God exist? Will faith be enough? What else is there to go on? Kierkegaard expands on what is required to become a knight of faith:

Let us consider in somewhat more detail the distress and anxiety in the paradox of faith. The tragic hero relinquishes himself to express the universal; the knight of faith relinquishes the universal in order to become the single individual. As said previously, everything depends on one's position. Anyone who believes that it is fairly easy to be the single individual can always be sure that he is not a knight of faith, for fly-by-nights and itinerant geniuses are not men of faith (BW 33).

According to Kierkegaard, religious faith is not about knowing if God exists; it is about surrendering to our ignorance of God's existence. Kierkegaard explains this as having "to lose the understanding to gain God" (BW 68). Religious faith is not about knowing if God exists but about understanding and accepting our ignorance of God's existence and then recognizing this as our path forward. This creates a paradox. If the theological structure of morality no longer rests on an absolute foundation, it is hard to make a moral decision. There is only "70,000 fathoms" of darkness. As Nietzsche's madman laments in section 125 of *The Gay Science*, "Do we not feel the breath of empty space?"

Nietzsche has concerns about there being no universal answers and only unconscious desires determining our movements. How are we to act if God, one of the central tenets of society, has vanished? Nietzsche's madman warns us:

"Whither is God" he cried: "I will tell you. We have killed him—you and I. All of us are his murders. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing?" (CP12)

As for Kierkegaard, so for Nietzsche—without an absolute reference point, we must step outside of ourselves and ask, "What am I? What should I be doing?" We must now make decisions based upon our newly discovered freedom, and we find this terrifying because life appears open-ended and indeterminate, and we can blunder along without knowing the outcome of our actions. Kierkegaard is convinced that we are separate from God, and we are in a state of anxiety because we must live in the unknown universe that has been exposed by our radical separation from God. Nietzsche describes humans as being in a state of anxiety because God is no longer present as a cosmic standard and judge of our actions. Still, the madman thinks that we can deal with our distress over murdering God, because this freedom presents us with the potential for change: "There's never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us—for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto" (Section 125, *The Gay Science*).

Here is where Kierkegaard and Nietzsche part company, at least on the technical level of God's existence and our ontological place in the structure of the universe. Without any plan, any teleology, to this universe, God being beyond our reach, for Kierkegaard, and God not existing, for Nietzsche, it is clear to both that it is up to us to

create our own values and figure out what is worthwhile. To do this, we must re-create ourselves as individuals. We must arrest ourselves in despair by going beyond our animal needs, our pain-avoiding, pleasure-loving approach to life (the aesthetic life), and we must go beyond our instinct to huddle (in what Nietzsche calls “herd mentality” and Kierkegaard, the ethical life) in a bubble of moral behavior based upon our outward show of wealth and worldly accomplishment.

Now, for Kierkegaard, this means to be governed by obedience to God at a level that is sometimes called a leap of faith but is, as Cynthia Coe puts it, more of a leap *to* faith, because this faith is not determined by logic but is an absurdity that leaves us in a contradictory state of being, drawn to what we want and, at the same time, repulsed because it seems unattainable;—and our anxiety is increased by our awareness because we must exert our free will and be a true human being, something trapped in the here-and-now with an inherent possibility to change. Thus, to be an individual self means to be lost (and in a state of anxiety) in the attempt to balance these contrary sides of the self.

At the beginning I implied that the problem of existential anxiety may be a problem only for philosophers. Not everyone approaches life as a problem in philosophy. We experience anxiety, but we learn to cope in one way or another. We follow habitual routines. We keep ourselves occupied with distractions. We medicate ourselves. But for Kierkegaard and Nietzsche this is the effortless way out of our situation. Nietzsche’s “God is dead” concept—that without religion, or any kind of moral compass, the world will plunge into chaos—is the source of our despair; for Kierkegaard, everyone is in a state of despair, whether they know it or not, since they cannot reach God. To resolve this paradox is no easy task. It requires psychological growth.

There is a further pressure exerted on a person who takes up this challenge of psychological growth, an additional component in existential anxiety, because we are now upon the stage of a greater history (Nietzsche) or near to the true friendship of God (Kierkegaard), and yet there is an appalling gulf between us and our goal. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche agree about the need to take control of one’s life, although they are not quite in agreement as to how this is to take place. Kierkegaard advises us to develop a stoical attitude, believing that we should experience the timbre of our anxiety with fortitude and press on in our endeavor to remake ourselves, whereas Nietzsche urges us to rebel and create our own morality. Both recognize that there are risks in these undertakings; they admonish us to have courage.

In the overall range of human suffering, “existential anxiety” is a reified type of suffering. Buddhists compare this condition to a wheel that is off-center, making for a bumpy ride—and the way to lessen this suffering is to recognize the cause is in our continued attachment and clinging to what is impermanent. Next, it is necessary to relax into the angst produced by this condition, allowing thoughts to self-liberate, and discover the nature of mind as a union of bliss (well-being) and emptiness. The resonance of this bliss-emptiness is compassion, and compassion is the ground from which to make sound decisions.

. . .

Another solution comes to mind—how, Illia, the main character in Jules Dassin’s

film, *Never on Sunday*, sees life's paradoxes as a continuum of the stage. She laughs throughout the tragedy of *Agamemnon* because she knows that once all is said and done, the actors will leave the amphitheater as friends, go to the beach, and have a picnic.

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Note: "BW" in the text refers to Gordon Marino's *The Basic Writings of Existentialism*.

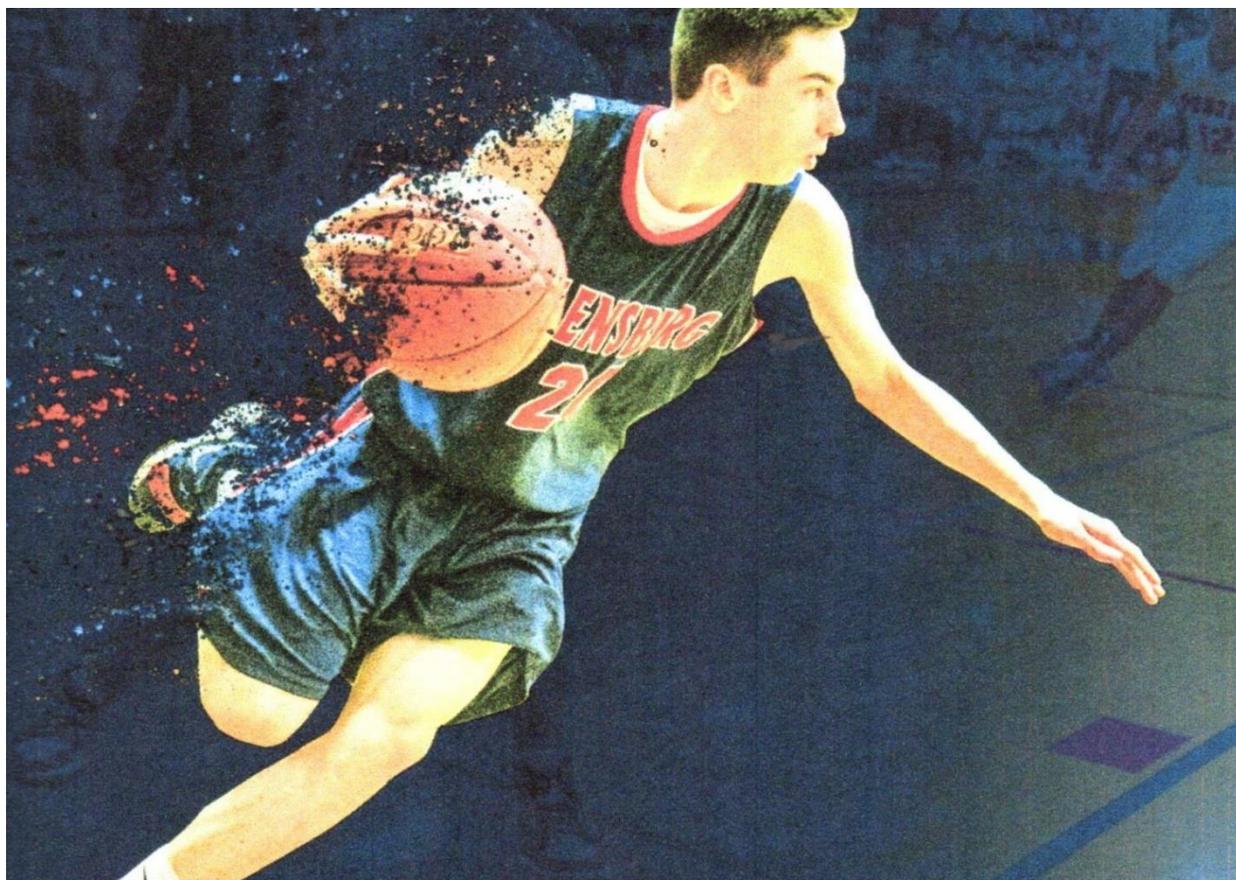
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GRACEFUL MOMENTS
A TALK ON MOVEMENT
AND MEDITATION
JAMPA DORJE

GRACEFUL MOMENTS
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Let me begin by wishing you a Happy Valentine's Day. May we all be moved by love. "Movement" is the key concept, since I am addressing a class in kinesiology, and it's hard to imagine the vast amount of movement that surrounds us. To begin my analysis of movement, I am going to read a poem, entitled "Second Coming," by the Irish poet William Butler Yeats.

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Not the love poem one might expect on this particular day, but I chose this poem because it reveals diverse types of movement in our experience, movements that we take for granted, as well as movements that are sublime and hold us in awe—

local movement, cosmic movement, mythological movement—a beast *slouching*, things *falling apart*, a falcon *gyring* (turning in a spiral), a cradle *rocking*. Many of the images in the poem describe movements that produce anxiety. This is an oracle that is not prophesizing peace, even though the poem was written in 1925, some years after the First World War and some years before the Second World War. It is a visionary poem that points to unresolved conflict, at some level, in our consciousness.

Kinesiology is concerned specifically with human movement, and so that I would appear informed, I looked the term up and found that kinesiology covers a wide range of activities: sports, sports psychology, exercise, orthopedics, biomechanics, as well as walking, running, bending, jumping, and crawling.

I met Professor D'Acquisto a couple years ago on the bridge that crosses the Ganges on campus. I was walking to the Language-Lit Building to attend a class in Existentialism, and he asked me about my robes. I told him I was a Ningma yogi, an Old School Tibetan Practitioner. He asked me why I was in Ellensburg, and I told him that I had a forty-year history with the town, and I had recently re-arrived from Colorado, where I had been ensconced in a long solitary retreat. He asked me what that was like, and I told him that it required many hours of sitting meditation. He wondered if there was anything I could offer his class on kinesiology, as he often had guest lecturers. I said that meditation practice could be considered at one end of the spectrum between movement and stillness.

We parted company, and a year or so later, he contacted me, and we met at the Downtown D&M, where we drew up a tentative plan:

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

HEALTH

WELL-BEING

MEDITATION

I told Professor D'Acquisto that I had read about a study that showed how mice running on a treadmill outlived their couch potato cousins. I admitted it was likely that exercise was good for an individual's health, but I wondered if all of the running and jumping and dashing around would purify one from Original Sin or, if one didn't have a belief in Original Sin, if exercise would rectify you with your Karma, relieve your Existential angst, or clarify the Ignorance that Buddha claims is the source of psychic suffering. I'm not sure whether or not your professor knew

what I was talking about, but he said he was curious to know what I would come up with—and, I'm not sure I knew what I was talking about, at the time, but I knew that I would come up with some ideas about movement and meditation that I could relay to you.

And so, as is my wont, I turned to the *Oxford Universal Dictionary* and looked up MOTION—

Late Middle English, from Latin *movere*, to move

Change of place in an animate body, 1588

Movement of a body in walking, running, 1598

Momentum, scientific term, 1690

Bodily exertion tending to fatigue, bodily exercises, 1695

Latin *movere*, from Phoenician Indo-European *menu*, “to push away”—found in words like momentum, movement, mobile, mutiny, momentous, motive, promote, remove, emotion. A basketball player pushes the ball in a pass; a swimmer pushes away from the deck; a sprinter pushes away from a block.

Recently, I had another meeting with your professor on campus near the bridge, he on his way to Dean Hall and I on my way to see an installation at the art gallery—*The Woods*, a collaborative work by Punch Projects. Did you see it? At any rate, Professor D'Acquisto inquired if I had made any progress on the topic we had discussed, and I told him I was presently working on an essay, entitled *Dancing In the Moment*, that compared the movement of Kierkegaard's knight of faith toward God with Buddha's movement toward enlightenment. The title of my essay had been inspired by a line in the Yeats poem, “Among Schoolchildren,” where he asks, “Who can tell the dancer from the dance?”—And, I told him that I had begun thinking about how motion was related to momentum, while a movement seemed circumscribed with a beginning and end.

Motion is the preferred term in physics, where there are quantitative forces at play (or not at play) on an inanimate object, as in Newton's Three Laws of Motion—observations that are original in that they articulate what is a priori evident,—and movement is a term more often used in physiology. What is momentous in a dance movement is the quality of a person's body moving.

This is connected to time and space and the way in which we understand movement, a concept on which philosophers from the time of the Presocratics until now continue a metaphysical debate as to whether there even is motion or movement. How can I say this when, wherever I am, there is movement? I hear

the 60-cycle hum coming from the motor in my refrigerator and watch a black van pass on the street outside my house and feel my esophagus contract as I swallow. I'm told the earth spins on its axis at 1000 mph, while its moving around the sun at 15,000 mph, while the solar system cruises through the galaxy at a half-million mph. Not exactly reassuring that anything can be at rest.

Has anyone heard of Zeno's paradoxes? The Fable of the Hare and the Tortoise? Right, that's Aesop's version of one of them. Zeno (circa 5th c. BCE), student of Parmenides, whose most famous arguments against motion are described by Aristotle in his *Physics*, Book VI, or you can check Wiki: *Zeno*.

A hare (in the fable named after the Greek warrior, Achilles, known to be a fast runner) is to race a tortoise. The tortoise is handicapped some distance, because of its reputedly slow movements. The race begins, and the racers race forward. The hare moves, and the tortoise moves, but before the hare reaches the halfway place between the starting line and the tortoise, the tortoise has moved some distance, and before the hare can, again, reach the halfway place, the tortoise, again, has moved, ad infinitum.

I don't know if you see the problem. In a children's book I read as a kid, a bunny rushed by a turtle but then stopped short of the finish line, and believing the race was won, the bunny fell asleep by a tree. The tortoise plodded on to win the race, and the moral was: *slow and steady is the key to success*. Somehow, the sense of infinitudes is lost in this telling.

When Diogenes heard Zeno promulgate this idea, he got up and walked away, as his answer; Aristotle says time diminishes as distance diminishes; Aquinas says time is not made up of instants; Russell posits the "at-at theory of motion"—the object just has to be where it has to be at the time it is supposed to be there to be there, requiring an arrow two feet in length to get to a target ten feet away, by being in five places sequentially; Weyl argues the argument is based on the assumption that between two points, there is always another point; Bergson claims time and distance are the same and can't be divided;— as for me, I see Zeno's argument as being a geometrical study of movement, like in *kinematics*, where the motion of objects can be described through mathematical equations—the process of making an engineering drawing, for example, to portray the dynamics of a robotic arm without considering the actual mass and forces working an actual robotic arm, or in the case of the hare and tortoise, propulsion, acceleration and momentum—but, then, getting started, halfway to the first step is a long ways. Do I have you confused?

I have us at the moment of non-movement. Somehow, I have to get us back to the idea of meditation. It is reported by health scientists that Americans get very little exercise. The majority of young males are unfit for military service. Research shows that inactivity has a role in heart disease, cancer, and Alzheimer's disease, but despite public campaigns to improve the situation, there's a resistance by humans to looking towards future rewards. Tell me about it. As a Dzogchen yogi, I am at the other end of the spectrum with a philosophy of Non-doing. However, I don't recommend total non-doing—at least until you're dead—but I do argue that no matter how much exercise one gets, stress trauma and the constant distraction level we maintain in our multi-tasking culture is taking a toll on our health, as well. So, it appears that I am promoting Meditation—Being—Consciousness under the banner: “Don't just do something—SIT THERE!”

What is meditation? It's a practice that involves focusing the mind on an object or an activity in order to attain a clear mental and a calm emotional state. Meditation, like sports, comes in many forms. As a Buddhist meditator I look at the cause of suffering and address the main problems, rather than just doctoring the symptoms. But this is not the place to introduce the Four Noble Truths and try to explicate the Eight-fold Path—I'm not here to espouse Buddhism. I'm here to speak about the practice of meditation and not challenge anyone's spiritual path.

I will give my spin on Mindfulness Awareness practice, based on Buddhist meditational techniques, that has been developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues at MIT as a means toward stress reduction and is used in the military, the corporate workspace, and in mental health programs. The trick is to be mindful, while at the same time being aware. Sounds simple, until you begin to think about it; then, the simplicity simply disappears. Talking too much about it also muddies the water, but I'll give it a stir.

Start with the body. Take control of your posture—your back, your hands, your feet, your eyes—sit like mountain, mind clear, like the sky. Your eyes can remain open, so you don't fall asleep. Focus on your breath—count the breaths going out. At the end of the out breath, take note of the openness, like space—when your mind drifts, bring it back to the breath. Three rules of meditation: relax, relax, relax.

When you have mastered sitting still, begin the practice of “looking at” your mind. Thoughts can be overwhelmingly constant in their activity. It's called monkey-mind or can be compared to a waterfall. Slowly, with practice, thoughts settle into a riverflow. Again, what is mind? Where is mind? Be mindful of consciousness

itself. Does it have a color? A form? Ask and ask again.

OK, and...here I am in the movement of the moment trying to sit still while in flux and all about me everything seems to be burning, while I'm trying to extinguish the fire by positioning myself on a chair, feet planted firmly on the ground, hands on my lap or on my knees, head erect, shoulders back, spine straight, and I ask, "Why so much emphasis on posture?" The answer: "It's where you start, if you are going to sit still." It takes some courage to overcome the tedium of the process.

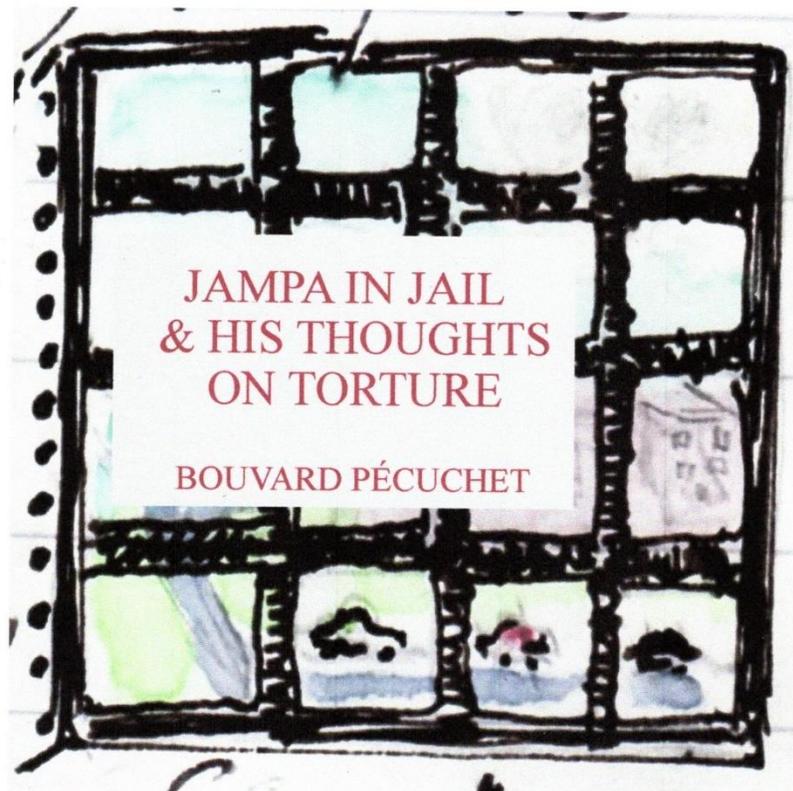
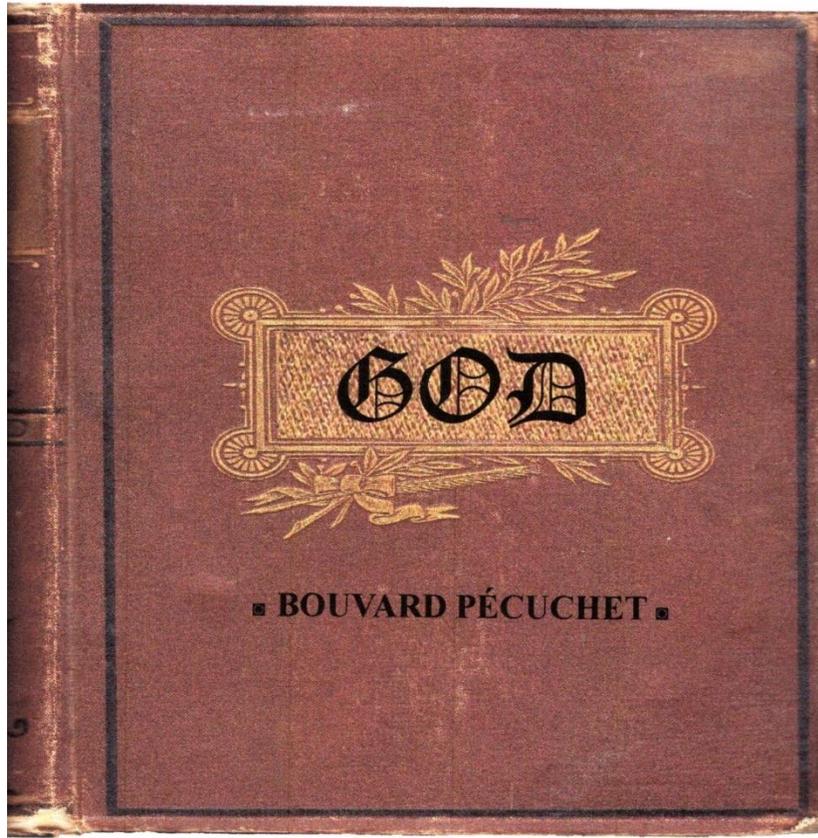
So, let's sit. I won't hypnotize you to quack like a duck. If you do, we promise not to say anything afterwards.

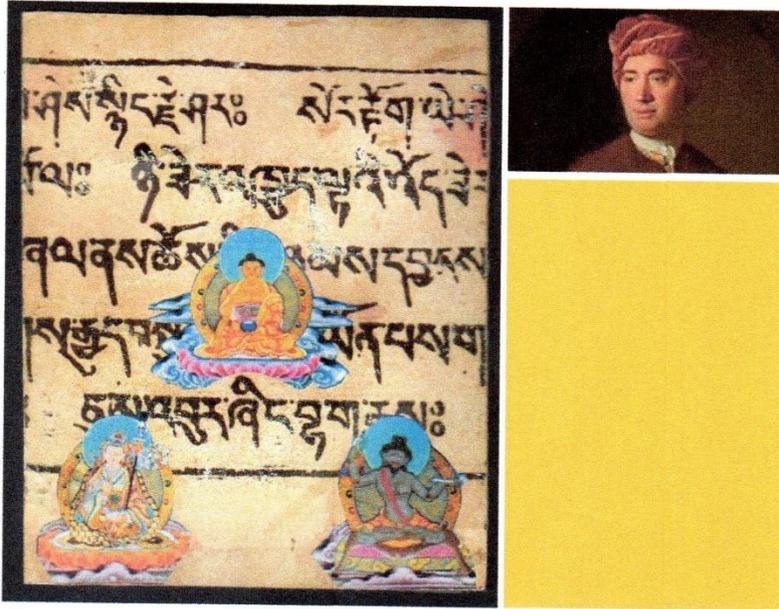
Take 5: a short meditation practice...

I hope you attained one-sit realization, or at least found a moment's peace and that you can carry some of it with you through the rest of your day. To maintain momentum in a meditation practice you must immerse yourself. Try short practices, many times.

APPENDIX

MEDIUM SIZE CHAPBOOKS
OF WRITINGS SELECTED FROM
A BOOK FROM LUMINOUS PEAK
AND OTHER SOURCES



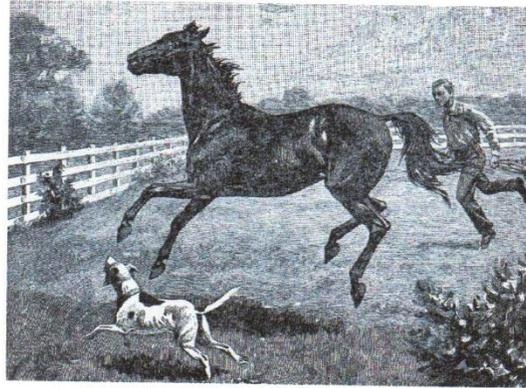


**A DEVIL SITS UNDER THE ASS
OF THE GODDESS SOPHIA
AND OTHER STORIES BY
BOUVARD PÉCUCHET**



A RIDE WITH DAVE

JAMPA DORJE



JAMPA DORJE'S
ANIMAL FRIENDS

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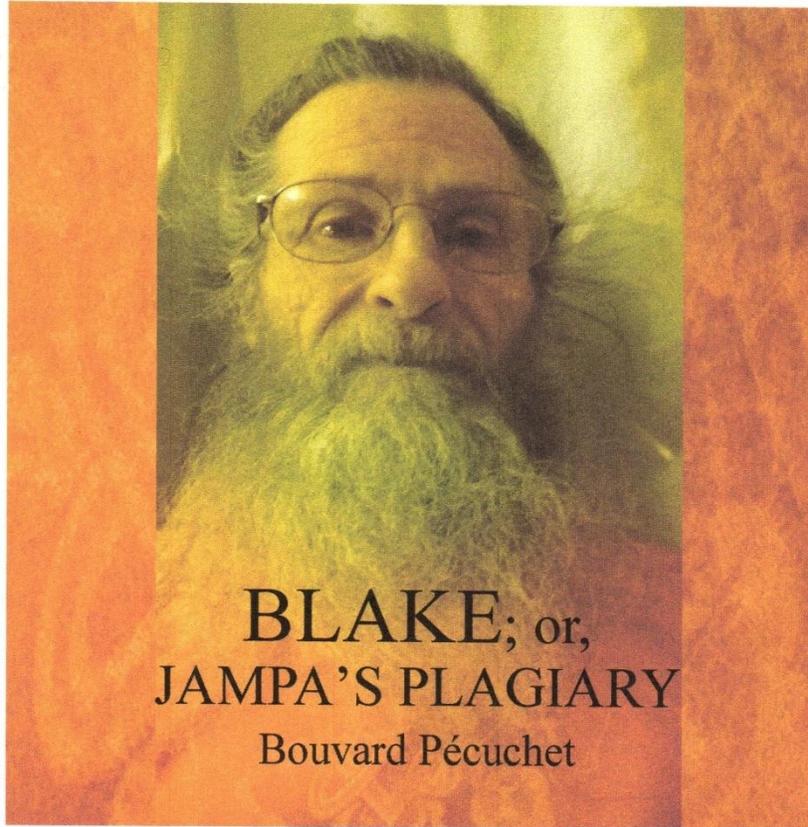
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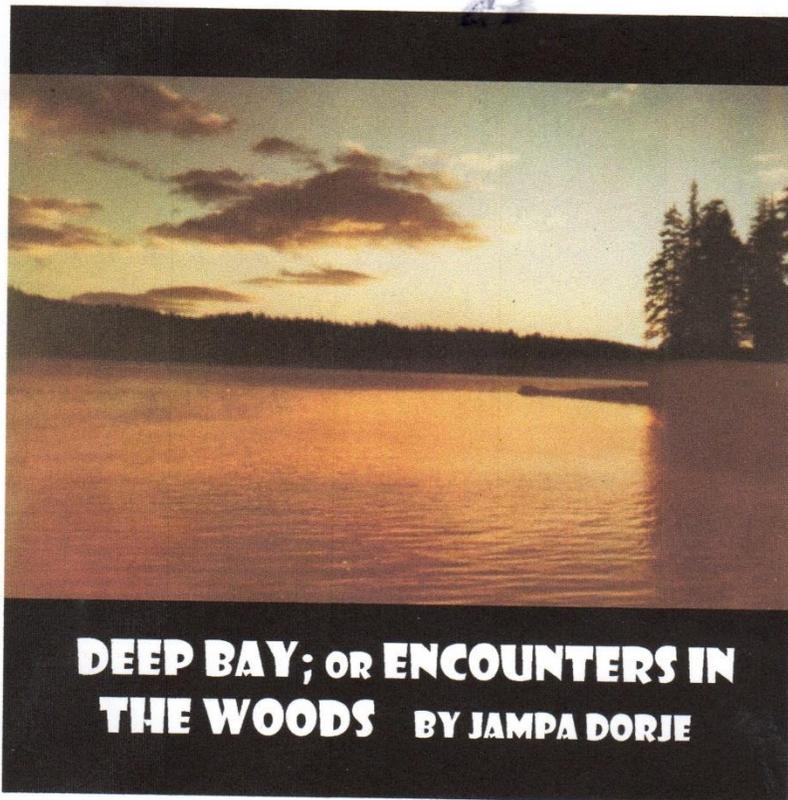


BOUVARD PÉCUCHET
WITH JAMPA DORJE





**BLAKE; or,
JAMPA'S PLAGIARY**
Bouvard Pécuchet



**DEEP BAY; OR ENCOUNTERS IN
THE WOODS** BY JAMPA DORJE



Jampa Dorje

EARTHDAY



THE EVOLUTION OF
THE D PRESS PROCESS

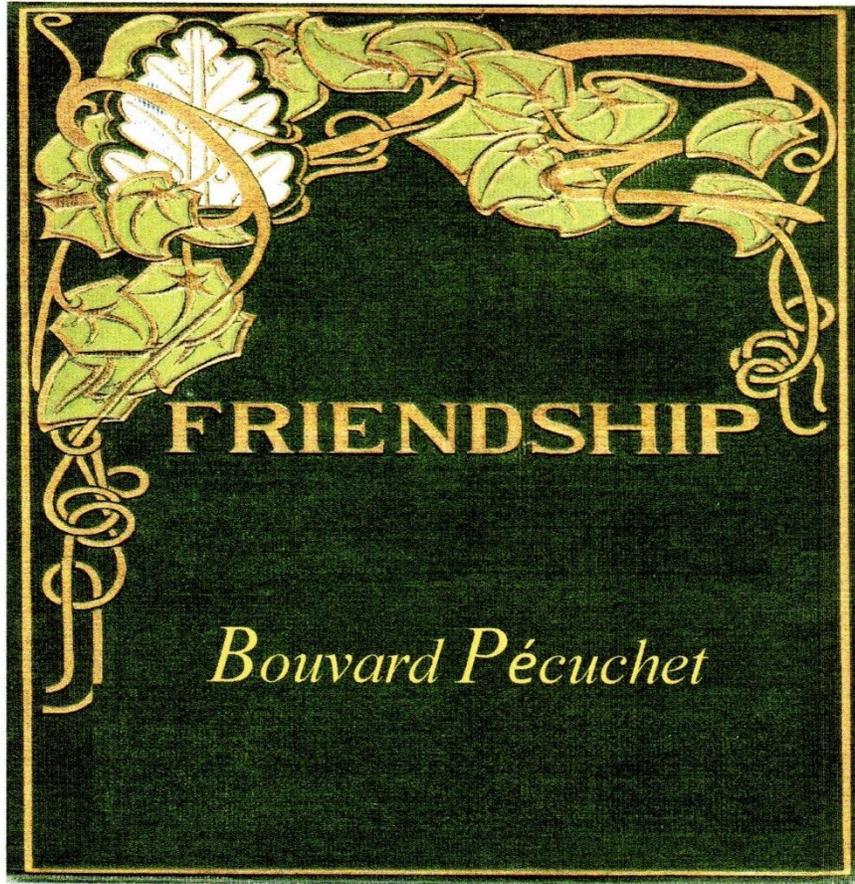
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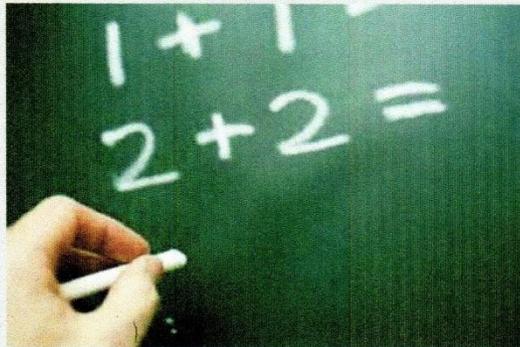
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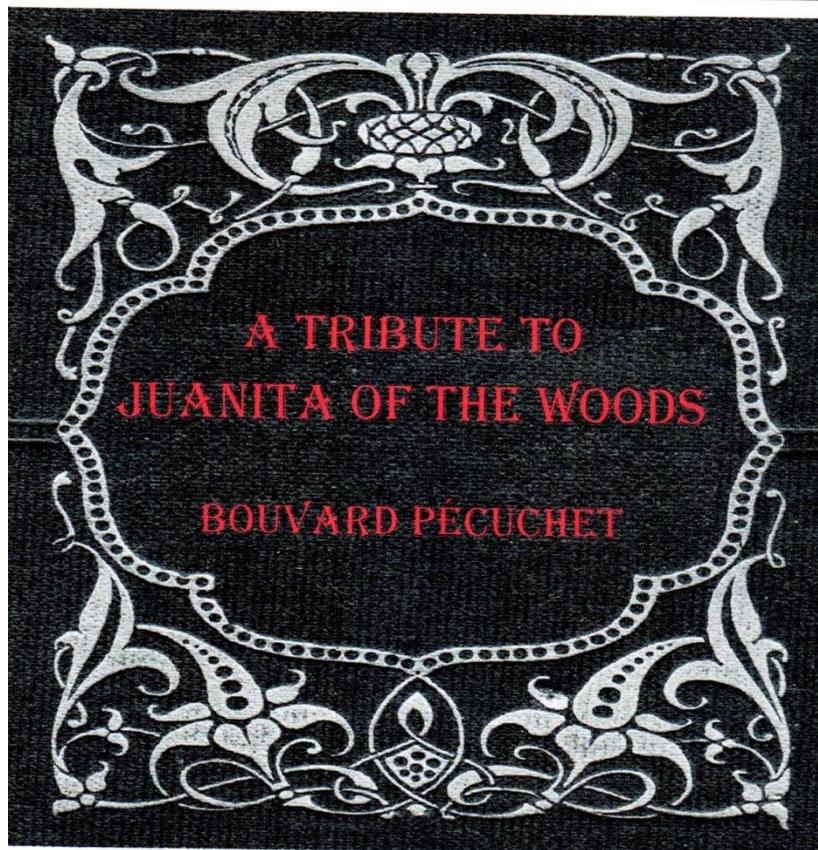
FURTHER REACHES IN MATHEMATICS
and Science



Bouvard Pécuchet
with Jampa Dorje



Jampa and His Horses
Bouvard Pécuchet



**THE LAMA AND THE
CARPENTER**

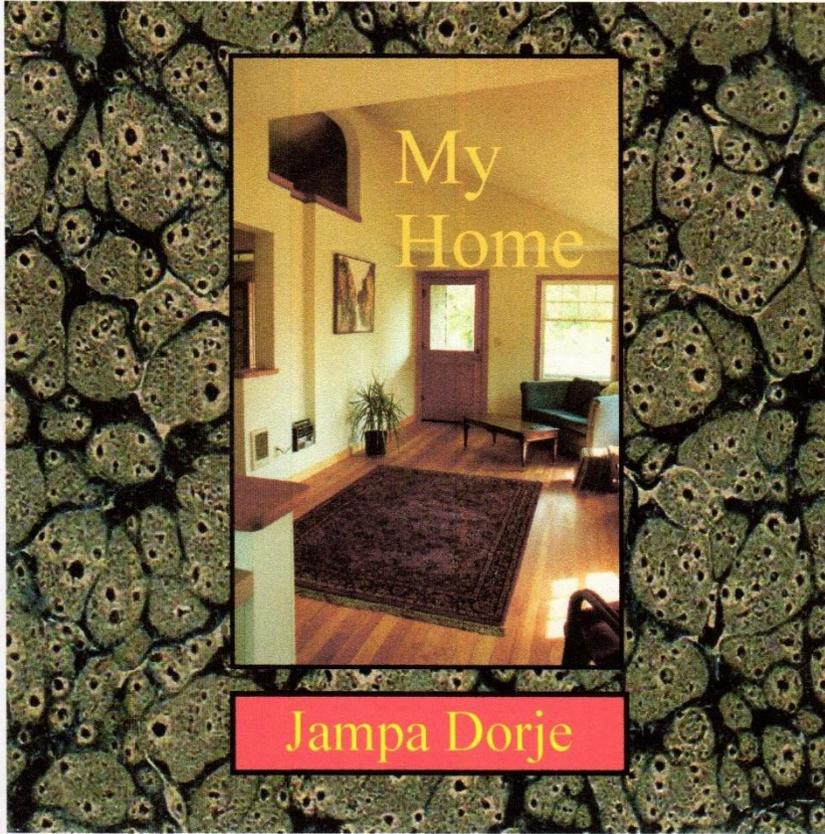
**DANCE MANDALA
ODYSSEY**

**TWO STORIES BY
JAMPA DORJE**

Jampa's adventures in

MENTAL INSTITUTIONS

Bouvard Pécuchet



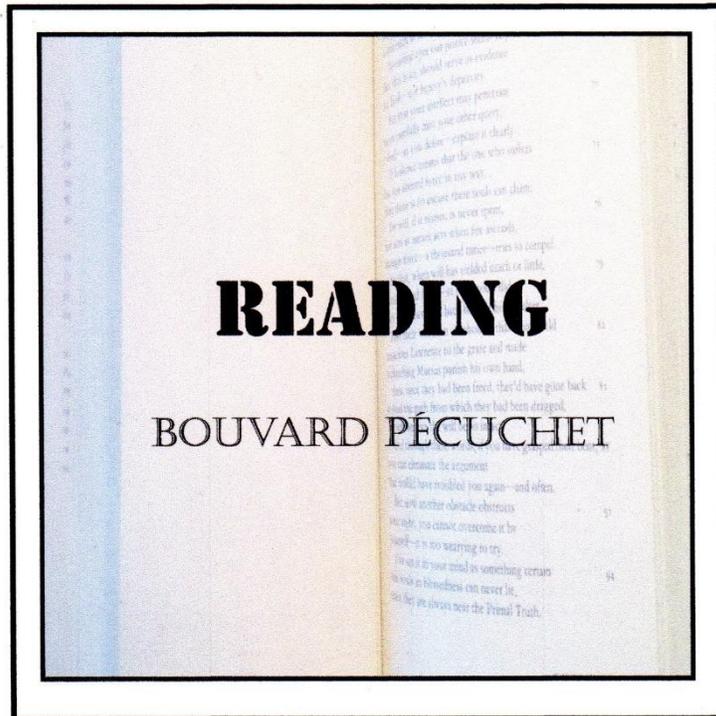
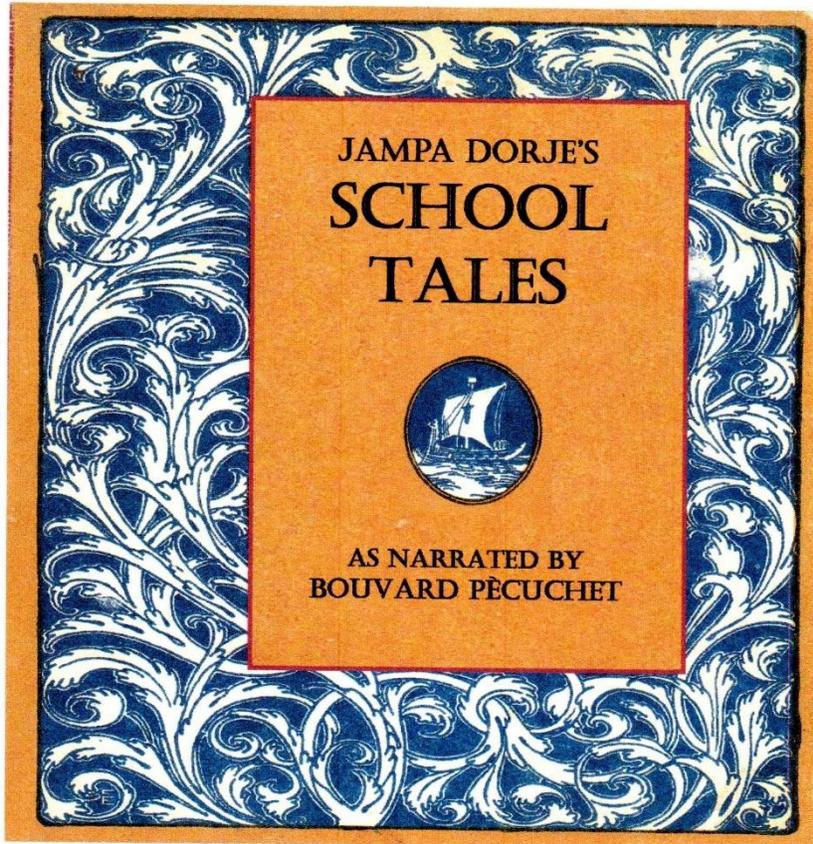
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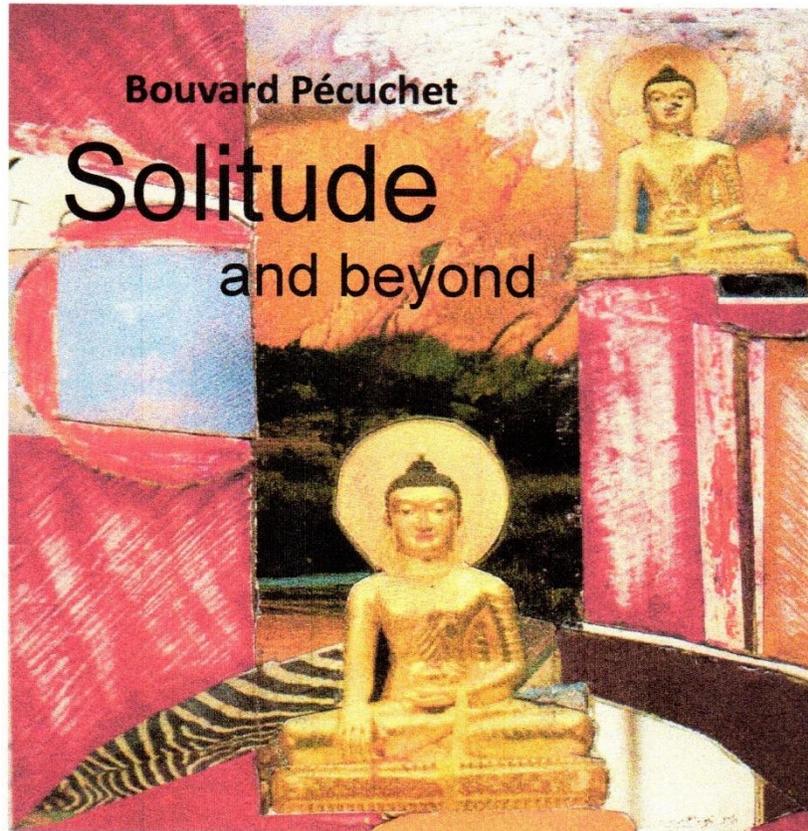


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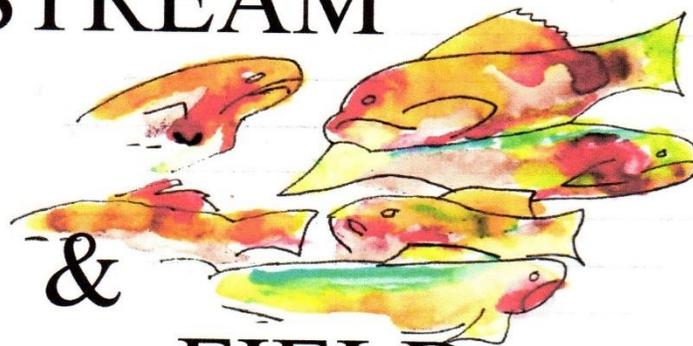
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