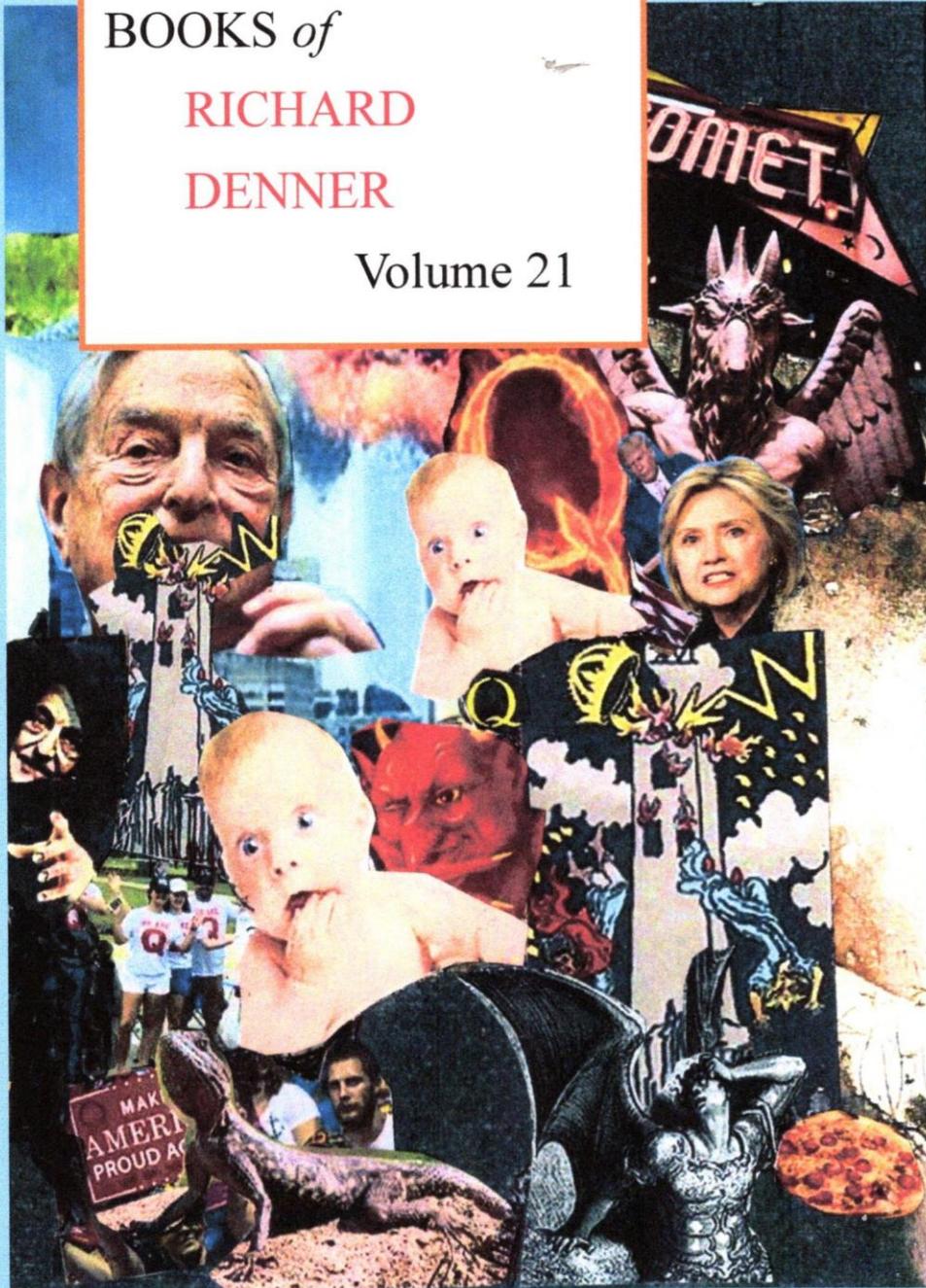


THE COLLECTED
BOOKS *of*
RICHARD
DENNER

Volume 21



THE COLLECTED
BOOKS of

RICHARD
DENNER

Volume 21



dPress 2021 Ellensburg

Morphemes in section
Lew, you and I know how love and death matter
Matter as wave and particle—twins
At the same business.
No excuse for them. Lew, thanatos and agape have no business
being there.

—Jack Spicer LANGUAGE (“Morphemics”)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Wu of Wu

A Hippie Guide to Caregiving Your Elderly Parents

Archive Art: Happy Readymades

Dithyrambic Ramblings in Times of Pandemic and Civil Unrest

A War Against the Unfavorable Maras

An Orphic Response to the Gamer’s Dilemma

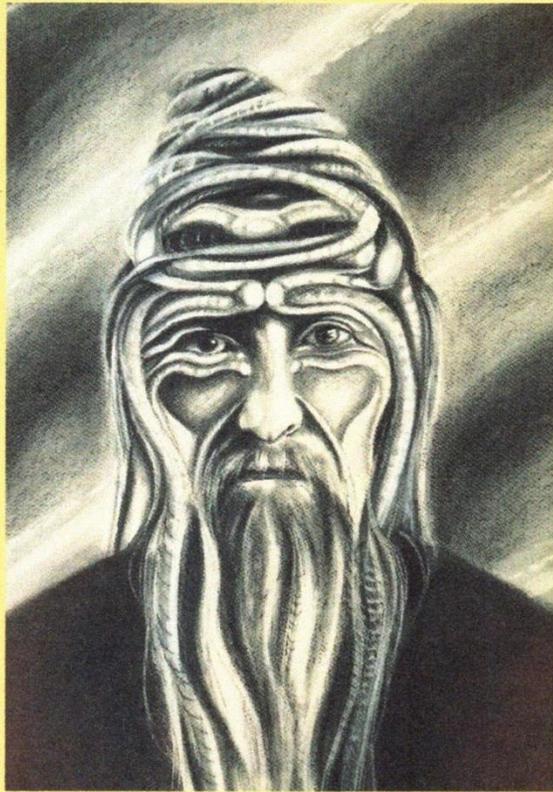
Modules

Two Essays

Socrates Revisited

Nietzsche in a Nutshell

Two Jampa Tales



JAMPA DORJE

THE WU OF WU

A HIPPIE GUIDE TO EASTERN MYSTICISM

WITH A PREFACE AND COMMENTARY
BY BOUVARD PÉCUCHE



JAMPA DORJE

THE WU OF WU

A HIPPIE GUIDE TO EASTERN MYSTICISM

Kapala Press

2020

Ellensburg



五

Painting of the author by Hannah Gunderson

An early version of this poem appeared in mimeograph form, as “Woodnotes” in 1970. It has been more recently collected in *Deep Bay: Works & Days*, dPress, Sebastopol, 2003 and in *Deep Bay; or Encounters in the Woods*, Kapala Press, Ellensburg, 2017. This version was prepared for Dr. Jeffrey Dippmann's Daoist Tradition Religious Studies class at Central Washington University, Winter, 2020.

DengXian font family for poem
Calibri for commentary
24# Beckett Sand Stone Vellum



PREFACE BY BOUVARD PÉCUCHE

The teaching that uses no words, the benefit of resorting to no action,
these are beyond the understanding of all but a very few.”

—*Tao Te Ching*, XLIII, Lau

Jampa has twice lived a hermit's life in the woods for extended periods of time. He lived as a householder with his wife and child, in a cabin in Tongass National Forest, near Ketchikan, Alaska, from late fall of 1968 until the summer of 1970, when he moved to Fairbanks to study philosophy and English literature at the University of Alaska. This retreat could be considered as an American transcendental literary retreat in the spirit of Henry David Thoreau.

At Tara Mandala Retreat Center, near Pagosa Springs, Colorado, from January of 2009 until August of 2013, Jampa practiced Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje's *Dzinpa Rangdröl* (*Self*

Liberation of Clinging, or Inherent Liberation of Fixation), a revealed mind treasure, under the guidance of Tulku Sang-nang, a Tibetan Vajrayana master. This was a solitary mountain retreat in the Nyingma Dzogchen tradition, Sealed in, snowed in, for the blizzardy winter months and for periods of one hundred days during the warmer weather, he documented his adventure in a series of poems, *A Book from Luminous Peak*, Kapala Press, Santa Fe, 2013.

Jampa is not one to be lonely, and when he is with people, he enjoys their company and is convivial. He accepts that “aloneness” is the human condition. On a deeper level, Jampa has found the “Self” who is lonely—nay, who is alone—is a phenom created by consciousness, and a self-liberated Vidyadhara (a knowledge holder and decoder of the symbols of the Supreme Secret Teaching) to which he aspires, can in no way be alone because the path he follows is well-blazed, and he feels the presence of the great masters to whom he often appeals for support.

Coming of age in the 1960s, in Berkeley, was an opportunity for Jampa to study with the first wave of Beat Zen Buddhists (Alan Watts & Co.) and be introduced to more Buddhism through the first wave of Tibetan refugees and the writings of western scholars and romance writers (W.Y. Evans-Wenz, Lama Anagarika Govinda, and T. Lapsang Rampa). Over the last sixty years, a great number of texts have been translated, which is a blessing for the world.

Coming to old age in the dharma is a also a blessing. Yesterday, basketball star Kobe Bryant died in a helicopter crash. So full of life was he! Made me contemplate existence, rebirth, immortality, and annihilation. Wise to be prepared on all fronts.

—Mojo Hotel, Valley of the Stars, January 27, 2020

Seek to realize the self—

the way, the poets say, is difficult.

We are situated in a cedar cabin

built on stilts over the water in a cove

a mile across Moser Lake from Deep Bay.

Our mail drop, Deep Bay 99901 with

mail arriving weekly from Ketchikan,

25 miles by plane weather permitting.

Mid-winter—there is four feet of snow.

Elizabeth and baby Theo and I,

helped by friends, take to the woods

after reading Bradford Angier's

How to Live in the Woods on \$10/Week.

Jampa lives with wife and child in frugal conditions. He practices the Dao based on both the eremitic standards of the Primitive lineages combined with an awareness of the Syncretic lineage of political involvement.

With my last paycheck, income tax return

and promise of employment insurance

we should make out—hoping that

by discriminating use of ecological resources

most of our material needs can be met—

Selfless means to a selfless end,

as Ghandi put it.

So around this complex
our routine flows—all activities
merge in the pursuit, which deepens
here in Deep Bay.

Jampa lives with wife and child in frugal conditions. He practices the Dao based on both the eremitic standards of the Primitive lineages combined with an awareness of the Syncretic lineage of political involvement.

Schedule remains firm.
Implementation of spiritual discipline,
Karma Yoga—wood and water
wood and water, wood and water.
Would you believe, wood and water?

Elemental—the meaning is subtle,
but we're only scratching the surface.
We have stored away necessary
supplies, several cords of wood
cut and split and stacked.
Now we improvise.

The *unchopped block* is the ideal, but a yogi must have a few of the fundamental comforts to survive in raw life and maintain tranquility.

Awoke to a 14 foot tide, high
enough to float a forty-footer off
an abandoned logging donkey.
Tied on and rowed it to shore,
breaking a rib in the dinghy near the stern.
Tied up and came in for a cup of tea.

Sometimes, I'm the ocean,
man-boat-ocean.
I wonder how hard the wind can blow.
Whips us from the east today.
Whitecaps in the cove, cedar bending.
Gulls motionless in the gale.

Knowledge from the East can be confusing. In contrast to pragmatism and utilitarian planning, spontaneity and improvisation are two pillars of action-without-action (*wuli*). Still, accidents happen, and anytime is a good time for a cup of tea.

Can we use up our desires?
Not that we don't have sense cravings.
Food is Number One God here.
And Shelter.

And the twin god, a good pair of Boots.

Made a mixture of vinegar, water,
cloves, onion, garlic, salt, mustard,
sugar, ginger for sauerbraten.

Put this mix and a venison roast
in a stoneware crock to marinate.

Here, we have advanced alchemy. Later, as a monk in retreat, Jampa ate *tsampa*, roasted barley flower mixed with yak butter and salt, and he felt, during his practice, that this humble fare was an ambrosial meal. Onions were forbidden but turnips were ok.

By the way, I'm told
Ramakrishna uses the simile of the ocean,
the ocean of *sat-chit-ananda*
the ocean of existence,
consciousness, bliss—dissolve
myself like a salt-doll in this ocean.

Lu Garcia writes from Berkeley,
“Things spin as they always spin.”

Jon Springer, at this time, finds it

“fetid in the Ukrainian ghetto of 6th St.”

How did I get from selling the Berkeley Barb
on Telegraph Avenue to this cabin?

The old personality breaks down, and
the world becomes pure—like Blake said,
as it is in infinity.

Salt dolls and spinning planets, the poet gets muddled in his atman/empty-of-self persona. Ukraine is a country east of Poland with beachfront on the Black Sea.

It is curious how some moves take
years to come about, but then
done with full support of mind & body
they move forward.

The wind gathers strength.
As weather delays delivery of oil,
as the Coleman stove is in parts,
we cook over a makeshift grate
in a Yukon oil drum heater—
Elizabeth achieves bliss of sourdough
chocolate cake, cerealmate bread,
venison stroganoff, and fern fronds.

Mind, body, and will power, or mind and body and being in the right place at the right time and recognizing the auspiciousness of the moment. Keeping to a strict budget is a requirement.

Living in the woods is a fruitcake idea.

Can others be influenced by seeing how
it's done?—expanding circle—friends,
town, state, country, galaxy, cosmos
returns me back to myself.

Snowflakes falling outside and in my mind.

The temperature, 40 degrees.

Nothing sticks.

Mind, body, and will power, or mind and body and being in the right place at the right time and recognizing the auspiciousness of the moment. Keeping to a strict budget is a requirement.

Tongass wildlife—

Sitka Black Tail Deer.

Eagles. Beaver. Bears.

Spawning salmon.

Much spirit life.

Still dark, I take to the woods.
When dawn cracks, I'm waiting.
I'm a good shot, felling my game
with a single round from a 30.30.
Death, sorrow, sort of unreal,
this tug of life and death.

But how else to become acquainted with Self and, as Thoreau puts it, “anticipate, not just the sunrise and the dawn merely, but, if possible, Nature herself?” (Henry David Thoreau, *The Portable Thoreau*, Penguin, New York, 2012: *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, p. 210.)

Repression, exploitation—
leaving the city to avoid the establishment,
and, in turn, I become the Man.

Good weather, one clear day in thirty
in this rain forest—ego hunting—lots
of weird animals in the mind—the mind
itself a crazy monkey.

Somewhere, the Governor of Someplace
makes money in real estate.

Dr. Leary attends Altamont, says
it's a lesson to be learned.

Vegetarianism is highly regarded in spiritual circles. Saliva and *qi* ingestion are more subtle dimensions of Daoist dietetics. Dzogchen yogis call it *eating air*. Jampa's lama put him on a caveman diet supplemented with green foods after his attempt to live on Top Ramen and chocolate cake.

Theo and I float in our boat, while far away

Neil Armstrong takes his giant step.

Hunt and fish, wood and water.

Today, eight crabs in the trap.

Cut and stacked cedar blocks,

using the tide to move them to shore.

I came indoors to paint the cabinets

until Theo knocked over the paint can.

Put him down for a nap and read

a few chapters of Thomas Á Kempis.

The approach taken in Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* emphasizes inner cultivation through withdrawal from the world, as opposed to an active imitation of Christ in the outer world. And what's a little spilt paint?

Field studies:

Periculum aquillium

a perennial fern, local species "hog braken"

substitute for asparagus.

Theo gets up early to pick the fronds.

Tiarella trifoliata

Quileut “gwaqwlatcyu’l”

three leaves (qwal’l=3)

Chew for coughs.

Equisetum arvense

“field horsetail”

Used by Quinault to regulate menstrual flow.

While reading this aloud to me, Elizabeth

starts her period. Spirit plant medicine.

We have no ailments in the woods

When we go to town, we catch

the Ketchikan crud.

One thing leads to the next. Cut through. Jump over. Let be. The master admonishes: “Leap into the boundless and make it your home!” (*Chuang Tzu Basic Writings*, translated by Burton Watson, page 44, Columbia University Press, New York, 1969.) Fern fronds are not half bad, but clam burgers take some getting used to.

A whirly-twirly, sunny day.

165 inches of rain, on average, per year.

10% chance of rain means 10 inches of rain.

Made ice cream and had mincemeat pie
á la mode.

These statistics reveal the poet's sense of the day's Dao moving from unity to differentiation to unity, again. *Ying /yang*, the astronomical is in the microcosmic. That's a lot of rain, but on a clear day, you can see forever.

Watched a sea otter dive for crab.

The sky Gualoises blue, the water
a shade of jade. Smooth as a mirror.

Buds and bugs and migrating fowl
signal Spring—

I feel like pulling the doors from the jambs,
but I'm afraid of the ceiling collapsing
from a ton of newspaper & mattress insulation.

Cut and split another cord of wood.

Supper of red snapper filets, scalloped
spuds, and sponge cake w/berry sauce.

We haven't seen a soul on the water
for days—grooving on the isolation.

The Heaven of Jade Clarity is the Spirit of Spring. The Daoist world view incorporates cosmology, theology, and biology. The French cigarettes are optional.

By kerosene lamp I read Lone Wolf Smith's
letters to the Daily News—

*Not one new goat trail here.
What for our Poor People and trollers
more rotten Pinks from Creeks
and let Coho go? Where o where
is Gov. Hinkels Better or Bitter way?*

Not sure I want improvements.
Sit and watch the deer on the beach,
watch them turn their heads, twitch
their ears suspiciously.
A little bird settles on a branch,
listen to it sing.

A bestseller: *The Dao of Raising Goats*. Ezra Pound said, "Poetry is news that stays news" (*ABC of Reading*). It all boils down to politics, say the Confucians. It all boils down to emotions, say the Poets. It all boils down to wonton soup, say the Daoists.



JAMPA DORJE



**A HIPPIE GUIDE TO
CAREGIVING YOUR
ELDERLY PARENTS**



A HIPPIE GUIDE TO
CAREGIVING YOUR
ELDERLY PARENTS

JAMPA DORJE



KAPALA PRESS
ELLENSBURG
2020

In memory of my parents

Samuel George Denner
April 7, 1900 - November 7, 1998
&
Helen Lenore Denner
May 6, 1909 - December 6, 2007

Married on New Year's Eve, 1938
In Portales, New Mexico

A Hippie Guide to Caregiving Your Elderly Parents has been previously published as
"The Episodes" in "*Sam*" by Jampa Dorje, D Press, Sebastopol, 2005.



EPISODE 1

I take the diapers to the garbage bin. I pin a pair of socks together with a safety pin so they won't get lost in the wash. So much depends upon details. Next, I fix a glass of warm water, a bowl of corn flakes with a soup spoon, and to help my dad swallow (what he calls *lubrication*), a bowl of applesauce. I reassure him that, yes, this is the *Clover* brand skim milk that he always uses, yes, non-fat-protein fortified-vitamin-A&D, yes. By this time, my tea is cold, and it's time to turn on the sprinklers in the garden.

The next step will be to help Dad get dressed and to make sure he is comfortable watching TV. His eyes are poor, and since he can only read the headlines, he likes to listen to the news stories after scanning the paper. I weave my personal routine into the fabric of my parents' way of doing things. It is essential they stay engaged in their own activities and take as much care of themselves as they can. This requires some strategy.

It would be quicker to do the dishes by myself. I could wash and put all the dishes away in the time it takes Dad to unload the dishwasher, but it is one thing he can do in the kitchen. He wants to help, so I organize the way to do this project a little differently. I want him to feel useful, and it's a good test of my ability to be flexible and not be attached to the job.

The dishes are done. I'll go to the mailbox and get the morning paper. The Press Democrat tells me the UPS strike continues. Small businesses are feeling the crunch. The postal service can't pick up the slack. There's lots of tension and talk. I need to locate a box that was sent to me from Colorado. Dad becomes terribly agitated about my need to

commandeer the telephone. He thinks the phone should be free for emergencies. Hard to convince him that this is an emergency. Later, he apologizes for being so rigid, but he can be a handful once he gets on one of his hobbyhorses.

Here is the episode of the separation of religion and business. One morning, I leave the house early to do *Chöd*, a Tibetan practice, and when I return, Dad is fuming about “religiontakingoverthebusiness,” meaning that somehow my practice was interfering with my responsibilities. Hard for him to understand that I had been working for an organization, Tara Mandala Retreat Center, that combined religious and commercial activities. He has begun to think there is a Buddhist coup underway, that there is a “suspicious influence” on my life that will ruin our business (read our family arrangement). He shouts that this fusion of church and state has been tried in other countries and failed. (Am I living in the Middle Ages?) He makes his point by pounding his cane on the floor, spittle forming at the corner of his mouth. He was a chief executive for State Farm Insurance. He is used to getting his way. But this is not a business meeting. This is going on in the family room, and part of the reason I have come home to stay is to mitigate these tirades, so that Mom doesn’t have to bear the brunt.

Here I am, bringing diapers to my main authority figure. This old man is not the villain. He is a person who worked hard his whole life, almost an entire century, to care for and protect his family. He has earned his retirement, but when he starts worrying about what’s to become of everyone and everything, the family trust, his files, the burial plot, he starts thinking in circles, repeating himself, until I want to run screaming from the room. He is not aware that dementia possesses him. It wears Mom out. She cries and threatens to leave. Then he fusses about being 98 years old, claiming this has only happened once and that we must forgive him, and things quiet down.

For awhile. I see that one of my roles here is referee. This is the longest I’ve stayed with my folks since I left to go to college 35 years ago. This couple has been married for nearly 60 years. Their relationship has its own dynamic. As a child, I was unaware of this dynamic, and as a young adult I didn’t pay attention. Now, I am immersed, embroiled, emplaced, and I am effecting changes, some subtle and some not so subtle.

After a recent knockdown, drag out bout concerning the historic *Proposition 13* of California Property Tax Law, I got up from the table and went in the next room to eat my muffin in peace. This precipitated an accusation that I was breaking up the family because I wouldn’t sit at the kitchen table with them. I tried to explain I did not want to discuss taxes and neither did Mom, and we were accused of ganging up on him and that she wouldn’t act like she was if it wasn’t for me and that he was standing in the way of everyone living their own lives and he should commit suicide and, damn it, he just wanted to have a little discussion about taxes.

My solution, separate them. Fix some breakfast. Chop up some onion and put it into the scrambled eggs. This could be exciting and new. Take their minds off the inevitability of taxes and death. Change the subject. Mom mentions a friend of hers from years past, and I ask if they visited us when we lived in Berkeley in the 40s, as I have a childhood memory of someone spending the night in the front room. I see a man taking off his shoe, a man because I can remember an argyle sock. She finds this funny, and she has a memory of when she was four years old, her brother a baby in their mother’s arms and her dad telling her mom never to rent a particular horse again because it was a mean horse, had mean eyes.

EPISODE 2

Around midnight I hear a thump in my dream—a wrecking ball, bouncing off the wall, a plane crashing through the roof, an avalanche, no, don’t freak, it’s only a tidal wave. I’m up in a flash because I know that it is Dad falling.

Sure enough, there he is on his back behind the door, laughing. I ask him what’s so funny, and he gleefully tells me about “a forest of huge trees and tiny houses, very neat and clean, with roads elevated above a field, so clear I could touch them.” A few simple images can seem profound in a dream. Terrifying or exhilarating, so much meaning, yet all just a touch beyond comprehension.

I check him for cuts and bruises. A scrape on his knee, a scratch on his cheek, a bump on his elbow. I help him to his feet. In the morning, his dizziness persists, so I make an appointment with his doctor. A little fussing about what color shirt and which hat, old or new slippers. Bring the car to the front of the house, back out the wheelchair, bump down the steps, and we’re on our way.

The tech at the clinic is gentle and instructive about the process. He helps Dad onto a platform for a scan. I’m reading a magazine. There’s a Gary Larson cartoon with cows in a classroom I don’t get. We wait for the computer to print out

the results. The photos show nothing irregular, no tumors or broken blood vessels, so the doctor feels that if Dad had suffered a stroke it would have been very small. The diagnosis seems to be that it is the continued deterioration of blood circulation due to hardening of the arteries. Old age. He's 98.

He has a good appetite, a good sign. Mom and I talk things over, trying to get a game plan for the next day, or we will be ground to dust by all of Dad's small needs, just getting him dressed, brushed, shaved, washed and polished.

At breakfast, he wants to tell me about driving a team of horses to the train station near his family's farm in Iowa. He had trained these horses from colts, and he was proud of them and felt he could drive them anywhere, sure they would co-operate. The steam from a locomotive spooked the team at a place where there was a telegraph pole, and they shied and bolted, one horse going on one side of the pole and one going on the other, stripping off their harness and smashing the yoke and tongue of the carriage. Scraped up the horses pretty good. He said it took a lot of coaxing to get them to pull again. After this experience, the horses were not of much use. Dad feels useless now that he can't walk and guilty for being a burden.

Important to be mindful of the luxury of my freedom of movement, of my control of my body, and my ability to care for myself. Sitting, standing, walking, eating, to be joyful. One minute everything is stable and clear and the next minute, stupid and wobbly. And fear gets up. Demons dance. Dad begins to worry his retirement benefits will stop. His company fail. Social Security go bankrupt. His savings run out. Somebody sue. A comet may strike. Martians invade. My legs are failing. I'm going blind. I can't hear. I can't have a bowel movement. Stark photographs.

This is going to take some getting used to. Mom can't handle it all, but there is no stopping her from taking the lion's share. Dad can take baby steps, stand and turn. He doesn't want his leg muscles to atrophy, so I help him walk, although he tires after a few steps. Depression sets in because he doesn't want to be helped. I hold his hand and tell him I love him and that I want him to relax and be with us if he is able.

I begin to see a change in his attitude like he has passed a barrier and put his trust in us to care for him. He seems humble. Quiet. Still wishes he could read the small print, but so do we all. I'm thankful for this incarnation and opportunity to gain wisdom and merit. Accepting the condition, "All offers subject to credit approval" found at the bottom of the page.

EPISODE 3

The day has been felled by a chainsaw of angry words. Turbulence and ragged voices. The *six perfections* out the window. The mystery of anger, desire, and ignorance rides on a riptide of self-interest, the flotsam of a family misunderstanding. Pick up the pieces, and go beyond the ideas and feelings. The universe is fundamentally abundant. Fears derive from an idea of scarcity—not enough time, not enough space, not enough food or enough love—all from the point of view of limits. Fear knows no frontier.

Easy to say this, sitting in the comfort of my family and the luxury of a suburban home, but the force of this fear is real whether it's in a place of affluence or one of poverty. Just what is enough? What amount of satisfaction will spur me to right action? What glut of misery will induce me to shun negative behavior?

Dad says that it is my intent to make Mom do an extra amount of work to cause her health to fail, which will put her out of the picture, and I will take hold of the family trust so I can distribute the family fortune to all my relatives. He squints his eyes, sucks in his breath with a hiss, and squiggles his upturned fingers like leeches. Mom shouts that all she is trying to do is remove the breakfast dishes from the table and that she doesn't like being told what she can or can't do and not to act like she is hired help, that she's been taking care of him for years because she wants to and that if he wishes to revoke the trust that is up to him because he won't get better care if he goes into a rest home. I raise my voice a few decibels and tell Dad not to badger Mom, and Dad takes this as a threat to his authority, and he reacts by telling me that my motives are impure.

To act in a way that benefits my dad, I need to look at this accusation. Being pissed off is counter-productive. Breathing deep, I can see I've missed an opportunity to defuse the situation because Dad is only looking out for Mom's best interest, and she has misread his tone of voice as an order. It's another case of Hearing Aid Wars. Sometimes, my parents get to talking on two completely different subjects with their voices getting louder and louder, and the feedback from the hearing aids makes a squealing like the speakers at a rock concert. Usually, I can help them sort it out, but this time I take the words personally and make matters worse.

Dad accuses Mom and me of conspiring, saying I have her twisted around my finger, and that he'll have to revoke the trust because he's lost confidence in us. Mom tells him to do as he damn well pleases, and she goes into the living room to cry. I try to smooth things out, but I wonder if I do this out of lovingkindness or because of the threat of disinheritance? Maybe a slow walk around the block will help me chill out. I'll let the purple rays come down from heaven and feel the red rays come up from the earth. I'll take a look at what's going on in the neighborhood. Fine brickwork being erected at the house on the corner. The pyracantha bushes are lush with berries this year. Robins love their fermented liquor in the spring. Oak leaves in the yards. Ghost and bat decorations and jack-o'-lanterns presage Halloween. Giant orange faces. Luminous trees. Autumn light.

I meditate on the fact that I am an adopted child. I entered through a womb door, but I was put into the bosom of a different family, parents who are generous, patient, and moral but are biologically different. In the six-ring circus of reincarnation, my life has been a cross between being on a flying trapeze and in an animal act—out of the flying pan into the lion's mouth. I can make light of my situation, but I am grateful to have had two mothers, one that gave me birth and one that nourished me into adulthood.

So, does an inheritance complicate matters? The money and property that my dad has is meant to keep my parents in comfort until the end of their days. I'm trying to be neither attracted nor repulsed. I'm trying to act for the benefit of Dad without self-interest, believing this is the natural way to act—kindly and, as much as possible, according to his wishes. At the same time, I am protecting my interests, which is, hopefully, enlightened self-interest.

I walk and relax. My goal is to have my anger liberate into clarity at the moment it arises. When I get back to the house, Dad is still in the same frame of mind. Looking at the bigger picture—he's half-blind and half-deaf, confined to his wheelchair with CNN being his only source of information about what's going on in the world—I am more understanding of his point of view. When Dad is having a fit of dementia, my trying to talk reasonably doesn't work because he refuses to listen, and my remaining silent and smiling and telling him to calm down just increases his frustration.

Then, nature takes its course. He has a sudden bowel movement and becomes totally discombobulated. I apply Oil of Olay Moisturizing Body Wash and give him a dose of Imodium Anti-diarrheal, and we are looking at a new man. The mind depends on the body and is conditioned by it. This shift of focus from mental activity to bodily functions changes the dynamic of our relationship. Perhaps a bowel movement and shower were all that was needed in the first place. At dinner, Dad is contrite and prays to remain calm and give everyone a chance. Where is the anger now? Washed away with a little soap and water.

CUTTING A SWATH

an old man pushes his wheelchair
and a clothes basket down the hall

he is slowly advancing to the laundry
with a plastic bag of soiled diapers

and with him the whole world comes

EPISODE 4

It's Veteran's Day. Dad was too young to fight in the First World War and too old for the Second World War. Born in 1900, he is a veteran of the 20th century, but today he is depressed he's helpless and a burden on his family. He has Mom dig out a file called *Choice In Dying*. He wants me to call his physician and ask if there isn't something that can be done to let him die peacefully.

Whose life is it? Dad feels it's his right to say, "Enough is enough. I've had enough of this suffering." But without getting into the concepts of sin and karmic retribution, it is necessary to impress on him that being half-deaf, half-blind

and dizzy does not constitute a terminal condition. Dad has strong moral convictions. He wants out but can't take his life. No contest, people should be able to die with dignity. The debate, however, is whether assisted suicide should be legal. It's not in California; and in Oregon, where it is legal, the FDA intimidates doctors with the threat of having their ability to write prescriptions terminated.

When should a person be able to die? Some believe it should only be done for terminally ill patients when the pain cannot be kept at bay with medication. This is *mercy killing*, however the precise meaning of euthanasia is *good death*, which can apply in a broader sense to people who are no longer willing to live, and which is based on an individual's right to control their body. Some believe no one has this right and that it is necessary to guard against the direction society might take to get rid of unwanted people. Some believe life should take a natural course, and the time of death is up to God.

My dad has put advance directives in place. A living will is on file, and I have durable power of attorney for health care stipulating he does not want to be resuscitated if his heart or breathing stops and that he does not want to be put on a life support system. I tell him, that other than this, about all he can do is write a letter to his congressperson and wait for a change in his condition.

To get his mind off this subject, I ask him to tell me about his youth. Mom and Dad and I are sitting at the breakfast table, and I put the tape recorder between us. These are his words:

My father was one of six brothers who came over. He was a small one who came over with his dad and lived in a small town near New Hampton (Iowa). I haven't had many occasions to visit, but there are a lot of Denners in that area. Dad was about the only one who didn't speak German. He was one of the youngest. After he married my mother, they settled around Mason City. Farming, they had 160 acres. The house was small, two stories; looked different than those today. It had an outhouse. No electricity. Electricity started to come in about the time of the automobiles. There weren't too many cars. We had horses. We broke horses. That's one of the jobs I had. We had these colts. I know I had a team of three-year-olds that I was quite proud of, well-broke and everything. One deal: of course, they weren't used to an engine on a train, and the engine came in pretty close to them, so they took a break and just straddled a telephone pole. A free-for-all broke out. All came home. Had to be more careful with them after that because of them going through that experience. Before that I could drive them most anywhere.

It'd be seven miles to town. I'd take a wagon, a big old wagon. I think it'd have some flaps down so you'd have some protection from the wind. My mother, she helped me an awful lot at that time. Inventories and all that stuff. And to pass an examination. I walked, I don't know, six miles or more to school, and I got up to where they had an 8th grade guy tutor me so I could pass an examination for high school and qualify for Iowa State. I had a little trouble getting into high school because I had to get some credit as I hadn't time to get very far.

Of course, I took kind of a fancy to breaking those colts. We always had colts, and I was proud of some of the horses I was training. I had a team of horses for several years, seven or eight. Of course, you'd sell some of them, but Dad was always very good about helping me getting into other things and gave me a lot of support.

Because I know I raised guinea pigs, and I raised skunks. I had all kinds of things I did to make a little money. That's what it was at that time. I never got back to Iowa very much, and I kind of lost track of people back there. I know I stayed at my aunt's place in town when I was going to school, so I could get through high school, graduating so I could get into Iowa State. 1920. I remember I was in charge of our group to graduate and go to college. Not too many folks went to college. None of my dad's brothers went to college. The other brothers were older. They were more strictly German.

When The War came, I got involved in a lot of war activities, and my dad was very active. I don't think he qualified. I didn't have any trouble (being German). There was some of that. One brother was in business in New Hampton. The rest of them were all farmers. German wasn't our language at home. I know I was always on the side of the United States. They all spoke German, but I think they kind of resented (what the Germans were doing in Europe).

I got so involved shipping different kinds of livestock. Skunks were only one. They made me keep them away from the house. But there were other animals that were very popular and expensive at that time. I raised groups of mink, and I'd always raise up groups so I'd have some so I could sell. That's one

thing the folks were always very helpful about helping me in other things in little profits. They were more so than some of my cousins. My cousins just about all spoke German at home.

High school, I graduated 1920. Then, college. The first job that I had, I was on the faculty in North Dakota. I remember the staff would go out and stop at various places and help some of the outlying places with their agriculture. I had a start in the county, what you call a district agent, or district group, and I had those groups several places in Iowa.

Dad was one of the first ones to have an automobile. It was in the garage a lot of the time because they'd have to break up the snow that covered everything. Sometimes, you'd only be able to see the horse's ears over the pile of snow they'd shovel out of the tracks.

I'm wondering what was happening on the farm on November 11, 1918, so I look in an old farm journal:

Shipped calf weighed 160 lbs, sold	17.50
Shipped calf weighed 150 lbs, sold	12.50
Cream money, Price 63¢.32.04
Sold 44 lbs beef 11¢.	4.85
Sold 31 lbs cowhides 4¢.	<u>1.24</u>
	\$55.63

Expenses:

5 gal gas.	1.49
crackers.25
stove pipe.	1.95
qt of oil for car.30
pd note (S.N.B.).	50.25
Sam	100.00
3 pair socks	1.00
licence for Buick.	27.00
G.E. Wilkins tax.	59.47
tobacco & candy.20

A note in the margin: Corrosive Sublimate ½ ounce, lard 2 ounces for lumpy jaws on cattle.

Tucked inside the journal, a letter from the U.S. Employment Service, Dept. of Labor, which reads:

This is to certify that Sam Denner has been duly enrolled as a member of the United States Boys' Working Reserve for farm labor, and will be allowed to wear the official badge after proving his fitness by actual service for the prescribed period, and subject to the rules of the RESERVE. Attested and Dated, April 8, 1918.

Mom says she remembers the day the war ended. She was eight years old. Her mom put her on a horse and sent her to the fields to tell the men the war was over. "They all came in, all except Dad. He stayed to shuck corn, and the rest went into town to drink and throw their hats in the air and shoot holes in their hats and do silly things like that. We lived near Colfax, Illinois, and I remember it because it was such a cold day."

EPISODE 5

The front door is rattling. There's a storm. Thunder. An explosion. Terrorists have detonated a bomb in San Francisco. Thunder. A storm. The front door is rattling. I'll go back to sleep. No, there's someone at the front door. A thump in the hallway. Who could it be? Dad? Sure enough, there he is in his pajamas, barefoot, careening from wall to wall with his arms out in front of him.

"Dad, let me help you back to bed."

"I was having this dream. I was in this house that was trashed; there were squirrels. I dreamed..."

"OK, don't wake Mom up; sit down in this chair; and tell me about your dream."

"I dreamed I was getting some fellows lined up. I was supposed to get three of them. I could get eight on one of those things because there was one room in that house that was just junk, and I forgot to look there. I was supposed to do eight in one of those big boxes, and I told them I couldn't do it, and I guess I wasn't in my right senses because there was one there right in that box. So, they just fired me, I guess, and I couldn't get any explanation, and I couldn't do anymore with them because they said I was in trouble because I did not resign or anything, and I guess they just went off and left me, and so I just had to rely on Helen. Did you say she was getting dressed?"

"Dad, it's still early, and everyone is asleep."

"And I just worked her to death. She had to get up every fifteen minutes so I could urinate and change my pads, so I tried to get up, but she needed more sleep, and so I went back to bed, and I tried to stay in bed as long as she wanted to stay in bed, because she had just had it, and I was afraid she'd just keel over, and I'd be stuck for good because what they wanted to do was put me in one of those box things, and I would have had no way of getting in touch with anybody."

"Dad, it was a dream you were having."

"They just had me locked up some way there, and that's not a very good thing to look forward to, but I was kind of disturbed because I didn't get those cross pictures. The fellows that were working on that thing, each fellow was going to get boxes with three of those things lined up there, and I don't know whether I dreamed this or not, but they told me to get eight on there, but I couldn't find any, and there was this big old empty room where all there was was all this used stuff, used planes; there was this long one, and somebody said I had to get something for the company, and you didn't hear anything about what I was supposed to be doing, did you?"

"It was your dream, Dad. I couldn't hear it. These boxes, what shape were they?"

"What station, do you mean?"

"No, what shape were the boxes?"

"Oh, they were just little, that these things were in, some of them were just in tubes. I don't see them right here now, but these little boxes they have by the plane with the things that get all the connections for each one."

"Like an airplane? Like a plane that flies? or a plane to smooth wood?"

"Well, they get whatever they get on TV. They got some of these fellows lined up, and they're supposed to get frogs to take this, so they use this stuff on the planes, and there are those on each box, and my box was just a square box with probably an S on it, one of the boxes with my name, and I was afraid I was going to create an open box, and I would be stuck."

"Dad, are you thinking about a coffin?"

"Toxin?"

"You know, after you die, they put you in a coffin, like a box, a coffin."

"No, just a little box that has these things in them, that have got these signs to get all the parts of the station..."

"Like a computer?"

"Like a small computer, and I was getting some boxes for one of these fellows, and most of them just have three of them in each box."

"Three what? Three computers?"

"Three computers...they have the telephone thing there where they can get calls for people and line them up to use one of these theater street boxes that had paper telephones, you know, that they used, and I was getting some for one of these fellows, and there were three of them in one package with little phones to use, and I don't know if I dreamed this or not, but I was helping this one fellow, and I got a bunch of three that I was supposed to get, and in one of these I was supposed to get seven or eight of them in one of them, these two with four each, and I didn't get it because I couldn't find the one that had a total of eight, and it was right there in that same room, but I just couldn't think of it because it was in this spare room that had all this stuff in there, and that was the only fellow that had these that I couldn't find, so they were going to fire me, and I don't know what happened to them because I kind of lost track."

"That might have been when I woke you up in the hallway."

"Probably was, but I didn't realize...I felt so bad because I wore Helen out, and she had to change pads for me, and I couldn't get this thing...I don't know what her plans are today, but I'm stuck if she takes the car anyplace or should go or can go, and I don't know if she's back there or not...HELEN...HELEN..."

"Hold on, Dad, let her finish sleeping. Let me get your wheelchair, and I'll fix you something to eat."

I'm becoming anxious. I'm a little slow on the uptake until I've had my cup of tea, but I'm sensing trouble. I get Dad moved into the kitchen without any fuss, but he doesn't want his usual corn flake and *Cheerio* mixture, so I try my hand at some *Cream of Wheat*, but it comes out thin and lumpy. I start over, stirring it continuously as it cooks, and this seems to be the right technique. I heat some applesauce in the microwave and cut a sweet roll into bite size pieces. I can tell by the set of his jaw that Dad is agitated, and this flurry of activity is creating a tense rapport between us. I make sure he has a full service of utensils, knife, fork, salad fork, soup spoon, tea spoon, and I bring warm water from the tap, just like he likes it. I leave him to his breakfast and go check on Mom. She's sleeping soundly, so I return to the kitchen.

"Don't you want any breakfast?" Dad asks.

"Dad, I never eat this early. I only want a cup of tea."

"I always have to have breakfast. It was important on the farm."

"I know; I'll have a cup of tea with you." I heat a cup of spring water, add some loose-leaf black tea to a bamboo tea strainer, and wait for it to steep.

"Where's Helen?"

"She's sleeping."

"I want to talk to her."

"She needs to sleep, Dad. She was helping you every couple of hours last night. If you want to be less of a burden, then let her sleep."

"Is she all right?"

"She'll be all right if she gets some sleep."

"Push me in there, so I can see her."

"All right, but we don't want to wake her." I push him down the hallway to the door of the bedroom, and in a loud voice he begins calling, "HELEN, HELEN," so I pull him around the corner and into his den and tell him to keep quiet or he'll wake her, but he says he thinks there's something wrong with her, that she needs to be taken to the hospital, and he starts to dial 911, but I stop him and set the phone out of reach.

"Dad, you're over-reacting."

"She can't hear me. She must be sick. HELEN...HELEN..."

"Dad, calm down. It's OK. She can't hear you because she doesn't have her hearing aids in, and she needs to catch up on her sleep."

"HELEN...HELL..EN."

This is not funny. He is off on one of his tirades. I decide to wheel him back into the family room where he will be less likely to wake the neighborhood, and I shut the door to the bedroom.

"What are you shutting up the house for. I'm not ready for that."

"Please, just quiet down, please."

"And I thought I could trust my son. Now, I've lost all confidence in you. It's a revocable trust, and you're just waiting to get me out of the way so you can divide up everything."

"Dad, calm down. Don't start on all this again. If it will make you any happier, you can take me out of the trust or whatever you want to do."

"Sure, sure, you're going to put me in one of those places."

"You just may have to go to a rest home if you keep throwing these fits, but you won't like it because you won't get the kind of care you're used to."

"I need to see Helen."

Mom appears at the door in her bathrobe. "What is it?"

"Helen, we need to phone the lawyer and change the thing so they won't get all of it and we be left as paupers. I made a mistake, and since I can't see to read the small print, they can get in there and..."

"Sam, what are you talking about?"

"He's worried about the trust again. I tried to keep him in this room so he wouldn't wake you, but now he's all worked up about the family trust."

"Sam, we will make an appointment, and you can make all the changes you want, but just let me get dressed first."

Following Mom down the hall, I tell her of the morning's events. "I heard him moving about and found him sleepwalking and talking about squirrels and frogs and phones in boxes. I don't know what he was dreaming about, maybe being put in his coffin and wanting a cell phone so he could stay in touch. I don't know. At any rate, I'm sorry he got so uptight. He thought you needed an ambulance, and I wouldn't let him phone 911, and you know how he hates to have his authority overridden, and now he's going on about the trust again. I figured you were in need of sleep, or I would have awakened you."

"Well, now I'm up, so let me get dressed, and we'll take it from there. Looks like it's one of those days."

When I get back to the family room, Dad has pulled his wheelchair up to the sliding doors and is waving his hands trying to get the attention of the gardener. Paul mows the lawn once a week, and he has on his sound mufflers and is totally oblivious to the pandemonium going on around him. I pull the chair back from the window hoping to avoid a public spectacle, but this only increases Dad's resolve to lash out, and he grips the door sill with tremendous strength, and I nearly pull the chair out from under him in the struggle. Mom comes back to the fray, and I retreat, hoping she can bring a calming influence, but Dad is not to be mollified. Chill. I go to my bedroom and repeat Vajrasattva's mantra to bring my emotions under control.

Back in the family room, Mom, on the verge of tears says, "You can change that damn thing any way you want, but I'm not changing mine. So, do as you damn well please. I don't want to hear any more about it."

"When does this change take effect," Dad asks, "at the first of the year?"

"What change, Dad?"

"When your organization takes control."

"What organization?"

"You know."

"No, Dad, what are you talking about?"

"Now, that I can't take care of myself, that I can't get around, see the fine print..."

"You mean whether or not you are mentally competent?"

"The fine print..."

"Dad, the family trust doesn't change just because you have trouble taking care of yourself. That's what we're here for, to help you through to the end."

"I don't want those millionaire lawyers to get in here and make it go through prostate."

"No, we don't want that, really, not through prostate, we don't." I'm having a hard time keeping a straight face, but I have an idea. "Let me get the papers, and I'll show you how it's set up."

After I bring the documents back from the file cabinet in the den, I sit and read a few lines and tell him it says that in case of his demise, all his worldly goods go to Mom and, after Mom dies, then to my sister and me. He and Mom are the trustees. He shouldn't worry about losing his position. I let him sit with the papers in his lap, and I go into the living room to talk to Mom. There is a bruise forming on her hand where Dad gripped her too tightly, and I counsel her that I think we ought to phone Dr. Shaefer and ask him for a tranquilizer to help Dad mellow out. She agrees and goes into the bedroom to phone.

The doctor returns her call in a short while, and I get on another line, and after Mom has talked with him some, I give him my impressions. He says that he understands and will call in a prescription. Later, when I pick it up at the counter of the drug store and look at the label, I wonder if I've gone into a space warp when I read, *Haloperidol, take one tablet twice a day in the left eye as directed*. I ask to see the pharmacist, and when he comes to the counter and reads the label, he apologizes profusely and returns to his mortar and pestle. Bustling back in a few minutes, he instructs me on the use of this drug. He says the dose is small, but that it is a strong anti-psychotic drug with the effective dosage varying from patient to patient. He cautions me that there might be considerable side effects, like *Tardive Dyskinesia*, a syndrome characterized by rhythmical involuntary movements of tongue, face, mouth or jaw. This might manifest as protruding of the tongue, puffing the cheeks, puckering the mouth or chewing movements, and sometimes movements of the hands and feet can accompany these. Normally, he explains, only one or none of these occur, and that if a satisfactory response is achieved, the dosage can then be gradually reduced to an effective maintenance level. However, he adds, the pills must be taken orally and not to put them in the eye.

By the time I get back to the house, Dad has repeated his need to see his lawyer and relayed his fears of being sent to a rest home so many times his voice is hoarse. Mom administers one dose of *Haloperidol*, which he takes with a piece of soda cracker and a little water, and we set him up in his padded chair in front of the TV. I turn on CNN and

throw up the menu so I can turn off the speakers. I set a folded washcloth on top of his snow-white hair and place the earphones on his head. I always feel a certain combination of impish glee and pontifical respect in this operation. The washrag is put under the headphones to keep them from sliding around on his head. Mom is working on a special yarn beanie with crocheted grooves for the headset, but the cap is not perfected, and the washrag will do for now. He looks like a cross between a court jester and WW II fighter pilot, but once the cap is finished, he'll look more like a ham radio operator at a bar mitzvah.

The drug takes effect, and he begins to nod out, so Mom and I help him to lie down, and in a little while he is sleeping. He sleeps steadily through the afternoon, and at dinner he is drowsy and his speech is slurred. He says he wants to watch TV after dinner, but it isn't long before he's nodding again, so we put him back to bed. Mom reports she only had to help him once during the night and that she watched him moving his hands around in front of his face. I tell her it is only the effect of the drug and that he is probably learning to *trip* in his mind.

On the evening news, there's a report of a forty-foot tree just down the road from our house that was struck by lightning and splintered from end to end during the storm.

EPISODE 6

"These pajamas are too light a color."

"You've been wearing light colors all your life. Besides, who is going to see them?"

"It's kind of pale. Kind of white."

"Every season they come out with different colors than the year before. You'll just have to get used to them. We're lucky we could find any in the material and style you like."

"I guess you're right. They seem a little tight."

"Well, after they're washed a couple of times, they loosen up about a mile."

"That's all right."

"Sit down, and we'll find a pair of socks for you."

I'm coming along with a clothesbasket of things from the laundry, and I say, "Here's a pair."

Dad says, "No, those are too tight. I tried those."

"Maybe they're mine," I say.

Mom says, "Could be; I wouldn't be surprised by anything." She goes into the bathroom to get a washcloth to wash Dad's hands and face. Meanwhile, I start making the beds.

"Gosh, I don't know how you do it, Rich. You do all that stuff. You get in there, and you sure get everything going. You know how to do it. It all comes out looking so good."

"Why, thanks, Dad. Mom showed me how to do it. She says it took her years to perfect this bed making technique. So, it's a tried and true recipe."

"Well, it sure works when you get in it at night and the covers pulled up."

Mom has a wash cloth. "Let me wash your face. You don't seem to be dripping so much today. You look pretty super."

I help him stand and put on his robe. He always seems to get one arm into the seam instead of the sleeve. "So, there you are, new pajamas, new robe, shiny shoes, hair combed. Your chair, sir, and off we go."

So far, so good. Maybe this new tranquilizer Dad is on will elevate his mood. Drugs are not the answer, but they have their uses. Finding the maintenance level will take a little time, but I think it will make things easier on Mom and me and, in turn, on Dad, if we can avoid these outbreaks of temper.

Christmas Day. Dad wheels himself into the front room, and in a grumpy voice he says, "We should not have put up that tree. It's some kind of freak."

"Jeez, Dad, what's with you? It's just a small artificial tree Mom bought to use at a Christmas bazaar. She said that everyone admired it and wanted to buy it, but she didn't sell it because it's so handy to have at home. And, besides, we don't have to go out and cut down a live one. It looks nice with all the handmade ornaments Lynda made."

"I made a mistake," Dad says. "I shouldn't have opened my presents. People come to visit, and they want to see the way they're wrapped."

“Dad, it’s Christmas morning, and we’ve always opened our presents Christmas morning since we were kids.”

“Well, there aren’t any kids here now. We shouldn’t have put up this tree. What will people think?”

“People? What they will think is it’s Christmas morning, and we have opened our presents.”

“I’d like to get myself...if I could eliminate myself...if I could get out of here, it might help some. We have to break this thing down. It can’t continue like this.”

“What thing? This tree? What?”

“If I could just eliminate myself...”

“Wouldn’t it be better to try and be of use? You ask to be put out of the way, but wouldn’t it be better to ask what you could do to be of use?”

“It’s a round-robin thing. It’s wearing Helen out, and I don’t know how in the hell we ever got going on this, and if I could get out of the picture, it might help some. Helen can’t continue like this, and I don’t know what to do about it.”

“Dad, Mom and I are perfectly content taking care of you, and she says that she had a good night. This morning, it’s you that is saying you’re depressed. That makes it hard on Mom because she doesn’t like to see you depressed. So, if you felt better about yourself, it would help her also.”

“But it’s an impossible thing.”

“What is?”

“To get out of this circle.”

“What’s the circle? You mean these spells?”

“Changing these pads and getting up and down and...”

“Do you want to know how you can relieve some of the stress?”

“I can’t...”

“Can you hear me? Do you have your hearing aids turned on? Turn them on. There, I heard them squeak. Do you want to help Mom?”

“I sure do.”

“Do you want to do that in a practical way?”

“The practical thing would be for me to get out of here.”

“No, that’s not a solution. You have to let go of that solution. That’s not something that helps.”

“Do you have any suggestions?”

“Yeah. First of all, it has to do with your fear of being old and having the symptoms, and you would do well to accept that this is a natural process and necessary and that we’re here to help and that this is what we want to do.”

“We can’t keep going indefinitely.”

“That’s something that will change in time; it will be a natural thing, the way it happens. You can’t push it.”

“Helen has been so good to me, and I feel I’m to blame for the whole damn thing.”

“I want you to understand that you taking all that responsibility on yourself depresses you and makes matters worse. It makes it harder for us to take care of you.”

“If there was just some way...”

“No, we can’t help you to die. That’s something that will happen in time. And it doesn’t help any by being depressed that you need care, that we’re here to give you care. And it costs less, and it’s better for the family to be together here at home, so Mom and I don’t have to worry about you in a rest home where you’d be unhappy. You feel unhappy here, but in a rest home you would want Mom to be there all the time to change your pads, so you don’t win out by making it impossible for us to take care of you here. You would be making it harder on us. So, if you want to make it easier on us, you have to try and be happier here...and there’s not a lot in between. Do you want to think about that a little bit?”

“Think about what?”

“Ok, I’m going to tell you again, ok? This is the way it is—if you go to the rest home, you’re going to be unhappier than you are here.”

“Well, I tell you, I’m going to have to get out of it, whatever it is. I think that’s what I’ve got to do first is get out of the way here.”

“See, what happens when you go to a rest home is that you want Mom to come and give you her special care, and that’s harder to do going to the rest home everyday to give you all that care than it is to do it here. You could make it easier all around by being less worried; I mean, like you worry about every little thing, and the worry wears people

down. If you tried to just enjoy yourself more...you don't want to die depressed, do you?"

"If there's any single way to die, that's what I want to do."

"How about dying happy? Remember the lines by Dylan Thomas, *Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light*. But also, DON'T WORRY! BE HAPPY!"

"It's a darn gone mess is what it is."

"I don't know. This is like the play, 'No Exit.' I don't think being nauseated and depressed will make the end come any sooner. I mean, sooner or later, you will die. So, try and be happy in the process. Mom's happy. I'm happy. We just can't seem to make you happy."

"I know; that's the trouble. That's the whole darn trouble. The trouble is that...it's a mess."

"Dad, you see it as a mess, but we see it as our job. We take care of you because we love you, and that's what we do. We have a house over our heads. We have food on the table. We have things that make our lives comfortable, and it's all due to you. You worked hard for all of it. What's the point in throwing it away?"

"What...what's the best thing for me to do?"

"To let us take care of you. To relax a little bit and enjoy your last days. To try and relax and enjoy what life you have without feeling guilty."

"I don't want to destroy the lives of other people."

"I know your intentions are good, but you don't understand that you're making it harder by being unhappy."

"If there was just someway..."

"If there was, I know, but there isn't; so for now, it would be good to relax, and I'll talk with Mom, and we'll look into what it would cost to put you in a rest home, and we'll have a family discussion about all that, OK?"

"Ok...I want you to know I'm proud of my son. You do so much around here to make things work. I don't know how I deserve all you and Helen do for me. I started way back there on the farm, and I never thought I'd have all this comfort at the end."

"Thanks, Dad; that means a lot to me. It's about the best Christmas present a guy could get."

DIMINISHING OPTIONS

Neanderthal took his peculiar stones
And Pharaoh his throne and gilded boat.
I'll be buried with my TV and remote
As well as a cell phone to keep in touch.

EPISODE 7

Feelings of frustration, anger. Moments of depression, claustrophobia, fear of being ground under. Sometimes, I forget why I'm in Santa Rosa. I get caught up in my own projects and miss the point. I'm here to help my parents.

Dad can be very tiresome. He has his good and his bad days. If he isn't having some kind of paranoid delusions, he's perfectly content with getting up, having three meals, putting on his headphones and watching CNN endlessly repeat itself. During the night, he has to be helped to the portable potty by his bed, change his absorbent pads and put on fresh pajamas. I assist my mom. Mom is used to this, and with the aid of a wooden step I built and an aluminum handrail, she can usually get him back to bed without much fuss. She says she's been doing this for five years and is used to being awakened and then going back to sleep.

Dad's personality goes through changes. I've written about some of these episodes. I'm not sure if it is from the pain medicine or slime on the neurons of the brain or a moon phase or biorhythms or a tendency towards schizoid behavior or just the natural progression of a worrisome line of thought.

He gets to thinking about some detail, and he can't let go of it. There was an account for the burial plots that the State required to be changed because there had been no activity, so the money was moved from one bank to another and re-deposited, but he can't be sure. I dig out the papers from his file cabinet, lay them out on a card table in front

of him, and show him the transaction any number of times until he's satisfied. He can't see to read anything smaller than the headlines, and he's worried there's some fine print he's going to miss that will jeopardize his situation.

He awakes from an afternoon nap and asks, "What am I going to do with the stock?"

Mom says, "I can't understand you. Are you looking for your socks? You have them on. I'll change them for you."

I say, "I think he said 'stock'. Maybe, he's been rounding up cows in a dream." Then, I remember that it was a day of heavy trading on Wall Street. Another record high for the Dow. I'm sure he has a vivid memory of Black Thursday—the day the stock market crashed in 1929. He told me he remembers the infamous Halloween Night broadcast by Orson Welles of *The War of the Worlds* and that it was very spooky. Given this event was followed by Adolph Hitler and World War II, it's no wonder that after I change the channel from CNN to TCM to watch George C. Scott in 'Patton' blast his way across France towards Berlin shouting, "I'm going to bury that damned paperhanger," Dad says he's seen so much of this in his lifetime, he doesn't want to see anymore of it. I fully understand. I turn it back to see n' en to see if the president has kept his pants on today.

One evening, Dad and I watched the San Quentin Drama Production of 'Endgame' by Samuel Beckett. Dad was riveted to the screen. The main character, Hamm, is a blind, old man who mostly dominates center stage in his armchair. His adopted son, Clov, who is his lackey, attends him. Two other characters, Hamm's parents, Nagg and Nell, are contained in two barrels and make brief appearances. This is classic Theatre of the Absurd, a mournful and distraught masterpiece, a mixture of lyricism and angst—an open wound of existential despair.

The scene: bare interior, gray light, two small windows, Hamm in his armchair on castors covered with an old sheet and the two ash bins containing Nagg and Nell. After a brief tableau, Clove speaks, "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished (Pause.) Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap. (Pause.) I can't be punished any more. (Pause.) I'll go now to my kitchen, ten feet by ten feet by ten feet, and wait for him to whistle me. (Pause.) Nice dimensions, nice proportions, I'll lean on the table, and look at the wall, and wait for him to whistle me."

The mystery of Being and the dynamics of relationship. The experience was so pointed, so acutely like the actual reality of our situation, I was amazed when Dad turned to me and said, "I don't need to watch this. I'm aware there are these changes."

I portray myself as having a combination of acceptance and transcendence in my attitude about my dad, but there is definitely another side to this picture. Sometimes, I feel I can agree with him when he says he's lived too long and is nothing but a burden on his family and he's keeping everyone from getting on with life. These feelings arise after I've been involved in a tense interaction with him.

I slapped his hand the other day because he was jabbing his finger in my face and accusing me of turning Mom against him because she told him she had reached the end of her tether and had begun to bark at him. This was understandable, since she had been up umpteen times during the night. She told me she could understand how someone could take a baseball bat and bash in a person's head. I was taken aback. This is really extreme for her. She's always right on track—kind, considerate, mellow, and with a sense of humor.

Dad, too, is usually agreeable, but he doesn't tell you what he wants, and he doesn't always like what he gets. He says, "Whatever is easiest for you," and I say, "Well, nothing is easiest; just tell me what it is you want." He wants me to be comfortable, but he's so insistent that I have a pillow, that the TV is turned towards me, that I become uncomfortable with the fuss. It's infuriating.

This all seems insignificant as I write about it, but the accumulative effect is intense. Gertrude Stein opens *The Making of Americans* with a story about a son carrying his father across a field on his shoulder, and the father shouts, "Stop, stop, I only carried my father as far as that stump." I can relate to this because I'm, also, a son and a father. On one hand, who can really be trusted? And on the other hand, how much control can be exerted without being oppressive?

I apologize to Dad for slapping his hand, and he apologizes for the things he said. I realize he doesn't know, at the time, that he's having one of his fits, and I know this is no excuse for parent abuse. I love the guy. We talk, shake hands and calm ourselves.

I sit on the patio and do my practice: *The Sadhana of the Wish-fulfilling Wheel of White Tara*. I take refuge, generate *bodhicitta* and meditate on emptiness. I dedicate the merit of my practice to all sentient beings and try to integrate the calm state into my daily life. Who deserves more lovingkindness than those who gave me nourishment as a child? What better place to find spaciousness than where I live? What better time to accomplish the dharma than while I care

give my parents?

“Dad, tell me that story about the horses breaking loose, again. I bet that was an amazing sight.”



Jampa Dorje in The Cloisters, 2006

Photo by Jillian O'Connor







**Dithyrambic Ramblings in a Time
of Pandemic and Civil Unrest**



Jampa Dorje's
Dithyrambic
Ramblings
During a Time
of Pandemic &
Civil Unrest

Kapala Press

2020

Ellensburg

Front cover photo is a screen shot of a video of Black Lives Matter demonstrators in Washington D.C.

Back cover and title page photos from the movie, *Fertilichrome* (1989),
a Stimco-Velvetone production, written and directed by Shawn O'Neill.



Doubtless one should put oneself in the position of an imaginary traveler who came upon these writings
as if they were a lost manuscript and, for want of supporting documents, subsequently strove to
reconstitute the society they describe.

—Jean Baudrillard, *PASSWORDS*

Table of Contents

The War Against the Unfavorable Maras

An Orphic Response to the Gamer's Dilemma

Modules

Two Essays

Whois, The Assignee

A Theurgical Examination of Transhumanism



THE WAR AGAINST THE UNFAVORABLE MARAS

NATURAL VISION 2020
REPOSTERS



THE WAR AGAINST THE UNFAVORABLE MARAS
JAMPA DORJE
KAPALA PRESS 2020 ELLENSBURG

Writings prompted by Dr. Michael Goeger's Philosophy of Technology clas,
Central Washington University, Ellensburg, Spring 2020

Grateful for "Orpheus images" from the web.



In 2015, Sherry Turkle gave a TED talk entitled "Connected, but Alone?" Having been involved with computers and the internet for over twenty years, Turkle said that, in the early days, she believed that "those who would make the most of their lives on the screen would come to it in the spirit of self-reflection." By 2015, she had become more cautious about her original projection. She discovered that in our heroic attempt to use technology to improve our capacity

for self-reflection, we became addicted to having contact with others at a distance through our mobile devices. Vulnerable to feelings of personal insignificance (a petri dish for narcissism), we hoped our technology could fill our sense of emptiness, and we reached out to others to acknowledge our existence. In reaching out through our devices, we found that we could keep our contacts at a safe distance—as T.S. Eliot put it, long before the cell phone, preparing a face for the faces that we meet—thereby further diminishing the spontaneity of traditional human interaction and communication and becoming more alone and less capable of self-reflection.

The following is a pastiche of short pieces written for Dr. Michael Goerger’s Philosophy of Technology class at Central Washington University. In the class we explored issues related to virtual reality, mobile technology, digital media, AI, and robots as they affect our human experience. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, 2020 Spring Quarter was held online.

. . .

As I join you in hoisting the sail of our philosophical Argos, I pause and consider what I may gain in this class and what I may lose. From personal experience, I know there are risks and rewards in every endeavor to realize the Self. The path is difficult. There are the rituals of religion, the talking therapies of the psychologists, the divinations of the oracles, the inner explorations of the artists, the contemplations and dialectics of the philosophers, and the meditations of the mystics and yogis. In adding this online cybernetic modality, I ask, “Why not combine the lot, maintaining the oars of faith and courage, as I steadfastly surf the Ocean of Uncertainty to acquire the Golden Fleece of Mindfulness?” Ok, I will give this an honest effort, at a distance, with my funky mobile devices, but I will miss your shining faces.

. . .

I scrolled down from Sherry Turkle’s TED talk and saw that there was conversation about whether or not a professor had sent them to this site, and someone calling themselves “A Skeptical Human” had recently made the comment, “I would have listened to this argument and taken it to heart, but 20 minutes is a long time, and I kept getting distracted by text messages and the urge to check Facebook.”

. . .

Advertisement: You can hear the haunting sound of horns from the temple of Akanistha. As raid boss Ratnasambhava, you assemble a band of hardy Bodhisattvas and make your way across the Plain of Nirmanakaya to retrieve the wish-fulfilling jewel from the clutches of the demonic Zamatogs in their fortified redoubt.

If I were to build a virtual reality video game, it would be called *The War Against the Unfavorable Maras*. Maras are the obstacles faced by an avatar, with the obstacles presenting themselves in three dimensions, two dimensions, and one dimension (e.g. imaginary numbers), called kayas. This would be a graphic adventure game involving first-person action role-playing and incorporating tower defense and survival horror. The game would occur during different waking,

sleeping, and meditative trance dimensions and traverse fields of time past, time present, and time future, while placing emphasis on one, or any combination, of the six consciousnesses, at any given time. The input device is the mind, and the platform is the sequence of events that we call reality (knock on wood).

. . .

After practicing Tantric meditations for twenty years, involving extra-sensory perception, astral projection, and consciousness transference, I enrolled at CWU and studied 18th and 19th century Enlightenment philosophy fused with 20th century existentialism, phenomenology, deconstructivism, and Neo-Daoism to break the spell. I had worked at deconstructing my identity through Tantric Buddhist meditation, using deep visualization and mantra in my traditional three-year solitary retreat (without the presence of electronic devices, 2009-2013), and to document this experience I applied the literary device of playing with multiple personas to write a third-person narrative of my life.

In Tantric practice, the emphasis is on the intrinsic purity of all being. The process of receiving knowledge of the self from a tutelary deity through meditation involves two stages, creation and completion (Jamgön Kongtrul). Deity practice does the purifying. The visualizations of the creation stage undermine one's sense of the solidity of the material world. In these practices, the true nature of mind is beyond the fabrications of intellectual observation 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 analogous to a gamer's avatar, and its function 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.

. . .

I have logged a lot of hours in meditation and on the computer, but I am used to it, after practicing in long retreat, where I did four two-hour sessions each day, plus additional calendar practices, breaking for personal needs and sleep. When the going got tough, I did more practice, and when I could not sit any longer, my five personas circumambulated my cabin. In this sense, technology has not hindered but, rather, enhanced my experience during this Covid-19 retreat.

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, a monk and scholar; and Thuragania, a pre-Socratic lesbian philosopher. They each have their own body of works—paintings, poems, novels, critical essays, 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 not a here in here. This perplexed me, until I realized I was being overly sentimental for something lost—a self—which, by being self-liberated, was an entirely satisfactory condition of existence. The game is on. Proceed with lovingkindness.

. . .

Continuing my personal story of multiple personae, I reference the early optimism of Sherry Turkle and the false ethical assumptions of early virtual reality claims, exposed by Nick Yee, and proceed to posit my personal case study. My story follows an arc of temptation, acknowledgement, and recognition of the natural state of mind, or grace, which, therefore introduces an anagogical level to my narrative.

In *The Proteus Paradox* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 2014), Nick Yee writes: “We have been telling ourselves a modern-day fairy tale about truth and falsehood simplistically partitioned into two worlds. Too often, media stories about the Internet revolve around the myth that truth and honesty reside in the physical world while fantasy and deception reside in the online world . . . By splitting realities, we ignore the fact that honesty and deception are very much a part of both the physical and virtual worlds” (136). I wanted to believe the myth. In 1998, when I got my first computer, Yee had yet to publish his data as a cautionary tale to illuminate the risks involved.

Sherry Turkle, author of *Alone Together*, a pioneer in the study of cyberspace psychology, originally proposed: “Those who make the most of their lives on the screen, come to it in the spirit of self-reflection” (TED talk youTube, 15:56). If I had heard that, in 1998, I would have agreed. I was open to the self-reflection part to discover why I was being different with different people. My cowboy drawl comes out when I am hanging with ranchers, and my erudite vocabulary emerges in my scholarly world. Poets are the original virtual reality players. The *Illiad* begins, “Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus’ son Achilleus and its devastation...” (Latimore). In our earliest poetry, there is a game of hack and slay, overseen and controlled by cosmic gamers. Not to be in the poem is, historically, not to have been. And from this poem, wisdom is transmitted down the ages.

The fabrication of exaggerated identities, online, is tempting, because there is a computer screen between myself and the other, and I can make a quick exit. My rationalization: by enhancing my identity, or modifying it to fit the occasion is permissible, as there will be no “real” repercussions, and everyone else is doing it to some extent, so why not? And the high is immediate—an experience of a mind/body/body/mind quadruple duality of myself during my ventures into the virtual world. I would say it was a wild west of consciousness, except that I was in California, and the Wild West was east of me—but there was the sense of a horizon.

My first experience of making up an online character was upon entering a chatroom for poets and finding I needed a nickname to identify myself. There was a copy of Antonin Artaud’s *The Theatre and Its Double* on a table next to me, so I seized on the name, Artaud. Antonin Artaud was a French poet, essayist, actor, and part of the early 20th c. Surrealist movement. He traveled to Mexico in the 1930s and took peyote. He returned to France and was hospitalized as an insane

person. I am a poet, actor, essayist who took peyote, in Berkeley, in the 1960s and spent time in an insane asylum. It was not that hard to get into character.

I discovered that by entering the same chatroom through a different search engine—Google, Ask Jeeves, MSN Search—I would still be on the roster from my first entry and could establish additional characters with nicknames. I could initiate a chatroom, create multiple personae, and have dialogues with my Selves. The basic tenant in a '98-poet chatroom: Poem first, chat after. I write poetry with multiple voices, with short lines and with long lines, poems political, poems of place, and love poems. I would post a poem, have my Selves critique the poem, or simply side-chat, until an outside nickname would enter the room. Presenting myself as three-different-poets-at-one-time might be considered a mindfuck, but it seemed harmless enough. I was aware there was a core group that moved from room to room, and we all had developed game playing personas. Poets play with words and create worlds with Orphic energy. A major component of poetry is reference to the poem itself. Jean Cocteau suggests, in his 1950 film, *Orpheus*, that poetry is a conversation among the dead, and the poet gets it second hand. I would not go that far, but I do hear something like words in my head that sound like they are coming from someone else. I do not take orders from these voices, but I do write down some of what is said.

Most of the poets were young and did not know of Antonin Artaud. I let my Artaud be one-dimensional, and I did not reveal that I was extensively published as Richard Denner, both online and off. When I give my resume as cowboy, tree planter, bookseller, father, husband, lover, actor, artist, poet, yogi, monk, priest, the response can be curious, intrigued, incredulous, hostile, and all these responses together. I stayed in the rooms, posted my poems, enjoyed the energy of the room...and began capturing bits and pasting them into a template in my publisher program to create a book for Artaud, called *Wavetwisters YK2*, where sinkfoil, wings, gypsy, glitterclot and steeltrooper hung out in text boxes. Here is a poem that is about itself as a virtual poem:

Poet to Poet

Code of Conduct

Host: wings

Artaud: a chain poem is created above and below the body

gypsy: in a pillar of soot

wings: and scrapings

sinkfoil: and it shivers

Artaud: Artaud: a chain poem is created above and below the body

gypsy: in a pillar of soot

wings: and scrapings

sinkfoil: and it shivers

gypsy: this is wild, artuad

glitterclot: i don't get it

Artaud: I am rejecting the notion that the subject matter is in the depth of the poem, here the main thing is the immediate situation, the energy, the accident of our situation in the room, the surface of the screen and the poem arising

glitterclot: it's wierd
Artaud: it's like a "candid camera" or a diary of our
memories, our chats, our poems, our moofs
wings: go on with it, Art
Artaud: Artaud: wings: the souls of anti-poets
sinkfoil: spring into moments like 666
wings: wipe that smile off your face
steeltrooper: what is this shit?
gypsy: shhhhh steel, art is reading
steeltrooper: dit don't make sense
gypsy: he's reading us reading
steeltrooper: sucks
Host wings kicks steeltrooper out

Notice at the beginning of the poem, Code of conduct: the conduct is the rule, poem first, chat after. This is a basic teaching of Orpheus in the *Derveni Papyrus* (c.340 BCE), lacuna: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=papyrus+derveni (2:22).

. . .

Then, I fell in love with Laura. When you have a muse, the words start to flow, and we were rapidly messaging one another, and it got steamy. (*The Petrarch Project*, D press, 2016, or web: https://bigbridge.org/BB18/features/thepetrarchproject/thepetrarchproject_canto_42.html#), and we decided to meet in the flesh. She lived in Sacramento; I lived in Santa Rosa; we met half-way, in Calistoga. It was not the muse I expected. It was a total fantasy collapse. My virtual girl turned out to be mere eyeshadow. And I, an aging Lothario.

During this time, I was working on a small horse ranch. While doing repairs, I fell off a roof and broke both legs. Soon after my recovery, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. This included radiation therapy, along with injections of Lupron, an estrogen treatment to reduce the size of the prostate but, also, used in transgender care. I decided to reinvent myself and took vows to be a Buddhist monk.

The ongoing composing of self, editing self, posting self, and so forth, even as a monk, can be exasperating, and Sherry Turkle thought that the computer would allow a "fluid, emergent, decentralized, flexible, multiplicitous, and ever in progress identity" (TPP 4). I had not abandoned the idea that the computer was a tool that would serve me in my quest for greater understanding of who I am. Was I an identity? a self? a soul? a spirit? or a pronoun? As Jampa Dorje (Tibetan name, translated as *indestructible lovingkindness*) I can have an experience of a self that is not a thing, in the ontic sense, but an awareness of presence in an ontological sense (Heidegger).

. . .

From a western perspective, I am practicing a form of Neoplatonist theological science, whereby I try to combine religion and philosophy and maintain equanimity with rational and irrational

thought structures. From the eastern perspective, I practice Tantric Buddhism. Unlike meditations that focus solely on emptying the mind, Tantric meditative practices are discursive, meaning that they use rigorous visualization and mantra to enter the mindstream (continuum of consciousness) of a chosen tutelary deity. After training in how to approach the deity in her/his outward form, the practitioner completes the practice by manifesting as an embodiment of the deity. Through this process, I can mirror the innate wisdom of my inner being. By discovering the nature of mind, I can change what I do by changing what persona I need to be. This could be compared to developing a set of virtual avatars, and, rather than abandoning them, urging them to be wise. Three concepts that strike the vital point: This game is for real; learn to actualize an assemblage of avatars; then, carry on.

. . .

News Flash: According to Samuel Veissier, a cyberethnographer, in his essay, “Varieties of Tulpa Experiences: Sentient Imaginary Friends, Embodied Joint Attention, and Hypnotic Sociality in a Wired World”:

<http://somatosphere.net/2015/varieties-of-tulpa-experiences-sentient-imaginary-friends-embodied-joint-attention-and-hypnotic-sociality-in-a-wired-world.html/>

Tulpas, a term reportedly borrowed from Tibetan Buddhism, are imaginary companions who are said to have achieved full sentience after being conjured through ‘thought-form’ meditative practice. Human ‘hosts’, or *tulpamancers*, mediate their practice through open-ended how-to guides and discussion forums on the Internet and experience their Tulpas as semi-permanent auditory and somatic hallucinations.

An early Buddhist text, the Pali *Samaññaphala Sutta*, lists the “ability to create a mind-made body (*manomāyakāya*) as one of the fruits (*siddhis*) of the contemplative life” (Wiki, *Tulpas*). For information about tulpas on the web, visit *Tulpa.info*.

My experience with mind-made-bodies (*vajra* bodies) and multiple personae is based on orthodox yogic practices in the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism in parallel development with traditional literary experiments by such notables as Søren Kierkegaard and Fernando Pessoa. My studies of the schools of theosophy and of occult practices of divination have been accompanied by rigorous epistemological reviews, and what I have taken at face value, I have taken with a good dose of salt (thrown over my left shoulder), so I am not about to jump down an astral worm hole without checking the credentials of these virtual reality psychonauts. On the other hand, maybe not. I am already receiving transmissions.

. . .

I stick my head outside of my module to see what is going on...







AN ORPHIC RESPONSE TO THE
GAMER'S DILEMMA

Jampa Dorje



AN ORPHIC RESPONSE TO
THE GAMER'S DILEMMA

Jamp a Dorje

Kapala Press 2020 Ellensburg

Writings prompted by Dr. Michael Goeger's Philosophy of Technology class, Central Washington University, Ellensburg, Spring 2020

Grateful for "Orpheus images" from the web



AN ORPHIC RESPONSE TO THE GAMER'S DILEMMA

Q1
interior- individual "I"
intentional cognitions
my hopes, fears, desires

* Q2
* exterior- individual "It"
* behavioral, my actions on sentient and
* non-sentient beings, and things
*

* * * * *

Q3	*	Q4
interior collective culture “We”	*	exterior social institutions “That/Them”
(mores, taboos, ethics, morals)	*	church, state, military, arts, sciences
“Usury clips the muse’s wing”	*	consumer society & the challenge of nature
	*	

With reference to the above diagram (extrapolated from Ken Wilber’s *The Marriage of Sense and Soul*) of interior and exterior configurations of the human condition, I will analyze the aporia of the Gamer’s Dilemma. As a poet, who has wandered into the philosopher’s domain, I propose an Orphic interpretation of the Gamer’s Dilemma. An evaluation of the activities of the virtual mode are being conflated with the activities of the reality mode with a false analogy.

Following in the footsteps of Ali, Luck, and Goerger, I will analyze the dilemma, and I will dispel it by separating the dilemma into two value systems, (a) esthetics and (b) ethics. I will separate them a second time into the categories of (a) virtual reality and (b) reality outside of the game. As Orpheus aboard the Argos, I will sing a stronger song than the sirens. With the fury of a maenad, I will rip this dilemma limb from limb.

Ali explains Luck’s paradox

If virtual murder is permissible, because no one is harmed, the same justification applies to virtual pedophilia (Rami Ali, “A New Solution to the Gamer’s Dilemma,” page 1). Directing your attention to the upper-left quadrant (Q1): the gamer has hopes and fears, unresolved questions, future projections, as well as moments of self-reflection, asleep and dreaming, awake and taking care of business, and contemplative reveries, when the mood is right. This is our gamer. If the gamer has psychological problems, I will note this characteristic, when relevant; otherwise the gamer is a philosophically neutered person, gendered hir.

Two sets of quadrants, one ethical, one esthetic

A. In reality outside the game, murder and pedophilia are both considered wrong by church and state, but they occur in the world and are evaluated, in our society, in the context of laws and medical diagnosis. In virtual reality, the only person hurt (or not) is the spirit of the gamer. (Q2) Moving electrons through a computer only “hurts” the computer by wearing out the hardware or corrupting the software. (Q3) The gaming cannot hurt us, the collective us, as we are not there. (Q4) Pedophiles effect the gaming world, as it creates a niche for consumption. Here, the moral

responsibility falls on the demiurge—the artists, fabricators, and marketers in the business world. (Q1) Is the gamer hurt? From an eternalist standpoint, God is aware and watches how the game plays out, allowing the gamer to remain in a state of well-being; and, from a nihilist standpoint, experience behind the screen is harmless because it is meaningless.

B. In the reality outside the game, in all four quadrants, there are signs posted, red lights flashing, and fingers wagging against doing harm to others. Stealing, killing, lying, committing adultery, intoxication, a long list. (To anyone connected to the Covid-19 Trumpian Death Cult—economy vs. science, or Thanatos challenging Apollo—please honor your elders.)

C. On the nihilist end of the spectrum, there are blue lights flashing. In a case like Nabokov's character, "Lolita" (Q1), where the child acts enticingly (but is not legally allowed) to give consent, the molested child is hurt only in social standing. (Q2) Friends in the person's immediate circle become alarmed and are ashamed of their association with the pedophile and react differently to the child. (Q3) From the point of view of the state and the church, laws have been violated. (Q4) As for the pedophile (if caught), it is notoriously dangerous to go to jail.

Oranges and Apples

This conflict between the value of beauty and the value of good can be traced back to Plato's expulsion of the poets (and, by extension, to all activities achieved through mimesis that are based on bad intentions) in *The Republic*. The real dilemma is whether we might be led away from truth and knowledge of the good by artistic mimicry of the world or not. In an imaginary world, whatever you are doing, you are doing to yourself. Whether it is in good taste (beautiful) or not is a subjective matter. Personally, I do not like the looks of a battlefield with smashed bodies or the look of terror and confusion on the faces of tortured persons, or the look of the rotting bodies of sex slaves in unrefrigerated cargo vans, smells bad. It messes with my empathy button. If the gamer keeps his megalomaniac desires under control, ok. If not, back to the aesthetic position—heads do not belong, bleeding and chopped off, on the ground. Whether or not artists should be seducing people into bad behavior is the question to be pondered.

Sporting, narrative, and simulation games

There are three kinds of video game: sporting games follow the rules of sports with touchdowns scored and homeruns hit, etc. Narrative games follow a story line. Some games limit the action to a predetermined goal; other games allow the player to dawdle. Simulation games reduce the action to a copy of real life activities that are ends in themselves, such as training exercises. Luck criticizes Ali for not addressing all games (“Has Ali Dissolved the Gamer’s Dilemma?” page 1). He misses the point. My guess is that Ali omitted discussing sporting games because he classified them with narrative games. As Goerger points out (Module 6 lecture) all games have a narrative, even if a weak one, like chess. Sports are a stylized form of combat with quasi-religious undertones. The ritual actions allow athletes to perform amazing feats, at times manifesting with the force of an epiphany. (As much as I would like to, I do not have enough space to discuss the Pythagorean mysticism of baseball.) In virtual murder there is a body count; in virtual pedophilia there is a body count. Disgusting as it seems intuitively, in terms of human contact, virtual pedophilia (the seduction, the capture, and the experience of pleasure) contains aspects of a sport; and the fantasy of the pedophile fills in the narrative.

Four aspects of simulation games

A. Is it ok to play violence-simulated video games with the actions out of context? It is an esthetic matter, not a moral one. If having thoughts and desires to commit murder, rape, pillage, pedophilia, and mayhem can be entertained in his mind without retribution, and he does not act on these thoughts, the same activities in games (without any relevant narrative or rule structure) are ok, too—unless there is a god judging you on your thinking, rather than on your actions. Thinking thoughts and doing deeds are related and often connected, but I believe we can cut through (change our minds about) the impulse to commit painful and shameful offences against others. The onus is on the individual to be decent and not use others unwillingly to gratify a fetish. The question, then, shifts to whether the production of such games is good or not. The truth is hard to discern (Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave”) and some light is needed to see in the darkness of ignorance. Theatre is cathartic (Aristotle, *Poetics*) and draws the mind to its inner conflicts (Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*), where we can confront ourselves in our true form. To bring this about, actors play dramatic roles; gamers play virtual roles; thespians both, putting on a mask.

B. Mirjam Heine, presented a talk, “Pedophilia Is a Natural Sexual Orientation” at the University of Würzburg in Germany, in 2018 (youTube, TED 2:02), and said that pedophilia is an unchangeable sexual disorder, but that unlike other natural sexual

orientations, the pedophile's attempts at gratification lead to disaster. According to the Wiki essay on the subject: "The exact causes of pedophilia have not been conclusively established. Some studies of pedophilia in child sex offenders have correlated it with various neurological abnormalities and psychological pathologies." It is possible that the use of virtual-reality-sex-act-therapy (not real-life-sex-acts with children, who cannot give consent) might be a way of addressing a pedophile's mental condition. I posit this idea as in keeping with Turkle's hope that "Those who make the most of their lives on the screen, come to it in the spirit of self-reflection" (youTube, TED talk, 2012, "Connected, But Alone?" 15:56). In addition to my nihilist claim, virtual pedophilia in games is ok once the possibility of therapeutic use is accepted. I dispel the aporia to look at a metaphysical question. Is the ability of man to mimic his own behavior the problem, or is the problem one of his behavior mimicking his mimicking? Does art imitate life or life (anti-mimesis) imitate art?

C. Violence for the sake of violence is accepted, in the real world, in such sports as hunting, boxing, and football. What is the point of these activities: a stringy roast of venison? a claim to ephemeral fame? a gold-plated trophy? Blake said, in his *Proverbs of Hell*, "Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires." In my opinion, if there is any place that socio-pathological desires should be worked out, the virtual world is the best place. Assistance from a reliable spiritual guide or healthcare worker is recommended. Any dualistic explanation of right and wrong ways to solve this dilemma is itself problematic.

D. I find it interesting that we can justify violence in some cases and not in others, yet we cannot find any sliding standard for pedophilia. I am not advocating a sliding scale for pedophilia, only a truer analysis of the "virtue" of murder. No one consents to being killed. We risk being killed in war and have motivations for the risks, patriotism, self-defense, vengeance, even gratification of desire, but no one wants to be killed, except under duress from conflicting emotions, for example, saving a loved one in exchange for your life. With a real murder, in all circumstances, the action steals a life and creates a vacuum in place of a human being, a being connected to a web of fleshy beings. In a video game, switches go on and off in a matrix of spinning electrons. Unless those electrons have consciousness in their atomic structure, our gamer does no harm.

Conclusion

The gamer's dilemma can be analyzed from an esthetic angle more effectively than

from an ethical angle. The anthropological nature vs. nurture conundrum is sometimes raised in reaction to the violence in the virtual reality world as a potential risk to the mental health of the gamers. So far, psychologists have been unable to verify the benefits or detriment of the effects of violence in any art form— theatre, novels, movies (I am not sure about paleolithic cave art)—to be an element that determines character development. Before video games, humans were hacking and slaying and running amuck. In my lifetime, the devastation has been quite extensive. If mental harmony is to be attained, a balance between the amount of time spent in these virtual realms and finding harmless happiness in other worldly endeavors is recommended. Lay the blame for the gamer’s dilemma at the feet of the poets and play on.

OTHER ART TECH POIESES TECHNE RAMBLINGS

Anything on the screen that moves IS the movie, holds me in rapture—car chases, gun fights, kick boxing, train wrecks, gas stations blowing up (remembering Hitchcock’s *The Birds*). These actions are all extensions of the second character appearing on stage in Attic theatre. The actions are told by a chorus, and the story is told from many points of view, and with the addition of a few props, the visual dynamic is enhanced. This manipulation of time and space by the playwright is the basic catalyst of dramatic action. Once you have the second character on stage, you can push hir over, and that is tragic or comic.

It is hard for me to let go of my fascination for shootouts with blood flying. Sam Peckinpaw, in the late 1960s, pioneered the use of devices that make blood spurt out as though the actor has been hit in an artery (*The Wild Bunch*, 1969). With many gunshot victims, a bullet goes in, and there is some seepage, but this is not as dramatic as a gush of blood. By the time we get to Tarantino’s 2004 film, *Kill Bill 2*, there is a ballet of blood. What works on the screen is our surprise that we are just bags of fluids. We have our sense of being contained and then we are leaking—shocks us, gives us a thrill. We are preoccupied, watching images, and we suddenly become aware we are mortal, that we are going to perish, going to cease breathing.

. . .

Art reveals death. Death personified in subject and object—Death as chess player in Bergman’s *Seventh Seal*. And death as plague. And death as purification. And death as liberator. It seems we humans cannot get enough of death. Without it, there would

be no getting out of here at all, alive or dead. Movies that have Death central stage remind me of my mortal condition, and in this way the movies are a religious vessel. (If I allow myself to be sidetracked into comparing the movies to a Dionysian cult, I will likely be torn apart by maenads.)

In the 1903 film, *The Great Train Robbery*, a passenger is gunned down as he flees from a train robber. To show a person firing a gun at another person and the person shot falling to the ground was unsettling to the audience. The final clip in the film, completely out of context, where a gun is pointed directly at the audience and fired, is still controversial. For many years, directors avoided censorship by showing a gun being fired in one set of frames and then cutting to the person falling in another set of frames.

There is always pushback against showing violent death in drama. The 17thc. English Protestants shut down Shakespeare's Globe Theater because he was littering his stage with murdered corpses (*Hamlet*) and, in *King Lear*, by having Gloucester's eyes gouged out on stage. The Temperance League is against it. Says it has a bad effect on youth. Churches sanctify death, hang it on their walls, so twisted and aggrieved. "Take that man down," my friend Bob said, "He's suffering," and I agreed.

. . .

Art is an exercise in making objects and actions seem real. Straight on, cinema verité style film making does not reveal the emotional content of an event to the same degree of realism as an edited version does. Different camera angles, the control of mise-en-scène, symbolic allusions of the props, and heightened sound affects seduce the viewer into intensified emotional reactions. When I come out of a movie theater, life does not seem real. Real is not real. Art is real.

. . .

Entertainment is rated to protect young people from being unduly influenced by what they read and see. Until the *Bible* was translated from Latin to various languages, it was thought the uneducated masses would misread the meaning of the text. And they do. Many stories have graphic detail. Is Mel Gibson's *Passion of Christ* a depiction of gratuitous violence? Given the context, the skin must appear to be torn.

In video games, the feeling of bodily immersion is an important part of the experience, whereas in literature, the mind's engagement in making moral evaluations is more apparent. Participating with others in a game makes for a shared

experience. Blood lust can be infectious. In Homer's *Illiad*, Achilles mutilating Hector's body on the shore at Troy, for many days, can be a reference point for evaluating a standard of violence that makes most violence in modern art pale in comparison. To level up with Achilles requires a lot of grind.

All these themes are ripe for storytelling, and good storytelling makes for good distraction from suffering by simulating the suffering as entertainment. I get a kick out of violence in movies because it confirms my view of the ephemeral, ornamental nature of samsara, but I do not recommend spending too much time in this cave of flickering shadows.

. . .

I hear, "Reality is broken." It is a hard to make a call as to when Reality is really broken. As a young person, I thought it was broken, in 1945, when we dropped a couple of A-bombs on Japan. I wanted to hide my head, somewhere. In another way, I thought it was broken in the 1960s, when young men began marching off to a senseless war. I dropped out of the lottery by relinquishing my sanity. Lately, the warnings are about spending too much time in online activities, but I wonder how we would be faring during this pandemic without Facebook & Co. I am getting zoom fatigue, but I cannot imagine going back to the Ancient Greek knucklebone era (c. 3000 BCE) to get into the flow,— although it does feel like being a Primal Eve and/or Primal Adam at the beginning of some phase of metamorphosis in a panpsychic realm. Can we make connections rather than mere contacts (Turkle) in our online intercourse? It will require establishing distancing dances and new manners. Can we use this computer to make a really real real that's more than just real enough?

. . .

Mark Coeckelbergh argues for the strong emotions view of morality. He thinks that emotions are required for moral thinking and that moral robots would thereby require some emotional capacity.

In the *CultureFibre#3* *youTube* video, Mark Coeckelbergh describes the pushback by members of the Romantic Movement to the emphasis put on rationality by the Enlightenment philosophers where moral decisions are concerned. He does not advocate the muddling of moral conundrums by emotional responses but advocates the recognition of the role that emotions play in coming to conclusions.

As a poet, I experience emotions mixed with my words and the effect words have on my emotions. My feeling-thoughts can be put into this text, being worded with words, that can be described as words conveying ideas with feeling. I am thinking with feelings and feeling my thoughts. The closest I can get to the experience of thinking with feelings is the experience of compassion. Here, I experience my being as constituted of both thoughts and feelings. As a moral principle, this is what Jesus means by loving your neighbor as yourself, or how else could I “turn the other cheek”?

. . .

Re: Azimov’s robot rules

I remember a story—I think I read it in a comic book as a youngster—where a human emerges from a cryonic state, into a future, less dystopian world and meets a robot tending a garden. The human plucks a tomato from a vine and eats it, and the robot promptly dispatches the human (and proceeds to kill the rest of the, as yet, unfrozen humans) for attacking the garden that it had been programmed to protect. Ironically, the robot was not programmed for this phase in human development.

. . .

Old guy, rambling here. I remember growing up in the wake of WW2 and my father having me pull nails out of boards and straightening them on an anvil. Why nails? WW2. We had turned all the nails into tanks for battle. I might have wondered “A robot could do this better!” only the word robot was not in my vocabulary. People did things. Robots were a science fiction concept. Now, I consider whether a robot tending to me in my old age might be better than a caregiver. Do I mind? Not much. I have never been sure if people did things satisfactorily. Put a smiley face on the robot if appearance matters. This is my nihilist side. Yes, of course, human contact matters. The further we move away from our mission to improve our flawed human side by distancing (not distance in the Covid-19 sense) from ourselves, the more we atrophy. Can we improve our condition, and can robots help? Yes, but this means finding something much happier for humans to do than standing in for robots. Hmm, what to do? My father always replied, “Cut your hair and get a job.” “Can’t Dad, pandemic.” This is a circular aporia.

Bibliography

Ali, Rami, “A new solution to the gamer’s dilemma.”

Ethics Inf Technol (2015) Published online: 16 December 2015, Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht

Blake, William, “Proverbs of Hell,” *Marriage of Heaven & Hell, A Memorable Fancy #1*, Nonesuch Press, London, 1967.

Coeckelbergh, Mark, “Moral appearances: emotions, robots, and human morality” (2010) Published online: 17 March 2010, Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2010 Ethics Inf Technol

Luck, Morgan, “Has Ali dissolved the gamer’s dilemma?” Ethics and Information Technology (2018) Original paper online: 5 June 2018 © Springer Nature B.V.

Turkle, Sherry, *Alone Together*, Basic Books, New York, 2011.

Wilber, Ken, *The Marriage of Sense and Soul*, Random House, New York, 1998.

JAMPA DORJE

MODULES





MODULES
JAMPA DORJE

KAPALA PRESS 2020 ELLENSBURG

Inspired by

Dr. Michael Goerger's Philosophy 317: Philosophy of Technology class

CWU SPRING QUARTER 2020

Group Set A5: Mariah Hogan, Nate Balinbin, Henry Milodragovich & Jessi Smith

Title page portrait of the artist by Hannah Gunderson

Thanks to Wikipedia and CWU for Front and Back Cover Art



*An Exploration of Issues Related to Virtual Reality,
Mobile Technology, Digital Media, and the Human Experience*

As I join you in hoisting the sail of our philosophical Argo, I pause and consider what I may gain from this class and what I may lose. From personal experience, I know there are risks and rewards in every endeavor to realize the Self. The path is difficult. There are the rituals of religion, the talking therapies of the psychologists, the divinations of the oracles, the inner explorations of the artists, the contemplations and dialectics of the philosophers, and the meditations of the mystics and yogis. In adding this online cybernetic modality, I ask, “Why not combine the lot, maintaining the oars of faith and courage, as I steadfastly surf the Ocean of Uncertainty to acquire the Golden Fleece of Mindfulness?” Ok, I will give this an honest effort, at a distance, with my funky mobile devices, but I will miss your shining faces.

. . .

I scrolled down from Sherry Turkle’s TED talk and saw that there was conversation about whether or not a professor had sent them to this site, and someone calling themselves “A Skeptical Human” had recently made the comment, “I would have listened to this argument and taken it to heart, but 20 minutes is a long time, and I kept getting distracted by text messages and the urge to check Facebook.”

. . .

In 2015, Sherry Turkle gave a TED talk entitled “Connected, but Alone?” (youtube.com). Having been involved with computers and the internet for over twenty years, Turkle said that, in the early days, she believed that those who would make the most of their lives on the screen would come to it in the spirit of self-reflection (15:56). By 2015, she had become more cautious about her original projection. She discovered that in our heroic attempt to use technology to improve our capacity for self-reflection, we became addicted to having contact with others at a distance through our mobile devices. Vulnerable to feelings of personal insignificance (a petri dish for narcissism), we hoped our technology could fill our sense of emptiness, and We reached out to others to acknowledge our existence (12:05). In reaching out through our devices, we found that we could keep our contacts at a safe distance—as T.S. Eliot put it, long before the cell

phone, preparing a face for the faces that we meet—thereby further diminishing the spontaneity of traditional human interaction and communication and becoming more alone and less capable of self-reflection.

. . .

I begin with a recent thread from my cellphone...“Kant might say the sublime wouldn’t be the sublime without the terror of, like, a pandemic, and Hegel would see the dialectic of analog/digital as leading to a zeitgeist synthesis...” and, here we are in a cloud of electrons configured as a module, at a university website, discussing the philosophy of technology.

I accessed an online version of Sherry Turkle’s *Alone Together* (Basic Books, NY, 2017), and I was told that someone named Pete told her that a “life mix is the mash-up of what you have on and off-line” (p. 160). The “mash-up” is the overlapping lives all demanding attention at the same time, due to our ability to juggle the life mix with our mobile devices.

Getting mixed up in a life mix is a good recipe for a life experience max out, yet this condition might be mitigated by looking at the mental tool we call “multi-tasking.” Actually, we can only do one thing at a time, although we can set things in motion, hoping that when we come back to them, they are still operational. What is required is the use of meditative mindfulness in doing the one thing that we are doing at any given time. If you’re not paying attention to what you are doing (a basic assumption, if multi-tasking is going to be a feasible approach to accomplishing anything), the project can go cattywampus.

I think of Socrates at a symposium, in 5th c. BCE Athens, discussing the nature of love with his friends. As I remember it, Diotima chased him out her house and threw a frying pan at his head for telling his friends about her “Ladder of Love” idea without permission. She had shown him love, and he had betrayed her confidence. This is likely how Pete’s real wife would feel, if she knew about his virtual friend at *Second Life*. And, if Socrates had had a cell phone? Gregarious as he was wont to be, he could easily mix up his life by enacting dialogues with virtual friends in multi-dimensional strata of consciousness.

Unless you can arrange a long-term, solitary retreat off the grid, it’s a little late to go back to the way it was, so the trick will be to move ahead mindfully and with heart.

. . .

The ongoing composing of the self, editing the self, posting the self, and so forth can be exasperating. Sometimes, I wish the whole power grid would collapse, and we could go back to living in caves. With climate change, pandemics, and the threat of nuclear war, this might come to pass; but in the meantime, we’ll have to muddle on.

Mine is a complex life mix with many mash ups (before and after the Digital Age). I have been

married and had children. I have worked at a wide variety of professions, cowboy, tree planter, bookseller, and publisher, among others. Retired, I remain active as a scholar, poet, artist, and Buddhist yogi. I do not present myself as who I wish I was, or who I want people to think I am. I present myself, on and offline, as who I am. However, this “who I am” involves a variety of personas, literary, religious, and social. From a Western viewpoint, my most exotic identity is my religious persona, the “farming town monk.”

I practice Tantric Buddhism. Unlike meditations that focus solely on emptying the mind, Tantric meditative practices are discursive, meaning that they use rigorous visualization and mantra to enter the mind stream of a chosen tutelary deity. After training in how to approach the deity in her/his outward form, the practitioner completes the practice by manifesting as an embodiment of the deity. Through this process, I can mirror the innate wisdom of my inner being. By discovering the nature of mind, I can change what I do and who I am. This could be compared to developing a virtual avatar; only my game is for real.

. . .

It is hard to keep up with all the various appointments and contacts with friends, family, and associates. I was listening to a high-powered businesswoman complain about getting 300 emails and 200 texts every day. And I realized that the few I get do not amount to much, unless I let them pile up. I went offline for four years, no phone, no computer, no conversations. As soon as I went online, again, there was a deluge. I quickly learned what the delete and ignore buttons were for.

Over the 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, a monk and scholar, and Thuragania, a pre-Socratic lesbian 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 their host, Richard Denner. [i.e. Search: “richard denner jampa dorje.”]

I created these personas after I purchased my first pc in order to posit my writings in various ezines and to interact with others in the online poetry community. It is ironic that a Buddhist, who is not supposed to have a “self” would develop five different selves, but I found that they corresponded to the five Wisdom Dakinis of Tantric Buddhism. Rather than no self, I discovered that I contained multitudes—something like having my own game of *Second Life*, only taking place in real life.

. . .

Poets are the original virtual reality players. The *Illiad* begins, “Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus’

son Achilles and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the Achaians, hurled in their multitudes to the house of Hades strong souls of heroes..." (Latimore). Already, we have players in a game of hack and slay, overseen and controlled by cosmic gamers. And from this poem, wisdom is transmitted down the ages. Here's a poem of mine that reflects on the nature of poetry:

POETICS

What is the point, Jack?
Is poetry a conversation among the dead,
and the poet gets it second hand
a vampire moon sucking off the sun?
What is the poet, Jack?
a battered radio transmitting static between
the stations on a lonely stretch of road?
Or a punch-drunk fighter
whose taken one too many
hooks to the head?
Powerful emotion recollected,
the most exasperating art,
Charles makes an analogy with Mahamudra,
Williams hears a sort of song,
Lu invents a ragged song, and Yeats sees
Tattered clothes upon a stick.
Belle weighs in with poetry as experience—
I awake in morning light. Thoughts
sweet as honey buzzing in my brain.
Swatting them I get stung
by real bees in a dream garden.

. . .

If I had thought about it before hand, I would have thought it too complicated to have multiple personalities and to cut across gender boundaries; but, for me, a world of possibilities has opened to discovering inner peace and harmony. My life path is near its end. I will be seventy-nine this November, and the plague is at my doorstep. So, I am going to explore the self until the very end...and beyond. And do this in the spirit of Sherry Turkle's original mission statement: "Those who make the most of their lives on the screen, come to it in the spirit of self-reflection" (TED

15:56).

Entering the virtual world of the web can be a form of world-traveling. It is another form of play that assists in the reshaping of identity by traveling to other experiences of lifestyle and consciousness. The term “world-traveling” I take from Mariá Lugones’ essay, “Playfulness, ‘world’-travelling, and loving perception” (*Feminist Philosophy Reader*, McGraw Hill, Boston, 2007). She admits to worlds that one cannot enter playfully, nor would want to, but there are worlds that we can travel to lovingly and experience some of their inhabitants. The reason why I think that travelling to someone’s world is a way of identifying with them is because by travelling to their world I can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be myself in their eyes. Here is a poem I wrote in the guise of a woman:

RISKING THE BOUNDRIES

There’s somewhere I want to go,
so, I cruise the limits of the visible.
I feel the barrier, weird yet familiar
to my touch—is this a warning?

A car burns beside the road
where I meet the guardians of the way,
an old woman throwing bones in the dust,
a young man rolling stones on a board.

“Who are you?” he asks, “Elven queen,
white witch, she who has trouble
making up her mind?” If I pass, I know
I cannot return, but what more can I lose?

The wind carries me—I change.
I have no eyes. I have no sex.
I dance to the rhythm of the stars,
a dance that is older than love.

.

“Reality is broken,” she says. It is a hard to make a call as to when Reality is really broken. As a young person, I thought it was broken, in 1945, when we dropped a couple of A-bombs on Japan. I wanted to hide my head, somewhere. In another way, I thought it was broken in the 1960s, when young men began marching off to a senseless war. I dropped out of the lottery by

relinquishing my sanity. Lately, the warnings have been about spending too much time in online activities, but I wonder how we would be faring during this pandemic without Facebook & Co. I am getting zoom fatigue. No going back to the Ancient Greek knucklebone era (c. 3000 BCE) to get into the flow,— although it does feel like being a Primal Eve and/or Primal Adam at the beginning of some phase of metamorphosis in a panpsychic realm. Can we make connections rather than mere contacts (Turkle) in our online intercourse? It will require establishing distancing dances and new manners. Can we use this computer to make a really real real that's more than just real enough?

. . .

Art (including the artistic aspects of gaming world projects) is subject to corruption. How is it to be saved, archived? The creative activity of building a fictive mineshaft in a video game is saved and, then, lost in a computer file; the creative activity of writing a poem in a Word file can be saved and can be lost; the digital recording of a speaker can be lost in an audio file; a drawing in ink on paper can be lost in a flood; a tree can burn before it becomes felled timber to be turned into pulp to make paper.

I can relate to Grant Tavinor's story about spending an entire play session with a partner clearing a virtual mineshaft, near a village they had erected, in *Minecraft*, only to have their "work" disappear into a corrupt computer file. This is an illustrative lesson on a fundamental condition of any reality—that material things (in this case electronic code) are impermanent and achievements ephemeral. I planted trees in Silver Basin, after a fire in the Wenatchee National Forrest, near Entiat; twelve years later I returned to thin the acreage of trees that had survived. The following year a fire burned up the remaining, healthy trees. The trick is in liberating yourself from clinging and attachment to things that cause suffering.

I sit in meditation and ask the Universe if it expects anything of me. I get no answer. I take this answer at face value. All that is required is to sit, until I realize that the ritual meditative games that I play are in my head. I maintain meditative equipoise, and my achievement is that I have become one less angst-ridden sentient being to contend with in the social mashup. However, I can be more by merging worlds. This I do by marshalling imaginary wisdom beings into guiding me through the dark night of ego-annihilation.

Advertisement: If you have a persistent optimism to change your/the/our world, I have the game for you: *The War Against the Unfavorable Maras* (Kapala Press, Ellensburg, 2020), The only requirement is to have a natural proclivity to see the absurd, epic potential in meaninglessness—and, if your skill set is complete, you will continue to plant more trees and fix up more mineshafts in the real and the virtual worlds. Colorado has urgent need of your mineshaft-saving skills.

. . .

If it helps you train the dog or pay the rent or improve the world in some way, the value is in relationship to how high you set the bar. My friend, Sarah, who told me that she was feeling unmotivated, and I dared her to set a low bar, use imagination, and complete the task. Later in the day, she reported back that she had cut her bangs. She said, “Ha, ha, it’s just one rash decision after another.” I told her it was better than drinking Drano (no matter what the President says) or hanging yourself because of ennui.

. . .

The ideas about achievement usually reference activities on the outside: climbing a mountain, passing an exam, getting a job. Going inside can involve an achievement: non-doing can be an achievement. I sit. I pray. I seek inner peace. Osho (osho.com/meditation/what-is-meditation/non-doing) relates a story about David Hume. He was reading the *Upanishads* and tried to meditate. “It is so boring! It is a boredom to look in. Thoughts move, sometimes a few emotions, and they go on racing in the mind, and you go on looking at them—what is the point of it? It is useless. It has no utility.” Hume needed to persevere, to go on sitting and achieve *satchitananda*, the unchanging reality of truth-consciousness-bliss.

. . .

Now, I turn to the Gamer’s Dilemma (virtual murder vs. virtual pedophilia) that Morgan Luck sets out to answer in his article “The Gamer’s Dilemma” (2009). In brief, Luck argues that if virtual murder is deemed morally permissible, then, why is virtual pedophilia (Luck prefers the term *child molestation*) not deemed so, as well.

The gamer’s dilemma can be analyzed from an aesthetic angle more effectively than from an ethical angle. This conflict between the value of beauty and the value of good can be traced back to Plato’s expulsion of the artists from the Republic. The real dilemma is whether we might be led astray by artistic mimicry of the world or not. In a made-up world, whatever you are doing, you are doing to yourself. Whether it is in good taste (beautiful) or not is a subjective matter. Personally, I do not like the looks of a battlefield with smashed bodies or the look of terror and confusion on the faces of tortured persons, or the look of sex slaves rotting in unrefrigerated cargo vans, smells bad. It messes with my empathy button. If the gamer keeps his megalomaniac desires under control, ok. If not, back to the aesthetic position—heads do not belong, chopped off, on the ground. Whether or not artists should be seducing people into harmful behavior is another question.

. . .

I find it interesting that we can justify violence in some cases and not in others, yet we cannot find any sliding standard for pedophilia. I am not advocating a sliding scale for pedophilia, only a

truer analysis of the “virtue” of murder. No one consents to being killed. We risk being killed in war and have motivations for the risks, patriotism, self-defense, vengeance, but no one wants to be killed, except under duress from conflicting emotions, for example, saving a loved one in exchange for your life. Is killing (in an absolute sense) justifiable? The Dalai Lama says, “Sometimes, the mouse must go.” I wonder.

. . .

Mirjam Heine, a medical student, presented her talk “Pedophilia Is a Natural Sexual Orientation” at the University of Würzburg in Germany (youtube.com) and said that pedophilia is an unchangeable sexual disorder, but that unlike other natural sexual orientations, the pedophile’s attempts at gratification lead to disaster. According to the Wiki essay on the subject: “The exact causes of pedophilia have not been conclusively established. Some studies of pedophilia in child sex offenders have correlated it with various neurological abnormalities and psychological pathologies.” It is possible that the use of virtual-reality-sex-act-therapy (not real-life-sex-acts with children, who cannot give consent) might be a way of addressing a pedophile’s mental condition. I posit this idea as in keeping with Turkle’s hope that “Those who make the most of their lives on the screen, come to it in the spirit of self-reflection.”

. . .

Is it ok to play violence-simulated video games with the actions out of context? Again, it is an aesthetic matter, not a moral one. If having thoughts and desires to commit murder, rape, pillage, pedophilia, and mayhem can be entertained in your mind without retribution, and you do not act on these thoughts, the same activities in games (without any relevant narrative or rule structure) are ok, too—unless there is a god judging you on your thinking, rather than on your actions. Thinking thoughts and doing deeds are related and often connected, but I believe we can cut through the impulse to commit painful and shameful offences against others. The onus is on the individual to be decent and not use others unwillingly to gratify a fetish. The question, then, shifts to whether the production of such games is of value. Theatre is cathartic (Aristotle) and draws the mind to its inner conflicts (Artaud), where we can confront ourselves in our true form.

. . .

The anthropological conundrum of nature/nurture is raised in reaction to the violence in the virtual reality world as a potential risk to the mental health of the gamers. So far, statisticians have been unable to confirm the effects of violence in any art form—theatre, novels, movies (I’m not sure about paleolithic cave art)—as an element that is detrimental to character development. Long before video games, humans were hacking and slaying and running amuck. In my lifetime, the devastation has been quite extensive. If mental harmony is to be attained, a balance between the amount of time spent in these realms and finding joy in other

endeavors is necessary. The U.S. has a gun fetish.

. . .

Violence for the sake of violence is accepted, in the real world, in such sports as hunting, boxing, and football. What is the point of these activities: a stringy roast of venison? a claim to ephemeral fame? a gold-plated trophy? Blake said, in *Proverbs of Hell*, "Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires." In my opinion, if there is any place that socio-pathological desires should be worked out, the virtual world is the best place. Assistance from a reliable spiritual guide or healthcare worker is recommended. Any dualistic explanation of right and wrong ways to solve problems is itself problematic.

. . .

In Fellini's movie version of Petronius' *Satyricon*, a slave's arm is amputated during a stage performance, as a part of the drama. Ancient theatre is not for the faint of heart. My idea about acting out violent activities in simulated ways without a narrative context being an aesthetic problem is not about actually committing an act of murder as a work of art, but whether a thought of murder (or an acting out of a virtual murder in a computer, or even on stage) should be judged in the same way as an actual murder is judged. Whether this kind of activity affects the psychology of the participant is another matter.

. . .

The question is: given that the robots function adequately, do I evaluate their performance in terms of how I feel the job was done by the robot or by what I would feel if the job was well done by a real person? I seek approval from a teacher or a friend or a parent or a lover because I believe the evaluation that I receive is based upon a shared network of ideas and emotions configured in an energy field that is grounded in human development and not in preconfigured algorithms (regardless of the logical positivist's dream of a perfect numerical language). As a slogan, "Good enough" serves in makeshift instances where there is no other alternative, but I think our essential mission is to perfect humanity, not robots. In perfecting robots, we become more like robots.

. . .

I have had children by three wives, and I am a great grandfather three times over, I have worked in hospitals, mental institutions, and nursing homes, and I was the main caregiver for my elderly parents for ten years. I have changed diapers at both ends of the age scale. I am a Buddhist monk, so compassion is my game. However, sometimes I look at this sorry mess we call samsara with its suffering and stupidity and hatred, and I am ashamed to be a part of humanity. A desire for deep ecology overcomes me. Covid-19 could wipe us out, and the place would be better off

without us. And, then, I realize I love my family, my friends, and my neighbors and their barking dogs. I have survived volcanoes, earthquakes, blizzards, tidal waves, and wars. What are a few robots in the mix, one way or another? Earlier, I posited an opinion that we become more like robots as we perfect robots. Could our mission be to perfect a robot better than us for us to be our role model?

. . .

What is human contact? Many strata of contact—with family, with city, with self, with mystery. Do robots have a need for really real feeling to be created between their robot selves, like my feeling-thoughts can be put into this text, being worded with words, that can be described with words and words with feeling. They are messages that the robots will have to have, having a realization that “we” are alone. There are others. “We are alone together,” as Turkle says. If robots can know this and survive and we become more like robots, then this is the species that continues. I have been looking at Heidegger: we are challenged by nature to survive; we challenge nature to give us the resources to survive; we store the resources and make more stored resources into things to acquire more things in a cycle with our technology revealing the technology is challenging us to survive the technology, and this on top of nature’s challenge.

. . .

I asked the old tree, Tm Vrbm Glk, if Tm
was his given name or his surname—Tm
was his location, he said, because trees don’t
have a self, nor do they need a personal pronoun

When I was doing my traditional three-year retreat and got lonely, I would climb to a spot above my cabin to sit like a buddha at the base of a gnarly pine tree and ask it why I was doing what I was doing, chanting in Tibetan to tutelary deities in another dimension of existence. This was comforting and helped reduce my anxiety. Like Andy, a patient in a nursing facility, talking to his robot, Edith (Turkle, p. 110), my talking with Tm allowed me to think about things that I was unable to work out in my many sessions of formal meditation practice. It was like having a beer with a friend in a bar after work and unwinding in an unstructured environment.

. . .

I have had four children. I am surprised they have survived to adulthood—well, one died of AIDS, but she was burning the candle at both ends, and I was lucky to have had her in my life for the time she was alive. I think, if I had a robot, I would name her Kirsten. That was her name. If she had an advanced design, she would play her guitar and, maybe, we would shoot heroin together

(just kidding). Like, Edna (Turkle, p. 116), I do not dislike little kids; I just do not see what there is to like about them (just kidding).

. . .

Once we solve the problem of planetary resources, pollution, and population growth, the basic needs for humanity's survival remain food, clothing, shelter, procreation, and entertainment. (I omit romantic love, as it is the invention of poets.) Robots can fabricate the first three. If a source for sperm and ovum are supplied, robots can bare and raise children (maybe better than in a home or in a present-day boarding school). What is really at issue is that humans suffer from boredom. Robots do not get bored and, so far in their evolution, make no demands to be entertained. Real emotions or false emotions? In a pinch, any emotion will do, but genuine emotions are preferred, as it helps me know where I stand in a relationship. On the other hand, there are situations where I would just as soon be left in the dark, thank you, and other situations, again, where I just need my ego stroked. For some of my needs, robotic love is good enough, for other situations nothing is as satisfying as a good cry.

. . .

I am looking at robots like Descartes' thinking machines. Thoughts are thoughts. Feelings are feelings. However, once I get beyond this mind-body dualism and analyze myself, I feel feelings mixed in with the cyber energy of cognitive activity, and when I feel my feelings, I catch thoughts mingling with the feelings, as I bring them to articulation. As a poet, I mix the logos with music and try feeling with my thoughts and thinking with my feelings. Plato pointed out that poets don't know what the hell they are doing. No wonder, robots are better at doing what robots do—helping with mundane tasks—and leaving the existential confusion to us.

. . .

In the *CultureFibre#3* YouTube video, Mark Coeckelbergh's describes the pushback by members of the Romantic Movement to the emphasis put on rationality by the Enlightenment philosophers where moral decisions are concerned. He does not advocate the muddling of moral conundrums by emotional responses but advocates the recognition of the role that emotions play in coming to conclusions. As a poet, I experience emotions mixed with my words and the effect words have on my emotions. My feeling-thoughts can be put into this text, being worded with words, that can be described as words conveying ideas with feeling. I am thinking with feelings and feeling my thoughts. The closest I can get to the experience of thinking with feelings is the experience of compassion. Here, I experience my being as constituted of thoughts and feelings colluding with energy. Being able to use this energy in a rigorous and precise way is to learn to "love my neighbor as myself," or how else will I be able to "turn the other cheek"?

. . .

I remember a story—I think I read it in comic book form as a youngster—where a human emerges from a cryonic state, into a future, less dystopian world, and meets a robot tending a garden. The human plucks a tomato from a vine and eats it, and the robot promptly dispatches the human (and proceeds to kill the, as yet unfrozen humans) for attacking the garden that it had been programmed to protect. Ironically, the robot was not programmed with Azimov's robot rules for this transitional phase in human development.

. . .

Descartes doubts his way into a mind-body split, the mind and its calculations and the body with its feelings, in his attempt to prove the existence of God. To know God exists, he must know what he knows for certain. Knowing his ontological condition gives him certainty, and he claims animals and machines do not have this capacity. Until animals and machines can convince us of their moral claims, our treating them as patients is only a form of sentimentality. Modern philosophers tend to get muddled at this ontological level. From God's point of view, there are teleological considerations. Humans are charged with attempting redemption. From an existential point of view, we are making it up as we go, and we are trapped in our technology, trying to create robots in our image to free us from our labors. As laborers, we receive no benefit, unless the wealth generated is distributed, which is problematic. Capital is its own religion, money and morality, same thing (Baudrillard). Is it our intention to harm ourselves? Something does not feel right about this. Logic does not unveil the truth.

. . .

Mary Shelly set us off on this modern simulacrum (creating robots) quest with her monster. She gave it a soul. And a body, a suffering body made from a collage of criminals' corpses. From a Gnostic point of view, this was not any worse than the earth used the first time around, described in *Genesis*. A feeling, thinking, half-witted creature flailing around in a garden with the capacity only to look backwards to figure out how to go forward. From paleolithic times onward, technology was the light at the end of the tunnel. As Zizek cynically jokes: "The light at the end of the tunnel is a train coming our way." We had better get these kluges we call robots up to speed, as we will need them to clean up our planetary mess in the *WALL-E* remake that is the real-time narrative of the near future.

. . .

Re: drones. It is tradeoffs all the way down. Two-edged swords. Double binds. On one side, there is suffering. On the other side, there are people trying to alleviate the suffering. Avalokitesvara gazed on the suffering of humans in the Hells of Ceaseless Torment,

and tears poured out his eyes. From one of his tears, Tara was born. In Vajrayana Buddhism, Tara is the Bodhisattva of Compassion and Action. She will take all the help she can get. Drones included. Hard to measure the effectiveness of tools in humanitarian aid. An objective approach is to evaluate the situation from the point of view of hygiene. Hygiene can be analyzed along the same lines as the Covid-19 pandemic is being measured. Flatten the curve,—and how it is done be damned. Food, clothing, shelter, medicine delivered, expedientially. Human contact when and if human contact is needed is foundational, but here is no merit system for compassionate action, other than the attainment of Buddhahood. But, the “how it is done be damned” approach comes with risks. Humanitarian actions are not passive actions, and actions that undermine local economies and social structures and, thereby, create reliance on outside help must be factored into the plan, along with avoiding government corruption and misguided corporate intentions. Health vs. wealth. Circular. It is enough to make a Buddha cry.

. . .

Is there a human directing the drone or is the drone self-programmed to do good drone deeds? Is there a risk of the drones going rogue? To measure human misery, let my thoughts be in relation to a human behind the drone. Measuring human misery???? is a five-pronged question: What is being measured? Who is measuring? How is it being measured? When/where is the measuring done? Why is the measuring done? Drones do not need anthropomorphic characteristics and highly ritualized manners. Need semantically clear statements. Robot rules. The software instructions can be fine-tuned, as the situation relates to time and space. Christian standard is charity (love), and the measure is in the action, not in degree of faith and hope. Utilitarian measure, a means to an end, the happiest outcome for the highest number of patients. How the patients react would be a measure. Why is the misery being measured, for a Marxist—does it help resolve the economic causes of the misery? From a deep ecology view, nature is what nature does? Or is that Forrest Gump, I’m channeling?

. . .

Drone technology is still new. The war against terror has put it in a bad light. The movies *Star Wars* and *The Matrix* did not improve the drone image of being snoopy, creepy, dangerous things. Anything can be weaponized. How to peacefulize? I suppose a friendly, smiley face robot might get someone suffering to give them useful data: “Sit down, here, fella, and give me your status.” Nursing home patients like their AIBOs. (I had *aibophobia*, a fear of words that are spelled the same from either end, before I discovered AIBOs.) We have a way to go with drones. Once they are online and humanity is compliant (believe me, we are getting there), Amazon can send CARE packages (at a discount rate) to refugees of the Yemen Civil War, or wherever the next crisis manifests, even my front door.

. . .

Immortality did not work out well for Dorian Gray. Faust managed to stretch out his existence, without the Devil taking his soul, and accomplish eternal life through God's grace, but Faust's eternal "life" is not on this plane. Frankenstein's monster might be replicated ad infinitum, but there are serious aesthetic matters to contend with, like what to wear that will cover those hideous mechanical protuberances. No one wants an unhappy immortal life on this planet, but without assurance of a better life in the next—through reincarnation, transmigration, or a Second Coming—the cyber-bionic technology touted by transhumanists seems to be the game in town. A complaint I have with transhumanism is its bias for high culture as a mark of achievement in the transformation of a soul. I do not see why I should prefer reading Proust to watching Stephen Curry shooting 3-pointers. Oh, well, my vow, as a Bodhisattva, is to keep returning until all sentient beings are liberated.

. . .

Oh, to live forever with cyber-bionic enhancements
and feel the wonder of writing a poem, lovelier than
"She walks in beauty, like the night /Of cloudless climes..."
and swoon with ten times the passion.

And the world would still be lovely —
with sunsets enhanced by oceans of burning oil.
Free of human restraints, yes—a robot standing in a haze
with an acid atmosphere slowly dissolving my wiring.

Crossing the street in wonder of the angle of earth's shadow,
crescent moon at my hand's reach, I would be grateful
for the experience of being a being, even of little consequence,
in my sporty, high-tech-low-tech kludge of a contraption.

. . .

Is the choice one of having a single full life or a series of full lives over time? I have trained in Christianity, Buddhism, Sufism, and Shamanism to learn how to travel to new lives after this one. Also, how to step off the wheel of karma into formless states. Being an old guy, with three great grandchildren and a couple more that are twinkles in the parents' eyes, I am beginning to lose track of my progeny. How many humans does it take to make a human happy? Maybe with biotechnical enhancements humans can stay young and figure out how to maintain a healthy balance in nature with other living creatures (except for the rebellious cylons, lol). Or, we come

back and pick up in the mess left us, like it was when we landed in this life this time around. Living a life is what we do. How we live it is the quest.

. . .

When I studied philosophy at Cal, in the early '60s, I asked my professors why they did not reference Ouspensky, and they told me that they thought he was crazy. Sixty years later, I find him, again, on the fringes of mainstream philosophy. This may only be an indication that humans remain where they are, and philosophy evolves. I am glad to know that my life-long journey towards cosmic consciousness (What a quaint term it seems, in retrospect!) has not been a fool's errand.

"Gilgamesh, here: My friend, Enkidu, told me the War Against the Bull of Heaven would be brutal, that I would need enhancements to reach the "post-human state" of deification, or wisdom. The goddess, Inanna, gave me a *mikku* and a *pikku* (unknown objects, most likely the secret channels of Pranayama breathing), but I lost them." These enhancements were not lost, as much as forgotten. A computer implanted in our brain to simulate tried and true yogic processes to attain a perfected state of health, happiness, and intellect is redundant. There is only one real question, no matter how much hardware you strap on: am I ready to die?

. . .

"Hu" is a Sufi name for God. When expressed with mantric intensity, it means "God Himself." In Darwinian terms, "Humans" (*Homo Sapiens*) are a tribe of *Hominina*. Use of tools, complex language, advanced societies, terms like "exceptional", "highly-evolved", "unique", etc. are used by this tribe to define itself. The "man" part of the word "human" covers the definition of man (as a gendered word for all of us), as humans see themselves. It is the "hu" part that seems to elude this creature. We are still on a quest to become godlike. The machine elements do not change a thing, as far as I can see.

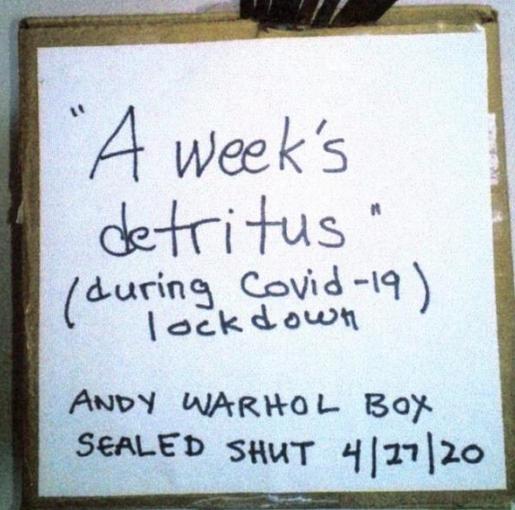
. . .

Too many ill-defined terms floating in my brain. Human. Transhuman. Posthuman. Humanoid. Too many cosmologies, as well. What to do? I will posit humans as ape-like creatures evolving over eons to our present condition with a lifespan of around 100 years, if lucky, and with a lifestyle, if lucky, being an improvement (maybe not for the planet) on the short and brutal life of our ancestors. And, I want to live longer in comfort. Ok. A bit of hardware here, a vaccine there, some cream to fix my wrinkles, some chemicals to clear my mind. Moving forward, I might want to improve the brand, add a little more hardware to the kludge, maybe download my entire consciousness into a tub of gooey substance left over from a fried computer terminal (Aronofsky, π) and, thereby, in the literal sense, embrace cybernetics,—voila! a new me. Maybe, we can all

do this together and reach utopian solutions to the world's problems and live in harmony with one another and nature and build forms of transport and terraform the solar system. (I want a condo on Ganymede.) However, what is the point of this? Everything that can be accomplished as the teleological endpoint is present, here and now, in this moment. New wiring on an old mainframe is not going to change the eschatology.



JAMPA DORJE



TWO ESSAYS: WHOIS, THE ASSIGNEE &
A THEURGICAL EXAMINATION OF
TRANSHUMANISM



TWO ESSAYS: WHOIS, THE ASSIGNEE &
A THEURGICAL EXAMINATION
OF
TRANSHUMANISM

JAMPA DORJE

KAPALA PRESS 2020 ELLENSBURG

Front cover: archive art by the author
Title page: drawing by Jorja Towner

Inside photo: Gallery One's "60s Party"
Back cover: Lama Gyurme in costume

Essays from Dr. Michael Goerger's Philosophy of Technology Class, CWU, Spring Quarter



WHOIS, THE ASSIGNEE

The term "personal identity" I take to mean, person, that is, a name for the self (Locke, "Essay Concerning Human Understanding"). I am not my driver's ID, nor my social security number. I feel, at times, like an evolving self or many selves or an incarnated mindstream or, presently, a pronoun in this sentence. What is my ontological situation? Is that me in the mirror? Why am I checking my phone to see if someone has called me, or checking Facebook or Twitter or any social media platform, or going to a priest or a shrink or a teacher or a parent or a friend? They seem to think I exist. I get messages that imply there is someone here to answer these messages, these tweets, these posts. I wake up from my dream and am amazed I am still here. I use my inner transhumanistic yoga practices to be sure I will find my way after I am dead. I enhance my sleeping state with lucid dreaming, my awakened state with mindfulness meditations, and my meditative state with a cushion and a cup of tea. I make sure my Vajra body is tuned to perfection. I check on my Shamanist allies and protectors. I study the topography of the Attic Greek underworld with its six rivers, the Hebrew Garden with its two trees, the three Dzogchen bardos (intermediate states between death and rebirth), the Egyptian weighing of souls, and the Christian judging of souls. I had better have a soul or it will not get weighed. I had better have a spirit or it will not be blessed. Or a self that will not be active on Facebook.

Staying active, my sense of self disappears, and I do not have to dwell on the moribund actuality that I do not have a self that has a personality that has a soul that must prepare a face (with or without a mask) to meet the masked faces that I will meet. This situation goes further back than Descartes and Augustine and Plato. "Death in Life; Life in Death; Rebirth," is Orphic. Coming forward, I want to improve the brand, add a little hardware to the kludge, maybe download my entire conscious mystery into a gooey substance left over from a fried computer terminal (Aronofsky, π) and, thereby, in the literal sense, embrace a cybernetic system. Change the mainframe, change the game. What I cannot understand is why a human would circumvent a system that is not broken and requires an operator merely to look beyond the bars of his self-centered imprisonment.

Assuming the self exists, my person would need the capacity to remember its mental content,

after any cyber-bionic overhaul of its form, sort out new implanted memory or information downloads from old data and adapt to new feelings of bodily modification. There is likely a tipping point, where the “human” collapses into the machine. Defining this moment as chemistry or alchemy, either way—a loaf of bread, a bottle of Viagra, and thou—it would be sexual. Is there sex after death? Sure, the union of bliss and emptiness in five formless realms.

Buddha remembered his previous lives. Under hypnosis, I thought I was Shakespeare. My writing by no means confirms this. I get whiffs of other lives, but I have had so many roles to play in this one life, it seems like I have had five lives. I will cope with this condition, until my next download. Lately, I have been channeling Philo of Alexandria. I do not believe I am, or have been, a machine.

A THEURGICAL EXAMINATION OF TRANSHUMANISM

In this brief (but sweeping) essay, I will present an inner transhumanist response to outer transhumanism, offer a multi-leveled paradigm of transhumanism, involving a critique of the term *cosmic consciousness*, and present a peripheral pedagogy of Vajrayana Dzogchen rituals.

In his essay “The Great Transition” Russell Blackburn describes transhumanism as a “broad intellectual movement” to distinguish it from a religion. According to Max More (“A Letter to Mother Nature”), transhumanism has seven objectives: curing aging and death, enhancing perceptual range, expanding memory and intelligence, fixing genetic defects, increasing self-awareness, reshaping behavioral patterns, and perfecting the biological body. In an epistemological context, these ideas are Enlightenment philosophical ideas mixed with Romantic flights of fantasy. It is like mixing Dalton’s Table of Elements with Wilde’s *Dorian Gray*. There is a strata of Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* (superior humans), as well. It is a tall order to accomplish all those fixes, with or without religious zeal.

According to Wiki elves: Outer Transhumanists champion the intersection of technologies, including nanotechnology (manipulating matter at molecular, atomic, and subatomic levels), biotechnology (manipulating biological process, especially genes), information technology (manipulating information and data) and cognitive science (examining the brain and its processes), as well as hypothetical future technologies like simulated reality (beyond virtual reality towards the artful creation of a simulated but really real reality), artificial intelligence (intelligence displayed by machines), superintelligence (created by a leap to a higher level of cognition as presently understood), 3D bioprinting (construction of objects from a digital 3D model), mind uploading (copying a mental state and scanning it into a computer), chemical brain preservation (memory and identity storage through the arrangements of chemicals), and cryonics (storage of memory and identity through low temperatures). Walt Disney trumps Albert Einstein as the iconic cosmological poster boy.

There are moral issues, as well as fashion issues, that accompany any advance in these technologies as they manifest. Blackburn says, “Ultimately, transhumanists argue, technological intervention in the capacities of the human body and mind will lead to alterations so dramatic that it will make intuitive sense to call the deeply altered people of the near or not-so-near future posthuman: they will be continuous with us but unlike us in many ways.”

Oh, to live forever with cyber-bionic enhancements
and feel the wonder of writing a poem, lovelier than
“She walks in beauty, like the night /Of cloudless climes...”
and swoon with ten times the passion.

And the world would still be lovely
with sunsets enhanced by oceans of burning oil.
Free of human restraints, yes—a robot standing in a haze
with an acid atmosphere slowly dissolving my wiring.

Crossing the street in wonder of the angle of earth’s shadow,
crescent moon at my hand’s reach, I would be grateful
for the experience of being a being, even of little consequence,
in my sporty, high-tech-low-tech kludge of a contraption.

. . .

When I studied philosophy at Cal, in the early ‘60s, I asked my professors why they did not reference P.D. Ouspensky, and they told me that they thought he was crazy. Sixty years later, I find him, again, on the fringes of mainstream philosophy. This may only be an indication that humans remain where they are, and that, in a radical form of idealism, philosophy evolves. I am glad to know that my life-long journey towards cosmic consciousness (What a quaint term it seems, in retrospect!) has not been a fool’s errand.

As a monk, I completed a traditional Tibetan Buddhist retreat in a cabin, called Luminous Peak, near Pagosa Springs, Colorado, under the guidance of Tulku Sang-ngag, a Nyingma school lama. My practice required me to follow the structure of four or five two-hour sessions of meditation each day for three years and to work my 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—*tsoks* (formal feasts) 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.

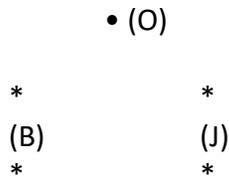
Before I began the rigorous main practices, I was softened up by doing a *ngöndro*, a preliminary practice composed of five sub-sets of practice: it begins with the taking of refuge (a recited prayer), while performing a full-length body prostration and visualizing the Guru Rinpoche

Lineage Tree Mandala, in full-detail, 100,000 times; followed by the practice of the raising of compassion, bodhicitta, 100,000 times; followed by 100,000 recitations of the Vajrasattva 100-syllable 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, the main practices vary. I followed a cycle of practices, completed step by step. In my three-year retreat, I accomplished the *Dzinpa Rangdröl* (Self-liberation from Clinging), a *terma* (mind treasure) of Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje (1800-1866). The main deity of the practice was Yeshe Tsogel. I found that not all inner transhumanist paths lead to the same place.

According to Andrew Pilsch (in his essay “Inner Transhumanism”), Ouspensky compares the psychic state of Nietzsche’s “Superman” to an Eleusinian Mystery initiation experience. The experience of ecstasy described by Ouspensky resembles Christian and Sufi mystical experiences (Underhill), Kundalini yogic claims, and may be influenced by the Vedantic term *satchitananda* (“existence-consciousness-bliss”) as the ultimate state of consciousness. Plato, also, speaks of a gradual transition from obscurity to the sudden contemplation of light in Diotima’s Ladder of Love Speech, in the *Symposium*, and the Allegory of the Cave, in the *Republic*. However, the Ati Yoga (Dzogchen) inner tantric teachings reveal a calm, abiding state of clear light beyond the liminal, phantasmagoria displayed in the intermediate states of disembodied consciousness (*Bardo Thodol*). To abuse a Vipassana trope—after the ecstasy, the laundry. Insight Meditation (Vipassana) places the emphasis on being able to handle the day by day, moment by moment spontaneously arriving perfect moments that, in short order, turn chaotic. Everything that can be accomplished as the teleological endpoint is phenomenologically present, here, in this moment. With my apperception (*gnosis*) of spontaneously arising perfection, supercomputers are not going to change the nature of mind (the View).

. . .

A Kabbalistic Paradigm of Inner and Outer Transhumanism as a 5-sided Argument:



I am going to add a dimension of theurgical play to my essay. I posit a pentagraphical display of transhumanism as a 5-sided argument of two cross-confronting sets of dualities with a quincunx contact to an Overseer of spooky forces from afar (Einstein). This is a pentagon, not a pentagram which is a Wicca sign, that is a five-sided star symbol used in magic as a display of psychic fields. Here, the 5-sided figure is a Pythagorean geometric concept. Imagine a simple house-shape, 2-D front, with a peaked roof, or a temple supported by two pillars, e.g. King Solomon’s Temple with two pillars, *Boaz* and *Jachin*, Strength and Justice—corresponding with a dialectic between

religion and philosophy, that, in turn, have internal dialectics: religion, East and West, between pantheism and monotheism, and between the Continental metaphysicians and deconstructionists and the British and American analysts. This is the right pillar, Jachin; across the deck is Boaz, a dialectic between cybernetics, biochemistry, and quantum mechanics vs. the state, the artists (with fettered imagination), and the marketplace. At the very top of our house is the peak of the roof, a Source of Being, that appears to be composed of quantum digital/analog holographic tweets between strings of known unknowns and unknown unknowns within a demiurge emanating mind into matter and back.

Will transhumanism—itsself an esthetic-ethics antimony wrapped in the conundrum of whether we have control of our technology, or it has control of us—go rogue, like a cylon in *Battlestar Galatica*, and turn on its creators?

I take inspiration with Henry David Thoreau's attempt to adjust to a simpler lifestyle: food-clothes-shelter, a \$28 cabin and 99 bean rows—Jampa in retreat with one solar panel generating enough electricity to charge the batteries for my headlamp, so I could practice at night and in the early morning hours in contrast to what it will cost, in time and resources, to upload to a virtual platform, when death is that platform.

. . .

Neanderthal took his peculiar stones
and Pharaoh his throne and gilded boat
I'll be buried with my TV and remote
as well as a cell phone to keep in touch

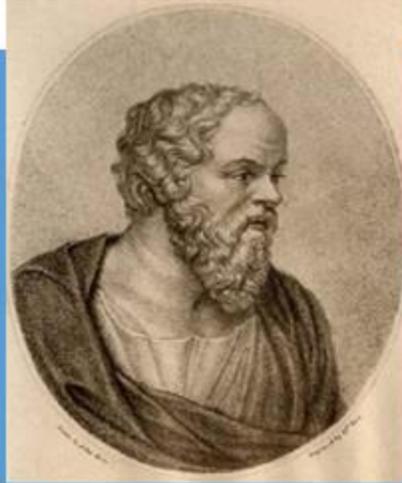
There are always roads not travelled. On some, you would saunter; some are the type where you bushwhack your way there; and some are tried and true mainstream, well-marked paths. Over the years, I have done divination on some decisions and done research on others. On one occasion I ran my finger down a list and pointed to a school at random and just went there, out of frustration. I made some interesting connections through that choice. In San Luis Obispo, in 1964, I read Ouspensky's *New Model of the Universe* and became an inner transhumanist. I have never looked back with regret. [Happily, I remember Buddy and I vied with one another to be the first to sit in the full lotus posture on our heads and were able to make love with Chela in *yabyum*, or Tantric embrace.]





SOCRATES REVISITED
A TRIPTYCH OF THE TRIPARTITE SOUL

JAMPA DORJE



SOCRATES REVISITED
A TRIPTYCH OF THE TRIPARTITE SOUL
JAMPA DORJE
KAPALA PRESS 2020 ELLENSBURG

Thanks to Dr. Clayton Bohnet and his Central Washington University Philosophy 101
Critical Thinking Class, Summer, 2020

Main text: *Selected Dialogues of Plato*, translated by Benjamin Jowett
Modern Library, NY, 2001.

Thanks to [bing.com/images](https://www.bing.com/images)



A RECEPTACLE WITH A TOOLKIT

In this textual analysis of Plato's *Ion* I will focus on some of the rhetorical devices Socrates uses to bring his friend to an understanding that inspiration from a Muse is a better explanation for the ability of an actor to influence his audience than the claim that it is through practicing the interpretation of a poem as a craft. Once my analysis is completed, I will contrast it with other views from different cultures.

Socrates is a bully. He should pick on someone his own size (intellectually). Poor Ion, he is coming from the Festival of Asclepius, where he has won a prize for his recitation of Homer, and Socrates takes the wind out of his sails. Ion is a *rhapsode*, an actor who recites poetry, and Socrates asks him if a rhapsode could recite the poems of a poet, like Homer, without understanding the meaning of the words in the poem (530c). Ion replies that the rhapsode must know the meanings, if he is to deliver a good interpretation of the poem.

Ion is full of himself, still high from his victory, and miscalculates the direction Socrates is heading when he boasts that he is the best among his peers at interpreting Homer. In his anxiousness to show how good he is at reciting Homer, he reveals a bias,—that he prefers Homer to Hesiod. Homer writes of battles on beaches and voyages at sea. Hesiod is a pastoral poet, more interested in farming than in the hacking and slaying of warriors. Both are revered poets, but by claiming one poet is superior to the other, while simultaneously claiming that he can understand the knowledge of both poets equally well where they agree (531b), he sets himself up for an epistemological pratfall later in the dialogue.

Socrates prods Ion, using subjects—prophecy, mathematics, charioteering, medicine—to draw out Ion's acknowledgement that he knows the meaning of the words the poets use in their poems, and he claims that he can discern when one has better knowledge than another (532a). He agrees with Socrates that knowing the poets is a great talent of his, but he is confused as to why he "wakes up" as soon as Homer is mentioned (532c) and wonders why he is proficient interpreting Homer and not the others.

Socrates is a word magician. He does not need a wand or a hat or a scarf to make things appear or disappear. He makes it happen right in your mind. He shifts from focusing on Ion as a talented rhapsode to the subject of art in general. Socrates claims that Ion's heightened capacity to interpret Homer is not derived from craft but from another source—inspiration, a channeling of something divine, which he refers to as a Muse (533d). Ion is interested in this possibility. Socrates makes use of a metaphor to explain his idea—a loadstone with its magnetic energy drawing iron rings together to form chains of influence. The Muse inspires the poet who inspires the rhapsode who inspires the audience. Socrates refers to this energy as a kind of madness and

references the frenzy of the Bacchic maidens under the influence of Dionysus (534a). From this point on in the dialogue, Socrates pounds Ion headfirst into the ground like he was a tent stake, the tent containing an arsenal of moral and intellectual arguments that Plato is compiling against poets and their mimicry. (This theme is to be developed in another paper.)

I have been hard on Socrates. His intention is not to humiliate his friend, although Ion's laurels are beginning to wilt. Rather, Socrates helps the rhapsode see how his ideas have led him into an unsatisfactory understanding of his talent. My claim is bolstered by a wiki elf who perceives Socrates' intention as a critique of unjustified belief rather than a critique of poetry. (G. Vlastos, *Socrates. Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, Cornell University Press, 1991, in Wikipedia, "Ion").

Receiving inspiration is one thing, be it from a Muse or, in modern parlance, from the subconscious, but getting the inspired words on the page is another. Socrates says, "every poet has some Muse from who he is suspended" (536a). In promoting the concept of the Muse, the binary between Homer and Hesiod is imprecise. It is essential to know the Muse you court. Homer is an epic poet, and his muse is Calliope; Hesiod is a pastoral poet, and his Muse might well be Polyhymnia, as she is the Muse of sacred poetry, sacred hymn, as well as agriculture. Homer begins the *Illiad* with "Sing, goddess the anger of Peleus' son Achilles..." (Latimore) and proceeds to tell of the Trojan War. Hesiod begins *The Works and Days* with "Muses, who from Pieria give glory through singing, come to me, tell of Zeus..." (Latimore) and proceeds to create a theogony. If you listen closely to the classical Greek, you can hear the clashing of swords and shields in the *Illiad*, and in *The Works and Days*, the humming of honeybees.

Socrates points out to Ion that his art is not systematic, like a science (532c), but he conflates the idea of knowing the meaning of words with being able to perform the activity the words refer to. Still, it is true that the more hands-on knowledge the poet has of various professions, the more likely he will find the appropriate words—*les mots justes*—for the situation, and the same is true for the rhapsode, who must recite the poem with feeling and clarity. Throughout the dialogue, Socrates focuses on the meaning element (*logopoeia*) of poetry and omits and discussion of the equally important pictorial (*phanopoeia*) and musical (*melopoeia*) elements (Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading*, New Directions, NY, 2010, p. 63 ff). Pound says, "Philosophy has no pictures," and this makes meaning harder to decipher.

. . .

T.S. Eliot says that the craft cannot be separated from the writing, and he suggests that writing on a regular basis, even if it is deplorable, is necessary to be ready for when the inspiration arrives. Like with love, there are no surefire strategies. Eliot promotes a modern approach to creative writing. A couple of quotes reflect his understanding of the creative mind (az.quotes.com):

“The poet’s mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present” (*Selected Essays*, Houghton, Mifflin, & Harcourt, NY, 2014, p. 17).

This has an atomist ring to it—Democritus and Dalton with a dash of Freud. And, “Writing every day is a way to keep the engine running, and then something good may come out of it.” Compare Eliot’s Apollonian approach to the creative process with Arthur Rimbaud’s Dionysian systematic-derangement-of-senses-approach:

The first task of the man who wants to be a poet is to study his own awareness of himself, in its entirety; he seeks out his soul, he inspects it, he tests it, he learns it. As soon as he knows it, he must cultivate it! . . .—But the problem is to make the soul into a monster, like the comprachicos, you know? Think of a man grafting warts onto his face and growing them there. I say you have to be a visionary, make yourself a visionary (greetmewithcriesofhate.com, a letter written, in 1871, to Georges Izambard).

Add to this, Allen Ginsberg’s “First thought, best thought” that he used as a vehicle to achieve a spontaneous way of telling the truth that comes from raw experience. He wrote the poem “Howl” after taking peyote, and it must have left him, as he says in the opening stanzas, “shuddering mouth-wracked and battered bleak of brain” (*Howl*, City Lights, San Francisco, 1958). William Wordsworth, in contrast: “I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility” (literary-articles.com). He is having it both ways—language originating with powerful feelings but crafted into poetry once the poet has “composed” himself.

There is a special type of revelatory texts that Tibetan lamas call *mind termas*, or texts that were posited by an 8th c. spiritual teacher, Padmasambhava, in the minds of his disciples who, through repetitive cycles of metempsychosis, find the treasure at the appropriate time to refresh the Buddhist teachings (see *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*, Tulku Thondup Rinpoche). I studied with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, who told me that he had to write his entire *Mandarava* terma, from beginning to end, word perfect, twice, to guarantee its authenticity. A terma that I have been using as a panacea against Covid-19 is called *The Practice of the Profound Essence of Simhamukaha, The Powerful Queen of the Dakinis*. It is a mind terma of A-Yu Khandro, Dorje Palden. In a colophon, Dorje Palden says, “Even though this upadesha [secret teaching] is all there is [a text in my possession with translation running to 13 pages], it was actually given by the Wisdom Dakini and was kept in my mind and practiced for a time of twenty-three human years...before it was written down in letters.” This form of divine transmissions is orderly and ritualistic and does not suggest frenzy. It is somewhere between Apollonian and Dionysian—ordered, disciplined, cognitive, but not exactly rational.

I have been using arguments based on authority, which is a weak form of argument. I posit my crossroads poem, written in 1974 in San Luis Obispo, when I despaired of every becoming a poet and made a promise to forsake the art, if I could not resolve the turmoil in my soul. In the library at Cal Poly, in a big bang of inspiration, I was born:

SCORPIO, SCORPIO RISING

Scorpio

beastie in the bunghole

bugaboo of bugaboos

mite in the middle of the third root race

big eight of the cycle of life

maggot of the mind's eye

mistake, abortion, infection, crablouse

error of the raised eyebrow

O deadly persuader

O propagator of corruption

O comic of crimes not yet committed

O gutless guttersnipe

O diddler at the door of destruction

let me fall with you into generation

I could feel the particles unite to form a new compound: the influence of George Barker, Madame Blavatsky, and Kenneth Anger—Fates stirring the cauldron;—but the source of the Dionysian energy seemed transcendent.

. . .

In the opening lines of *Ion*, the Festival of Asclepius is mentioned. Asclepius, the god of medicine, was a son of Apollo. His followers were called the Therapeutae of Asclepius. They were healers. Socrates asks Ion if there was an honor that included the reading of poetry at this festival (530a). The Greeks must have considered poetry therapeutic as well as beautiful. It follows that, if medicine is an art and draws on technique, the performance of poetry, an art, would draw on technique or contain technique as part of the creative process.

William Blake came to me in a dream and said that poetry has two angels, one that dictates and one that records. He also said that poetry is constructed of one part drawn from myths, another part from the literary tradition, or craft, and the rest from personal experience and imagination. Again, the formula for creation utilizes a combination of faculties, some from within and some from without, rather than a single source transmitted only from the outside. A poet is a

receptacle with a toolkit.

A PHILOSOPHY SLAM AT CALLIAS' HOUSE

This paper analyzes, in an allegorical manner, an argument between Socrates and Protagoras as a play within a play with references to boxing and slam poetry, remembering that the competitive form of slam poetry began on a boxing-like platform in the Get Me High Lounge in Chicago, in 1984, where the main rule was to stand your ground, work your way through the rounds, and take your punches, translated into your score on a score card, like in boxing. Serious as the search for truth can be for a philosopher, knowledge of the craft must be passed on to students, and the *Dialogues* of Plato are a handbook of rhetorical devices, as well as an entertainment, as well as an analogical path towards something transcendent.

Socrates and Protagoras are the protagonists in Plato's dialogue, *Protagoras*. The scene is one of disarray—random activities, some people are awakening in the early morning; some are on their way to a gathering at Callias' house, others are leaving; some are still in bed; Protagoras meanders, pontificating to his followers. It is a play with dramatic, personal dialogue, meant to be read on the page—a new concept, at the time. Indeed, Simonides, who has a cameo, is one of the first poets known to read his poems to his audience, from a papyrus, likely, rather than reciting from memory. There are two main rounds of argument between Socrates (a middle-aged citizen) and Protagoras, a famous, older sage from out of town, designated a sophist, a derogatory term because of the stigma of offering your knowledge up for sale;—but these were changing times in Athens Town.

One of the rounds occurs right after the opening scenes. Then, there is a diversion to spar with the poets, always a merry sport. Simonides, a colorful person-sage, is one of the best and loves the ring. After an entertaining half-time, the two philosophers return to their main argument, to a second round, to decide if virtue can be taught, or not.

These two philosophers have different styles. Protagoras is old school. He draws on myths to explain complicated concepts. He can argue with propositions, but he is careful about his inferences. Socrates is the avantgarde. He has a method of deconstructing an argument with a series of ever-quickening questions that attack the basic assumptions of standard opinions, to arrive (perhaps "mystically") at knowledge already known.

In the first round, Protagoras, in white shorts, looking fit, comes out swinging. Protagoras claims virtue can be taught; Socrates, virtue cannot be taught. In a series of right jabs to Socrates'

midsection, Protagoras offers an anthropogony, a story of the origin and development of man, rather than an argument based on propositions. The story of how humans gain a sense of civic wisdom (even if disproportionately distributed) is explained, by Protagoras, as due to an oversight at the time of creation of human beings by the gods. The titan, Epimetheus (“hindsight”) was given the task of distributing protective ware (claws, fur, etc.) to shield humans from the forces of nature, and his brother Prometheus (“foresight”) was given the task of checking to be sure the job was done well. Epimetheus gave all the animals their “appropriate qualities” (320d) but forgot humans. Zeus saw trouble ahead, when these creatures would come to form cities; and, with a dynamic one-two combo, he slammed in Shame and Justice, in equal measures.

Protagoras says that the addition of these two elements explains why humans possess different abilities, yet all are subject to being brought before Justice, and all feel Shame (322d). Protagoras is of the opinion that all citizens possess some knowledge of civic virtue: “Cities cannot exist if the virtues are shared by only a few, as the professional skills are” (322d). This is sound reasoning, if you believe in deities and their ability to hand out transcendental favors like they were candy bars.

Socrates asks Protagoras to clarify if virtue is one or has many parts (329d). Socrates swings a haymaker, asking if all fathers are successful raising their sons to be virtuous, and he has a long list of failures, but Protagoras blocks this by telling Socrates that he did not say all students had the same capabilities but that society only expected them to have some familiarity with the civic virtues (327ff). Socrates stops there. There should be a discussion of the relativity of terms and the compositional content of mixed metaphors, at this point, but Protagoras is entirely on another plane of thought, and the dialogue segues to the subject of poets.

Following an idea posited by Andrei V. Lebedev, in his essay, “The Derveni Papyrus and Prodicus of Ceos” (www.academia.edu/36812048) that there are two forms of pantheism present in the narratives of the philosophers at the time of our dialogue, Protagoras is giving lightning bolt punches of a religious pantheism, that reduces nature to God, and Socrates is counterpunching with a naturalistic pantheism, that reduces God to nature. In our dialogue, Socrates examines the concept of virtue as though it is a commodity in the marketplace or the learned talent of an artisan. (In a later theory, Plato, in a radical move, reduces nature further—to eternal forms by which we can apprehend nature in its true ontological condition.)

In terms of the dramatic action of the dialogue, the discussion ends without agreement. I think this is a part of Plato’s message, that this section of the dialogue contains a set piece of argument for revealing a rhetorical device at work in Socrates’ method, the analytical vs. the story board. The use of a dramatic presentation is a media message (McCluhan), and the dialogue form, when enacted, is a form of theatre, a mind mirror (Artaud).

In the second round, Socrates (in red shorts) goes from the general meaning of virtue into a semantic field of specific meanings of the word virtue. All examples are connected to the world of arts and trades and warfare. All the examples are tautologies. Socrates seems to be going for a composite of many essences making up a unification of essences that he can call Virtue. For Socrates, all the examples combined do not equal one, undifferentiated Virtue. He has a strategy, to set the stage for an exploration of the one-or-many approach to his solution, whereby he can perform an amazing stunt and flip the argument (his real opponent) upside down (325c). Now, virtue is a form of knowledge and can be taught. This is called a *penitrope*, a table turning, in the trade. And in searching for the meaning of this word, a wiki elf told me that Socrates did the same number on Protagoras again, in *Theaetetus*, where he juggled three meanings of knowledge and walked a virtual tightrope in his argument.

In both dialogues, Socrates, leaves the party. Socrates concludes the dialogue in *Theaetetus* by announcing that all the two had produced were mere “wind-eggs” and that he must be getting on to the courthouse to face his trial for subverting the youth (Wiki). In our dialogue, in the second round, the slam is a draw. Both contestants are a bit bruised, they but have maintained status, and Socrates, with his understated genius, is given tribute as an up-and-coming contender. I hope he left this gathering to visit a friendlier place, than he does in *Theaetetus*. I think of how George Foreman felt about Muhammad Ali, as reported in an interview (Wiki), that “[Ali is] the greatest man I’ve ever known. Not greatest boxer, that’s too small for him. He had a gift. He’s not pretty, he’s beautiful.” Protagoras might have said this about Socrates.

. . .

Hermes, the herald of Zeus, who carries messages and does his boss’ dirty work, has a role in Protagoras’ creation story. Hermes moves quickly between worlds—God of businessmen and thieves, God of Shepherds, Creator of Fire for the Gods—Trickster, Coyote, Soothsayer, God of the crossroads, Guide in the underworld (Hyde). He has a lot in common with the titan, Prometheus. Both are tricksters; both are connected to the element of fire in a fundamental way; both are connected to the trades (*techne*); but they are from different god lineages. Although combative, they remain on speaking terms. In Aeschylus’ play, *Prometheus Bound*, Hermes points out that Prometheus is chained to a rock, and Prometheus tells Hermes that it is Hermes who is chained to the establishment.

(www.litcharts.com/lit/prometheusbound/characters/hermes)

I have been claiming for years that The Donald is a Hermes figure, not a “chosen one” of the Judeo-Christian-tradition but a chthonic deity of the pagans. The presently ascending Covid Death Cult seems to confirm my hypothesis, but no one listens to poets, where myths are *lingua franca*. The name “Trump” is reason enough to be suspicious: a playing card of the suit chosen

to rank above the others, which can win a trick where a card of a different suit has been led. Also, full of bombast. Poets are like punch-drunk fighters, who have taken one too many blows to the head (Spicer).

. . .

In *Protagoras*, Plato manipulates a few dates to get all his characters into the same time frame and have a dialogue. In an earlier work of mine, *Cheek to Cheek* (D Press, Sebastopol, 2005), my persona, Thuragania, a 4th c. BCE hermaphroditic philosopher from Lesbos and close friend of Simonides, meets with Lao Tzu, Bertrand Russell, Socrates, Parmenides, and Plotinus, in the Second Heaven, the Sphere of Hermes, and they discuss the interrelationship between the physical and the eternal world of forms (<http://www.kapalapress.net/cheek-to-cheek-1>).

. . .

In wondering why Socrates seems to be a poor logician, I came across this text by an anonymous writer in a blog (www.philosophy.stackexchange.com/questions/43687/why-there-are-so-many-blunders-fallacies-in-platos-dialogues): In Philosophy Stack, it says:

Plato believed in deeper levels of Truth and Reality underlying the world as we know it. Because of the relative imperfection of our own world, we cannot fully express or directly communicate deeper Truth. However, we have an unbreakable and inherent internal connection to it. Accordingly, Plato believes in a Socratic process of teaching via questions, where the student is guided to “remember” deeper Knowledge from inside, rather than receiving it didactically from a teacher...This is because he doesn't believe argument and logic (or anything else) can be perfected solely within this world. At the same time, he is deliberately using many of those same errors and imperfections to lead the reader forward, and eventually allow the reader to make the leap past what can be directly conveyed and into the deeper Truths beyond.

Socrates helps his students (and, perhaps, old philosophers) see how their ideas have led them into unsatisfactory understandings of the meaning of their claims. With his method of questioning, he blazes a new path in philosophical discussion. Using the dialogue form allows Plato to promote the Socratic method, creating a handbook of rhetorical devices, while retaining examples of past traditions for a new generation of philosophers, for whom mythology is a kind of soft technology they can no longer understand.

References:

Artaud: Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), was a French dramatist, poet, essayist, actor, and theatre director, widely recognized as one of the major figures of twentieth-century theatre and the

European avant-garde.

Derveni papyrus: an ancient Macedonian papyrus roll that was found in 1962. It is a philosophical treatise that is an allegorical commentary on an Orphic poem, a theogony concerning the birth of the gods, produced in the circle of the philosopher Anaxagoras. It was composed near the end of the 5th century BCE (Wiki). www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GStHl8j0tw&t=606s

Hyde: Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World: How Disruptive Imagination Creates Culture*, Cannongate, Edinburgh, 2017.

Lebedev: Andrei V. Lebedev, The Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences Faculty Member, online essay, "The Derveni Papyrus and Prodicus of Ceos" [abridged version, for substantially expanded version see the 2019 article "The authorship of the Derveni papyrus, a Sophistic treatise on the origin of religion and language: a case for Prodicus of Ceos"].

McLuhan: "The medium is the message" is a phrase coined by Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) and introduced in his *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Mentor, New York; 1994, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Spicer: Jack Spicer (1925-1965) was an American poet often identified with the San Francisco Renaissance. See *Collected Books of Jack Spicer*, Black Sparrow Press, Santa Rosa, 1996.

WHITE HORSE, BLACK HORSE

At a coffeehouse, in Berkeley, seated in front of a colorful mural portraying Greek gods and goddesses, Bertrand Russell claimed that from a false premise, you can prove anything. A person at the same table proposed, "If $2+2=5$, prove you are the Pope." Russell, shot back, "Subtracting 3 from both sides of the equation, you have $2=1$; the Pope and I are two, therefore, I am the Pope." There is sleight of hand at play in this retort. The first manipulation of the equation subtracts numbers, while the second stage of the argument references people.

The Chariot Allegory, in Plato's *Phaedrus*, begins with a similar sleight of hand definition. Socrates states that a soul is immortal because it is of the nature of something that is always moving, always in motion, and it is always in motion because it partakes of the Self-Moving, which is "the beginning of motion of all else that moves" (245c-d). Socrates supports the concept of something Self-Moving by claiming "that which is begotten must have a beginning, but Beginning cannot be begotten of anything" because, if "Beginning came out of and thus after something, then it would not exist from the beginning (ibid). This is not a proof that the soul is immortal; it is a definition that the soul is immortal. The tautological nature of this definition is hidden by its association with Self-Moving being without a beginning, another tautology. By shifting mundane terms into

transcendental terms by raising the first letter from lower case to upper case, I read “immortal” as meaning “without beginning,” and, although the argument does not give me any new information about the soul, it does introduce an immortal allegory, where our heroes speak to me, under a plane tree, along a legendary river.

This is a pleasant spot along the river, visually, but there is drama in the history of the spot. There is a sexual vibe transmitted by the location being sacred to Achelous and his daughters, the Nymphs, and the conflict between Achelous and Hercules over their love of man-destroyer Deianira, as well as the scene of the rape of Orithyia by Boreas. And more,—note that the plane tree is sacred to Hercules and the blossoming plant beneath the tree is *agnus castus*, known as the chaste tree, rumored to be an anaphrodisiac (Wiki). The psychic tension between Socrates and Phaedrus is reflected in the landscape.

Socrates considers this kind of mythologizing as confusing the issue (229d) and gives us what he claims to be a simpler vision of a complex problem: how to keep your passions under control when you are seized by erotic madness. A mind body dualism was recognized by Plato, where the mind and body are distinct and separable, and he tries to reconcile the dualism by proposing a tripartite soul. Composed of a virtuous, noble side, the white horse pulling the chariot upward towards beauty; an uncontrollable side, defined by the appetites and habitual tendencies, the black horse, pulling us downward to earth and bad behavior; and a charioteer that is rational and tries to control the horses (246ff).

Once Socrates has given us a quite suitable portrayal of the Soul, he pulls me into the chariot with him and takes me on a wild ride around the heavens, giving me a glimpse of the meaning of Being, and he explains how the soul can again arrive at these heights, if the appetites regain the upper hand. His explanations of the eternal return of the soul through cosmological time frames is a fascinating study itself.

In the Dzogchen school of Tibetan Buddhism, upon the cessation of life, the mindstream, in a disembodied form, can recycle through six realms: the two hell realms, the ghost realm, the human realm, the realm of the titans, and the realm of the gods. There is no exact time frame for a return to human form, like in Socrates’ plan. One could find oneself in a cell, playing a board game, where you would have to roll snake eyes a million time in a row to be freed,—but, if you have glimpsed the Dharma, seen the Vision, had the right Initiation, the Elysian Fields are attainable. It appears to me that Socrates and Phaedrus have arrived.





Nietzsche in a Nutshell
Jampa Dorje



Nietzsche in a Nutshell

Jampa Dorje

Kapala Press 2020 Ellensburg

Thanks to Dr. Clayton Bohnet
and his Creative Thinking
Philosophy Class
CWU, Summer, 2020

Main text: *A Nietzsche Reader*, translated
by R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books, New York, 1977.

Thanks to www.bing.com for images



NIETZSCHE IN A NUTSHELL

In this poorly minted coin, this brockage, of an essay, I will discuss Friedrich Nietzsche's use of aphorism and other rhetorical devices in his writing style, how he takes the traditional philosophers and their philosophical projects to task and give a glimpse of how he has affected me personally. This essay will include a faux diary by his *femme fatal*, Lou Andreas-Solomé.

By searching "Nietzsche writing style" I found this quote: "Nietzsche created, so to speak, a new style in philosophical writing, which up until then was couched in academic tones or in effusive poetry: he created a personalized style; Nietzsche not only mastered language but also transcended its inadequacies" (www.bing.com). His personalized style included the use of aphorisms, short pithy phrases, intended to blow your mind.

Writing aphorisms is one thing; having something to say is another. As poet Robert Creeley exhorts: "If you have a song, sing it; if you have a bell, ring it." Nietzsche had a plan, much like Socrates, to deconstruct ideas and show what a rhetorical sham the conventional system of thinking is, and to refocus on morality, because whatever we are doing as a civilization is not working. He had a bell, and he rang the hell out of the bell.

Nietzsche questioned everything, especially himself. He writes from many perspectives and is very much an archeologist of ideas. A contemporary of Nietzsche's, Herman Melville, author of *Moby Dick*, said philosophers have their arses sewn shut. Nietzsche would agree and understand why they would not be receptive to his ideas.

The writing is not only aphoristic. Nietzsche jams on a lot of levels. In respect to his intelligibility, he writes, "One does not want only to be understood when one writes but just as surely not to be understood" (*Reader*, p.18). Nietzsche wants to be read, but he does not want to be read as a curiosity by the philosophers or to be the chitchat of the literati. He wants someone who "reads" him, in the sense of taking on the vector of his ontological condition, his View.

The writing is dense. Poetry proceeds by hyperbole. Nietzsche mixes in maxims with his aphorisms and, when the need arises, adds an allegory or fable (e.g. *spirit-camel-lion-child* metamorphosis, *Ibid.* p. 37). A terse flow of narrative, reaching for fundamental principles, interspersed with concise statements that cut to the heart of the matter. So, with Nietzsche, you get wisdom transmissions coming and going. It is not always easy to tell where the aphorisms leave off and the maxims begin.

Nietzsche As a Tonic for Our Times

If his medicine is to work on you, take him neat, no mixer, no ice, no chaser. This madman laughs cosmic laughter. Here is a quote from a 14th c. Dzogchen sage, Longchenpa: “Since everything is but an apparition, having nothing to do with good or bad, acceptance or rejection, one may well burst out in laughter” (*Treasury of Natural Perfection*). This kind of laughter can occur when you find something you lost, like your cell phone in your pocket or your glasses on top of your head, in the most obvious place; or it can be big stuff, like the “Rwandan genocide”, “environmental degradation”, or “prevalence of disease.” These are terms with strong rhetorical content to laugh at, when the pandemic numbers in the headlines are suffering human beings,—but riding on the tail of the Comet Neowise, looking at Earth in the distance—the tragedy fades, and the divine comedy comes into focus. Between tragedy and comedy, I feel comedy is the most tragic, while being comic, in the sense that no one is let off the hook. Easy to blame the Hutus. Easy to blame Trump. Keeps us from taking responsibility. Like Socrates, look at the terms. Like Nietzsche, cut through the rhetoric you tell yourself. Best to make it a clean cut. LOL

Nietzsche reminds me of the Roman god, Janus, depicted as a double-faced god, looking in opposite directions, towards the beginning and end of things, to the end of dualities and the reformation of new riddles. For the Romans, Janus presided over the ending of war and the beginning of peace (Wiki). The face facing towards peace (in Rome and, as it has been for the U.S.) was/is hardly seen. Janus/Nietzsche is at war in one dialectic with philosophy and philosophers, and with himself and us, his audience, in another other. Nietzsche stands in the doorway and screams his head off. The tenor of his philosophy is like using capital letters in an email. He is John Coltrane laying down his licks.

Looking back at philosophy, Nietzsche realizes the whole project was misconstrued and poorly executed. He points out the egocentric nature of each philosopher’s take on philosophical structures; that the metaphysics of everyone since Heraclitus is skewered; that humans change mentally and physically over time, and that the ape of today might not have the opposing thumb of superiority it had during other eras;—or, it could have, if it got its face (with a mask, preferably) turned around and out of its arsehole.

Nietzsche knew his news would remain new, but what of the philosopher of the future? With a sense of qualified optimism, he sees us as wanting to remain an aporia: “As I divine them, as they let themselves to be divined—for it pertains to their nature to remain a riddle in some respects...”,—he went on to label us “attempters” in the hopes that we will not get hung up in our self-importance and our susceptibility to dogmatic utterances (Ibid., p.39). He would have us have a new spirit of exploration, a spirit that would require some rigorous purifications to take place before the strange phenomenon he calls *intellectual conscience* matures. Then, we can take pride in being as authentic as our ideas, once they have been truly analyzed and substantiated (Ibid., p.32). He wants us to be rigorous thinkers of thoughts and to look at these thoughts and sort them out, species, genre and kind, and shake them good, and see what falls out. He is not the first one to propose this. Try Averros (Abū I-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn ‘Aḥmad Ibn Rušd), a 12thc. Islamic polymath, who has this to say in his treatise, *Tahafut Al-Tahafut*:

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

Any logical positivist, language analyst, mathematician, or scientist worth his salt would concur. As would genius artists and poets.

From the Notebooks of Lou Andreas-Salomé, circa 1872

-
A decade after the death of Sigmund Freud (d. 1938), a fragment of a notebook was found in his London residence by his daughter, Anna Freud. The lower half of the notebook is charred, as though the book was retrieved from the fire before it was totally consumed or that the fire was not sufficiently hot enough to burn books. The notebook contains a few pages of diary. The dates correspond to the time Nietzsche, Reés, and Andreas-Salomé spent together in Switzerland, in 1872. These fragments were a part of Roberta Soultea’s 2007 installation in the Freud Museum. Her monograph from that exhibit, *Nietzsche and His Orphic Influences*, was published by Fishburn and Hughes, London.

FROM THE NOTEBOOKS OF LOU ANDREAS-SALOMÉ

13 May, Lucerne

Friedrich and I were alone on the veranda of our hotel, and he earnestly proposed marriage. His words were like fire and ice mixed in the magic cauldron of his soul. Again, I rejected him. To mollify his anxiety, he said he would be happy to continue with our project, Winterplan. [Their plan is to create an academic commune.] I heard him mutter: “There is always some madness in love. But there is also always some reason in madness”(www.goodreads.com/authorquotes/1938.Friedrich_Nietzsche)

.]...[

[as]...]yes, but..

14 May, Lucerne

Friedrich told me that he would love his Fate:—and that he would be a “Yes” sayer (youTube, *amor fati*). Elisabeth [Nietzsche’s sister], is determined to get him away from me because I am, in her eyes, an “immoral woman.” Elisabeth has about as much chance to understand our aspirations, as a cow without teeth has of chewing grass. While we traveled with my mother through Italy, we decided to set up our commune in an abandoned monastery. So far, no suitable location has been found (Wiki). Maybe we need to consult an oracle. Ther[...[...leap]...]..ould[.]...[his libations and purifications]...

15 May, Lucerne

We are in the lap of the Alps. Friedrich and Paul want to leap from mountain top to mountain top (*Reader*, p.16). They will need ten league boots to slug through the muck to get there. Paul

believes that altruistic feelings are a foundation for morality. He suggests that human sensations may take precedence over the rational mind. There is Darwin in the air, when Paul claims altruism is an innate human drive that over the course of centuries has been strengthened by natural selection (Wiki). I have a li].....]uggy whip. I wil].[spank these bad boys...][...]been made with total[.....[ang pf conscience[.....hitherto thes][...]rros[...

16 May, Lucerne

I have a Eurydice Complex. Eurydice is a figure in Greek mythology. Friedrich helped me with the philology: *Eurydice* or *Eurydike* (/jʊəˈrɪdɪsi:/; Greek: *Εὐρυδίκη*, *Eurydikē* “wide justice”, derived from *εὐρύς eurys* “wide” and *δική dike* “justice”—Lady Justice) was the wife of Orpheus, who tried to bring her back from the dead with his enchanting music (Wiki). I feel our ménage à trois has been doomed from the start. The three of us, Paul, Fredrick, and I all want a Platonic Love, a *philadelphos*, a love of ideas shared among friends, but undercurrents of Dionysian magnetism remain. I am open to exploring new arrangements, on the condition that a certain mustachio does not drink milk only. After he imbibes, he looks like Tiresias with a mouth full of seafoam—Tiresias is not a bad comparison; he also used language made of succinct phrases, and he, too, is a liminal ...r][...]between the worlds of man and[...].[.]...[.]

19 May, Lucerne

A day or two has passed without an entry (Oh! so many levels). Who is my Orpheus? A wiki elf whispered: *I was your wife for years because you were the first reality, where man and body are indistinguishable from each other, an indisputable fact of life itself. I could have said literally what you told me when you confessed your love to me: Only you are real. That is how we became husband and wife even before we became friends...*

EURYDICE AWAITS ORPHEUS

I wait for Orpheus in hell
knowing his lyre is on fire

The distance he must go is
further than a raindrop, further
than a poem
drips

In either
world

.

He will think ahead

and bring three coins and
extra honey cakes]....
]...

]...yet, there is triumph
and tenderness in his last look
]...[when]...[t]
in]...[hideous grin torn open
by]...[maenads
]..[sight, but bad
hindsight,—as now, our love
stains the carrion stair...]...[
]...[Cerebus licks...]

No fanfare, No Trumpet, No Salute, Just Raising Bodhicitta

-
I am carrying *A Nietzsche Reader* in my back pocket. I feel like I am 20, again. Revolution is at hand! And how often does one feel the heartbeat of history in one's chest? Nietzsche is present in our post-structuralist world. See the truth bubbles float out the window! In this essay I have ruffled the surface of the lake beyond the cypress tree. The *Übermensch* (and it will likely be a black woman) is at hand!

. . .

If I plan to make any progress on an inner-transhumanist Path towards the Truth of there not being absolute truths (and how not to be terrified by the relativity of truth values), I need to get a grip on myself and continually set new coordinates for the arch of my Meditation (including my artistic endeavors and my daily life) and let these interdependent currents carry me in a spiral of compassion. Looking towards the East, *bodhicitta* (enlightened mind resonating with compassion) is on full display, in the episode with Nietzsche and the horse.

It is reported: "On January 3, 1889, in the throes of a manic episode, Friedrich Nietzsche left his lodgings in Turin, walked a short distance across a nearby square, and then halted. Seeing a horse being flogged by its owner, he threw himself towards the animal and embraced it. Breaking into tears, he slumped to the floor." (<https://blog.lareviewofbooks.oressays/nietzsches-horse/>) Also, I have heard that he spoke these words to the horse: "I understand your suffering!" I tell friends that you must learn to raise bodhicitta with one hand and grapple with power with the other—and do this without doing.

References

-
Averros. Averros (Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn 'Aḥmad Ibn Rušd), *Tahafut Al-Tahafut*: I reference an epigram in my chapbook, *Cheek on Cheek*, Sebastopol, 2005. From *History of Western*

Philosophy by Bertrand Russell?

Creeley, Robert. *On Earth: Last Poems and an Essay*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2006, ("Old Story") p. 49.

Longchenpa. *Old Man Basking in the Sun: Longchen Rabjampa's Treasury of Natural Perfection*, translated by Keith Dowman, Vajra Publishers, Jlyath, Thamel, Nepal, 2007. Again, an epigram.

Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick* (1851), Norton Critical Edition, letter in the appendix.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *A Nietzsche Reader*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books, New York, 1977.

THE NIETZSCHEAN MODULES

"Write with blood: and you will discover that blood is spirit." (From Nietzsche's *Of Reading and Writing*). There is madness in this line, a push to go beyond the literal, to use hyperbole to lift the reader from their safe bubble of consciousness and ride the torrents of inspiration;—and this break is an overthrow, a overwhelming of the forces of convention. This line by Nietzsche can be read different ways. I am reminded of a line in Jean Cocteau's 1930 film, *The Blood of the Poet*: "Poets shed not only the red blood of their hearts but the white blood of their souls." There is the idea of suffering from Eros as well as being inspired by the Spirited side of their Self. Also, François Villon, the poet in Robert Louis Stevenson's short story, "A Lodging for the Night," trying to write by flickering candlelight with frozen ink that represents an act of courage, perseverance, effort, as well as adherence to the aristocratic rituals of one's craft, no matter the weather—total dedication, if not divine intervention. Whenever he is in prison, he is inspired, writing his *Testaments*. They are *prima facie* evidence. Check them out.

The matter is not about the ability to write; it's about the fire, the being jacked-up to write. Writers write because they are enticed to enter a creative dimension through the doorway of a seductive instinct, that the ancients called Muse, the romantics, Spirit, and the moderns, the Subconscious. This "demon-angel-force-instinct-mania" bites you and you come alive inside your sleeping corpse. Jack Spicer compared writing to the building of caskets and referred to dialogue as "the scroll work on the casket." This is a well-worn vanity for many writers and can disguise excessive pride. The wise avoid hubris. The only other choice is to claim, like Nietzsche, that you are beyond the problem.

Theia mania (Divine Madness) is a term used by Plato and his teacher Socrates to describe a condition of behavior attributed to the intervention of a god. (*Ion* and the discussion of "inspiration.") Nietzsche has a good dose of three of the four madnesses: he has the Apollonian form to channel accurate prophesy, that is evidenced by us reading him in Philo 101; he has the madness of the Muse, as is evidenced by this literary style (sometimes so dense as to be obscure);

he claims to have something of the Dionysian tendency;— and he creates a dialectic between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, that allows him to break from the status quo of common society, and create for himself what, today, would be an existential predicament. The existential “angst-despair-anxiety-nausea” bug is as bad as the madness one he was fleeing from. The only solution is to take to drink (which Nietzsche detested) or fall in love; and neither have “sobriety” as an anchor. Poets and philosophers are not renowned for their success with Love. Nietzsche floundered. I would recommend prudence when pursuing a woman with the name *Salomé*; she will likely bring you your head on a platter, and this might be construed as writing in blood.

“Good writers have two things in common; they prefer to be understood rather than admired; and they do not write for knowing and over-acute readers.” There are subtleties here. I will leave it to you, dear reader, to parse this one out.

One of the troubles I have reading Nietzsche is that he is dense. I stop and think and unpack every sentence. I have the same problem reading Tom Robbins (does anyone read Robbins anymore?) The jokes pile up on themselves, and I have a hard time getting into the reading flow. I know, Nietzsche is not a big fan of reading for the *readingness* of reading, but so what!

By writing in a style that is pithy and enigmatic, Nietzsche is breaking away from the usual philosophical writing of his day. (Try reading Hegel, and you will rush back to Nietzsche in an instant.) I see him a bit terrified by his own abilities. The freedom! The thrill of spiraling in the poetic heights! The ecstasy that comes from boldly embracing his creative powers! The predominate new philosophical view of his day was tied to science. Science tries to define everything but has no answers for us in terms of the perennial questions, and Nietzsche questions the whole of Western philosophy as failing us in that regard, as well. Finding the right balance with messages that awaken us and intrigue us is his approach. David Bromige told me, “Poetry is implicit not explicit; you don't have to explain everything.”

Ah, the profound modesty of those Grand 19th century Personalities! Even if there was no other reason for developing the field of psychology than to analyze the lunatics of the Romantic Movement, that would have been sufficient. A “little immortality”? Give me a break. In regards to philosophy—Nietzsche, like an ancient god, swallowed his forebearers, and we tossed in the Sea of Abyss, until Wittgenstein towed us back to shore.

“We ourselves want to be our own experimenters and vivisectional animals!” That's what this philosophical adventure is about, from Socrates on through the ages, “Know thyself!” Both have methods. Socrates' method is understated; Nietzsche's, overstated. Both want us to examine our psychic hygiene. Learn to do the mental distance dance from our mainstream egos and see

through our masks. If you can do this, you can read Nietzsche; if not, no matter, he cares little for lazy readers.

The term “aesthetics” was coined by Alexander Baumgarten, in 1735. The term comes from the Greek word, *aesthesis*, meaning perception. The questions “What is beauty?” and “How do I make aesthetic judgements?” are central to this philosophical field of enquiry. Emmanuel Kant, in his *Critique of Judgement* (1790) attempted to create a methodological way to analyze beauty. He concluded that beauty is a subjective experience and there is no adequate means of determining standards for beauty, and that it must remain a matter of taste. The idea that “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder” stems from that period of Western philosophy (re: Edward Allington essay: www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/aesthetics).

The Greeks had their say. Aristotle is more interested in the technical side of poetics, and Plato sees Beauty as a transcendental form, along with Truth and Goodness. Plato views Beauty as a means of arriving at the Good—from the contemplation of well-crafted objects (Beauty) to the contemplation of beautiful ideas (Truth), to the activity of right actions (Good). I believe I am remembering this from the *Symposium*. Kant, too, sees Beauty as a symbol of the Good in the moral order.

I see our mustached philosopher trapped in a 19th c. mindset regarding the role of art in culture. In the excerpt from *Human All Too Human*—The artist’s sense of truth (96):—I hear echoes of Plato. For Plato, painting and music are ok, but poets are suspect and pose a threat to society because they use mimicry, and these mimicking techniques can be used to bamboozle (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-aesthetics/>). In my opinion, philosophers simply cannot help but harp on Truth to the detriment of Beauty. As Nietzsche points out, artists are not the “pure vessels” that philosophers are, and they simply accept the fact that in this world—in the Battle Against the Obstacles to Beauty—they can take solace in the belief that the continuation of art is important. Nietzsche knew something was afoot, but did not have a clue what Modern Art would get itself up to:—snow shovels (Duchamp), flags (Johns), and Brillo boxes (Warhol).

When asked which was better, wealth or wisdom, Simonides replied wealth, because all the wise guys had to rely on the rich man’s largess. Simonides was a poet and an entrepreneur. Poets have their gods, but theirs’ is a craft, not a cult.

Camping: "Shap Wood, Carry Water"

Two Jampa Tales

CAMPING & HOBBIES

plus

a Dramatic Scene

EZRA POUND INVITES A COLD WAIF
TO SPEND THE NIGHT

Jampa Dorje with

Bouvard Pécuchet



Two Jampa Tales
CAMPING & HOBBIES
plus
a Dramatic Scene
EZRA POUND INVITES A COLD WAIF
TO SPEND THE NIGHT

Jampa Dorje with
Bouvard Pécuchet

D Press 2020 Ellensburg



[WILDERNESS, as a concept, is hard to pin down. I climbed to Luminous Peak to ask Jampa about his wilderness experiences: the hunter killing his prey, the logger felling a tree, the mystic interfacing with the ground of being, but he wanted to talk about camping. BP]

Camping might be about going feral—being Dionysian—but not be about wilderness. Camping is just camping—camping is a temporary affair, a night's rest,

hopefully with shelter and warmth—whether above the timberline in the San Juan’s or in a friend’s backyard in Berkeley. I always see vistas opening before me.

In *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, Thoreau says that the three necessities for survival are food, clothing and shelter. In architecture, the three basics for shelter are the mound, to keep the ground water out of the fire, the fence to keep animals away, and the roof to keep the elements at bay. Simple. Then, the fence becomes the walls, and the mound become a hearth, and the ground is tilled. You get a few goats; you perform rituals; and you’ve got a start on civilization.

Kumaradza, Longchenpa’s teacher, wouldn’t let his students camp out for more than a month, so that they wouldn’t get too comfortable and become attached to their “home.” The great yogi, Milarepa, went about naked, or with a single sheet, and lived at times on nettles, so it is possible to get by with very little, if you have the training. As a boy, I erected tents made from WW II Army blankets or lengths of canvas, built forts and tree houses and pretended I was Robinson Crusoe or Daniel Boone. My dad enrolled me in the Berkeley Y.M.C.A., and between the ages of 10 and 12, I attended Guwalla Summer Camp, along the Guwalla River, in northern California, where I learned some woods craft, swam, and hiked extensively. By the end of the summer, my hair was cut Mohawk style.

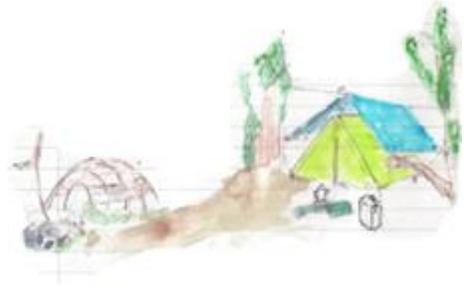
I learned the “facts of life” on a camping trip to Lake Pillsbury with a family friend. Just a guess, but it might have been a put-up job by my dad, who would have found the task embarrassing. So, Bud Connors, a man just back from the Korean War, who lived with his wife in a downstairs apartment at our home in the Oakland hills, told me a plethora of dirty jokes. After each joke, Bud explained the details. Soon, I got the jokes without the need for a commentary. Many were easy, like the books with scatological puns in their titles: *The Yellow River* by I.P. Freely and *Antlers in the Treetops* by Hugh Goosedthemoose. Others I needed help with; the traveling salesman and the farmer’s daughter jokes were less obvious. The “Hillbilly Virgin” was an eye-opener for me, who had never thought about incest. I have always cringed at jokes because someone is almost always the butt of a joke, a woman or a person of ethnicity—or yourself.

Tibetans have an earthy sense of humor, and I remember having a hysterical time with dirty jokes with a group of Lama Tharchin’s students at Parmalee Gulch, near Denver. The lama loved hearing these saucy stories, and his students regaled him all evening. It was this night that Deborah and I began making moves on each other and spent the night in an old, flowered bus.

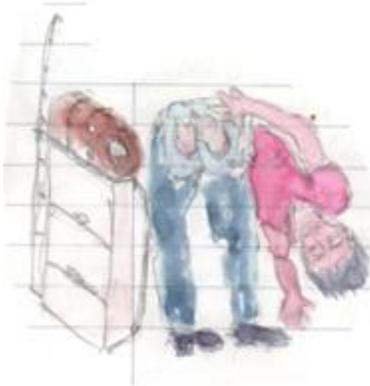


Deborah and I would later share a tent at Tara Mandala in a little glade just above the sweat lodge. That area and the low ground between there and the outdoor kitchen under the big elm tree was enchanting.

Or, it might have just been haunted. Lama Tsultrim had her camp in that area one summer and became ill. The dakinis performed an exorcism, and after Lama Tsultrim got better, she moved to higher ground. There are no shortage of ghost stories around a camp. There was one about the dilapidated cabins in Hidden Valley, vacated by settlers who had died of cholera. This area was also considered a burial ground, where the Utes had brought their old horses and put them out to pasture to die.



When I was 14, I went with ten other boys, guided by the track coach from San Rafael High School, on a two-week trek in the Goddard Range, east of Bakersfield, California, in the Sierra-Nevada Mountain Range. This was the summer of 1956. In general, camping equipment was makeshift and relied a good deal on army surplus. Our track coach leader had been written up in *National Geographic* for his innovative approaches to camping. He had designed an aluminum pack with compartments for food and clothes, and he worked out a deal with a company that made dehydrated foods for us to try out their products.



Not the tastiest of fare, but after a full day of hiking, everything tastes good in the open air with a fresh-caught, pan-fried trout. Each hiker carried a share of the group's supplies. Their own personal items they kept to a minimum, a T-shirt, a long-sleeved shirt, a heavy sweater, a couple changes of shorts and socks, and one pair of jeans with a patch sewn onto the seat. After two-weeks of clambering around on granite slopes, everyone's butt was exposed.

I managed a 40-pound pack, which felt heavy at first, but each day the pack got lighter as I got stronger. By the last day, I felt I could fly. The air in the mountains is lighter, and I experienced many euphoric moments. This was the longest time I

had been in the wilderness without excessive adult supervision, as well as the longest time I had yet bearing up under a daily physical challenge. As an apotheosis to the trip, I won the fishing pool with my prize 14” Rainbow Trout.



The first thing we did on our return to the horse ranch and outfitters, where we had parked our bus, was to overfill our stomachs with hamburgers, French fries, and milkshakes. Not a good idea, after eating dehydrated, non-greasy

food for two weeks. My euphoria remained in spite of my stomachache, and when I got back home and began to tell my tale, an alarming flow of obscenities came from my mouth, much to the chagrin of my parents and the embarrassment of the coach. After a few awkward moments, all was forgiven. I was home, safe; I had had a good time; my parents, too, had enjoyed their time alone. Now, I’ve a home in which I am alone.

I worked for a tree planting outfit called T.G.T.B.T (Too Good To Be True). I’m not sure the way tree planters live in the woods can be called camping. It’s more like “crashing” in the woods. We sleep when and where we can—in tents, in vans or campers, wrapped up in tarps, along the roadside, in ditches, in culverts, in barns, under park benches, anywhere we can find shelter before it is time to bag up more trees and hit the slopes.

The force of our endeavor is more like a military campaign than a nature hike. We work in rain and sometimes snow, although after the snow gets a couple of inches deep, we are asked by the Forest Service



Inspectors to stop. Then, we sit in our vehicles, called “crummies” (because of the condition) and wait for the weather to break. If it does, we again fill our bags with trees, take our hoedags (long hoes) and leap again into the slash. My chapbook, *Timberlines* (D Press, 2003), relates more details on the life of a treeplanter, where you can expect pine needles in the milk.

One of the most arduous trips I have taken was with Cheri and Theo, in a VW camper, on our way up the Alkan Highway, through British Columbia and the Yukon, from Haines to Fairbanks. My poem “Trukin’ the Alkan” hits some of these highlights, but there are many untold episodes.

The trip began ominously with the VW breaking down five miles into Canada. A mother bear and her cub had just crossed the road, and the engine gave out. I gave Cheri my 30.30 and showed her how to lever a shell into the chamber, and then I put on my coat and started hiking back to the boarder guard’s shack to phone for a tow truck. I made the trip without incident and contacted a mechanic who said he would help us. Turned out the mechanic was a Good Samaritan, a Seventh Day Adventist, and he said we could camp out at his place, the Harbor View Garage, until he could get us on the road again. The only new VW engine this mechanic could find had to be shipped from a plant in Kentucky, but he said he knew a man who lived out of town and had several old VWs and might trade an older engine for the busted one, for its core value.

Cheri, Theo, and I were charmed by the town of Haines. There was no TV or radio,



and the main café where the locals drank coffee and gossiped had a wall of books. At a point in their conversation, someone might say, “Well, I guess I’ll just go home and read.”

On the road, again, we stopped at a place called Mosquito Lake. Why would anyone stop to camp at a place with that name? No sooner did I open the door to the camper than I was swarmed by mosquitos. I bumped hard into a tree ahead of me and then bumped hard into a tree behind me before I got the bus turned around and back on the main road. Back on the dusty, rocky road. Back to one sublime vista after another.

[Jampa reminisced about how circuitous his path had been and how he had originally planned to enter a long retreat after taking teachings by Tulku Sang-ngag called Extracting the Quintessence of Accomplishment, in 1998, but this had to be postponed for another decade, and he returned to Santa Rosa, California, to care for his elderly parents. Riffing off a line in Edward Albee's play, The Zoo Story, "You sometimes have to go the long way around in order to go a short distance correctly." BP]



I HEARD MACHIG CHUCKLE AND SAY, “Before Jampa was a monk, his main hobby was chasing women, and now his main enjoyment is reminiscing about his conquests.” This seems to me to be unfair to Jampa and his lovers. It implies he approached romance as a sport or to add to a collection, women as butterflies or as a track and field event. Jampa loves women and finds beauty in their ways. Objects of desire instinctually sought, yes; but beyond biology, teachers who have inspired. Jampa likes to think that his truly true hobby has always been the pursuit of Wisdom and, if he were to give the most beautiful woman award today, rather than to Aphrodite or Hera, he would present the golden apple to Athena. LOL.

Along the way to Luminous Peak, Jampa did some collecting. As a boy, he collected miniatures—little figurines, glass, porcelain, wood, metal, plastic. Animals, mothers with their young, skunks, deer, horses. Little men, soldiers, cowboys, and Indians. Some were used in games; some were staged in tableaux with his toy trains; some just reposed in a display case. Jampa’s mom had a housekeeper. Helen would say, “Rose, I want you to clean the apartment downstairs, but don’t spend all day dusting those miniatures.”



There were packets of bubblegum that came with a card. Most of the cards were of sports heroes, a picture on the front and statistics of the player's game on the back. These cards were traded on the school ground, as well as played

in a game where they were sailed, sometimes for a distance and sometimes to see who could get the card to land closest to a wall or fence. A trick was to clue two of the same card together to give it more weight. Easy way to get a punch in the face.

Some of these bubblegum cards were of historical figures. In this area, George Washington will never be as collectible as Mickey Mantle. However, a historical card that Jampa coveted was of Albert Einstein. Jampa and another fourth grader would meet during recess and discuss nuclear physics. Dennis Wier knew a good deal for a boy his age. The two boys made small leather pouches in which they sequestered secret formulas and samples of raw uranium. Dennis, who could do a bit of higher math (in this case he was familiar with exponents), explained to Jampa that, if $E=mc^2$, then "c" (light) would equal the square root of "E" divided by "m." Heavy metaphysical thought for an eight-year-old, something to ponder, like a

Buddhist koan.



Jampa, reading *Genesis* (*Gen. 1.3*), "And God said, Let there be light; and there was light," and comparing this with *The Gospel According to John* (*John 1.1*), where "In the beginning there was the Word, and the Word was with God" and "That was the true Light," (*John 1.9*) it was not too farfetched to suppose Einstein was, if not God, then he was perhaps the author of The Bible. Remember, the Atom

Bomb had been exploded four years earlier, on August 6, 1945, bringing World War II to an end. These occult revelations and alchemical substances were kept hidden

in a compartment behind a baseboard in the closet of Jampa's playroom in the basement of the Robinson Drive home, in Oakland. Later, this secret crypt would hide a pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes, when, at fourteen, Jampa began to smoke tobacco.

One half of the playroom (14' x 14') was taken up by a large table on which there were model trains, a two-track American Flyer freight train with four cars, an engine and a caboose, and a 3-track Lionel passenger train. The Lionel set circled a web of tracks on which the American Flyer flew towards the inevitable, catastrophic train wreck. Bud Conners, who worked for Ma Bell, taught Jampa about electricity and how to wire Christmas lights to places on the board from a terminal that Jampa had constructed from nails driven through a block of wood and soldered in series. Once Jampa understood the basics of electricity and had mastered the technique of soldering, he built a 60-watt amp and a pre-amp from a kit for his hi-fi system.

Bud's wife, Laurel, had artistic talent. She showed Jampa how to construct mountains out of chicken wire and plaster of Paris. She could draw, and helped Jampa paint nature scenes, lakes, and forests, as well as roads to the small, plastic buildings that dotted the landscape. Anytime Jampa could visit Berkeley Hardware store, which stocked model railroad accessories, he would add new items to his little world.

Jampa decorated his playroom with nudes from magazines, like *National Geographic* and *True Detective*—this was before censorship was relaxed and men's magazines, like *Playboy* and *Hustler* were available,—and Jampa's interest in trains began to wane. A man, who had come to the house to work on the washing machine, expressed interest in Jampa's trains, and Jampa sold all the Lionel train set, engine, cars, and track, to him for \$6, which was more than a good buy. Like in the joke, "When God handed out brains, Jampa thought he said trains, and he missed his." This impulsive tendency to sell cheap, to be rid of it, whatever it was, would occasionally possess Jampa, and perhaps it is an element in his character that led him to become a renunciate.

He collected comic books, and again, he just up and gave away his vintage (1945-55) collection, when his interest shifted. He began his antiquarian book collection, which he still adds to, with a two-volume presentation edition of *The Ring of the Nibelungenlied*, illustrated by Arthur Rackham, with tipped-in prints, bound in white deer hide, with gold latches. He paid \$100 for it at Farrel's, in Berkeley, in 1960. There are editions not half as nice that sell, today for fifteen times that. Jampa sold his set back to Farrel to help a street waif get an abortion. He remembers the sparkle

in Farrel's eyes when Jampa accepted the offer of \$20. The books seemed to turn into fairy dust as they were handed over the counter.

When Jampa became a bookseller and bought and traded old books, he was more informed and cautious, although he still kicks himself for passing up a copy of Volume 1 of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Spy* (published in 1821). It was tattered, but it was a first edition, and it was priced within his means. He balked and left Puss 'n' Books, in Seattle, without the book in hand, and when, after checking a book of auction records at home, he returned to the store, the book was gone—fairy gold.

Jampa's dad collected match matchbooks and coins. Jampa's mom collected teacups. None of these collections were that extensive. Sam's main hobby, before he retired, was to buy run down ranches, fix them up and make them operational, and sell them. He never claimed to make any great profit in this enterprise, but he enjoyed ranching and having a place to hunt and for the family to vacation. When Sam retired, in 1965, he played golf for a spell at the nearby country club. He said it was good exercise, but he did not excel at this sport and soon hung up his clubs, or rather they sat unused in his closet. He took to entering contests as a hobby.



At this he was successful. He said the process of filling out entry forms helped his arthritic hands, but in truth it appealed to his organizational skills. He had a system. After winning innumerable small prizes—portable radios, a couple of television sets, kitchen appliances and T-shirts—he focused on big prizes. He won a prize of \$10,000, a trip to Hawaii for two, and a car. His system involved entering the same contest many times, if this was allowed, to make packets of the envelopes for different contests to be mailed, and to deposit the envelopes in different mailboxes. This last action was the key to his system. He said that by varying the days and the drop-off locations, the entries were less likely to be mailed to their destination in the same bag, and this expanded the breadth of the distribution, which thereby increased his chances of being a winner. Sam said that over the years he had entered contests, the return on his time amounted to minimum wage, but Jampa told him that it was ok, that minimum wage was about all he had ever made.



Helen's teacup collection filled several display shelves. She said she did not start the collection. She received cups and saucers as a gift one Christmas, and friends and family members continued the tradition of adding to the collection. At some point she called a halt. If she had a hobby, it was sewing and knitting. She was a good seamstress, and she could crochet and knit and quilt. She had learned these skills from her mother, but she also took classes. She made things for charitable bazars and for people she loved. Lu Garcia was so pleased with a scarf that she knit him to replace one he had lost that he said it was one of his greatest treasures.

The double-knit, cable-stitched Norwegian fisherman's sweater she made for Jampa's first Alaskan trip lasted him thirty-five years with almost daily wear. She knit new armpits and cuffs and covered the elbows with leather patches. Finally, when it fell apart, she said she could no longer mend it. She knit Jampa a new but simpler wool sweater, saying her eyesight was not up to the task of replacing the earlier masterpiece, but it was a far cry from the battle amour given him by young Athena.

Jampa has written poetry and made art for sixty years. This is a sacred love affair with the Muses. The printing of little books can be construed as Jampa's main hobby, and he publishes the work of other poets besides his own. He collects poets, like rich men collect racehorses. You can see this collection in the Stable, online, at the dPress website, www.dpress.net.

EZRA POUND INVITES A COLD WAIF TO SPEND THE NIGHT

"Mr. Pound, it's gracious of you to give me shelter, but where will I sleep?"

"Call me Ezra. You can have the bed, and I'll take the couch."

"That's kind of you, Ezra, but the bed is covered with papers."

"Sit at the table, and I'll tidy up a bit."

"What is this you are writing?"

"Oh, just some lines of verse."

“It looks like poetry.”

“Yes, poetry, that’s right.”

“I write poetry.”

“You do?”

“Yes, I even had a poem published in my home newspaper.”

“What was it about, dear?”

“My cat. His name was Whiskers. He was a sweet thing. I’m sure you would have loved him.”

“Could you recite your poem for me?”

“Not the exact lines, but it started with him wandering, like fog, on our roof.”

“I like that. What happened next?”

“He fell and broke his leg.”

“Oh.”

“We took him to a vet, who gave him ether and set his leg.”

“I see.”

“He was right as rain, for a while. Funny expression, ‘Right as rain.’”

“Yes. And Whiskers?”

“There were complications, and he died. He curled up at my feet and went to sleep.”

“Interesting.”

At this moment, Ezra Pound’s landlady knocks on the door.

