

# ÆSTHETHICS

THE PHILOSOPHICAL  
TREATISES *of*  
RICHARD DENNER  
JAMPA DORJE &  
BOUVARD PÉCUCHE

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and my family who take me half seriously.



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

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

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



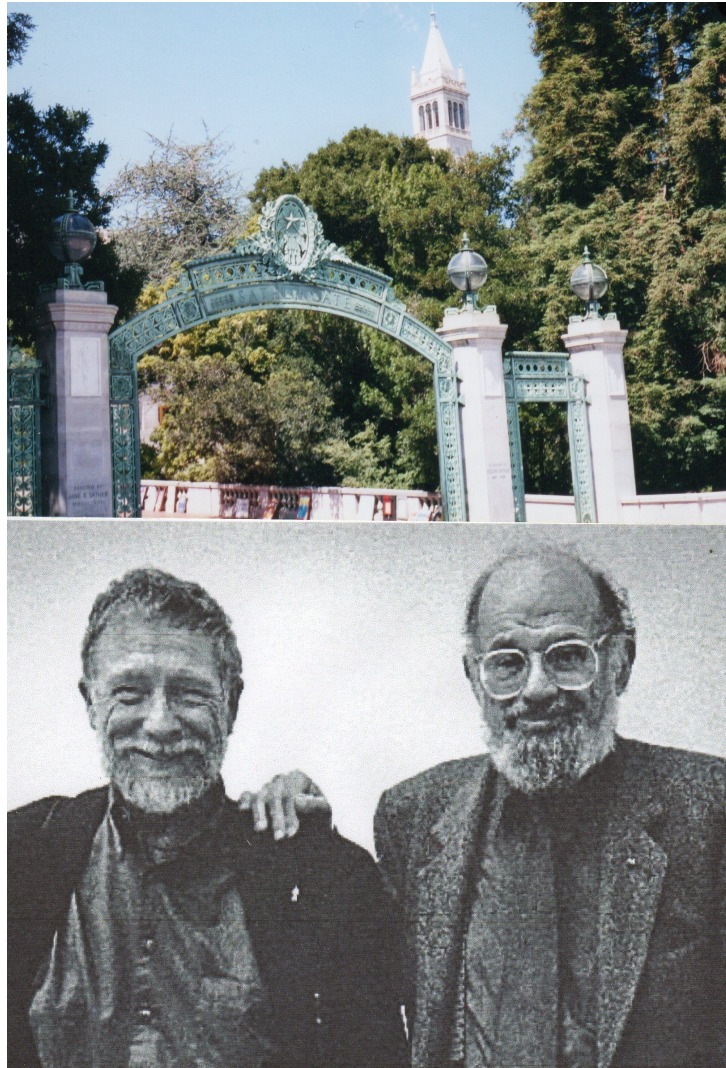
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# INTRODUCTION

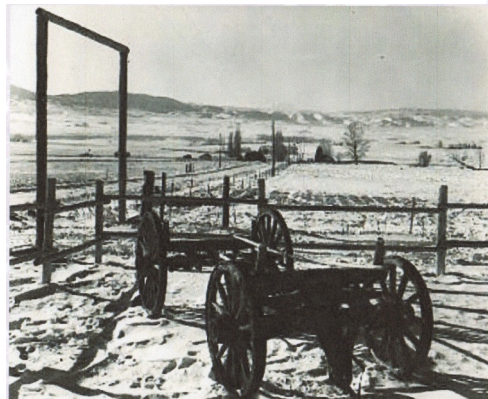
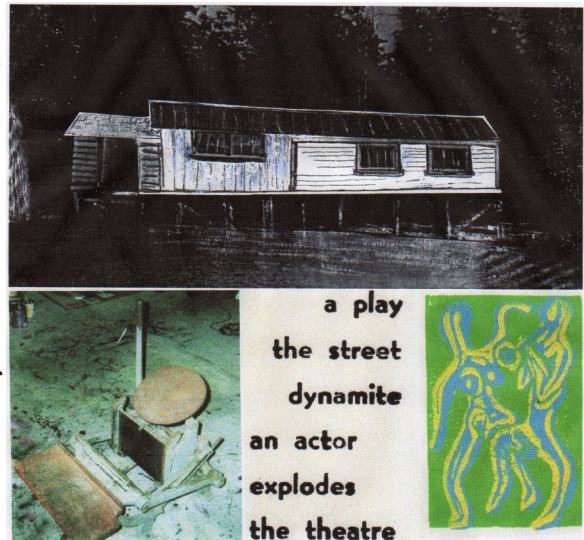
## WHAT AM I ABOUT?



### *Homage to my Teachers*

1965—UC Berkeley, met Gary Snyder and Allen Ginsberg, told Gary I was on my way to Alaska to earn money to start a bookstore in Berkeley, and he said Berkeley didn't need another bookstore, to find a place in the hinterlands than needed a Berkeley bookstore

After reading *How to Live in the Woods on \$10/Week* by Bradford Angier, I spent two winters in a wilderness cabin outside Ketchikan with wife Cheri and son Theo along with a 1927 Kelsey hand press, learning to thump type and cut lino-leum blocks, beginning of the D Press, now with 400 titles in its backlist



Job as foreman of an 800 acre cattle ranch in Badger Pocket, Diamond Hanging J Floating I, liked El-lensburg, decided this was the place in the hinterland ready for a Berkeley bookstore, a storefront in the 200 block of East Fourth—books, and cards, prints, gifts, coffee, teas



Four Winds going through many manifestations, putting in the second espresso machine in Eastern Washington, soon after the Valley Café's, Four Winds finally arriving on the corner of 4th and Pine, 1995, with an inventory of 40,000 volumes and, under Theo's management, a full service restaurant

Facilitating events, Troupe Rose belly dancing, Jan Kerouac and friends celebrating the publication of *Baby Driver*, music, art



openings, home of the *Ellensburg Anthology*, and ENUF, Ellensburg Nicaragua United in Friendship, political confrontation with U.S. foreign policy

Developing assemblage art, painting with junk, hanging my works on fences, outbuilding and barns, picking up materials hither and thither, looking for the *wabi* and *sabi*, the beauty of the imperfect, very much a Buddhist concept reflecting the impermanence and transience of nature

With growing interest in Buddhism, I sought out teachers, among them Tsultrim Allione, who had been Allen Ginsberg's meditation teacher, inspiring me with her vision of a retreat center in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, where one could practice without interruption to gain insight into the nature of mind and reality

Adzom Paylo Rinpoche, Tulku Sang-ngag, Ketsum Sampo, Namkhai Norbu, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Tsultrim, Tsoknyi, Soygal Rinpoche, all masters of tantric practices and Dzog Chen yoga, 24/7 Dharma machines, spreading blessings, compassionate Bodhisattvas with whom I found solace



Camping out, sleeping in tents, cooking under tarps, practicing outdoors in glens and on mountain tops, finally completing the three-story Tara Temple in the center of a natural mandala landscape facing rocky escarpment of the Continental Divide where, quite literally, East meets West

Finally moving to Colorado to nurture Tara Mandala's fledgling bookstore, but after two years, called to California to caregive my elderly parents, an opportunity to repay them for their lovingkindness and generosity, standing by me through all my shenanigans and allowing me to put my practice into practice

Difficult transition from the Rocky Mountain climes to golf course community, but I made friends, working part time at Cold Mountain bookstore, giving poetry readings, teaching a class in poetry, collage and tarot at Summerhill Waldorf School, and managing to spend time each year at Tara Mandala



No matter how much the lamas try to keep me from exploring consciousness with concepts, I continue to give birth to books and artworks, and after both of my parents had finally died peacefully in their beds, my father at age 98 and my mother at 99, I returned to Tara Mandala to begin my long retreat



During a blizzard, in January of 2009, I was sealed into retreat at a cabin known as Luminous Peak, 12 feet by 12 feet with a deck, Luminous Peak being not only a cabin but a state of mind as well, and it is guaranteed that no one who has been to Luminous Peak will ever fall into lower realms

Looking out my windows to the south, a vast expanse of wilderness, the Ute Indian Reservation at my doorstep adjacent to the San Juan National Forest with Ekajati in the foreground, known by the Utes as the Ant Hill, but we Tibetans named it after a protector dakini, who has one eye and one breast

Big sky and fresh air, the coming and going of wild animals and the daily routine of chop wood, carry water interlaced with two-hour sessions of inner and outer Tantric meditation along with ad-



ditional prayers and pujas and offerings to past masters of meditation and dharmapala mountain gods

Food comes in and food goes out, a note left on Tuesday and supplies delivered Thursday and left at the road head by my gate keeper, all the conveniences— water stored in frozen containers, wood stacked under plastic tarps, my outhouse frigid in the winter but with an incredible view

Tantric meditations performed at my altar alternating with wild yogic practices, leaving me just enough time to do one very focused session writing *A Book from Luminous Peak*, a concession to my creative imagination amid the rigorous process of deconstructing my so-called self— And who wrote this book?

If each individual second contains a 1/32nd wisdom element and you combine each day's wisdom elements over a period of 100 years, a retreat time of 3 years 3 months and 3 days is accumulated, and being thus cooked, I was popped out like a grape by Tulku Sang ngag, my excellent Vajra Master

Rip Van Winkle returning to a surveillance society finds confirmation of the Buddha's "The World is on fire!" Self-immolating monks never a good sign, the US economy climbing out of an economic morass while people morph into cyberbots, checking facebook for their ontological status.

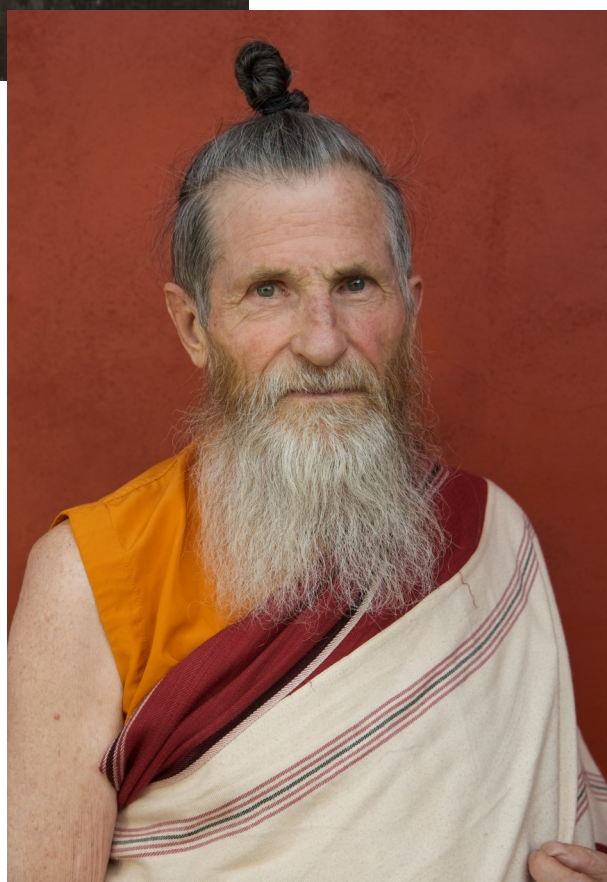
Returning to Ellensburg in 2015 to be near family and to audit classes at Central Washington University, using class lectures as prompts in my attempt to fuse Dzogchen Great Perfection Teachings with Western philosophy and literature. The question could be asked: How did a Berkeley street poet become a Tibetan lama who accomplished the dharma in retreat?





Richard in Ketchikan, 1968  
Photo by Ray McLaughlin

Jampa at Tara Mandala, 2008  
Photo by a staff photographer



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE: DENNER AND I

I don't know which of us wrote this.

—Jorge Luis Borges

I peer out from behind my masks to address you in the first person. *Jampa's Worldly Dharmas* is my biography of Jampa Dorje, and was written by me in the third person by Bouvard Pécuchet about me, in my guise as a monk in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. My initial impulse to write my autobiography occurred while I was in retreat at Tara Mandala, a Buddhist center in Colorado, between 2009 and 2014. I wanted to tell my tales, but I was unable to tell them straight out in a chronological order, and I was afraid I could not tell all of the truths. I have the urge to confess, but I—a double Scorpio—have secrets within secrets within secrets. I needed an objective observer. Bouvard is ideal—a continental philosopher-type with a touch of the poet.

A bookseller in Ellensburg, Washington, who came to Ellensburg to work on an 800 acre cattle ranch caring for animals. A caregiver in Sebastopol, California, who worked on his computer to create the printed art of his chapbooks of poetry. Following Rousseau, I tell of the worldly experiences that shaped my personality through an arabesque of adventures. Following Saint Augustine, I explore the labyrinth of my soul in search of redemption. Following Buddha, I contemplate my path to enlightenment.

Since returning to Ellensburg from Santa Fe, in 2017, I have been taking classes in philosophy at Central Washington University. At present, I am taking Philosophy and Psychedelics, and the orientation of the class is to explore whether or not we can get a grip on the conscious mind through the use of psychedelic drugs. We have been reading Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception*. We watched Ken Kesey's *Magic Trip*, a TED talk on the brain hallucinating consciousness, and a documentary entitled, *The Last Shaman*. I started chemotherapy for a rare blood disease at the beginning of the quarter, and I am experiencing the infusion of drugs as though it is an ayahuasca trip. Undergoing the treatment at Northstar Oncology Center, in Yakima, is a form of katabasis. I go on a journey, take my medicine, and deal with the nausea.

What are these pesky shadows, flitting across my brain pan like so many Chickadees. Funny, the name of a bird that sounds like the song of that bird, "Chick-a-dee-dee." God said to name things, and the poet in us names them. But where do these thoughts come from? Are they from my subconscious? But where is that? Do they arrive via neuronal rhizome-like pathways? Have they traveled etheric channels connecting with a Muse? Do they self-arise? Poet Jack Spicer says, somewhere, that poetry is a conversation among the dead and that the poet gets it second hand. In my case, it seems to be third hand.

Richard Denner



## FOREWORD

by Bouvard Pécuchet

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

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

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

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

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

Hard whites, infernal yellows, sulfur and yellowgreen. It starts with a smudge of paint and becomes a painting. It starts with silence and becomes the sound of one hand clapping. It is seriously silly. Weep anew!



**Richard Sherman wouldn't have any trouble covering Georg Hegel.**



**But Hegel is a better philosopher.**

**PHIL 354:**

**Western Philosophy III**

**M-F, 1-1:50 PM — Spring 2015**

Immanuel Kant J.G. Fichte E.W.J. Schelling G.W.F. Hegel  
Karl Marx Ludwig Feuerbach Arthur Schopenhauer  
Søren Kierkegaard Friedrich Nietzsche

**Dr. Matthew Altman**

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**Spring Quarter 2020**  
**PHIL 317**  
**PHILOSOPHY OF TECHNOLOGY**  
**DR MICHAEL GOERGER**  
**M-F: 11-11:50**

**AN EXPLORATION OF ISSUES RELATED TO VIRTUAL REALITY, MOBILE TECHNOLOGY, DIGITAL MEDIA, AND THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE.**

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# ÆSTHETICETHICS

## A HISTORY OF A NOVEL IDEA & REVERIES OF AN EUDAEMONIST JAMPA DORJE KAPALA PRESS 2015 ELLENSBURG

Heartfelt thanks to Webster Hood, Holly Myers, Lu Auz, Megan Gustafson, Beth Lee-Herbert, Anne Parker, Jon Springer, Matt Altman, Gary Severin, Philippe, Sasha Nelson, Gina Turrigiano, Joseph Powell, Kyle Denner, and Katharine Whitcomb for their patience, encouragement, and help in the development of the idea and its manifestation in this book.

### A HISTORY OF A NOVEL IDEA

A full, scientific description of the process an idea undergoes in its formation is not yet possible, but, given the limitations of my memory and my ability to reflect, I can trace the tendrils of the idea I have in mind back to my first readings of Nietzsche, after I had flunked out of Cal Berkeley, in 1960.

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

Morals and aesthetics. Another tendril takes me to a question I asked Allen Ginsberg at the Berkeley Poetry Conference, in 1965. I had ventured north from California State Polytechnic College, in San Luis Obispo, where I had been studying English and Philosophy, to rub shoulders with poets from the Beat Generation, the Black Mountain School, and the San Francisco Renaissance. Having discussed with Gary Snyder my plan to go to Alaska and earn money to start a bookstore in Berkeley and receiving the advice not to start a

bookstore in Berkeley but to go to the hinterlands and find a place that needed a Berkeley-style bookstore, I asked Allen Ginsberg whether it was better to be a good business man and a bad poet or a good poet and a bad business man. (Yes, young men ask these kinds of questions.) Allen said, "Just be good!"

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

PATTERNS

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

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

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

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

478793232826  
in the bottom of the 9th

The rhizome of the idea I have in mind is to be found in Plato. There the transcendentals (the True, the Good, and the Beautiful) are ontological properties of Being. Truth can be verified by reason, the Good by action, and the Beautiful by experience of proportional harmony. In the *Symposium* (Cooper, John, ed. 1997. *Plato: Complete Works*, Indianapolis: Hackett, p. 211), Plato says, "The true order of going is to use the beauties of the earth as steps along which to mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty: from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions until he arrives at the idea of absolute beauty." Perusing the Wikipedia article on the transcendentals, I see that France Diderot compared the True, the Good, and the Beautiful to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the German J. G. Sulzer, in

a supplement to Diderot's *Encyclopaedie* in 1776, translated the ideas in terms of the aesthetic, the moral, and the intellectual. (Crocker L. G., *Two Diderot Studies* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1952, pp. 99-101.) Truth-Goodness-Beauty become linked and convergent, almost like atoms of thought. You cannot have one without the other.

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

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

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

As I said, I had completed my traditional three-year retreat. This was in the fall of 2012. There was a facet of the Dzog Chen training still to be transmitted by Tulku Sang ngag, the Vajra Master, but that would transpire at the lama's pleasure. My friend, Beth Lee-Herbert, had completed her retreat in Karuna, a cabin about a mile from Luminous Peak. We were now trying to re-enter the everyday world and were having a rough go of it. It was not

easy to leave our snug nests after three years in isolation. True, we had gone from our cabins to the temple for brief periods to receive transmissions and explanations of the yogic practices we were to practice and accomplish, but for long stretches of time (six to eight months during the inclement months and, at other times, periods of one hundred days) we had only the wild folk for companions.

Life in the world and life in the *sangha* (the fellowship of practitioners that had supported us) had continued unabated while Beth and I were in retreat. During the time of our retreat, a three-storied temple had been erected at Tara Mandala. The vision Lama Tsultrim had, while she was in retreat during the 1970's had now evolved and manifested as a world-renowned retreat center in a dramatic physical setting. (Go to [www.taramandala.org](http://www.taramandala.org) for more information.) But for the first two yogis completing the long retreat at Tara Mandala, it was a bumpy reentry. Even a pure land with a retreat center is a mini-samsara. And now there was facebook and smart phones to contend with, and the economy was coming out of a huge recession, and there were new rules to be followed on the land; and, then, a large statue of Machig Lapdrön (a 12th century Tibetan saint) went missing.

The county sheriff's department investigated and determined, based on the evidence—an empty wine bottle left on the altar, an empty bag that had contained beef jerkey, and deep footprints that led into the sagebrush—that the crime was vandalism. Perhaps, someone dared someone else to sneak into the temple and abscond with a statue. This was accepted as the official explanation, but once the police had left the scene, an internal investigation led to another conclusion. A particular nun was found to be responsible because she had neglected to perform a required protectors practice. However, I knew that this nun had been invited to attend a yoga workshop and another nun had done the practice. The other nun was deemed an improper substitute because she was from a different lineage, regardless of the fact that she had been practicing with us for over a year. Therefore, it was determined that a karmic break in the protectors practice had occurred, and demons had found a way to violate the temple. Tibetans take their demonology seriously, and that the protectors practices are important in and around a temple to prevent harmful influences and obstacles, but I did not expect westerners with a high degree of empirical knowledge to be this superstitious and fall prey to Buddhist fundamentalism. I was shocked by this outcome.

My formal three-year retreat was completed, but I put myself back into retreat to reflect on new developments in my understanding of the nature of reality. *Karma* had now become a concept that bore some consideration. I sat down and read Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. After years of immersing myself in Eastern mysticism, I needed to balance my mind with something from the West. *War and Peace* had the weight needed. Not only is it a great read, it is an extended meditation on causality, as well as how ideas relate to other ideas. Tolstoy reveals that there is but a mere coincidence between the

attempts of his characters to shape history to their own desires while what actually is happening is independent of their actions.

*Karma* can be described as both the activity and the result. Approaches to karma according to Trinley Norbu (*White Sail*, Shambhala, 1992): (1) karma originates in subjective consciousness (Vaishesika); (2) karma originates in ordinary conscious mind (Sutranta); (3) karma originates in the basis of all phenomena (Yogacara); (4) karma originates through interdependent circumstances (Madhyamika).

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

You know the relative to be a lie, yet still you practice the two accumulations.  
You realize that in the absolute there is nothing to be meditated on,  
/yet still you practice meditation.  
You see relative and absolute as one, yet still you diligently practice.  
Peerless Teacher, at your feet I bow.

I sensed an idea beginning to percolate. Bubbles rising to the surface of my mind. I had been nearly four years in a cauldron under intense pressure. I read; I reflected; I meditated; and, then I went AWOL.

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

On my way along Hwy 84, just before I reached Abiquiu, I passed an inn with a gift shop, and I decided to turn around and go back in order to buy a

present for Lama Tsultrim. Not a smart move. I picked the worst spot along the road between Santa Fe and Pagosa Springs to make this maneuver, and I was hit broadside by a car containing two women with their babies strapped in car seats. The place I had decided to make my U turn was between two curves, so I was not hit by a car traveling at super high speed, but the impact was still severe.

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

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

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

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

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

The subjective-“I” experience consisting of my eruption from retreat, the broken *samaya* (promise) with my lama, a possible awakening or heightening of consciousness through the recent near death event in the world space. The measurable events involved the various forces (horizontal and centrifugal) of two cars colliding (skid marks, speed) and any wounds or bruises, aches and pains on my body. The subjective, shared dimension consisted of myths of descent and dismemberment (Iannah, Dionysus, and the accident happening at the base of Pedernal could easily be a magic-myth archetype image related to Tröma (my trauma), the wrathful tutelary deity of my recent meditations, the wrathful, devouring mother of primordial, transpersonal experience. And the measurable side involving institutional personae consisted of the County Sheriffs Department, the medics, and State Farm Insurance Company, as well as the Albiqui Inn where I was presently residing. At any rate, it was bad spot on the highway to make a U-turn, I concluded. Duh.

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

But to the extent that the subject is an artist he is already delivered from individual will and has become a medium through which the True Subject celebrates His redemption in illusion.

and

Only as an esthetic product can the world be justified to all eternity—although our consciousness of our own significance does scarcely exceed the consciousness a painted soldier might have of the battle in which he takes part.

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

One morning, while having tea at The Teahouse on Canyon Road, I looked up and saw that a young woman across from me was reading Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*. It is not unusual for the students who attend St. John’s College to read original texts. It is the required curriculum at this particular school. I asked the woman how she fared in her endeavor. She smiled and

replied that she was enjoying the book. We got to talking, and before we parted we both knew we were becoming friends. I even went so far as to give her a no-longer needed draft copy of the first volume of my trilogy. She told me she was soon to teach a class on art at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas and would reach me by email. I received the following:

*Dear Jampa,*

*I have been meaning to write you all week to tell you how much I enjoyed our conversation at the Tea House a week and a half ago, the one that began with Nietzsche and moved on to many other things. I have to tell you it came as a particular gift insofar as I had been for the hour or two previous despairing over the dim intelligence of our world, having been subjected just before you arrived to an hour of the most banal conversation imaginable by three very loud women at another table. To encounter someone as well read and thoughtful and insightful as you felt at that moment a minor miracle.*

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

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

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

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



*ting the first one published but I am dragging my feet, so it languishes. Most of my published writing has been art criticism. I lived in LA for fifteen years before moving back to Santa Fe (my hometown) last summer, and I wrote for the LA Times and various magazines - that is why I'm here in Las Vegas. But I've had a kind of crisis of faith with all that and I don't really know where it's going anymore. I'm supposed to be working on a book about art, specifically the concept of value in art - that is what my classes are based on. But every time I sit down to try to do it, I spin out very quickly into despair - from why does art matter? to why does anything matter? It's been a problem. I have always wished I could be a scholar of some obscure and narrow field - but it was not meant to be: everything spins out to the existential. It's maddening.*

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

*Best, Holly*

I replied:

*dear holly,  
thank you for your note, it touched me, meaning that i felt a sympathetic soul responding to my work, and it touched on some important philosophical, maybe spiritual, issues i too have been struggling with  
yes, our lives do seem to have points of contact, like your writing about south dakota, because just before i went into retreat, i was at the pine ridge reservation, in my robes, dancing with the lakota under the arbor, while my son completed his sundance for that year  
and one of my daughters is working on her dissertation to complete a doctorate in art history at the university of washington, her thesis on the italian art movement of arte povera, and she will soon travel to milan to interview germano celant, the organizer of that art movement and now artistic director of the prada foundation, believe me, she has similar concerns, and she is a "scholar of some obscure and narrow field" as you put it and she too has existential angst, yes, it is maddening, but she presses on with her work  
i suppose i have a slight advantage in this angst business being a buddhist, since we don't get upset that there is no "meaning to things" and we just relax into the "emptiness" rather than freaking out, and i can do art for the sake of art, selfish of me to be sure, and my writing i do for the "invisible circle" and for "the process" rather than for any material reason, lucky me  
as for meaning, well, guess what? right now, i'm trying to figure out a new system of ethics based on aesthetics, something stimulated by the quote from c.s. lewis, "beauty will save the world...but what kind of beauty?" hmmm, maybe you have an idea  
you see, we are in a dark void without beauty, and it's no wonder we fall into despair and wonder about the meaning of life, and it doesn't help being told we think too much, since it is really the case that no one seems to be thinking*

*at all, so there's a lot of work to do to change the moral landscape rather than just leaving things in the messy mess they are at present, and a good place to begin is to "worship at the font of beauty" as Pound put it, since so few do  
oh, well, how i do go on, an email is no place for this, and i hope we can talk later, when you return  
in the meantime, keep the faith and teach well  
your friend, Jampa*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Freedom, according to Heidegger, determines Being-ing and transcends all human being. Man is grounded in Freedom, but as Heidegger points out:

The God in becoming emerges in his becoming to something which has become and is the one who he is in this becoming as it. The inner-divine becoming is originally the self-seeing of the God himself in his ground so that this look remains in the ground. Just as when one person looks at the other in distant correspondence and, looking into him, longing becomes clearer in the self-seeing of the God in his ground, but that means precisely all the more aroused and craving. The ground thus wants to be more and more ground, and at the same time it can only will this by willing what is clear and thus striving against itself as what is dark." (*Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, Martin Heidegger, translated by Joan Stambaugh, Ohio University Press, Athens, 1985, p. 136.)

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

In Dante's ethics, reason and will should control passion. Lust allows passion to subvert reason and will. According to a note (p. 557) in Allen Mandelbaum's translation of Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*:

...true or 'refined' Love was a quality of noble lovers...true Love had been presented as necessarily accompanied by nobility of heart, that is by virtue... Francesca goes on to define Love as an irresistible mutual passion (line 103 of Canto V of the *Inferno*), thus blaming Love as a universal force personified in the terms of contemporary courtly poetry, masking her own responsibility for her damnation...

Can the appreciation of Beauty be the basis of right behavior? What founda-

tion for morality is there beyond the Good? How can we separate the Good from the True from the Beautiful and expect right action? Without a lot of bloodshed and shame. Something beautiful. Pope's phrase: "eternal sunshine of the spotless mind." An apt metaphor for meditative absorption. Rigpa.

*Rigpa* is the knowledge of the fundamental ground or Buddha-nature. The opposite of rigpa is *marigpa* (*avidyā*, ignorance). Knowledge of the ground. Schelling raises the question of man's place in nature, one that does not serve any systematic purpose. Evil introduces a necessary imbalance into the system of the world, and this is the origin of life, life that is chaotic, dissonant, and a threat to freedom. Through his analysis, Schelling attempts to reconcile God's necessary nature with his freedom. In their introduction to *Schelling's Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, the editors, Schmidt and Love, state, "God plays a delicate balancing act in his own self-revelation, which may (as conditioned by the ground) and must not (as somehow overcome this condition) end in a disastrous contraction back into the ground."

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

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

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

In the Dzog Chen (Atiyoga) view, the essence of mind is emptiness; its nature is to manifest; and its resonant energy is compassion. This spontaneously present and clear, primordial wisdom is the nature of mind and the universe. It is free from concepts and duality, and when one's mind recognizes this primordial wisdom it can be said that one has attained Buddhahood.

According to Vairotsana (8th c. CE.) in "The Great Garuda in Flight" (*Eye of the Storm: Vairotsana's Five Original Transmissions*, translated by Keith Dowman, Vajra Publications, Katmandu, Nepal, 2006, page 18-19):

(13)

Analyzed it is nothing—letting it be, fine exaltation;  
it is truly invisible, yet it gratifies every need:  
the master, innocent of self and other, a treasure trove;  
the happy isles, revealed in selfless compassion.

(14)

Unmoving within, it is nothing that can be found within  
And turning outside, it cannot be imaged or isolated;  
Neither extruding nor intruding, this selfless compassion  
Is inalienable—it abides here timelessly.

Compare this to Schelling, or at least Heidegger's interpretation of Schelling (*Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, Martin Heidegger, translated by Joan Stambaugh, Ohio University Press, Athens, 1985, page 123):

The Being of the existing God is becoming in the primordial simultaneity of absolute temporality, called eternity. The being of things is a becoming as definite emergence of divine Being into the revealedness of opposites still concealing themselves. The thinghood of things is so little determined by an indifferent objective presence of material bodies that matter itself is conceived as Spirit. What "we" feel and see as matter is Spirit which has congealed into the extended gravity of inertia.

God is with us and we with God, and because of this radical theodicy (revealed by Schelling), we are uncertain how to know how to behave? Behind the words, we just know. Feelings don't lie. Words lie.

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

Is it possible to have knowledge of what is right and wrong?  
Socrates admonishes us to look inward  
Toward our humanness, not toward the world—

Character is the key to virtue  
If we can reach our full potential  
Become real, we will do good, says Aristotle

Self-realization is the key to virtue  
For Stoics, peace of mind is the goal  
The inviolate will is the means to this goal

Freedom from attachments is the key  
Fulfilling the momentary desire or pursuit  
Of spiritual bliss is the principal of Hedonism  
“Eat, drink & be merry! Fear not death!”  
Mohists promote the benefit of all under heaven  
And eliminating harm to all under heaven

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

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

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

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

Love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness due to sin.  
With divine assistance, we Christians are called  
To become virtuous in both thought and deed  
Go to the Bible, to the wisdom narratives  
To answer Judaic moral questions—note the  
Dynamic interplay between law and ethics

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

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

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

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

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

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

Back to Germano’s introduction to Longchenpa’s *Treasury of Words and Meanings*:

Longchenpa then turns his attention to the authentic identity of this “Ground” (which is closely related to Heidegger’s conception of “Being” and Jantsch’s notion of the “Universe”) with an emphasis on showing how its pure vibrant nothingness can give rise to the wild variety of worlds we currently experience, which he presents in terms of the key dyad of its “original purity and spontaneous presence”, and its expanded (and equally important) triune identity as “its essence, nature, and compassionate resonance”. “Original purity” signifies the Ground’s utter emptiness wherein no-thing at all can be said to exist (“totally purified by any materialization from the very beginning”), while “spontaneous presence” signifies the Ground’s inherent dynamism which serves as the pure source-potential of everything that comes to exist. The Ground’s utter emptiness and openness is in perfect union with its spontaneously dynamic light energy, such that its emptiness is inherently dynamic and luminous, and its luminosity is thoroughly empty and unmaterialized—the two aspects are merely conceptual isolates abstracted from a unitary seamless reality.

Logical enough. Not possible to test this empirically. Logic suffices this far. But one cannot do Dzog Chen with concepts. I turn to F.S.C. Northrop (via a wiki elf) who, in broad strokes, contrasts the East and the West as follows:

One early claim by Northrop in Ch. 2 of "The Meeting of East and West" was that Eastern Thought in general (really most applicable to Chinese thought) is that Eastern Thought deals with the world as an “undifferentiated aesthetic continuum.” That is, reality is all connected and unified, not separated into distinct objects (undifferentiated continuum) and is in reality qualitative as perceived (aesthetic = perception, but later related to theory of art). Some Chinese have dismissed this as racist and simple-minded. Others have embraced it as a correct characterization. What Northrop contrasts with it in the west is an abstract, mathematical or formal conception of reality along with an atomistic conception of reality as fundamentally separate objects. Concepts are in the west “by postulation,” while in the East “by intuition.”

Not the intuition of feelings, but an intellectual intuition. A meditative experience of bliss-emptiness. Not a thought—resonate compassion as an intellectual-physical intuitional experience of the Ground as an undifferentiated aesthetic continuum. Resonate compassion as the aesthetic foundation for right behavior. That Beauty.

Now, with a rough draft of the idea in my consciousness, I began to see the difficulty I would have developing it into a concept. How present the idea formally, keeping poetic license and multi-value word games to a minimum? I read more Heidegger (*Poetry, Language, Thought*); I looked at Kant's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*; I read Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*; I read a section on art and meditation in *Creative Meditation and Multi-Dimensional Consciousness* by Lama Anagarika Govinda; I read a salient chapters in *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* by Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch. I even read the long version of Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, not that it had anything to do with this idea, but it's a lovely story when fully told. I reflected on my readings, and I did mindfulness-awareness meditation.

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

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

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

I would begin with Descartes—his tree of knowledge with its metaphysical roots, its trunk of physics, its branches of ethics, aesthetics, and so forth. I would move to Leibniz's theodicy and God's plan for the human race, where



evil is not an individual human's responsibility—to Kant's critiques of truth, goodness, and beauty, wherein he takes a radical step by seeing that the Good is man's responsibility, that humans can make evil decisions—to Schelling accepting Evil as necessary, much like Goethe's notion in *Faust* (Prologue, Part 1), where God knows what's what and wants Faust to know Him, and Mephistopheles is a puppet helping Faust have this experience. For Schelling, Evil is a dissonance in God, a tension through Nature between God and Man.

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

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

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

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

### **Morality in the Aesthetic Order: A Boxing Match**

(Round 1) Ontological

Argument by authority in the red tights: Longchen Rabjam (1308-1363), Tibetan. Nyingma scholar-yogi-monk. (*Old Man Basking in the Sun: Longchenpa's Treasury of Natural Perfection*, translated by Keith Dowman, Vajra Publications, Nepal, 2007, number 41, page 113):

Thought is Resolved in Pure Vision  
The intangible samadhi that lacks any field of meditation,  
Pristine, simple, intrinsic gnosis,  
Consumes all events in consummate resolution,  
And all experience spent, itself is consumed.  
Since the consuming or non-consuming is resolved in absence,  
Its existence as ineffable is never in question.  
What is, is a vast nonreferential,  
All experience consummate, 'no mind!'  
And that is the yogin's delight!

A single field of dynamic space  
Integrating past, present and future,  
An unbroken holistic field of reality,  
This is the arena shared by buddhas and masters of gnosis.

Argument by authority in the blue tights: Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), German philosopher, here quoting Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), a Bohemian-Austrian poet in support of his concept of "Being," (*Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter, Harper Perennial, New York, 2001). First, a poem by Heidegger from *The Thinker As Poet*:

When on a summer's day the butterfly  
Settles on the flower and, wings  
Closed, sways with in the  
Meadow-breeze. . . .

All our heart's courage is the  
echoing response to the  
first call of Being which  
gathers our thinking into the  
play of the world.

In thinking all things  
Become solitary and slow.  
Patience nurtures magnanimity.

He who thinks greatly must  
Err greatly.

Next to Heidegger's poem I posit this quote from Rilke to be found in Heidegger's essay, "What Are Poets For?" (Pg. 105):

You must understand the concept of the "Open," which I have tried to propose in the elegy [here referring to the eighth of the *Duino Elegies*,

in such a way that the animal's degree of consciousness set it into the world without the animal's placing the world over against itself at every moment (ado); the animal is in the world; we stand before it by virtue of what peculiar turn and intensification which our consciousness has taken. [Rilke goes on,] By the "Open," therefore, I do not mean sky, air, and space; they too, are "object" and thus "opaque" and closed to the man who observes and judges. The animal, the flower, presumably is all that, without accounting to itself, and therefore has before itself and above itself that indescribably open freedom which perhaps has its (extremely fleeting) equivalents among us only in those first moments of love when one human being sees his own vastness in another, his beloved, and in man's elevation toward God. (Translated by Maurice Betz, *Rilke in Frankreich*, Reichner, Vienna, 1937.)s we

**Argument from authority by the one in the maroon robes:** Jampa Dorje (1941- ), Poet-Printer-Yogi-Monk (*A Book from Luminous Peak*, Vol. 13, Luminous Peak Notebook, 2011.)

There is a parcel of space  
That, once, was an "I"—  
Now, there's just the sky

3 precepts of psycho-cosmic real estate  
Happy wherever  
Happy wherever  
Happy wherever

A yogi can be happy in hell

(Round 2) Meditation and Art

In the red tights: the dynamic trio from MIT, Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch. (*The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1993, page 24):

How can this mind become an instrument for knowing itself? How can the flightiness, the nonpresence of mind be worked with? Traditionally, texts talk about two stages of practice: calming or taming the mind (Sanskrit: *shamatha*) and the development of insight (Sanskrit: *vipashyana*). Shamatha, when used as a separate practice, is in fact a concentration technique for learning to hold ("tether" is the traditional term) the mind to a single object. Such concentration could eventually lead to states of blissful absorption; although such states were assiduously cataloged within Buddhist psychology, they were not generally recommended. The purpose of calming the mind in Buddhism is not to become absorbed but to render the mind able to be present with itself long enough to gain insight into its own nature and functioning. (There are many traditional analogies for this process. For example, to be able to see painting on the wall of a dark cave, one needs a good light protected from the wind.) Most present-day schools of Buddhism do not practice shamatha and vipashyana as separate techniques but rather combine the functions of calming and of insight into

a single meditation technique. [They go on] As the meditator again and again interrupts the flow of discursive thought and returns to be with his breath or his daily activity, there is a gradual training of the mind's restlessness. One begins to see the restlessness as such and to be patient with it...Eventually meditators report periods of a more panoramic perspective. This is called awareness.

In the blue trunks: Lama Anagarika Govinda (1898-1985) German painter-poet and expositor of Tibetan Buddhism and Buddhist meditation. (*Creative Meditation and Multi-Dimensional Consciousness*, The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Illinois, 1976, page 151-152):

Art and meditation are creative states of the human mind, both are nourished by the same source, but it may seem that they are moving in different directions: art toward the realm of sensuous and outward manifestation, meditation toward inner realization and integration of forms and sense-impressions. But this difference pertains only to secondary factors, not to the essential nature of art and meditation.

Meditation is neither pure abstraction nor negation of form except in its ultimate illimitable stages. It means the perfect concentration of the mind and the elimination of all unessential features of the subject in question, until we are fully conscious of it by experiencing reality in a particular aspect or from a particular angle of vision.

Art proceeds in a similar way: while using the forms of the external world, it does not try to imitate nature, but to reveal a higher reality by omitting all accidentals, thus raising the visible form to the value of a symbol, expressing a direct experience of life.

Mr. Guru Garb: (Richard Denner, *Collected Poems: 1961-2000*, Comrades Press, Warwickshire, England, 2001, page 347):

PICTURE FROM WILLIAMS

*for Jane*

she did a painting, which in  
keeping with the spirit was to be  
a red wheelbarrow  
    rain-drenched  
    with chickens  
no fuss, straight up

finally, tore the sky  
    into four pieces, each  
    had a line of verse  
and framed the botched wheelbarrow  
and too bright interpretation of  
chickens with sewn on feathers  
by thumbtacking it to a stretcher bar

so much depends upon that first cup of coffee

(Round 3) Is there morality in the aesthetic order?

Authority in the red trunks: Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Robert Audi, The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy:

In “Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man” (1794/5), Schiller examines the relationship between natural necessity and practical freedom and addresses two problems raised by Kant: How can a creature governed by natural necessity and desire ever become aware of its own freedom and thus capable of autonomous moral action? And how can these two sides of human nature—the natural, sensuous side and the rational, super-sensuous one—be reconciled? In contradistinction both to those who subordinate principles to feelings (“savages”) and to those who insist that one should strive to subordinate feelings to principles (“barbarians”), Schiller posited an intermediary realm between the sphere of nature and that of freedom, as well as a third basic human drive capable of mediating between sensuous and rational impulses. This third impulse is dubbed the “play impulse,” and the intermediary sphere to which it pertains is that of art and beauty. By cultivating the play impulse (i.e., via “aesthetic education”) one is not only freed from bondage to sensuality and granted a first glimpse of one’s practical freedom, but one also becomes capable of reconciling the rational and sensuous sides of one’s own nature. This idea of a condition in which opposites are simultaneously cancelled and preserved, as well as the specific project of reconciling freedom and necessity, profoundly influenced subsequent thinkers such as Schelling and Hegel and contributed to the development of German idealism.

To illustrate the difference between awakened mind and discursive mind, a Zen Master says, “When you have Satori you are able to reveal a palatial mansion made of precious stones on a single blade of grass; but when you have no Satori a palatial mansion itself is concealed behind a simple blade of grass.” (Lama Govinda, op. cit, p. 157.)

Longchenpa in blue trunks (op.cit. page 133):

With spacious intuition of the brilliant emptiness of reality,  
unconfined gnosis is a seamless infinite openness,  
And free of belief, all ideation dissolving,  
all things converge in the matrix of the gnostic dynamic.  
The blissful ground and a happy mind blended,  
Inside and outside the one taste of pure mind,  
This is the vision of reality as the consummate way of abiding.

The man in the maroon robes (from *Jampa Dorje’s Worldly Dharmas*, by Bouvard Pécuchet, Kapala Press, Santa Fe, 2014, Vol. 1):

INTERVIEW WITH JAMPA DORJE by Bouvard Pécuchet

I made my way, wearing snowshoes, along the faint traces of a trail in the

deep snow to Luminous Peak, the cabin where Jampa is ensconced. He welcomed me with a big smile and a hot cup of tea.

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

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

Bouvard: No, this is delicious, but don't yogins avoid becoming attached to fine teas?

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

Bouvard: Do the Tibetans have a tea ceremony like the Japanese?

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

Bouvard: Can you tell me about your assemblages?

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

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

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

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

Once I am satisfied with my composition, I start with the background level and begin to build, changing things as necessity dictates, as the materi-

als demand. It never comes out as I planned, but that is half the fun. I do tend to over work my pieces, not to let well-enough alone, to get cute, “to put a bird on it.” Literally.

At the gallery I mentioned earlier, where the curator was concerned about the crustiness, the rustiness, the flakiness, I did get three works accepted in a community show and won first, second and third prize in the mixed-media category. I asked the judge, later, why the one piece received third place, and she told me that the little hand-crafted bird I had added to a projecting piece of metal was silly. Maybe so, maybe not; I had added it because I didn’t want someone to poke out their eye. There’s a bird in Rauschenberg’s *Canyon*. Maybe, if I had spray-painted my bird black, it might have flown.

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

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

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

The opening scene of Sam Albright’s video, *The Collage Artist*, takes place in front of the Tack Shack. I appear in a black tweed overcoat and fisherman’s cap, working on my art. I get in a battered GMC van and drive down 4th Parallel Road towards Ellensburg. Mt. Rainier can be seen above the Manastash Canyon, and there’s a fine shot of a hawk cutting the air near the van. The video narrative follows the activity of an artist putting together his retrospective art show.

There are three parts: the ranch scene and trip to town; a café scene, shot in the Four Winds with a part that is an interior monologue; and a final, Chaplinesque scene of Chris Shambacher and myself, accompanied by Craig, Chris’s three-legged dog, carrying a mysterious box around town. The video was shot just prior to a show I had at Gallery One with Don O’Connor and Bruce McNaughty. If you go to the gallery at my dPress website, you can see

photos of this show by Julie Prather.

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

Jampa: Oh, that's harder to describe than how I make my art. You know that I am also a writer. I go back and forth and sometimes combine both mediums. When the poetic muse takes a vacation, I do visual art. They're related activities. In collage, you cut and paste images; in poetry, you take an image from your mind and put it, in the form of a word, on the page. The impulse to make art is the same. Both are means of expression, like giving birth to something that wasn't there beforehand, an urge to procreate. There's a time for flirtatious-like curiosity with an idea or image, and then of conception, gestation and delivery—even before I begin to work—then, you have to nurture this baby. The actual making of the poem or collage involves all the trials and hopes and disappointments of getting this baby to grow into a being, but I don't like this analogy much. Maybe the drive to create is something more transcendental, like communing with the Absolute. Or it might be totally mundane, like wanting fame. If you think too much about this, you'd never do it.

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

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

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

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

Bouvard: Of course, go ahead.

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

For example, my way of writing is described in *My Process* (dPress, 2002, see Vol. 8 of *The Collected Works of Richard Denner*). I explain how I write into the book. I use linked text boxes in a computer program to create a book format. The open pages "call out" to be filled; and from here, it is out of my hands. The book becomes an editing process. I print out a copy, sew



it up, edit, and print it again, until I am satisfied. There are usually pieces left over, and these start the next book in a series. The “book” is never done. It is done when you put a cover on it and call it done. With my assemblages, I may begin with a frame and fill it. Or, a wall seemingly calls me. I make a few strokes, and the composition begins to expand and take on a life of its own. This is why it’s hard for most people to dedicate themselves to art, to live in the moment and give up their structured lifestyle.

Then, there is the “secret” place that is a source for the work of art. I may be inspired by a beautiful woman, or I may find I am writing or making a picture to please a friend. I discovered recently that I wrote many poems to Allen Ginsberg and Jack Spicer. I want to be in that Circle of Hell where Dante put the poets. As Jack once said, “Poetry is a conversation among the dead, and the poets get it second hand.” It is in this secret place that strange knowledge comes to the artist, and it is here that meditation is helpful.

Is there a conflict between making art and meditation? My experience is that there is room for both, that they are compatible and enhance each other. Aspects of the creative process are meditative: there is the focus of shamatha, of maintaining a mindful presence in your work; and there is a kind of seeing, or insight, that arises from the vipashyana aspect. It is impossible for the mind to reach complete stillness when making art, especially with writing, where logic and the law of contradictions are in play, yet the mind stream is channeled, directing the flow of energy toward realization of what is really real.

After a session of meditation, where the discursive mind is given rest, I find my creativity enhanced, my hand steadier. The continual search for bliss in visionary fantasy, the god-like power of creativity, the revelatory ecstasy of epiphany are a mistaken direction to pursue, if you want lasting transcendental wisdom. Finally, there is no meditation; all dualistic notions are subsumed under equanimity, in a simple state of awareness.

Blah, blah, blah!

If you have brought your art onto the path, then it is a form of practice, and your view, your practice, and how you carry this out in your life are unified, were always a unity. You need to develop confidence in this. It doesn’t mean having a Big Ego. You develop what the Tibetans call Vajra Pride, which also requires you to maintain humility and compassion for others. You don’t need to be acknowledged by others. You acknowledge yourself. I could go on, but I think this is a good place to stop.

Bouvard: Thank you, Jampa.

Jampa: You are entirely welcome. Blessings. May the two-fold accomplishments of mine and others be of benefit—no, that’s not it—through the two accumulations, may the two-fold benefit of mine and others be accomplished.

. . .

Echoing the poet John Keats: *the beautiful is the good, the good, the beautiful; that’s all you need to know.*

### **Outline of my summation.**

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

### **Beauty in the moral order.**

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

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

479d). Next, Kant notes that we mistakenly believe that because *the beautiful* can be appreciated by others as well, the beautiful is deemed to be inherent in the object.

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

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

### **Kant and Schiller.**

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

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

ed between the two, it is withdrawn from the constrain of both alike.” (Fifteenth Letter, *ibid.* p.78).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Jesus was all virtue , and acted from impulse not from rules.”

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

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

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

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

Utilizing peaceful absorption, the meditator experiences a state of well-being, or bliss, as the natural expression of emptiness, and this experience resonates as compassion. In *Secrets of the Vajra World* (Shambhala, Boston & London, 2002) Reginald A. Ray, says that the 8-fold path, the Forth Noble Truth of Gotama Buddha,

...is divided into *shila*, ethical behavior; *samadhi*, meditation; and *prajna*, wisdom or insight into the nature of things. In one sense, these three are progressive: one must first cultivate a life that is marked by kindness and good intentions towards others, a life that is ethically well grounded. On this basis, one may then enter the practice of meditation. And, having developed a sound meditation practice, insight begins to arise. In another sense, however, *shila*, *samadhi*, and *prajna* may occur in any order and mutually reinforce each

other in a variety of ways. For example, from one point of view they unfold in reverse order: it is insight (prajna) into suffering that often motivates people to enter the dharma in the first place. Then they practice a little meditation (samadhi) and realize, perhaps for the first time how self-centered and unkind they are to others. Based on this, they may attempt to be more ethical in their behavior (shila).

After completing the prerequisite trainings to establish the physical side of meditative stability (calm abiding), I practiced Guru Yoga, which involved hours of deep imagining (visualizations) and the repetition of specific sound formulas (mantras). These rewire the neural circuitry of the brain in a dramatic way. In this sense, there is an analogy with Heidegger's phenomenological scrutiny of the historical ontology of man's Being, but the yogic path is more rigorous and extends beyond an intellectual understanding into a final experiential condition. For example, the yogi or yogini can learn to dry sheets that have been soaked in freezing water while he or she sits in meditative equipoise. Such a practice is not for the faint of heart and must be learned in stages. All tantric teachings require a formal, ritual transmission by the lama (*wang*), along with verbal explanations (*lung*), without which the instructions in the manual are meaningless at best and could well lead the uninformed practitioner into dangerous psychological territory. Here is the bare outline of the yoga of inner heat from *A Treatise on the Stages of Training in the Profound Path of Naropa, 's Six Dharmas* by Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa, translated by Glenn H. Mullin, Snow Lion, Ithica, NY, 1996, page v. After the preliminary practices are completed, the following systematic teaching is given:

.A. The essence of the basic principles in the guidelines of the path; .1. The essence of the path; .a. Arousing the four blisses by means of drawing the vital energies into the central channel; .i. The inner condition of the meditations on the inner heat doctrine; (.A.) Meditating upon the inner heat in order to draw the vital energies into the central channel; (.1.) How to meditate on the inner heat yoga; (.a.) Meditating by means of visualizing the channels; (.b.) Meditating by means of visualizing mantric syllables; (.c.) Meditating by means of engaging the vase breathing technique; (.2.) Having meditated in this way, how to cause the vital energies to enter, abide and dissolve with the central channel; (.B.) Having brought in the energies, the methods of arousing the four blisses; (.1.) The nature of the signs that arise, and the blazing of the inner fire; (.2.) How the bodhimind substance are melted and the four blisses induced; (.3.) The manner of meditating upon the innate wisdom.

At each stage, I found myself confused by the recent instructions, but as I progressed with the training, I realized that I could not have advanced without having accomplished the previous stage of training. This understanding gave me confidence in the training and renewed my faith in and devotion to my teacher. Tulku Sang ngag once asked me, "What do you think I want from you?" and I answered, "Devotion." He shook his head in the negative and said, "Courage." In my training, I had begun with faith and devotion,

moved forward with courage, gaining more confidence because of my accomplishment, and this in turn renewed my faith and devotion. The attentive contemplation pertaining to the attributes of the outer guru, in time, brought about an awareness of the same attributes being a part of myself. Inner guru and outer guru became one.

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

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

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

and the sheer contemplation of that face—  
never-changing, whole beyond corruption—

will be, for the rejected, an Inferno,  
and for the elected, Paradise.

God. Darwin. Theodicy. Intelligent Design. Intelligence. Brain research into evolutionary psychology finds that, with the development of the mammalian brain, a kind of cognition with feelings occurs, allowing mammals to have social and nurturing behaviors. The part of the brain called the “neocortex” handles higher cognitive activities like planning and modeling; the “limbic brain” refers to those structures that deal with social and nurturing behaviors; and the “reptilian brain” functions are related to territoriality and ritual activities.

The triune model of the mammalian brain is a simplified organizing theme to describe complex neurobiological functions. Still, through my yogic practice, it seemed as though I was beginning to “talk” to my reptilian brain, and my success in accomplishing the yogic vase breath brought useful insights and gave me confidence for the next stage, the practice of yogic heat, which involved yet another subconscious brain function.

Fulfilling Kant’s epistemological condition for metaphysical speculation, we are closer to knowing how we know. If, with the development of the mammalian brain, mammals could “think” with their feelings, we have the biological-ontological (if not metaphysical) foundation of aesthetic morality.

# Reveries of a eudaemonist

## Part 2 of A HISTORY OF A NOVEL IDEA

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



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

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

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

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

Time and space. I put my left foot forward in space, followed by my right foot in time, trying not to step on a crack and break my mother’s back. She’s been dead for years, and I’m still doing this. Clicking my fingernails to the palms of my hands in a one-two-three-four rhythm in rhythm to my steps, like a baseball player getting ready to bat. Moving into a concentration mode. Feeling time. Time, a superstition, but still double checking my positing of my will. Willy-nilly-ness, the idea-in-itself in all its glory. The Force is with me, today. My chi is achillin’ while my Tao is adoin’.

But to eat that burrito I’m taking us back to Descartes. Descartes’ proof of God based on the idea of perfection not being found in the world, so the idea must come from somewhere. Ergo, God.

Professor Altman finds the argument an intriguing one. Melanie, his student, wants the idea of perfection to be accessible to her without the need for an Old Guy with a white beard. The discussion moves to the term Infinity. Melanie finds the source of her concept for Infinity in the positing of its counterpart, the finite. She thinks she sees Infinity implied in mathematics, the Fibonacci sequence, but Professor Altman tells her this is another attempt to compound parts to reach a whole, in this sense Infinity is a hole that can never be filled. All the same, where does that thought come from?

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

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

## Invocations of Geist.

Rainbows of the five Buddha families.

Earlier, Professor Altman had shown the philosophy of Kant branching in two directions: one branch to Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, to Marx, and one branch to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

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

After Kant, to the extent that dogmatists critiqued themselves and understood the limits of their thinking, scientists continued to reach for the-Thing-in-itself, while poets critiqued themselves in negative light and plunged into unreason following their imaginative energies, William Blake waving his arms above his head as though he had been attacked by bees.

Except for Coleridge, who took opium to get negative delight. Negative Capability.

For Keats beauty is truth, not truth is beauty. Somewhere I read that that line in his "Ode to a Grecian Urn" was written especially for the eyes Samuel T., who Keats felt placed Truth higher than Beauty. Angels and Demons in brain wars. And these 18th century capital nouns. Reason. Spirit. Truth. Like handling concepts the size of boxcars and moving them around one's neurological confines with the deftness of a stage magician.

The next thing.

## Correspondence between Holly and Jampa:

Dear Jampa

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

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

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

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

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

H.

Hi, Holly

*A History of a Novel Idea* baffles most people—"lovely placement of philosophical passages that i don't understand in the story line" or "I don't get this post-modern stuff" or "nice punch at the end" or a discussion about emptiness/bliss/aesthetic and art theory/observations, like you, hopelessly entangled in all the art - the observer, the artwork, the artist - back to myself, studying now the process Duchamp used to develop "the large glass", making collages, and reading Kant's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*.

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

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

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

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

Schiller is a poet, and in the process of digesting Kant against the backdrop of the French Revolution, he was bold enough (poets!) to suggest "disinterested and unconditional appreciation of pure semblance" as a way to lay the foundation for a new approach to right behavior that he believed could lead to an Aesthetic State (and by this he means not just a mental state but a political state. High hopes he had. He seems to falter when he realizes that only an elite few could attain this "detachment," and it is here, I am sure you are right, he's another Enlightenment

dummy when it comes to women. From my readings in Shriner's *Invention of Art*, I see the cultural bias of the late 17th and early 18th century philosophers would believe that only white, property owning men could attain this level. "Race" is just becoming to be considered a concept, and "Art" is becoming "fine art", and we're calling arts, such as vase painting and embroidery, "crafts" or "womanly arts"—not fine arts.

• • •

I find a new book, *Psychology of Contemporary Art* by Gregory Minissale, Cambridge U Press, NY, 2013. The blurb by Gerald Cupchik says, "...The author explores experimental aesthetics, neuroaesthetics, and cognitive psychology in depth, incisively pointing out problematic issues in each area related to processes underlying the creation and appreciation of contemporary art. A pleasure to read." Unfortunately it's hardback and \$99, but my friend Philippe has a copy, and so I read chapter 3.9.

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

**aesthetic contemplation and meditation** being aesthetic experiences, the work of the artist communicating "whatever" to arrive at truths of Being, the beautiful, the ugly, the harmonious, the inharmonious, just as a meditator uses a statue, a mandala, a rock, or the breath to find well-being, bliss/emptiness.

But this is not what is experienced by yoginis or yogis. Emptiness is experienced as "bliss" (which is often explained as "well-being," so as not to confuse the term as a form of "ecstasy," or in another reading, the essence of Being is emptiness, but its nature is to manifest, and it resonates compassion (meant in a very ontological, if not metaphysical sense). As regards emptiness, the Nyingma School holds "emptiness" to mean impermanence. Schopenhauer is, at first, abhorred by being awash in "nothingness", then shores up his courage with compassionate will-less-ness; but a sense of being dissatisfied seems to linger in his bliss.

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

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

### 3. Aesthetic morality and Schiller's concept of play.

Here's a piece on Frederick Schiller (1759-1805) by Robert Audi from the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*:

*In "Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man" (1794/5), Schiller examines the relationship between natural necessity and practical freedom and addresses two problems raised by Kant: How can a creature governed by natural necessity and desire ever become aware of its own freedom and thus capable of autonomous moral action? And how can these two sides of human nature—the natural, sensuous side and the rational, super-sensuous one—be reconciled? In contradistinction both to those who subordinate principles to feelings ("savages") and to those who insist that one should strive to subordinate feelings to principles ("barbarians"), Schiller posited an intermediary realm between the sphere of nature and that of freedom, as well as a third basic human drive capable of mediating between sensuous and rational impulses. This third impulse is dubbed the "play impulse," and the intermediary sphere to which it pertains is that of art and beauty. By cultivating the play impulse (i.e., via "aesthetic education") one is not only freed from bondage to sensuality and granted a first glimpse of one's practical freedom, but one also becomes capable of reconciling the rational and sensuous sides of one's own nature. This idea of a condition in which opposites are simultaneously cancelled and preserved, as well as the specific project of reconciling freedom and necessity, profoundly influenced subsequent thinker such as Schelling and Hegel and contributed to the development of German idealism.*

Jampa

Dear Jampa

*Re your emptiness of created things, emptiness of uncreated things, ultimate emptiness, emptiness of limitlessness, emptiness of dispersion, emptiness of primary nature, emptiness of selfhood, emptiness of things, emptiness of non-being, emptiness of self-nature, emptiness of the non-being of self-nature.*

That is a fascinating list. In my essay (on futility, which I just finished) I hold Nagarjuna up against this passage from Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer is really a pill, but he sure is a beautiful writer. *That we abhor annihilation so greatly, is simply another expression of the fact that we so strenuously will life, and are noth-*

ing but this will, and know nothing besides it. But if we turn our glance from our own needy and embarrassed condition to those who have overcome the world, in whom the will, having attained to perfect self-knowledge, found itself again in all, and then freely denied itself, and who then merely wait to see the last trace of it vanish with the body which it animates; then, instead of the restless striving and effort, instead of the constant transition from wish to fruition, and from joy to sorrow, instead of the never-satisfied and never-dying hope which constitutes the life of the man who wills, we shall see that peace which is above all reason, that perfect calm of the spirit, that deep rest, that inviolable confidence and serenity, the mere reflection of which in the countenance, as Raphael and Correggio have represented it, is an entire and certain gospel; only knowledge remains, the will has vanished. We look with deep and painful longing upon this state, beside which the misery and wretchedness of our own is brought out clearly by the contrast. Yet this is the only consideration which can afford us lasting consolation, when, on the one hand, we have recognized incurable suffering and endless misery as essential to the manifestation of will, the world; and, on the other hand, see the world pass away with the abolition of will, and retain before us only empty nothingness. Thus, in this way, by contemplation of the life and conduct of saints, whom it is certainly rarely granted us to meet with in our own experience, but who are brought before our eyes by their written history, and, with the stamp of inner truth, by art, we must banish the dark impression of that nothingness which we discern behind all virtue and holiness as their final goal, and which we fear as children fear the dark; we must not even evade it like the Indians, through myths and meaningless words, such as reabsorption in Brahma or the Nirvana of the Buddhists. Rather do we freely acknowledge that what remains after the entire abolition of will is for all those who are still full of will certainly nothing; but, conversely, to those in whom the will has turned and has denied itself, this our world, which is so real, with all its suns and milky-ways—is nothing.

H.

Dear Holly

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

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

*Death* back to back with *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Genealogy of Morals* in the three-month retreat I took after my three-years practicing the *Dzinpa Rangdröl*. Wonderful reads. Talked with Professor Altman, and it was a go. For \$5, a senior citizen can get on the roster, and the fee comes with a library card.

Later.

Kant had a revolutionary insight about time and space being forms of consciousness, the means of how we know what we know. Fichte felt the “a priori” beat and turned it into a song and dance routine, and then Hegel expanded the tune into an opera fit for the Festival at Bayreuth. As much as one may criticize the airy, emptiness philosophy of Buddha as the abstractions of an exotic subjectivist, Buddha does not point to the dialectical operations of Geist as the subject of his inquiries. Buddha is talking about sentient beings that are actually suffering, not abstract beings in a historical process.

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

Another day.

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

### **The Geist of Berkeley in the ‘60s.**

#### **LEARY PROCLAIMS TUNE IN TURN ON DROP OUT (1965)**

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

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

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

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

A day or two later.

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

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

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

. . .

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

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

The truth-as-it-is.

Royal goal.

OK, Crazy to some! But...

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

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

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



Longchenpa is speaking of non-duality within the awakened mind. In his commentary to the above stanza in his poem, he gives the following instructions to the meditator on how to reach the understanding of this stage of meditative absorption: "Given that the true nature of phenomena and mind itself are inseparable, on the strength of your becoming familiar with this and refining it in your own experience, a state of realization that is like space arises naturally from within; this is reefered to as "building the vajra fortress of dharmakaya"—that is, this realization is spontaneously present as great perfection beyond limitation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It's hard for writers in the Buddhist faith to write without the myth, but Longchenpa is more able than most. Within the expanse of spontaneous presence is the ground for all that arises. Empty in essence, continuous by nature, it has never existed as anything whatsoever, yet arises as anything at all. Longchenpa says,

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

. . .

On Wednesday, May 13 at 5 PM in Black 152, Dr. Michael Fletcher gave a talk. His preface read: "Buddhism makes a number of initially alarming metaphysical claims, one of which is that persons do not exist. This would seem to make the Buddhist an

anti-realist about persons. But that's not all. Buddhism is not only a body of doctrines but also a religious practice, one guided by its own distinctive normative ethic. Buddhist ethics is in large part a moral response to the existence of suffering. But can Buddhism coherently claim on the one hand to be a normative practice, one that recognizes the moral significance of suffering, while on the other claim that, whatever else may be true of our world, ours is not a world containing persons?"

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

hi, michael, jampa here, the following may be of use to you, thanks for listening to me...checking on my selves, i find i can have quite a number and quite a number of no selves, as well mainly, the Self is the "I am" (like how Descartes uses the term) which is what the Hindus call "Atman" (a permanent self), but there are divergences in the meaning in some schools of Buddhism, however the emphasis is for the most part on it's unsubstantial nature, the impermanence of it as an entity—buddha nature is usually referred to as the true self, but even here it is tricky to pin the sucker down.

the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* uses the term Self in order for the Buddha to win over non-Buddhist ascetics, as Buddha says: 'The Buddha-nature is in fact not the self. For the sake of [guiding] sentient beings, I describe it as the self.'" and is at this end of the spectrum that the yogi must pull back from his inward explorations to keep from becoming a cave bug and this alludes to why i cautioned you to be careful with trying to fit the term into a single concept, as there are pedagogical difficulties in guiding students to awakening from their dogmatic slumbers and discover their essential nature, from a practical level, we all have a sense of self, mere selves, social selves, and spiritual selves, each with more or less reality (or none, in the metaphysical sense)

it appears that some Buddhists believe that, while there is no atman, there is a pudgala or "person", which is neither the same as nor different from the skandhas, so your use of "person" in the sense of self holds up, as i was thinking of person more as the incarnation (the embodied mind) with or without a self, really, it is selfishness that is the problem, it is the self as a central player that is the false belief, and from this self-centeredness arise negativity—harmful desires, hatred, ill will, conceit, pride, craving, attachment—so how to get it to chill out is the focus of the teaching that will help the student discover the Buddha's nature

Self, or no self, whether or not one has compassion is what is important, being a kind person rather than a selfish one, and it is through meditation that one peels back the layers that seem to be a self that manifests in its essence as emptiness and resonates in conduct as compassion, the skillful means by which the wisdom of emptiness is put into action—the fourth noble truth, which is the 8-fold path, is not exactly a set of precepts, in the sense of the biblical ten commandments—they are a series of steps to begin meditation practice—the path begins with the first noble truth, there is suffering, which is meant in the sense of things being out of alignment, and the second noble truth, that this state of affairs, this suffering, is due to our ignorance of not realizing that our desires cause us to attach and cling to what is impermanent, and the third noble truth, that suffering can be overcome, leads to the means to accomplish this, and the means to reach wisdom is through meditation by developing mental discipline, ethical conduct, and wisdom

in order to begin to meditate, one has to create the right environment: having right understanding means understanding that wisdom and compassion are one, not pointless metaphysical speculation, but to begin to develop compassion for all sentient beings—with right understanding comes thought, which allows for ethical conduct of right speech, action and livelihood—to arrive here requires mental discipline, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration, that of keeping an energetic will in whatever we do, be it work or meditation, and right mindfulness with regard to the body and the mind, and right concentration, such as applying the breath as a mode of meditation, thus one begins the training

another element in the mix: you must deal with the Trikaya of the Buddha, the three bodies of buddha, the three aspects of buddhahood: dharmakaya (the emptiness aspect of buddhahood); sambhoghakaya (the spontaneously luminous aspect, only visible to realized beings), and the nirmanakaya (that which manifests out of compassion for sentient beings), and then, Emptiness, and here too there are variations, and if we combine different kinds of emptiness with the various kinds no-selves, the problem is complicated and confusion magnified

### **Eighteen kinds of emptiness:**

CREATIVE MEDITATION AND MULTI-DIMENSIONAL CONSCIOUS BY LAMA ANAGARIKA GOVINDA (Quest Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 1976) from the opening paragraphs of a chapter titled “Concept and Actuality” from which I have removed the Sanskrit (p.37): *The Middle Way of the Buddha—reiterated and reformulated in Nagarjuna’s Madhyamika Philosophy and put into practice in the Tantric Sadhanas of the Vajrayana—is based precisely on the denial of anything absolute, by proclaiming the law of dependent and simultaneous origination, in which the elements of both time (causality) and synchronicity (acausality) are combined. Even the term sunyata does not mean “emptiness” in an absolute sense, because when speaking about emptiness, we cannot conceive of or attach any meaning to this word without having at the back of our mind the question “empty of what?” The word “empty,” like all words of the human language, is a relational term, just like “high” or “low,” “right” or left.” This is clearly shown by the classification of sunyata into eighteen kinds of emptiness: emptiness of inner things, emptiness of outer things, emptiness of inner and outer things, emptiness of emptiness, great emptiness, emptiness of ultimate truth, emptiness of created things, emptiness of uncreated things, ultimate emptiness, emptiness of limitlessness, emptiness of dispersion, emptiness of primary nature, emptiness of selfhood, emptiness of things, emptiness of unattainability, emptiness of non-being, emptiness of self-nature, emptiness of the non-being of self-nature. This list could have been indefinitely extend and has itself been the subject of Immeasurable learned commentaries, which complicate matters even more and keep the intellect more and more busy with concepts of concepts and abstraction of abstraction, until the mind has proved its own utter emptiness and nonexistence.* jampa, here, whomever, hoping this helps

Dr. Fletcher thanked me with a quid pro quo from the *Dhammapada*:  
WHAT THE BUDDHA GOT RIGHT

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

Of all purity and impurity.  
No one purifies another.

dear michael

started to write a long thing, then thought better of it, knowing professors have so much to read, but here are three areas you might explore in relation to buddhism's concept of subjecthood

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

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

ADI BUDDHA the primordial self-originating buddha

In response to your *What the Buddha Got Right*, here is a stanza from *The Natural Freedom of the Nature of Mind*, which is part of Longchenpa's *Trilogy of Natural Freedom*:

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

. . .

Read *The Science Delusion* by Carl White. Yikes! I'm on track with my argument for aesthetic morality. Or, at least, I've got my hands on a live wire in philosophy. Romanticism vs Dogmatism.

. . .

Here follows a chapter from *A Book from Luminous Peak* by Bouvard Pécuchet:

Jampa thanks God for all His blessings and for the many, many instructive lessons that he has received. Jampa is grateful for this life, even if, as St. Augustine put it, we are born amid piss and shit. Jampa was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, the better to feed off the offal.

Jampa had kind, steadfast parents, loyal friends, intelligent and beautiful wives, genius children, and enlightened teachers. He has felt Christ with him in his darkest hours helping to restore his soul (Psalm 21). Goodness and mercy have always followed him (Psalm 25). He believes the sins of his youth have been forgiven. The name "Jampa" means lovingkindness, and this quality, by the grace of the Lord, he has come to embody. Praise be!

How does Jampa reconcile his Judeo-Christian faith with that of Buddhism? Jampa claims that it is easier to be a Buddhist and a Christian than it is to be a Christian and a Buddhist. The First Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," is not a problem for a Buddhist, since they do not believe in a creator god. Gotama and other buddhas are men and women who are given respect because they have attained the state of enlightenment, the true understanding of the nature of mind, comprised of luminous cognitive emptiness.

Buddha-mind is beyond description, but the path to enlightenment can be communicated. The Buddhist approach to the meaning of Life is understood within a psychological context, and the metaphysical approach of Christians, with the emphasis on proving God's existence independent of humans, is abandoned. The ontological solution is: nothing really exists in and of itself. Even Heidegger's inquiry into Beingness would be considered an etymological tempest in a teapot.

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

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

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

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

Jampa was not able to maintain a pure skepticism. He mingled the philosophies of the ancients with the moderns and combined mythologies into a form of Hedonism highly spiced with mushy mysticism, after his legendary peyote trip. Poetry became his path, his pride, and his pitfall. The classes Jampa took from Walter Benesch at the University of Alaska in Eastern and Western Philosophy and from Bob Allen in English and Canadian Literature helped him firm the mysticism into a metaphysical foundation for his poems that synthesize visionary consciousness with a social conscience.

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

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

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

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

Either/or & both

GURU KHAN  
HUM PHAT

KRAZIGNATZKAT  
PUPPIGDUNGFUNGI  
X-RAY CRISTALGRAPH  
Pendulum haronographic  
Alpha-particular articulation that  
I= an elliptical metaphor 4  
Misononeismhystic Presbyterianism

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

5'2 (eyes blue) 35-19-33  
5'9 (legs sublime) 36-24-35  
6'3 (relativity) 42-30-44

This anarchistic shotgun blast of imagery is from "intergallactic69pornoputer," a selection of Jampa's book, *Islam Bomb* (D Press, 1998). It dates to 1972, when Jampa lived in Preston and was decompressing from two intensive years of studying a vast array of subjects. The poem traverses outer space and inner dimensions, hops

from the funny papers to the holy scriptures, taps meta-language and mantra, hints at a government of cruelty and a garden of earthly delights. But what exactly is “misononeismystic Presbyterianism”?

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

So, does “misononeismystic” mean anything? Probably not in a literal sense. I think Jampa liked the sound, a kind of linguistic onomatopoeia of philosophical babble. He needed rest from the rigors of argument. He let sounds arise without reference and return to where they came from into sound-emptiness-Buddha speech. In astrological terms, the planet Neptune links the individual soul to the Godhead. Between 1957 and 1971, Neptune was in the sign of Scorpio, the first house in Jampa’s natal chart. Neptune, according to Lucy Pond (*Metaphysical Handbook*, Reflecting Pond Pubs., Ellensburg, 1984), is “the planet of illusion/delusion, fantasy, drugs, escapism, spirituality, and supreme faith.” Jampa came of age in the vortex of a time when social values were in upheaval, the Vietnam Era, and he partook of mind-expanding drugs, practiced free-love, protested against war, torture and tyranny, and sought spiritual meaning to his life.

At the Berkeley Poetry Conference, in 1965, when he told Gary Snyder that he was going to Alaska to make money to start a bookstore in Berkeley, Gary told him to start his bookstore somewhere that could benefit from Jampa’s experiences. Ellensburg, Washington, in the geographical heart of the state, is where Jampa set up shop. Jampa and Cheri founded Four Winds in 1978 with the help of Sid Thomas. The New Age Movement was starting to percolate. What for a while had been a small section of books in the store became the mainstay, during the 1980s. Books that were once considered esoteric now gained a popularity unheard of in the past. Works by members of the Order of the Golden Dawn, the theosophy of Madame Blavatsky (1831-91), and occult treatises of ancient philosophers were dusted off and reprinted in new editions. Contemporary works on astrology, tarot, crystal healing, alchemy, numerology, and psychic channeling appeared. The divinatory arts were in ascendancy. Mysticism, east and west, was now designated “metaphysics,” a term which had long been reserved for a branch of philosophy dealing with first principles, like the structure of the universe and the nature of being. Now, the meaning was stretched to include poltergeists and Babylonian musical modes. Jampa was not going to argue. The sale of these books paid the rent.

. . .

The problem for the development of aesthetic morality is the same one that Schiller envisioned, the problem being the rarity of detached observers observing a work of art. The same for meditation. The meditator finds the monkey mind, the chatter, the static without being able to see the background, the nature of mind, the absolute. Can’t get any leverage. First of all, unable to think about thinking, let alone observe

the process. Kant could. Fichte did. Schelling went a bit inward, and Hegel a lot further outward. Schiller posits “play” as a resolution of the mind-body dualism, finding an identity between thinking and feeling, suggesting thinking with the feelings, or at least attempting to understand conscience, will, the feelings in relationship to the thoughts, their interrelations, and distinguishing between the kinds of thoughts—list making, analytical calculations, imaginative ramblings, syllogistic sophistries, sexual fantasy—and being able to be still long enough without distraction, even if an ant bites you in the armpit.

Everything shifts about. The mind wanders, processes another draft, another scenario, another strategy. Dissonance—distraction. The Spectator sniffs it. Touches. A thinking Eye. Another eye sits behind this eye, a primal Eye. The Third Eye. Rigpa. The metaphysical basis for the ground of consciousness. The ground of the ground. The Base. That which, no matter how it is supposed to be, isn’t and yet is rationally experienced as present awareness. Behind existence. I compare bigness with smallness white with black, male with female and accept the contradiction, their identity being a pointing to what cannot be conceptualized and only partially pointed at because one abstraction reduces to another abstraction until, in reaching beyond the a priori continuum to the Thing-in-itself, that Schopenhauer calls the Will and Hegel the Geist, which Fichte feels is his Ego, and Schelling expects to find in Freedom, and Kierkegaard touches with his raw faith and Nietzsche experiences in madness. At the this end of the spectrum I go beyond common logic to an more fundamental logic in order to think with feelings. This requires me to use an esoteric form of mystical positivism, the intellectual intuition, a notion that Kant rejected but that Schelling, in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), aligns with other mental states, such as aesthetic consciousness and mimic intellectual intuition. Schelling postulates this philosophical intuition as the ground of idealism.

. . .

#### ATHENA

Athena, bright-eyed, chaste and circumspect  
Goddess of art, wisdom, and the craft of war  
Hot on the battlefield, hot between the sheets  
If you can get her between the sheets

A challenge only approached by the confident and tenacious  
You blinded Tireseus but gave him second sight  
If I were to choose to whom to give the golden apple  
I’d choose you.





## WHATEVER IT TAKES ORIENTALISM AND FEMINIST STRATEGY JAMPA DORJE

KAPALA PRESS 2016 ELLENSBURG

A section of F. Pradilla's 1888 engraving,  
*The Surrender of the Moors at Granada, A.D. 1492*

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

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

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

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

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

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

One of the main criticisms of orientalism is that the Orient is characterized in static terms with stereotypical descriptions of people and places. The seraglio, or harem, is an example of such a place, it being a secured place (Arabic, *ḥarām*, forbidden because sacred or important) occupied by wives and concubines and forbidden to most men. However, in the mind of a poet, such a place might be dreamed of as a place of pleasure, as Coleridge adapts the idea in his poem. He sees "a damsel with a dulcimer in a vision" and he claims that her song (if he could only remember it) would inspire him to build that "dome of pleasure." The harem was thought by Europeans to be a type of fancy whorehouse, and paintings of women in har-

ems with the possible exception of Delacroix's, because he claims in one of his journals that he managed to gain access, are depictions of pure fantasy (*Wikipedia/Women of Algiers*).

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

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

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

Both Wollstonecraft and Schopenhauer reference Oriental cultures to substantiate their opposing viewpoints.

Wollstonecraft:

In a seraglio, I grant, that all these arts are necessary; the epicure must have his palate tickled, or he will sink into apathy;

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

And she explains the arts necessary for seduction:

Gentleness, docility, and a spaniel-like affection are... consistently recommended as the cardinal virtues of the sex... She was created to be the toy of man, his rattle, and it must jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused (PW 124).

Schopenhauer:

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

Now, if, as by magic, I could get Mary Wollstonecraft and Arthur Schopenhauer on the same plane—say, the Sufi 4th Heaven of the Innermost Heart—and, after a glass or two of vintage ambrosia, they would converse without her trying to strangle him or he trying to kick her down the stairs, their dialogue might develop to a point where he conceded that a woman can make reasonable arguments, that Nature has drawn the line dividing the sexes more equitably than he thought She had, and he might even tentatively nod in agreement when she says, "Nature, or to speak with strict propriety, God, has made all

things right; but man has sought him out many inventions to mar the work" (PW122). But would the continuation of their argument actually lead to a clearing in the dense forest of ambiguities between the gender roles of the sexes?

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

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

hear the conclusion, postpones her execution once again. At the end of one thousand and one nights, Scheherazade presents Shahryar with a son.

The method Scheherazade uses to survive would seem to Wollstonecraft to be a degrading means to find freedom. She would understand the situation and that it required an immediate solution and that the one chosen was clever, but she would see its limitations for the liberation of all women as being a continuation of the curse of inequality laid upon them. Schopenhauer would see just another man being "clouded by his sexual impulses," while believing that the state of polygamy is proper, whereby a woman is "reduced to her natural position as a subordinate being" (PW 144).

Does Scheherazade degrade herself by using her storytelling art to ward off decapitation? Was her method a mere feminine wile? Remember, that among the Greek heroes, Odysseus used cunning in building a wooden horse, showing a great degree of intellect by disobeying normal rules and conventional behavior to dismantle the master's house, in this case the City of Troy. Any such cunning accomplished by a woman will be judged as one of the nasty aspects of her feminine nature, whereas in a man it will be judged to be a crafty stratagem.

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

Joining Wollstonecraft and Schopenhauer in the Sufi 4th Heaven, I suggest to them that we are experiencing an upheaval in gender identity within the process of human sexual evolution—a dynamic phase in the eternal return of biological polarity—

whereby the male and female sides of the equation are recognized as mere abstractions, the one interpolating with the other, as they open to a spectrum of gender possibilities and the re-establishment and affirmation of her story within the context of so-called history to be more of an all-inclusive *ourstory*.

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# Transgender Play and the Buddhist Middle Way

Jampa Dorje

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Title page sculpture: "Lely's Venus"  
Linoleum block by Rychard

This essay originated from discussions in  
Dr. Cynthia Coe's Women and Philosophy  
class at Central Washington University.

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



Inside the ambiguities of Sea-Tac Airport, I'm waiting to pass through the security check point before boarding my flight to Colorado to attend Tara Mandala's White Dakini Drup Chen, when I hear a distant voice shout, "Kelly, you're in the wrong line." I see a tall man ahead of me in a blue suit with dark curly hair turn toward the person calling. There is a great distance between them, an almost infinite distance by Zeno's reckoning, but Love wins, and the tall man turns, and I see he has large breasts and is wearing makeup. Now, he's a woman: lips red, cheeks rouged, eyes with long lashes and eyelids artfully shadowed. I like curly hair. When done right, it speaks a lot about your personality and aesthetic outlook. Looking directly at her, I feel the curl coming out of my hair. Ze was tall and broad shouldered and moved with force. People stepped aside, and as ze passed I could smell amber or something from the Orient, perhaps the perfume Shalimar or Opium. There was a lot of man in this walk. Transgender or transvestite? Was ze being a she or a he? Ze waved, and the nails on hir hand were long and manicured. I realized how doubtful and uncertain I was of this person's meaning and intention.

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

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

has hair pulled back in a ponytail; their sex is indeterminate, but their uniforms represent authority.

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

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

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

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

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

transgender” is part of “the Left’s continuing war on biology.” Matters are getting complicated, as the rigidity of gender identity becomes unstable. As Judith Halberstram says in her essay, “Transgender Butch: Butch/FTM Border Wars and the Masculine Continuum”:

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

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

World-traveling is another form of play that assists in the reshaping of gender identity by traveling to other experiences of lifestyle and consciousness. The term “world-traveling” I take from Mariá Lugones’ essay, “Playfulness, ‘world’-travelling, and loving perception.” She admits to “worlds” that one cannot enter playfully, nor would want to, but there are “worlds” that we can travel to lovingly, and travelling to them is part of loving at least some of their inhabitants. The reason why I think that travelling to someone’s “world” is a way of identifying with them is because by travelling to their “world” we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes (FPR 79).

Gender is not stable (Butler, FPR 97) and is therefore the perfect playground for personal transformation. As a high camp group having fun breaking down barriers, Bornstein referenced the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, street-performers in San Francisco, who began dressing in drag as Catholic nuns, and whose origi-

nal appearance now includes exaggerated make-up that accentuates their rebellion against gender roles. Fausto-Sterling (FPR 132) suggest that ultimately, concepts of masculinity and femininity might overlap so completely as to render the very notion of gender difference irrelevant and, she references Roshblatts' chromatic system that differentiates hundreds of different personality types which could translate into "shades of gender" (FPR 133).

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

After reading Judith Butler's "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," I begin to question whether or not, not only gender, but the body itself might be a cultural construct. I'm reminded of something one of my lamas said about the metaphysical foundation of the world (in its physical sense) resting on an elephant which rests upon a tortoise, and when asked what the tortoise rested on he said, "It's tortoises all the way down." The study of gender for me, at the moment, is the metaphysics of metaphysics, and the field theory of play is a means to ease, unify, and harmonize tensions, dissonance, and contradictions in the polarities of the body, voice, and mind. Outwardly, I can join the camp parade, but inwardly I must deconstruct my gendered self; and being a tantric yogi, I know the way to go about this.

A Tantric practitioner lives in a view, not a point of view but a kind of seeing of the world in indestructible splendor. This sounds romantic, and there is passion involved, but this view is unclouded and luminous, and its sublimity is the seal of its authenticity. The essence of this luminosity is wisdom and its resonance is compassion, or Buddha's heart-mind, which is the motivation for Bodhisattvas (who recognize their essence) to help all sentient beings attain enlightenment.

Tantra is the path of sacred union. Its methodology utilizes the union of form and sound (deep visualization and mantra recitation) to facilitate, in short order, the recognition of the nature of mind. The ritual items always present with a Tantric practitioner are a bell and a vajra ("thunderbolt" symbol). The bell is a symbol of emptiness-wisdom and is held in the left hand, whereas the vajra is the symbol of compassionate, skillful means and is held in the right hand. The crossing of the right and the left hands during formal practice represents the union of compassion and wisdom.

Reflecting on an event I witnessed, while at the Great Accomplishment Ceremony at Tara Mandala celebrating a tutelary deity in the form of a White Dakini, I can see that Buddhist training does not totally prepare one to assimilate the accelerating changes in gender identification. Yes, the concept of equanimity and "one taste" are foundational to the path, but what is a lama to do when an openly gay practitioner wants to be blessed by a ritual item that traditionally has the opposite gender valence? To perform a ceremonial blessing for someone claiming an alternative gender identity, in the pomp of a tradition that hardly recognizes homosexuality, is enough to make a knowledge-holder's nose bleed. I told my friend that he had taken a giant step for the liberation of all queer Buddhists.

Two themes I have heard at conferences over the past year—at the Human Behavior and Evolution Conference, in Vancouver, and at the Washington States Art Commission con-fab, in Ellensburg—are co-operation and reciprocity. How can we get along and help one another? Again, we must overcome our biases in how we interpret the world. And what better way to start than tolerance?

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

I have described the transgendered condition in which I find myself. For a young person, choosing the form of gender neutrality might enable her or him to decide on an appropriate lifestyle, but for an old person, being a they can be a way of summing up all the facets of one's oneness.

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



A MEDITATION ON HIGHER FREEDOMS

*AND*

A LETTER TO THOREAU

Jampa Dorje

D Press ♦ 2017 ♦ Ellensburg

## A MEDITATION ON HIGHER FREEDOMS

Between University Avenue and E.7th Street and between Samson and Walnut, in Ellensburg, there's some wild Nature;—not exactly Wilderness,—but a patch of land left alone and gone to seed. The trail is about seventy paces, along the edge of a creek. A piece of cardboard in the bushes gives me a dry place to sit on the dewy grasses. I've brought food from Safeway's deli, and my plan is to step off the grid for an hour and find solitude.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Deep memory follows a beaten path, and my feet lead the way;—I’m up for an adventure. I have on a couple of sweaters to shield me from the gusts of frigid air passing through the trees. The density of the undergrowth increases, and the bushes snag my clothes. And, then, I come upon a renegade shrine to a dead teenager, a memorial tree covered with friendship ornaments—a tree with a plaque that says, “Wish You Were Here,” and I think, “Lucky, to be here now,”—but how cross the creek in the marsh? As I approach the upended root structure of one of the trees that bridge the creek, a tangle of wings, powerfully rising from the reeds, disturbs the air. I am prepared for another mallard—see lots of them along the Ganges, on campus,—but a Great Blue Heron, yikes. Escaping the entanglement of Nature, I cross the log and set foot on concrete, still trembling from the excitement of my encounters. Across from me is Vinman’s Bakery. . .and I’m beginning to sense freshly baked croissants. . .voila, I’ve returned to the predictability of the grid.

## **A LETTER TO THOREAU**

5/7/2017

Dear Thoreau,

Salutations from my outpost in the Pacific Northwest. I can imagine you snug in your cabin at Walden Pond. I know you’ve only received one or two letters in your life that you considered worth the postage, and I’m not sure this one will reach up to the standard



you've set, but I feel compelled to fill you in on a few recent developments of philosophical themes dear to your heart.

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

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

The debate on how to manage the federal parks we call our "national treasures" (an idea not even a twinkle in anyone's eye when you were living in your cabin) has been continually raging since Theodore Roosevelt, our 26th president, made conservation a top priority by establishing an array of national parks, forests, and monuments intended to preserve the nation's natural resources. The realization came to us that our scenic wonders should be protected, and steady progress has been made by environmentally conscious individuals to ensure that some of this heritage will be protected for future generations.

After you so poignantly revealed in *Walden; or Life in the Woods* how nature opposes human society, others discovered that they, too, could find solace and renewal from the deadening existence of social intercourse. Dr. Goerger has had us read selections from your

works and the works of your dear friend, Ralph Waldo Emerson, as well as from the works of John Muir, Sigund Olson, Howard Zahniser, and Edward Abbey. While Emerson is a true philosopher, Muir is a true outdoorsman, an adventurer, who explores the western United States and writes profoundly about the destruction of the forests and the beauty of untrammelled wilderness. (Check out his *Atlantic Monthly* articles.) He railed against the havoc caused by logging and mining in order to get Congress to establish protections and create some kind of management of our resources instead of just wasting them. He's forthcoming about his connection to God in the setting of the great outdoors, and he focuses on beauty and the esthetic value of his nature experiences. In 1903, Theodore Roosevelt camped with John Muir in Yosemite Valley, in California, and Muir convinced Roosevelt to establish a national park, while the valley was still pristine (Wiki). Today, it is overrun by tourists, but it is still a sublime vista. Come west, and we'll go see it before they build another dam.

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

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

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

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

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

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

During the Wilderness Act’s drafting process, another letter arrived on Zahniser’s desk from F.S. Baker, a forester at U.C. Berkeley, dated January 2, 1946. Baker accuses Zahniser (and the Wilderness Society of which Zanhiser was a leader) of being elitist in their dedication

to keeping pristine wildernesses in perpetuity (HZ 63), and, in a further letter, Baker delineates the types of people who, he feels, desire this kind of wilderness: the “solitary minded,” the “man-against-nature fellows,” and a breed “who go in search of the strange and unusual” (HZ 67). In other words, there are those who merely want to take walks, those who want recreation, including hunting and fishing, and those who want something more, like Edward Abbey, who wants the chance

to confront immediately and directly if it’s possible, the bare bones of existence, want to be able to look at and into a juniper tree, a piece of quartz, a vulture, a spider, and see it as it is in itself, devoid of all humanly ascribed qualities, anti-Kantian, even the categories of scientific description. To meet God or Medusa face to face, even if it means risking everything human in myself (DS 6).

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

But back to the invisible (as well as quite literal) bullets flying in the wilderness. I read opinion articles in favor, opinion articles against, and balanced articles on the subject of the ban on lead bullets and the promotion of “green” (safe or, at least, less-damaging-to-the-environment-type) bullets. A lot of this is not going to make any

sense to you, and I know you are off the grid and don't have a computer, but I am going to reference these articles with their links to what we call the *internet* for your future access.

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

The overall situation of green versus lead bullets, like all situations that you look at closely, is a complex one. On one side there are the Second Amendment fanatics and certain hunting groups and, on the other side, environmentalists and health scientists. At *Patriot Update*, Jim Yardley claims that: (1) those wanting to ban are "pandering to rabid environmentalists"; (2) the cost to shift ammunition to copper alloys could cost about \$20 million, a 300% increase from current costs, and will raise electronics and house wiring costs; (3) a loss of jobs in the lead industry; (4) green ammo doesn't kill any better. Perry Chiarmonte, a *Fox News* contributor insists that lead bullets have: (1) no effect on environment and are not a hazard; (2) that green bullets costs hunters more; (3) quotes the National Rifle Association that it is "restrictive legislation"; (4) hunters would have to reset guns. And there is more of the same, except that there's a "Catch 22" (says Michael Bastsch, in *The Daily Caller*, and his use of this expression implies there's a dilemma because of conflicting conditions), because the U.S. Army doesn't want armor-piercing bullets in the public domain, while the State of California has a ban in place against lead bullets at a time when green bullets are hard to obtain.

The environmentalists are of a completely different attitude, and they posit an alternative interpretation of the data. Lori Ann Burd, writing for *Oregon Live* claims that lead bullets are: (1) toxic to humans; (2) poison wildlife; (3) the largest source of man-placed lead in the environment—3,000 metric tons of lead fired randomly into the wilderness and 80,000 metric tons of lead fired in shooting ranges—all a health hazard; (4) argues against the rise in retail costs,

claiming that costs will come down; (5) green bullets have as good or better ballistics. Laura Geggel, writing for *Live Science*, reports: (1) toxicity of spent ammo eaten by animals that forage; spent ammo eaten from dead prey; (2) lead gets in water supply; (3) bald eagle, our national bird, and condors, an endangered species, are threatened; (4) 10-20 million non-target animals, dead, along with 2 million ducks dead from ingesting pellets. An article posted at the Humane Society website explains that: (1) animals at every level of the food chain are effected; (2) no safe level of lead for humans.

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

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

I've sat and meditated on a falling leaf in the Rockies, felled giant

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

In all humility,  
Jampa

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

My Dear Jampa,

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

I was reading Zahniser's article, "Threat to Wild Lands" (HZ 135), and I came across a reference to Antæus, and it triggered an association with what you were saying about the new gods becoming the old gods and the old, the new. Hercules fought Antæus as his eleventh labor. Antæus was born from Gaia, and his source of strength was the earth;—so, as long as he was touching the earth, he could not be defeated. Hercules lifted him off the ground,—creating a gap,—and squeezed the life out of him. The Olympians

represent the Modern Age, our scientific prowess,—and, as we explore these new realms, we sever the connection to our Ancient Source. As my new friend Abbey keeps harping, “Now is the time for some serious monkey-wrenching!”

As ever, Henry

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## An Ontological Circumambulation of Walden Pond *by* Jampa Dorje

D Press ◇ 2017 ◇ Ellensburg

This essay originated from discussions about *Walden Pond* in Dr. Michael Goeger's Philosophy of Wilderness class at C.W.U. in 1917.

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

Henry David Thoreau may have been looking for a middle way between being a hermit living in the woods and, at the same time, being someone who appreciated the arts and sciences and found them useful. As he donned an ascetic's mantle and moved to Walden Pond, he was looking for solitude and the freedom to think his thoughts without the cacophonous energy of the industrial landscape that he found himself immersed in. Throughout his

book, *Walden; or Life in the Woods*, first published in 1854, Thoreau admonishes his countrymen to realize how disconnected we are from Nature and how technology has added to our numbness and distress.

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

We have constructed a fate, an *Atropos*, that never turns aside. (Let that be the name of your engine.) Men are advertised that at a certain hour and minute these bolts will be shot toward particular points of the compass; yet it interferes with no man’s business and the children go to school on the other track. We live the steadier for it. We are all educated thus to be sons of Tell. The air is full of invisible bolts. Every path but your own is the path of fate. Keep on your own track, then (PT 294).

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

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

reau's, when he wrote:—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

...if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours (PT 460).

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

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# **DANCING IN THE MOMENT**

## **Jampa Dorje**

**Kapala Press 2017 Ellensburg**

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

**On** my way along Hwy 84, just before I reached Abiquiu, I passed an inn with a gift shop, and I decided to turn around and go back to buy a present for Lama Tsultrim. Not a smart move. I picked the worst spot along the road between Santa Fe and Pagosa Springs to make this maneuver, and I was hit broadside

by a car containing two women with a baby strapped in a car seat. The place I had decided to make my U-turn was between two curves, so I was not hit by a car traveling at super high speed, but the impact was still severe.

The seat belt gripped me tightly. The air bag punched me. The impact sent my vehicle into a spin, and I writhed in a gyre of centrifugal force. In an existential cleft of my being, my left eye saw an abysmal blackness and my right eye saw an eerie light. I looked up and saw the flat top of Cerro Pedernal, a mesa I knew from the paintings of Georgia O'Keefe. This is a physical and spiritual sentinel in the belief systems of the Apache, the Tewa, and the Navajo. A protector if there ever was one.

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

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

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

I drank a cup of tea and booked myself into a room. I lay on the bed and stared at the ceiling. There was a stain where water had seeped through the plaster. I guessed from my feelings that I was out of my body and having an experience on a subtle level arising from poor judgment on the causal level. I checked myself for physical wounds and bruises; other than some aches, I seemed to be in one piece. The psychic dimension was another matter. I recognized a motif with my near dismemberment and descent connecting this accident at the base of Pedernal to the myths of Iannah and Dionysus, archetypes that, in turn, connected to Tröma Nagmo, the tutelary deity of my recent meditations, a wrathful, devouring wisdom dakini of primordial, transpersonal experience—and I concluded that it was bad spot on the highway to make an unnecessary U-turn. Suddenly, I was very appreciative of my life. Here I am, I thought, existing, in all this impermanence.

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

The next day, my friend Beth picked me up at the inn and drove me back to Tara Mandala. After a warm bath with Epson salts and many consoling words, I returned to Luminous Peak, the cabin where I had completed my traditional Tibetan Buddhist three-year meditation retreat. I had completed the training and had been recognized as a *drupla* (a lama who has accomplished the dharma in a mountain re-

treat). I had another level of training to complete, and that would happen at Tulku Sang-ngag's retreat land, called The Seat of Longchenpa, near Glorieta, New Mexico. Before returning to my cabin, I decided to read Western existential philosophy, to regain some balance, as I seemed to be throwing myself into the world in a rather chaotic way. I found well-worn copies of Søren Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* and *The Sickness unto Death*, Friedrich Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* and *The Genealogy of Morals*, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Underground Man*, and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* in the Tara Mandala staff's library.

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

PHIL 358: Existentialism

Dr. Cynthia Coe

12/5/17

### **Is a Buddha a Knight of Faith?**

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

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

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

If I am to discover something about myself and my place in the universe that is beyond my rational ability to understand, I will need to know what a religious path to

God entails; to do this, I must look to our means of reaching God; and, if the means is to be faith, rather than reason, I need to look at my capacity for faith. For this, I look at a “self” taking a role in the process.

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

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

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

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

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

A comparable sense of despair, involving an extensive meditation on the nature of self in relationship to a creator god, occurred in the fifth century before the Christian Era by a young Hindu prince, named Shakyamuni, who left the comforts of his home and family and ventured into a forest to practice austerities and ponder the universe. After years of rigorous practice, he finally attained a state of ultimate understanding, called enlightenment. After attaining enlightenment, Shakyamuni, became known as Gautama Buddha and was considered a perfect person. His teachings (*dharma*), however, go against some important teachings in Hindu philosophy. Two main tenets of Hinduism are the belief in a self (*atman*) and the belief in a creator god, or unifying principle (*Brahman*), and the point of release from the cyclic system of causation (*karma*) is the union of the individual self with Brahman (Wiki: Brahman). Gautama Buddha denied the validity of either of these entities.

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



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

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

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

Most people live dejectedly in worldly sorrow and joy; they are the ones who sit along the wall and do not join in the dance. The knights of infinity are dancers and possess elevation. They make the movements upward, and fall down again; and this too is no mean pastime, nor ungraceful to behold. But whenever they fall down they are not able at once to assume the posture, they vacillate an instant, and this vacillation shows that after all they are strangers in the world (FT, pp. 51-52).

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

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

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

It is supposed to be the most difficult task for a dancer to leap into a definite posture in such a way that there is not a second when he is grasping after the posture, but by the leap itself he stands fixed in that posture. Per-

haps no dancer can do it—that is what this knight does (FT, p. 51). If it can be done, both a knight of faith and a buddha make their lives an artwork by utilizing their awareness of being in the present moment;—and both believe that it takes more than logical reasoning to resolve having one foot in the finite world and one in the infinite. This failure of reason to connect word to meaning is expressed in Emily Dickinson’s reflection:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This is not the level of spiritual attainment Kierkegaard seeks. He believes: Either there is an absolute duty toward God, and if so it is the paradox here described, that the individual as the individual is higher than the universal and as the individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute, or else faith never existed, because it always existed, or, to put it differently, Abraham is lost, or one must explain the passage in the fourteenth

chapter of Luke... (FT, p. 91).

Kierkegaard is referring to the words spoken by Jesus: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (*Luke* 14:26). These words exemplify the severe limits imposed on anyone who would choose to be a knight of faith. A terrifying maxim—and radical faith is required to meet the challenge.

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

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

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

According to Kierkegaard, religious faith is not about knowing if God exists; it is about surrendering to our ignorance of God's existence. Kierkegaard explains this as having "to lose the understanding to gain God" (SD, p. 171). Accepting our ignorance of God's existence and then recognizing this as our path forward creates a paradox. If the theological structure of morality no longer rests on a solid foundation, it is difficult to make moral decisions where there is only dank darkness as an absolute. The method for a knight of faith, driven by this realization, is to move toward God with increased intensity:

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

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

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

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

Sometimes, the metaphor of the self as a poisonous tree is used. A Hinayana renunciate would take many vows and try to dig up the many roots of the tree, one by one (habitual tendencies). Following the Mahayana path, where one focuses on developing compassion, one cuts the tap root of the tree (the self). A Vajrayana practitioner transforms the poisons of the tree into wisdom nectar. And, a Dzog Chen yogi takes the direct path of self-liberation from clinging and attachment. By direct path, I mean a path that does not require future rebirths over many eons. This path is known as the Third Turning of the Wheel, a teaching that is not part of the canonical texts that were handed down through the mainstream Mahayana Buddhist schools (Norbu, pp. 26-31).

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

A knight of faith doesn't have the luxury of a teacher. Abraham doesn't

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

Another point of alignment between a buddha and a knight of faith is that both need a bit of faith to jumpstart the process. The knight of faith is seeking succor from God; a buddha is seeking the cessation of suffering through the deconstruction of a suffering self and a substantive world. However, as you jettison your concept of a self, you find yourself sinking into what Kierkegaard indicates is 70,000 fathoms of nothingness (CUP, p. 181). This is risking madness. It requires faith for a knight of faith to believe in God and faith for a disciple of Buddha to practice meditation.

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

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

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

You know the relative to be a lie, yet still you practice the two accumulations.  
You realize that in the absolute there is nothing to meditate on, yet still you practice  
/meditation.

You see relative and absolute as one, yet still you diligently practice.  
Peerless Teacher, at your feet I bow (Patrul, p. 283).

I unpack this as follows: first line—both the cyclic world of suffering (samsara) and the idea of liberating oneself into a state of non-suffering (nirvana) are realized to be concepts, and one realizes that, as there is really nothing that needs to be accomplished in the finite, relative world of here-and-now, ze is still the realized master and performs meritorious actions and continues to seek wisdom, if only out of a

sense of form;—or, like an existentialist, ze creatively makes up the necessary value system; second line—again, since, at the absolute level, all things are of equal value, at the relative level, you still have to make it up as you go, living your life; and, in line three, even though you have actualized the state of inseparable union of opposites—this line requires a shift, perhaps from Hegelian heights, from a two-value to a three-value system of logic (replacing an *either/or* with a *both and\**)—you continue to practice dharma, which, if one has taken the Vow of the Bodhisattva, means returning in future lifetimes for the benefit of all sentient beings and bringing them all, down to the last microbes, to realization from whatever stage of development they have reached on the path toward Buddhahood.

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

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

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GRACEFUL MOMENTS  
A TALK ON MOVEMENT & MEDITATION  
JAMPA DORJE

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This talk was delivered to Dr. Leonardo J. D'Acquisto's  
Applied Kinesiology class, IHP 559  
at Central Washington University, Ellensburg, Washington  
February 14, 2018

Photo of Ty Denner by Ricki Towner

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

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

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

Not the love poem one might expect on this particular day, but I chose this poem because it reveals diverse types of movement in our experience, movements that we take for granted, as well as movements that are sublime and hold us in awe—local movement, cosmic movement, mythological movement—a beast *slouching*, things *falling apart*, a falcon *gyring* (turning in a spiral), a cradle *rocking*. Many of the images in the poem describe movements that produce anxiety. This is an oracle that is not prophesizing peace, even though the poem was written in 1925, some years after the First World War and some years before the Second World War. It is a visionary poem that points to unresolved conflict, at some level, in our consciousness.



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

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

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

#### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

HEALTH

WELL-BEING

MEDITATION

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

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

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

Late Middle English, from Latin *movere*, to move  
Change of place in an animate body, 1588  
Movement of a body in walking, running, 1598  
Momentum, scientific term, 1690  
Bodily exertion tending to fatigue,  
bodily exercises, 1695

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

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

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

All this is connected to time and space and the way in which we understand movement, a concept on which philosophers from the time of the Presocratics until now continue a metaphysical debate as to whether there even is motion or movement. How can I say this when, wherever I am, there is movement? I hear the 60 cycle hum coming from the motor in my refrigerator and watch a black van pass on the street outside my house and feel my esophagus contract as I swallow. I'm told the earth spins on its axis at 1000 mph, while its moving around the sun at 15,000 mph, while the solar system cruises through the galaxy at a half-million mph. Not exactly reassuring that anything can be at rest.

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

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

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

When Diogenes heard Zeno promulgate this idea, he got up and walked away, as his answer; Aristotle says time diminishes as distance diminishes; Aquinas says time is not made up of instants; Russell posits the "at-at theory of motion"—the object just has to

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

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

So, it appears that I am promoting Meditation—Being—Consciousness under the banner: “Don't just do something—SIT THERE!”

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

espouse Buddhism. I'm here to speak about the practice of meditation and not challenge anyone's spiritual path.

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

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

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

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

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

Take 5: a short meditation practice...

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



## **MAKE IT NEW:**

**A RESPONSE TO ARONOFSKY'S *NOAH***

**JAMPA DORJE**

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

Text assigned: *The Jewish Study Bible*,  
edited by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler  
Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014.

Artwork by the author.

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

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

Why would they make changes to the original story? In an interview in *The Atlantic*, "The 'Terror' of Noah: How Darren Aronofsky Interprets the Bible," Cathleen Falsani claims that it is the messages, not the history, that matters. She quotes Aronofsky:

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

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

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

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

In *Genesis* 6:2, "divine beings saw how beautiful the daughters of men were and took wives from among those that pleased them." In verse 4, "It was then, and later too, that the Nephilim appeared on earth." Scholars debate whether the Nephilim were the offspring of fallen angels and human women or whether they were a separate race of giants or whether they were the lineage of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve, or whether they were aliens from another planet. Aronofsky portrays these large "transformer-type" creatures as being made of huge chunks of rock that have a core of light, portraying these creatures as made of light that has become deeply materialized. There are, also, tell-tale signs of their having once had wings. Regardless of their genealogy, they serve Aronofsky well as characters in a modern action film. There are no battle scenes in the biblical version of the Noah story, but the epic battle in the film foreshadows the upcoming stories in *Judges* and *Kings*. Aronofsky conflates the different interpretations of the Nephilim. During the battle to protect the ark from the wicked men who God regrets having created (*Gen.* 5-8), the Nephilim, upon being defeated, are suddenly "beamed" into the heavens. Their fallen, embodied nature appears to be redeemed by having helped Noah and his family.



In both versions of the Noah story (*Gen. 6* and *Gen. 7*), Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, have wives to take onto the ark. Aronofsky departs from this traditional depiction. Much of the dramatic development of the film revolves around finding wives for the young men. Early in the film, Noah and his wife rescue a young girl, named Illa (portrayed by Emma Watson), who is still alive after a brutal rampage of her village by the warriors of Tubal-cain. Illa has an abdominal wound; later, she finds herself to be barren. A romantic interest develops between Illa and Shem. Noah goes to a village to find wives for his other sons, but he is repulsed after seeing young women sold for food, and he returns empty handed to tell his family that they will be the last humans. My favorite new character is the one-eyed crone, played by Aronofsky's seventh grade teacher, Vera Fried, who confronts Noah in the village and gives him her fierce English teacher look, shouting, "You! You!" In a video-interview with the Palm Beach Post News, she tells of her reaction in getting a cameo in the film with Russell Crowe [www.mypalmbeachpost.com/news/vera-fried-reenacts-her-scene-with-russell-crowe-HLnIBFvp1oHjWbvXQFgGuO/](http://www.mypalmbeachpost.com/news/vera-fried-reenacts-her-scene-with-russell-crowe-HLnIBFvp1oHjWbvXQFgGuO/).

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

Beyond extending the theme of romantic love (a modern and not a biblical notion), the conflict between Ham and Noah extends the theme of the transfer of the father's lineage to his sons, a theme that was posited at the beginning of the film. During an interrupted ceremony, where Noah's father, Lamech, is passing his lineage to his son, a sacred snakeskin talisman is lost. In Aronofsky's rendering, this heirloom is stolen by Tubal-cain (Ray Winstone) and is later given to Ham, who, at the end of the film, gives it back to Noah. Rightfully, it belongs to Shem, since he is the firstborn. Ham relinquishes his place in the family structure and,

like Cain, becomes a wanderer. Aronofsky works in another touch of Cain and Abel allegory, when Shem (Douglas Booth) is sent by Noah to find his brother and returns without him.

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

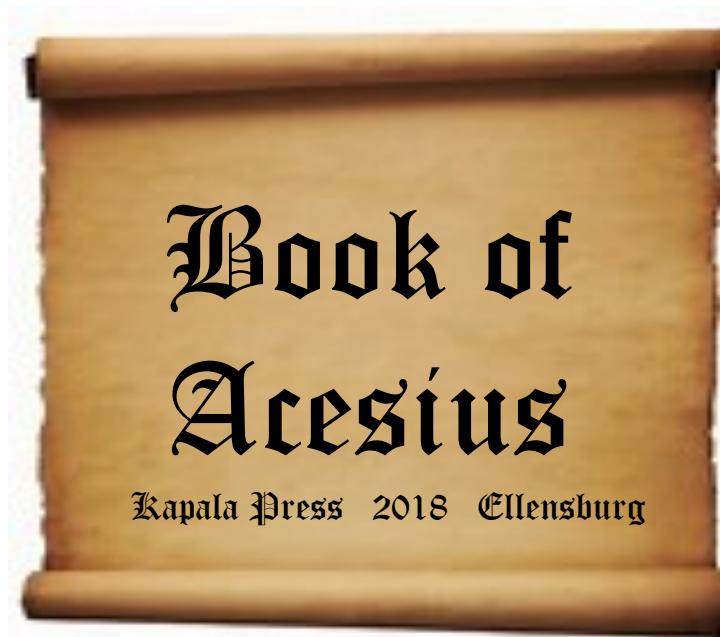
One of the most tenebrous parts of the Noah story is in the post-flood stage, after Noah has become a drunkard (*Gen.* 9:21). It is here where Ham views his father’s nakedness. These events have spawned an ongoing debate around whether there was a rape of Noah by Ham, a castration of Noah by Ham, or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

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

This is plausible enough, although the film raises as many questions as it solves. Whose brilliant idea was it to get the animals to

lie down? Is the curse of Canaan (*Gen. 9:23*) now extirpated? How does Methuselah, a mortal, become the healer of infertility and not an Angel of the Lord? What might happen with this altered gene pool? With the seas rising due to global warming, is God rescinding his covenant?

But, as they say, “It’s only a movie.” Regarding the last question, only time will tell.



This fiction is the product of Dr. Lily Vuong’s Religious Studies Class on Christianity at Central Washington University, Ellensburg WA in connection with Dr. Michael Goerger’s class on Greek and Roman Ethics in which we read *The Republic* by Plato.

Photo of Bishop Acesius by Oberon

Salutations from the Synod of Libya to our most illustrious potentate, Emperor Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus Augustus, known as Constantine the Great. Praise be that his majesty is in good health and has called together this august body of representatives of our Holy Church from the far reaches of the empire to this convocation. Salutations, as well, to Bishop Hosius of Corduba, our Senior Council Officer, and to the right illustrious elected council officers.

Since the time of Our Savior, Jesus Christ, taught in Galilee, Our Holy Church has been confronted by obstacles, as it spread the Good News to distant lands. We true believers, as well, have undergone hardships, as we traveled from these distant lands to reach this most-favored City of Nicaea in the province of Bithynia, and we face further hardships in our mission unless we attain consensus on church doctrine in this assembly representing all of Christendom.

Let me introduce myself. I am Titus Flavius Acesius, Bishop of Libya. I was born in the first year of the reign of Emperor Diocletian [284 CE] in the port city of Leptis Magna, a part of the prosperous Africa Nova province, Tripolitania. The hills in the countryside of my homeland are covered with olive trees. The city has always depended upon the fertility of its crops, and olive oil is one of our chief exports. My father, Marcus Aurelius Acesius, was a successful merchant. He was absent much of the time, and my mother, Antonia, who was very religious and very devout, raised my older brother, Claudius, my younger sister, Julia, and myself.

My brother, a robust and rather aggressive young

man, was destined to take over the family business. I might have followed this path; however, because of my frail health and my interest in books, my father decided I would have more success in the clergy. He had connections, and through his beneficence I acquired a teacher and learned to read and write. I proved to have excellent academic qualifications but was totally inexperienced with the practicalities of daily living.

Later, I traveled to Alexandria and studied in both the Catechetical School and the Museion, where I gained a great deal of reverence for the teachings of the Roman presbyter Novatus, sometimes called Novatian. Although I have been influenced by his penetrating and rigorous arguments concerning the substance of the Trinity, I have managed to stay out the political turmoil in which he was embroiled.

I studied classical Greek philosophy and literature, focusing mainly on Plato and the Stoics. I am also familiar with pre-Christian Jewish esotericism and Gnosticism. I read Latin, Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. I have written two treatises: *Trove de Trinitate ac Pretioso (A Precious Treasury of the Trinity)* and *Deriuationem Omnia Mentem (The Transmission of All-inclusive Mind)*. These works are unknown to you, because they have only circulated among a small audience. You are all learned men. At this point, I prefer not to impress you with my erudition. I would rather tell you a salient story to set a tone for the debates to follow.

In a distant diocese, there was a ghetto of Jews outside a castle inhabited by a clever bishop, who shall go unnamed. The parish wanted these Jews to disperse, but the bishop, being a fair man, said he would give them a chance to stay, if they produced their wisest man on a certain day to answer his newest riddles. It was agreed among the parishioners that this was a safe bet because the bishop was well known for his difficult riddles.

In the ghetto, the people were asking, "Who is our wisest man?" After much debate, it was decided that Izzie, the tailor, was the best choice, although his wife, Deborah, whose namesake can be found in *Judges 5:7*, was a strong second choice.

On the appointed day, Izzie arrived at the gate of the castle. He

showed his pass and was escorted to the grand entry hall of the building. He was amazed by the embroidery on the massive tapestries hanging from the ceiling, as he climbed a marble staircase. He was ushered into a room and seated in an ornate chair at one end of a long table. The fate of his people was to be determined by his ingenuity in answering the bishop's riddles.

The bishop, wearing his mitre and robes, entered the room with two priests. The priests stood at attention on either side of the bishop, once he was seated. After a pause, the bishop raised the forefinger of his right hand in the air. Izzie, moving his arm in a dramatic arch, pointed his finger at the table top. Then, the bishop pointed a finger directly at Izzie, and Izzie, in rapid response, pointed two fingers back at the bishop. The bishop smiled and, from a side pocket, presented an orange. In response, Izzie presented a piece of matzo.

After Izzie had departed, the priests beseeched the bishop to tell them the outcome of the debate, whether the Jew had satisfactorily answered the bishop's riddles or not. The bishop was ecstatic. "I have never met a wiser man in my life. I said, 'God is in heaven,' and he said, 'but some believe he has also been on earth.' Then, I said, 'There is only one God,' and he said, 'There are those who believe he has two other manifestations.' I said, 'Some believe the earth is round,' and he said, 'Others say it is flat.' The Jews can stay where they are."

Meanwhile, in the ghetto, Izzie was nearly crushed by the throng wanting to know their fate. "Do we have to leave, or can we stay?" they clambered. "That bishop," said Izzie, "what a schmuck. He said, 'Your people must leave.' And I said, 'We are going to stay right here.' He said, 'I'm going to poke out one of your eyes,' and I said, 'I'll poke out both of yours.' He took out an orange; I took out a piece of matzo; and we had lunch."

My fellow bishops, I pray that the Heavenly Spirit is upon us and that we may have God as our guide and the power of the Lord as our aid, to direct the course of our work in a satisfactory direction.

Note: I compiled some of the data from entries in *Wikipedia*: Constantine, Novatian, Acesius, First Council of Nicaea, Libya, Christianity in Libya, and Early Libyan Churches. Some phrases were taken from Eusebius's *Church History* and from a Masonic document, *Protocol of the Imperial Council and Imperial Court*, online. The joke, to which I added details, is an old one.

## TOWARDS THE FORMATION OF A CREED

My fellow bishops, I pray that the Heavenly Spirit is upon us and that we may have God as our guide and the power of the Lord as our aid to direct the course of our work in a satisfactory direction.

This is the first ecumenical council of the Church. It is convened to create a uniform Christian doctrine, a creed. With the creation of a creed, we will have laid a foundation on which both local and regional synods will be able to create orthodox statements of belief. A momentous opportunity is present. The creed we produce will enable us to define the unity of beliefs for the whole of Christendom.

There is much to be resolved. Among the subjects to be debated are the following: castration among the clergy; ordination among the recently converted; women living with the clergy, women's roles in the church; ordination requirements in general; excommunication and how to appeal; the supervisory role of Alexandria, Rome, etc.; the status of Jerusalem's bishop; the readmission of the dualistic *cathari*; what to do with priests who were improperly examined before ordination; the removal of clergy who are discovered to have fallen; readmission of others that have fallen from the faith, such as those returning from the military; the communion for the dying; lapsed catechumens; what to do with transient members of the clergy and of those who receive transient clergy; the problem of usury; the conduct of deacons; the followers of Paul of Samosta; and when we should kneel or stand while praying. Also, the date for Easter must be decided. [This list is from *Fourth Century Christianity*, Wisconsin University, "Canons of the Church,"

<https://www.fourthcentury.com/nicaea-325-canons.>]

All the above subjects are of great importance. However, none of the subjects is as important as our need to resolve disagreements arising over the relationship of the Son to the Father? Is the Son *begotten* by the Father from his own being and, as such, has no beginning, or was He created out of nothing and has a beginning? Against Arius, I am with the Alexandrian faction.

It is my belief that our creed should commit the church to the following precepts [What follows is a paraphrase of the Nicæan Creed as it was adopted at the First Council in 325CE, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene\\_Creed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_Creed)]: *We must state, unequivocally, that we believe in one God, the Father Almighty, who was the creator of all things, in both the visible and the invisible worlds. We believe in Jesus Christ, who was the Son of God and the only one begotten by God. We, also, believe in the Holy Spirit, and both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are of the same essence as the Father, not made afterwards by God the Father, but of one substance with the Father and with the Father from the beginning. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, came down to earth and was incarnate as a man, suffered for our sins, died on the cross, and on the third day ascended into heaven. At the end of time, Jesus Christ will judge us, both the living and the dead. I also want to emphasize that those who say: “There was a time when he was not;” and “He was not before he was made;” and “He was made out of nothing,” or “He is of another substance” or “essence,” or “The Son of God is created,” or “changeable,” or “alterable” are to be condemned.*

#### Overview of One Substance stance based on scriptural authority

That the Father and the Son are of One substance. In *Matthew* 11:27, Jesus said:

*All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*



That Jesus is from the Holy Spirit can be found in *Matthew 1:20*. An angel tells Joseph:

*...Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.*

Jesus, by inference, is God the Father, when Jesus rebukes the Devil after being offered all the kingdoms of the world in *Luke 4:12*. Jesus answered him:

*It is said, "do not put the Lord your God to the test."*

Throughout the Gospels, the Father, the son, and the Holy Spirit are of one substance. Jesus is with God; Jesus is God; Jesus is responsible for all things attributed to God. That the Word become flesh is revealed in *John 1:14*.

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.*

In *John 8:21*, Jesus comes and goes from earth to heaven:

*Again he said to them, "I am going away, and you will search for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come."*

In *John 10:22*, Jesus is the Messiah, speaking to the Jews:

*Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. the works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; but you do not believe..."*

All of this is summed up at the onset of *John 1:1-3*. John says:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.*

. . .

Phenomena that have tripartite being pose a language problem. How

is one to describe a condition that operates with a three-value system of logic (both/and) utilizing a two-value system of logic (either/or)? A thing in a two-value system must either be or not be. It cannot both be and not be at the same time. This is true for objects that exist in time and space. This is not the case for an Absolute that exists outside of time and space. It is said that a thing is the sum of its parts. If you remove the legs from a chair, the chair is no longer a chair, but the idea of a chair remains. It is easy to see that things are impermanent, that the only permanent characteristic things have is that they change. In the realm of the Absolute, things do not change. In the world of change, according to Plato, we get glimpses of the eternal realm of Forms [see “Allegory of the Cave” at the beginning of Book VII of the *Republic*]. Goodness is what every soul pursues [*Rep.* 506a]. Just as we need light from the natural sun to give us power to see earthly objects, the Good, which is the substantive base of our human soul, being the cause as well as the result, contains an epistemological structure (good-truth-beauty) that informs our methodological path to experience the Good. Images are reflections of objects; objects are reflections of forms; and forms unlock the metaphysical principles that allow us to reach God. In *Genesis* 1:3-4, God said, “Let there be light” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. With the light of reason we can discover our right relationship to God by seeking the good and forgoing evil.

. . .

There is a belief that God is 100% divine, that Jesus was born human and became divine upon His baptism. In *Matthew* 3:15, Jesus stated that he must be baptized to fulfill all righteousness.

*Let it be so now for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.*

If God and Jesus are, at this point, both 100% divine, and Jesus can redeem humans from sin, then humans are potentially of the same substance, a substance that can become divine, and humans simply don’t know this. The

possible transubstantiation of man is revealed by Jesus Christ in His baptism. As it says in *John* 4:15, Jesus is the means to this end:

*God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God,  
and they abide in God.*

. . .

It is said Jesus was not divine because he died on the cross. Although He later ascended into heaven, the question remains, why couldn't Jesus, if he was God, save himself. Humans must die to be reborn. If they abide in Jesus, they will be reborn and, on the Day of Judgement, ascend into heaven (or not). Jesus shows the way humans will discover their divinity. Why doubt the omnipotence of God?

Getting into heaven is a bigger problem. I agree with Novatus. If a person has forsaken their vows, they should not be readmitted to the congregation. I know this is a severe position, the position of a purist, and I have been admonished by Emperor Constantine ("Acesius," he said, "take a ladder, and climb up to heaven alone.") and I was humbled [[https://biblehub.com/library/sozomen/the\\_ecclesiastical\\_history\\_of\\_sozomenus/chapter\\_xxii\\_acesius\\_bishop\\_of\\_the.htm](https://biblehub.com/library/sozomen/the_ecclesiastical_history_of_sozomenus/chapter_xxii_acesius_bishop_of_the.htm)]. Still, I persist in my belief that those who have fallen from the faith during the times of persecution, or who have committed any mortal sin after baptism, should not be admitted to the church, even if they repent. In general, it sets a bad precedent.

Some will say that we can be saved at the last minute, if we confess our sins, and they source this idea to the story of the thief on the cross. Of the four Gospel writers, only Luke speaks of a thief being saved (*Luke* 23: 42-43). Mark and John don't mention any thieves. Matthew mentions two thieves but says that both taunted him (*Matt.* 27:44). Why believe Luke rather than the others? [I take this question from a speech by Vladimir in Act 1 of Samuel Beckett's play, *Waiting for Godot*.] We all want the chance to be saved from our sinful ways, especially in our last moments on earth. Redemption and salvation will not be easy for those of us who have lost their faith. The salvation of the thief on the cross is the exception because he was present with our Lord at the Crucifixion. Now are the End Times, and with-

out God's intercession, there is not enough time to complete the necessary penance to be truly purified.

Argument for God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit being of one substance, like a blanket with three folds, rather than an egg with three parts:

I have argued in my book, *The Transmission of All-inclusive Mind*, the danger in resetting the order of procession as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to a more Gnostic view with the Holy Spirit being first in the order of emergence.

*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while the spirit of God swept over the face of the waters [Gen. 1:1-2].*

Before the creation, there was a formless void, and out of this void, God created the earth. The Spirit (although some say that the word merely means "wind") appears at the time of the creation of the earth, but what existed before God? If the void existed before God, with God appearing out of this emptiness, God would not be eternal and would occupy the second part of the equation, with the Son taking third place. Emptiness (an abstract concept), followed by God (imaginable but human-like, since we are made in his image), and, lastly, the Son. In this scenario, God would be some form of arithmetical anomaly in space and time, an abstract first principle, producing Himself, like an accidental "vacuum" arising within the void, and the divinity of God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit would be diminished to zilch. Any attempt to place a specific value scale on the divinity of the Trinity will limit omnipresence and omnipotence of their existence. Therefore, a simpler and more elegant solution [Acesius anticipates *Ockham's razor*] is to say that the Son is 100% divine and 100% human. Otherwise, we will be eternally debating this matter in hell.

. . .

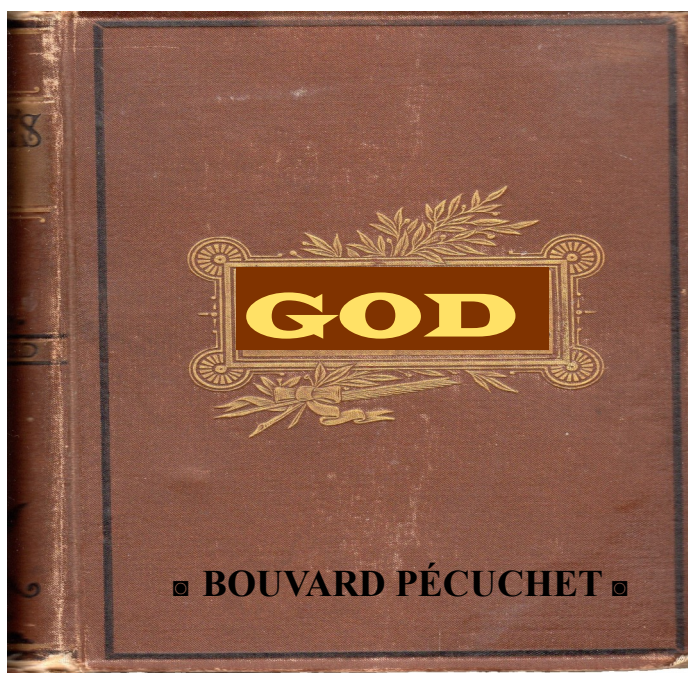
Concerning women being considered for the priest hood and the date for Easter:

There is one belief that God created both man and woman in his image. If this were so, God would be hermaphroditic. And this won't do. Just look at women. They have none of the proportions of classical male beauty. Women are emotional and have no intellectual capability. They were made from Adam's rib, a part of man, and are deformed creatures. According to Aristotle (and who would doubt Aristotle?) they have fewer teeth than a man. They must remain in a subservient role in both civic and religious, service.

[A year later, upon hearing of the death of his mother and having a vision of her entering heaven, Acesius reversed his position, saying to his friend Alysia, "If women are good enough to enter heaven, they are certainly good enough to have a place in the clergy."]

. . .

As for Easter, let the date set be a floating feast day in the spring, as a symbol of the renewal of life.



God is dead.  
—Nietzsche  
Nietzsche is dead.  
—God

D PRESS 2016 ELLENSBURG

*God* originally appeared in *Jampa Dorje's Worldly Dharmas Volume 2*  
by Bouvard Pécuchet, Kapala Press, Santa Fe, 2014

Jampa thanks God for all His blessings and for the many, many instructive lessons that he has received. Jampa is grateful for this life, even if, as St. Augustine put it, we are born amid piss and shit. Jampa was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, the better to feed off the offal.

Jampa had kind, steadfast parents, loyal friends, intelligent and beautiful wives, genius children, and enlightened teachers. He has felt Christ with him in his darkest hours helping to restore his soul (*Psalms* 21). Goodness and mercy have always followed

him (*Psalm 25*). He believes the sins of his youth have been forgiven. The name "Jampa" means lovingkindness, and this quality, by the grace of the Lord, he has come to embody. Praise be!

How does Jampa reconcile his Judeo-Christian faith with that of Buddhism? Jampa claims that it is easier to be a Buddhist and a Christian than it is to be a Christian and a Buddhist. The First Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," is not a problem for a Buddhist, since they do not believe in a creator god. Gotama and other buddhas are men and women who are given respect because they have attained the state of enlightenment, the true understanding of the nature of mind, comprised of luminous cognitive emptiness.

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

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

Attending church for Jampa's parents was, for the most part, a social obligation, something they felt the family was expected to do. Their true belief system was the Masonic institutions: The Order of Free and Accepted Masons, for men, and The Order

of Eastern Star, for women. For young men, there is The Order of DeMolay, and for young women, Job's Daughters. Both Jampa and his sister, Lynda, were initiated, but it didn't take for Jampa—too stuffy. And formal attire was required, and he did not find the girls he was asked to escort to dances attractive. (Dance couples were paired by a drawing of names sent from one lodge to another.)

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

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

Jampa was not able to maintain a pure skepticism. He mingled the philosophies of the ancients with the moderns and combined mythologies into an egotistical form of Hedonism highly spiced with mushy mysticism, after his legendary peyote trip. Poetry became his path and his pitfall. The classes Jampa took from Walter Benesch at the University of Alaska in Eastern and Western Philosophy and from Bob Allen in English and Canadian Literature helped him firm the mysticism into a metaphysical foundation for his poems that synthesize visionary consciousness with a social conscience.



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

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

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

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

Either/or & both

GURU KHAN  
HUM PHAT

KRAZIGNATZKAT  
PUPPIGDUNGFUNGI  
X-RAY CRISTALGRAPH  
Pendulum haronographic  
Alpha-particular articulation that  
I= an elliptical metaphor 4  
Misononeismhystic Presbyterianism

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

5'2 (eyes blue) 35-19-33  
5'9 (legs sublime) 36-24-35  
6'3 (relativity) 42-30-44

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

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

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

In astrological terms, the planet Neptune links the individual soul to the Godhead. Between 1957 and 1971, Neptune was in the sign of Scorpio, the first house in Jampa's natal chart. Neptune, according to Lucy Pond (*Metaphysical Handbook*, Reflecting Pond Pubs., Ellensburg, 1984), is "the planet of illusion/delusion, fantasy, drugs, escapism, spirituality, and supreme faith." Jampa came of age in the vortex of a time when social values were in upheaval, the Vietnam Era, and he partook of mind-expanding drugs, practiced free-love, protested against war,

torture and tyranny, and sought spiritual meaning to his life.

At the Berkeley Poetry Conference, in 1965, when he told Gary Snyder that he was going to Alaska to make money to start a bookstore in Berkeley, Gary told him to open his bookstore in the hinterlands, someplace that could benefit from Jampa's experiences. Ellensburg, Washington, the geographical heart of the state, is where Jampa set up shop.

Jampa and his then wife, Cheri, founded Four Winds in 1978 with the financial help of Sid Thomas. The New Age Movement was starting to percolate. What for a while had been a small section of books in the store became the mainstay, during the 1980s. Books that were once considered esoteric now gained a popularity unheard of in the past. Works by members of the Order of the Golden Dawn, of Madame Blavatsky (1831-1891), and occult treatises of ancient philosophers were dusted off and reprinted in new editions. Contemporary works on astrology, tarot, crystal healing, alchemy, numerology, and psychic channeling appeared. The divinatory arts were in ascendancy. Mysticism was now designated "metaphysics", a term which had long been reserved for a branch of philosophy dealing with first principles, like the structure of the universe and the nature of being. The meaning was stretched to include poltergeists and Babylonian musical modes. Jampa was not going to argue. The sale of these books paid the rent.

Chester Keller, the Chairman of the Philosophy Department at Central Washington University, became one of Jampa's best customers and a good friend. Chester made it possible for David Pond to get his master's degree in Experimental Metaphysics. It was an inter-disciplinary degree with the Psychology Department, and Roger Fouts, the well-known primatologist, was on the committee. Roger had an interest in eastern philosophies and the mystical arts. Jampa had many animated conversations with both Chester and Roger, as well as David, whose main interest was astrology and who went on to a successful career in this field. (See [www.davidpondastrologer.com](http://www.davidpondastrologer.com) )

David and his sister, Lucy, had a manuscript that utilized astrology, tarot, I Ching, numerology, and palmistry in answering your

questions about life without needing prior experience in these branches of divination. A step-by-step book. Jampa edited what was to become *The Metaphysical Handbook* from over 400 pages to 180 pages and readied it for print with illustrations by Jim Sorensen. In exchange for his valuable contribution, David gave Jampa a Texas Instruments contraption that printed out the exact degree and minute on the house cusps for the construction of astrological natal charts and spent considerable time showing Jampa how to interpret these charts. Jampa hung out a sign and made astrology and tarot readings a sideline to his business as a bookseller. Even after personal computers were being used to make charts, Jampa continued drawing his by hand. When asked why, he would reply, "A compass and a square alone were sufficient for God to create the World, and they'll do for me to make this chart for you."

Ed Sullivan, another Four Winds patron, overhearing Jampa in conversation with someone touch upon the involvement of the Masons in the revolutionary politics of the 18th century, asked him if he would like a petition to join the local lodge. Jampa considered this and decided it would be a wise move on three counts. First, he was curious about the "secret knowledge" rumored to be held by the Masons; second, he felt it would be beneficial to him as a businessman to be connected socially with others in his community through a fraternal organization; and third, and most important, Jampa knew it would please his father and heal, or go some ways towards healing, the rift in their relationship. Jampa petitioned Ellensburg Lodge #39 of Free & Accepted Masons and was granted the right to enter as an "apprentice."

After his initiation as an Entered Apprentice, he took the Second Degree of a Fellowcraft Mason, and finally the Third Degree of a Master Mason, all this occurring in 1985 and 1986. For a period of time, Jampa attended meetings, participated in the work of the Lodge, and studied the lore. Then, he was asked to be an officer, and he took the Chair of the Junior Warden and, in the following year, the Chair of the Senior Warden. In 1990, Jampa Dorje (Richard Denner) was elected Worshipful Master of Ellensburg Lodge #39. The Lodge was full to capacity on the day of his installation, friends and family members and his brethren and their families, all wishing him success. He received a telegram from his

father that congratulated him on his accomplishment and told how it was a proud moment for his son to be so honored. Jampa felt jubilant.

Not being myself a Mason, I am ignorant of the secret rituals that are performed and of the esoteric knowledge that is imparted. Jampa informs me that there are severe penalties imposed on those that divulge what has been entrusted to them. What I have learned comes from Geddes MacGregor's *Dictionary of Religion and Philosophy*. I quote:

Generally speaking in the English-speaking world freemasonry usually conserves a distinctly religious character, although reflecting both the Deism fashionable in the 18th c. and an esoteric tradition that tends to look upon all religions with favor yet as mere outward expressions of a common inward truth that is conserved in the "craft" of masonry.

A distinction needs to be made between "Speculative Masonry" and "Operative Masonry." The system of morality that is taught in Free Masonry derives its signs and symbols from the craft guilds of the stone masons of the Middle Ages. Certain signs, gestures and handshakes were kept secret so that members could recognize one another. Later, when the craft lodges began to decline, the lodges accepted members who had a purely historical interest in architecture and who introduced speculative ideas into the mix. The connection with the building of King Solomon's Temple derives from this phase in the evolution of Masonic tradition.

Various expressions in everyday usage, such as "on the level," a "square deal," and "a stand-up guy" may have their source in Masonic terms, being connected to the tools of the trade: the square, the level, and the plumb, although "a stand-up guy" is a phrase more associated with the Mafia. (A clandestine lodge of Masons, in Italy, organized, but were prevented from carrying out, an overthrow of the Italian government in the 1970s.)

With Jampa being a Worshipful Master of a Masonic Lodge and a practicing astrologer and tarot reader, he began to have the reputation of being something of a Magus. Jampa developed

a script based on a William Butler Yeats' story about a Celtic hero of folklore. This script was to become the video *Red Hanarhan*, which was aired on Ellensburg Community Television, starring Bruce McNaughty as Red, Beryl Reeves as the Most Beautiful Woman in the World, and Jampa as The Magus. It was cleverly staged and directed by Dan Herron using a vast array of old-time special effects and shot on locations in and around Ellensburg—The Last Chance Saloon, the ballroom above the Palace Café, and the abandoned train tunnel along Canyon Road on the way to Yakima. Kim Secunda played the part of Power; Carolyn Zick was Knowledge; and Jimmy Eisenberg, wearing black engineer boots and a diaphanous gown, was Pleasure. All the magic of this pagan folktale is captured.

Jampa's reputation spread further. His talents were also appreciated by a small coven of witches. One of these ladies, whose husband was the pastor of a local church and who will go unnamed, invited Jampa to rendezvous with her at midnight, and she led him to the altar where they blessed each other on hallowed ground in mystic union. The altar was narrow, so they entered intercourse with the Divine Guest on the floor behind the pulpit.

It seems at times that Jampa is on the road to perdition. Certainly, some thought so. Take Laurel. She was a young college co-ed, studying to be a grade school teacher, very beautiful, a fundamentalist Christian with a bubbly personality, a naïf. Jampa was her "project." His name had probably come up in her youth group as someone who needed to be saved. Jampa has a sixth sense about such things. The Four Winds was thought by some to be a den of wickedness.

So, Laurel ventured to cross the threshold of a devil's den to beard this "rascal", as she liked to call him. They went for walks. They walked and walked and talked and talked. They drank cherry cokes at the Highway Grill. They went to the Liberty to see *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, starring Max von Sydow. Jampa likes biblical movies, has since he was a child.

*The Robe*, *Ben Hur* (both DeMille's silent version and his remake), *The Chalice*, *The Ten Commandments*—Jampa likes the reverent tone. Even controversial films, like Scorsese's *Last Temp-*

tation of Christ and Mel Gibson's *The Passion*, Jampa gives "two thumbs up."

Laurel could tell that Jampa loved Jesus, but that he was not going to be "reborn" in her version of the Gospels. She had run out of arguments, and Jampa had not budged at all. Jampa could tell that Laurel was feeling defeated; he could also tell that she was falling in love with him; and this posed a problem. Jampa was not trying to undo her faith or convert her to his path. He made himself unavailable to her, and she soon got the News.

Perhaps, there is a slight odor of sulfur around the youthful Jampa. He may have been baptized by the Devil. What say you, Jampa?

JAMPA: I am a man of love and I hope a brave man. If I have a fault, it is Pride, which is the failing of most poets. I am a Prince of Secrets and not a Prince of Darkness, I hasten to add. As a young man, I followed the ligaments of my desires. I could have curbed them; I chose not to. My desires at present are of a different order, yet I am learning to let them self-liberate. It is a difficult path but not futile.

Another interest of Jampa's is the Kabbalah. I know a little about it, too. The Divine Tetragram, which is a magical word, is formed by the union of the Emanated Phallus, Adam, the Yōd, and the 3-part name of Eve, which then forms the name of Jehovah, the English equivalent of YAHWEH, a name not to be spoken aloud. (See *The Great Work of Undo* by Rabbi Fisk-chak Ben Ezra, All Bright Publications, Cairo, 1947.) If the names in the Tetragram are reversed and divided, when we read in verse 27 of the first chapter of Genesis how God in his own image "male and female created them," then God is a hermaphrodite, IT or THEY.

I discussed this concept with Jampa, and he told me to stop, that I was in way over my head. To continue, he said, was to perpetuate the fallacy of projecting human characteristics on the generative principal and to further confound the issue with sexual valences, the male primacy of which is questionable.

After twenty years studying Hermetic Philosophy, Jampa concluded the Science of God was mainly a vast system of correspondences—a word is a number is a color is a tone is a mineral is a planet is a god—and that a divinatory epistemology distorts knowledge. If all of existence is based on interdependent relationships, fine and good; let's get on with living. The Buddha claimed that if you train your mind and achieve enlightenment, everything else falls into place.

Jampa was convinced of this and began to meditate.



## A LETTER TO A YOUNG TRUTHSEEKER

■ JAMPA DORJE ■

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by Bouvard Pécuchet



Dear Abbi Merry Mountain,

You asked me in your last letter, “How do I know I am on my Right Path?” The question might be rephrased, “Am I ready to be on the right path?” or “Is the right path ready for me?”

By “path” I assume you are referring to the Buddhist path in general, the Vajrayana (Tantric Buddhism) path more specifically, and finally you have a bead on the Dzog Chen path (“The Great Perfection,” or Ati Yoga). There is the Sutra approach, where you study the metaphysical meaning of the Buddha’s teaching and practice sitting meditation. To enter the Vajra World, you must find a guru you respect and devote yourself to deity practice, which includes visualization and mantra recitation. To practice Dzog Chen, your guru must point out the nature of mind to you, and you use this awareness as the path. Each path builds on previous experience, but each is contained within the other.

To be sure you are ready to enter a path, the Tibetans speak of the four reminders, that turn the mind toward Dharma. First, the freedoms and advantages: are you aware how fortunate you are to possess a human body that has the ability to reflect and understand its real condition, as well as having been born in a time and place where you can receive teachings? Second: have you really contemplated on the nature of impermanence, how things are subject to death and decay? Third: are you truly aware of the extent of suffering? And next: are you aware of your actions, of the principle of cause and effect?

If you have given up destructive behavior, like killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, self-medication and so forth—and you have committed yourself to performing beneficial actions; if you recognize the many types of suffering—the suffering of change, the suffering on suffering, the suffering of composite things—and you understand that suffering can be overcome; if you are intensely aware of how everything—the outer universe, all living beings, even holy beings—are impermanent; and if you aren’t just shopping for the latest fashion in gaining enlightenment, then you are ripe for this venture.

One more thing, the odds against even finding and recognizing a path are small. It requires faith, but it also requires rational deliberation, because to choose a path that has as its goal a state of being where your attachment to corporeal things is reversed and dualistic concepts are dissolved is contrary to the cultural mores you most likely have. There is not a lot of support for someone who would transform themselves in isolated retreat through exotic rituals and secret practices chanted in Tibetan.

This takes courage and perseverance, and although there is a map, getting there (where?—to knowing who you are and what is your purpose; of taming your mind) is dependent on your own effort. It is, after all, your path and, it is unlike all others. You have “beginner’s mind”, Abbi—open, curious—good, keep it pliable and relaxed. If you have been able to navigate the outer preliminaries: aisle 1, freedoms and conditions; aisle 2, impermanence; aisle 3, suffering (in an orange box, not necessarily “natural”); and aisle 4, cause and effect—proceed to the checkout counter and take refuge. This act is an inner preliminary step, and I am brought to my main subject: initiation.

Again, “how do I know I am on my right path?” There might be signs, although not everyone receives signs and, if they do, can read them. Dreams, strange occurrences. For me, it was a near-death experience that made me realize, “Life is brief!” In lieu of magical or dramatic indicators, do some old-fashioned research. The Sufi says, “When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.”

The lamas that teach at Tara Mandala, for the most part, are of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism. This is known as the Old School, and its tradition goes back to the early spreading of the Dharma by Padmasambhava (circa 810 CE). Although the Nyingmas have many great scholars in their tradition, the main emphasis is upon tantric practice and meditation. If you are adverse to rituals, this is not the path for you.

Lama Tsultrim, the spiritual leader of Tara Mandala, emphasizes the feminine principle in Tibetan Buddhism. Her books, *Women of Wisdom* and *Feeding Your Demons* celebrate and explore

the lives and teachings of women, past and present, in the Vajrayana. Lama Tsultrim is recognized as an emanation of Machig Lapdrön, the 12th century originator of the Chöd, a practice which fuses Tibetan shamanism with Buddhist ideas on emptiness and compassion.

Before you take any vows (refuge or bodhisattva) and make any promises to a lama (samayas), it would be smart to read about the lineage, the teachers and their teachings. There is a wonderful world of Tibetan literature emerging in English. If you are like me and are inspired by the colorful biographies of realized teachers, a recommended read is *Masters of Meditation and Miracles* by Tulku Thondup (Shambhala, 1999).

How did I come to this path? By a circuitous route. Through many initiations. But what I've written here so far seems to me stuffy and a bit pedantic. Here are some poems to lighten the mood and which show some rebelliousness and, perhaps, weakness.

I would have fit right in with Do Khentse's gang  
A sangha of reformed marauders—  
Say the word, and I'll jump off a cliff!  
    . . .

I fly around, put my hand and butt prints on rocks—  
Come back later, nothing there  
Still, I'm amazed  
    . . .

Phony dharma posturing, these robes just for show—  
What am I going to do when I'm put to the test?  
    . . .

Complete, ineluctable, consummate  
Infallible and without substance—  
Watch what you're doing  
Just stir the oatmeal!  
    . . .

A morning of mantra muddle

Mudra mangle and fuzzy yidam  
I put paid to this condition—  
Vajra ground perfected  
Vidyahara levels matured  
Four kayas fully actualized  
So, who's your lama now?

. . .

All this sagely poetry  
What a load of crap!  
Still, my grocery list is popular  
For its wild, edible words

I was baptized as a Presbyterian. My secular education introduced me to skepticism and the empirical method. I became a logical positivist and wanted to study medicine. I went to Cal Berkeley. Then, I discovered English Renaissance love poetry, and medicine went by the wayside. After being introduced to the work of Arthur Rimbaud, I was initiated into the cult known as "Dérèglement de Tous les Sens" with a near fatal dose of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll.

#### LEARY PROCLAIMS TUNE IN TURN ON DROP OUT (1965)

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

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

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

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

Note: the term "radical dzog chen" is a term used in this context by Keith Dowman in his book *Eye of the Storm* (Vajra Pubs., Nepal, 2006, p. xii.).

Between 1978 and 1995, I owned a bookstore and studied theosophy and mysticism. As a student of David Pond's (co-author of *The Metaphysical Handbook*, Reflection Pond Pubs., Ellensburg, 1984), I gave astrology and tarot readings. In the late '80s, I joined a Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons and, in 1990, was elected Worshipful Master of my lodge. Metaphorically, I tunneled from the Temple of King Solomon to Mecca, where I became a Sufi, spinning with the dervishes.

My first encounter with Tibetan Buddhism was in 1959, in Berkeley, as I was walking up Telegraph Avenue and saw some ritual items in a curio shop. My curiosity was aroused. The political situation in Tibet was also troubling to me. In 1963, I bought a copy of Evan-Wentz's *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, but I found it difficult to understand. There were not many books about Buddhism in the mainstream at that time. I did find *Beat Zen, Square Zen and Zen* by Alan Watts at City Lights Bookstore, in San Francisco, and this led me to D.T. Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism* and to Gary Snyder's *Rip Rap and Cold Mountain Poems*, so I was well on my way. My wife, Cheri, introduced me to Lama Govinda's *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, and I read this with interest, along with some fictional works about Tibet by an Englishman, who wrote under the name *T. Lapsang Rampa*.

In 1989, I read *The Crystal and the Way of Light: Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen* by Namkhai Norbu, who was then Lama Tsultrim's main teacher. My Sufi teacher, Alia, told me that Pir Vilayat, who is the head of the Sufi Order in the West, had suggested his students investigate Tibetan practices. Upon seeing a poster on my bookstore window advertising a talk on Dzog Chen by Sogyal Rinpoche, I took this as a "sign" and went to Seattle to sit at the feet of this master, and from him I received my first transmissions. Sogyal became a celebrity with the publication of his bestseller, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*,

and he became less accessible. I traveled to Oakland for a Dzog Chen retreat and laid the foundation for future practice. In the early '90s, I traveled to Seabeck, Washington, and attended first a Chöd retreat and then a Dakini Simhamukha retreat. I took refuge with Lama Tsultrim. Kneeling on the grass outside the gompas, I said my vows, Tsultrim cut a lock of my hair, and she gave me the name Jampa Dorje which translates as Indestructible Lovingkindness. It was at these retreats that she talked about her vision of a place to be called Tara Mandala, where people would be able to do long retreats. She and David Petit found land near Pagosa Springs, Colorado. In 1995, I sold Four Winds, my bookstore, to my son Theo and his wife, Melissa, and I moved to Pagosa Springs to run the Tara Mandala Bookstore. In 1998, I took responsibility for caring for my elderly parents, in Santa Rosa, California, where I resided for the next ten years, only visiting Tara Mandala for short periods each year. Adzom Paylo Rinpoche became my main guru, in 1999, and he ordained me as a monk, in 2005. In 2008, after my parents had both died, I returned to Tara Mandala to do my three-year retreat.

Each year, beginning in the summer of 1994, I made my way to Tara Mandala to work and take teachings. For the first ten years, we cooked outdoors and slept in tents. We connected with the Utes and had sweats. Lamas, as well as American Indians came and taught. It was rough, but Tibetans are a tough breed. "A Tibetan yogi can be comfortable even in hell," they say. We erected a yurt for a shrine room. The office and the bookstore were in town, at the Spring Inn plaza. The stupa, which holds the relics of Nagla Padma Duddul, a 19th century saint who attained Rainbow Body, was the first permanent structure on the land. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche consecrated the stupa on 9/9/99. (See "Mandala Odessey" in *A View from Ekajati* (Collected Books of Richard Denner, Volume 7, at dPress website.)

With Lama Tsultrim's tireless efforts at fundraising, the land was paid off. With David's dedicated supervision of land projects, a complex of buildings have appeared, as if by magic. It is said that David, who died in 2010, was a gift to Lama Tsultrim from Ekajati, the guardian of Dzog Chen.

Just completed is the Tara Temple. It is a glory to behold, worthy of being alluded to as “a palace of lotus light in the pure land of Akanishta.” There are carvings by Bhutanese artisans, who spent a year away from their homeland, to exquisitely embellish the temple.



And there are the masterworks painted by Lama Gyurme Rubgye, who I had the honor to assist before I entered retreat.

Dzog Chen is presented in groups of three categories. The initial set consists of Base, Path, and Fruit. I like to think that, historically, the era that has just ended, with the construction of the temple, is the “Base”, and the phase we are entering is the “Path”, since we are now able to serve a more diverse group of practitioners. You have impeccable timing coming now, Abbi.

Welcome to the path. May it be right for you.

# THE ANNOTATED EARTHDAY ODE



RICHARD DENNER



Edited by Bouvard Pécuchet  
*with additional poems*

## Kapala Press 2018 Ellensburg

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

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

Assigned text:

*The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler  
Jewish Publication Society, Tanakh Translation  
Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014.

### PREFACE

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

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

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

—Bouvard Pécuchet



Before anything  
 there was dirt  
 a breast-shaped mountain  
 a valley, a plain  
 just dirt 5

Mother Nature wearing  
 a dress with many pockets  
 looks over the land  
 and bends low  
 moving her hands 10  
 she makes clouds  
 Taking seeds from her pockets  
 she throws a few here  
 some there, some in the valley  
 pfff, pfff, pfff 15  
 some on the plain, pfff, pff  
 and on the mountain, pff

She stands up and the clouds leave  
 and she calls Father Sky  
 “Bring the sun over here” 20  
 this is on the first da

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

On the second day  
she takes a look  
and makes adjustments

She says to Father Sky 25  
“Take the sun back  
back further, over there!”  
and she takes some seeds  
from a pocket way in the back  
that she’s never used before 30  
pfff, pfff, over here  
pfff, pfff over there  
Mother Nature is a lot like us  
she’s never satisfied  
always making corrections 35  
pfff, pfff, pfff

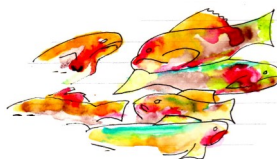
SECOND DAY (lines 22-32): ME makes adjustments. After her work passes inspection, like in *Gen.* 1.18 (“And God saw that this was good”), she continues working and commands FS to position the sun at a specific location. She selects some seeds (line 30) that she has “never used before,” suggesting that there have been previous cosmologies or different attempts at this creation. The conclusion of the landscaping activity, following a seven day pattern for the creation story, marks the end of the second day. In *Gen.* 1, God creates by verbal command. Like God, in *Gen.* 2, ME, is more of a physical laborer; here, rather than being like a potter she is a farmer. The aspect of “always making corrections” (lines 32-34) posits a similarity between humankind and their creator, echoing *Gen.* 1.26, where God creates humans in His own image. This implies that the long term creation will be a work-in-progress.

Then she takes the water people  
from a pocket near her hem  
and sets them to one side  
and the winged people 40  
and the four-legged people  
from yet other pockets  
She takes the two-legged people  
and sets them to one side  
and says, “Pay attention 45  
don’t say anything  
watch what I do, and I’ll explain later”



This story goes on

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



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

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



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

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

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

75



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

Now, we’re in the time  
of the third language—TV land  
and Mother Nature looks over  
the breast-shaped mountain  
at Bobcat bounding  
from an altar at Tara Mandala  
A new moon  
yip yap of Coyote  
screech of Hawk

80

85



SIXTH DAY (lines 71-78): At this juncture, the style of the narrative changes from an exposition about a related group of events to a highly compressed timeframe. This accordion-like shift in narrative structure is done in oral traditions to segue into a different story for a different occasion. Here, the poet confesses to memory loss as a means to bring forward the story from primeval times to the present. The evolution of types of firearms, those first used by Spaniards and then by U.S. Army troops, symbolize the historical eras from the time of the first people to now. This sixth day can be considered the antistrophe of a classical Greek ode, where the chorus moves from west to east behind the altar, before the members sing in unison. The *vajra* (line 95) is a Tantric ritual implement, symbolizing skillful means. It may also be a nod to Namkai Norbu’s “Song of the Vajra,” an esoteric sound and movement practice that embodies the essence of the Vajrayana Ati Yoga teachings. These teachings relate to our potential to realize our true nature.

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| and drumming sounds<br>from a yurt at the base<br>of the Continental Divide<br>east meets west                 | 90  |
| We're back to basics<br>wood and water<br>water and wood<br>the energy of Vajra<br>song and dance              | 95  |
| Our love of the land<br>is our comfort and strength<br>this the Ute people know<br>this the Buddha people know | 100 |
| The Sangha is a circle<br>here is where we're from<br>awake to the scent of rabbit ear sage                    |     |
| Ears hear fire, eyes see light<br>all one taste<br>Garden of fire, garden of stars<br>garden of air            | 105 |

SEVENTH DAY (lines 79-108): A 20th century voice emerges with the mention of television, and this indicates where Richard Running Deer transmitted the story to Richard Sitting in Bookstore. These lines highlight local color and celebrate complicated social interactions. Coyote is still present, but Mother Nature is now related to the Great Bodhisattva, Tara, who can manifest in twenty-one forms and is the central tutelary deity at Tara Mandala Retreat Center. At the Continental Divide, there is not only a geographical divide, there is a cultural divide; coming from the East, you are now in the Old West. The seven hundred acres of Tara Mandala lie wedged between the Ute Indian Reservation, the San Juan National Forest and a large cattle ranch. Tara Mandala's organizational values, as espoused by Lama Tsultrim Allione in the Tara Mandala 2018 newsletter, *Vast View—Open Heart*, consist of recognizing the sacredness of all life, supporting a just and equitable world, promoting balance in environmental and political activities, and honoring the re-emergence of the Divine Feminine. The concluding lines, with their equivalence of elements, have the feel of a mystical experience. There are 108 lines in the poem and 108 prayer beads in a Buddhist mala.



# WAITING FOR RAWLS: A STATEMENT A STORY & A PLAY

Jampa Dorje

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☐ 2019 ☐  
Ellensburg

This is a version of *Jampa's Adventures in Mental Institutions* by Bouvard Pécuchet, D Press, Ellensburg, 2016, adapted for Dr. Michael Goerger's *Philosophy 348: Social and Political Philosophy* at C.W.U, Ellensburg, Winter, 2019.

Photo by the author.

When I arrived at Herrick Hospital, in Berkeley, after my bust for indecent exposure and possession of marijuana, while tripping on Peyote, I was spewing verbiage from the deepest recesses of my subconscious mind. You might have thought I was quoting from James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* or enacting the part of Lucky in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, perhaps both at the same time.

riverrun past Eve and Adam's brings us to the stones of Connemara by a circulation of Commodus vicus to the works of Fartum and Belcher past Howth Castle the stones know the secret...

After listening to me for a few minutes, the admitting psychiatrist leaped from his chair and left the room, returning with a colleague to listen to my rant. After the interview, I was allowed to enter the day-

room, where I met my fellow inmates. There was a hierarchy among those who weren't catatonic. The matriarch was Mrs. Melick, the Queen of Hearts.

Mrs. Melick confided to me that between the digits of her feet there was toe jam, and in her belly button there was rot, and in her nose was snot, and although it might seem gross, like it or not, if you took a close look, there were bugs with homes and families, who on Sunday went to church, if not eaten by birds on their perch, and in their shit lived microbes, happy as could be, a pure world, dazzling and bright, and what you miss of beauty is what you don't like.

There was a Seventh-Day Adventist Japanese woman whose husband had locked her in a closet because she believed she was the Virgin Mary. She said that at the time of the Immaculate Conception, her womb had "burned with the heat of a thousand suns."

I painted a small canvas in the arts and crafts room, blotches of color, in the style of Hans Hoffman. Raw pigment pleased me, the magenta flowing into the cobalt blue. No meaning except painted color and emotional expression. After ten days of observation at Herrick Hospital, I was transferred to Napa State Hospital and assigned to the D Ward.

My new companions included Bob, a Seventh-Day Adventist, who thought he was Jesus Christ, Smitty, who had been transferred from San Quentin because he was stir crazy, and Mike, who had tried to shoot his family and commit suicide, failing on all counts. It was Tom, who had attempted to commit suicide by cutting his wrists, who loaned me a blood-stained copy of *Dawn Visions* by Daniel Moore. It was in *Dawn Visions* where I encountered the Great Bodhisattva, Avalokiteshvara.

Loraine came to D Ward with other female patients for a Saturday Night Dance. The dance idea may have been an experiment. It only happened once during my three months on the ward. Loraine sat next to me. She had a presence of forceful energy. She told me that she and her boyfriend had tried to rob a bank and, when it had gone wrong, she had climbed up on the counter and pissed on the teller who had set off the alarm. Loraine and I were sitting at an oblique angle to the glassed-in nurses' station, facing one another with our knees interlocked, and she seemed ready to mount me yabyum style, when an orderly interrupted us and suggested we dance. I have a weakness for bank robber women. Might be a Bonny and Clyde Complex.

This was 1964, and because the widespread use of psychedelic drugs was a new phenomenon, the doctors were interested in the pathology of "bad trips," and I met with a room full of shrinks at my first interview.

I was calmer, after being repeatedly dosed with Stelzine, an anti-psychotic, and I was coherent, if less imaginative, in my descriptions of my state of mind. I related my feeling that there was irony to my being interviewed in the same room where I had once been a guest, during a visit with my high school American Problems class. Now, sitting on the opposite side of the table, I was experiencing what it was like to be a “problem.” I must have made a good impression, as I was not given shock therapy. Instead, I was allowed to chill because I had “expanded my consciousness and needed space to re-enter the atmosphere.” After ninety days, I was released and transferred back to Alameda County Jail to await the formal return of my sanity from the State of California. When I reached the bottom of the steps of the courthouse, I kissed the pavement. My dad may have thought I was crazy, but I think he understood. Having to go through security checks and peer through a porthole to talk to his son in the tank, as well as appearing in court, was humiliating for him, and he was glad it was over.

For me, it was as if I had been holding my breath under water for several months. Freedom felt good, but the transition was not easy. For one thing, the silence in the neighborhood around the Santa Rosa Country Club was unnerving, because I had become accustomed to the clanging of steel doors, the rattle of chains, and the moans and groans of my fellow prisoners and inmates. The squawk of Stellar Jays and the whap of tennis racquets was not the same racket. I wrote a poem:

#### POEM ON MY RETURN

I'm back  
among the living  
back from where angels & devils dwell

I'm back  
and see the meager come, the greater go  
day follow day as usual

I'm back  
and will live lustily  
among the oak trees

If I had remained in Santa Rosa among the oak trees, it might have made a difference in how things came to be, but I found the place stifling and moved back to Berkeley, which for me was like an open wound.



I rented a room above Cal Textbook Exchange, on Bancroft Avenue. This was the bookstore where I had been arrested for shoplifting a dense tome on macroeconomic theory. I thought, at the time, that I was following the Marxist principle of redistributing capitalist wealth, but I was soon to learn that it was an ordinary case of petty theft. I was not in a true state of desperation. I was not Jean Valjean, in *Les Misérables*. I was merely taking a shortcut. I could have begged forgiveness or have fled before I was taken into custody. I had been reading *Crime and Punishment*, and I needed penitence and purification. Like Raskolnikov, I had created a karmic debt. I thought I should suffer.

Again, in despair—and being at a loss as to what to do with myself—I committed myself to Mendocino State Mental Hospital, near Talmage, in northern California, a facility for those requiring drug and/or alcohol rehabilitation. I found the mountain air more to my liking than the sweltering heat of Napa Valley. I was sternly instructed, “Don’t try and get comfortable. We don’t want you here.” Dr. Wurtzel was old school, Viennese. She had my maroon thesis binder, the one that Lu Garcia had given me to keep my poems together. She said that my dad had lent it to her because he thought it was a big part of why I was crazy. It contained an early draft of this poem:

#### FLOWER POEM

Gladness linked to  
Madness to amuse you  
Characters move—

Rhythms, waves of color  
Flowers.

They whisper to me.  
I am a privileged guest.

They let me do as I please.  
They do as they please.

In the core of the bud  
Is fire,  
The bone of desire.

Dr. Wurtzel said, “As long as you are not following orders from these flowers, it seems harmless enough.” I didn’t know how to take that comment. I decided I should make my poems more dangerous, like this one from *Another Artaud*:

## SOUL OF THE ANTI-POET

Spring into movement, like 111 or 666—  
It's all in the wrist.  
Take your hat off, and stand alone  
Wipe that smirk off your chops.

It's ok to fart, it's healthy.  
Make it loud.  
Salute the sun.  
The mucus of life is before you.

Eat up!

I feel, at times, that I am a “walk-in” for Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), the French poet and playwright, who was committed to mental hospitals, in Paris and Rodez, and who had been one of the first modern Europeans to take peyote.

I produced a book entitled *Another Artaud* (D Press, Sebastopol, 2000) that is a facsimile of the City Lights book, *Artaud Anthology*. Belle Randall called it (and others in the same genre that I have produced) one of my “forgeries.” (See Belle's essay, “Having Tea with Blake: Self-Publication and the Art of Richard Denner,” online at Big Bridge.) She does not mean “forgery” in a derogatory way; she is complimenting me on my inventiveness.

John Bennett in his “Afterword” writes:

“Taking *Another Artaud* in hand, the well-informed fringe reader will be struck by its mirror-like similarity to another Artaud, the City Lights *Artaud Anthology* published in the early Sixties and superbly edited by Jack Hirschman. If one leafs through the pages of *Another Artaud*, the visual and structural similarities hold, and if one goes no further, a conclusion might be reached that a rather clever thing has been done. But if one delves into the writing itself, distinctions blur, and one Artaud bleeds into the other. Antonin Artaud, Rychard Artaud—will the real Artaud please stand? Two men who straddle three centuries and who have battled hard to ward off mental extinction; two men touched by madness exacerbated by drugs and alcohol; two poets, two thinkers, two philosophers who suffered incarceration in penal and mental institutions—at this juncture the comparisons end and the fusion begins to take place. Antonin Artaud died in unresolved torment, and after reading *Another Artaud*, one is left with the disquieting sense that Rychard Artaud may very well be the reincarnation of Antonin Artaud and that he has—after much purging—spiritually elevated Artaud's struggle and transcended the darkness.”

I had more freedom at the Mendocino asylum than I did at Napa. After working a couple of days in the laundry room operating a steam press, I was transferred to the Admissions Office. In the laundry, some of the patients were handcuffed to their irons, so that they would not wander. It was a hell realm with hissing machines and plumes of steam. One woman sat on a bench and with ornate gestures swatted at invisible flies. At least to me, they were invisible.

It was a better fit for me as an “administrative assistant” in the Admissions Office, where I welcomed new arrivals. When Lu Garcia and Marianne Baskin came to visit, I was at work and acted, much to Lu’s chagrin and Marianne’s amusement, as though my friends were to be processed for admittance.

I had a roommate, a young man named Bill, who had cut the fabric and sewn an entire bespoke suit for himself. It was a sad affair. It made me want to cry, yet Bill was proud of his work and wore it with such aplomb that I always complimented him on his dapper appearance. It made me realize that my own work, my poetry, might be just as ill-fitting and homespun in its own way.

Did I have a girlfriend at Mendocino? Yes, I did, a girl named Rose. At Mendocino, there were scheduled dances. We held hands. We snuck kisses. This is as far as it went. After I left the hospital, I drove back up to Talmage and went to the hospital to see Rose. She was standing alone by a cyclone fence, as though she knew I was coming. I asked her if she wanted to get together, after she was released. She smiled and said, “A black girl from Richmond and a rich, white boy, not likely. Too crazy!”

I took a job at a company called Idea Research and Development Corporation. A fancy title, but my main task as the warehouse foreman was to mail out boxes of TV Bingo cards to TV stations for at-home players. I saved my money,—enough to go Alaska and develop healthy, outdoor lungs. Too Crazy!

Upon my return to Berkeley, after my adventures in Alaska, I was sitting with my girlfriend, Cheri, and my mom in a café. As I doused my cigarette in a cup of coffee to put it out, I told them I was feeling unstable. In fact, my hands were shaking, and there was a nervous twitch near one of my eyes. They took me to Herrick, where I self-committed myself and spent a couple of days, before I was released as an outpatient,—out during the day and sleeping on the ward at night.

Cheri cooked me huge meals and baked pies for desert, trying to put

weight on me. My main diet was espresso coffee and Gauloise cigarettes. We were living on Ward Street, which was an appropriate name. I was on meds, and helped by Cheri's home cooking, I began to regain my composure. I repainted the whole apartment, except for one wall in the back bedroom. On the wall, Walter Duesenberry painted a mural.

Cheri helped me paint the bathroom. We painted the lower half of the walls a dark blue; the trim board that ran around the middle of the room, we painted red; and the upper half of the walls and the ceiling, white. The outside of the claw-foot bathtub we spray-painted gold, and we hung a large American flag upside down in the window. American society was in distress, and so was I.

Cheri became pregnant, and my stable condition reversed itself. I had been giving my meds to my guitarist friend, Robbi Bashō, who said it helped him with his music. I was glad about that, but I was now afraid to go outside our apartment. When Mike Lovewell, who had helped me stage a production of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* at Cal Poly, came to visit, I couldn't get out of bed to say hello. Cheri became concerned. Usually, when the going got edgy, Cheri's solution was to take more Acid, but this time she called my psychologist, who came to the apartment and diagnosed me as "schizophrenic-non-decisive," which in today's parlance might be "bi-polar" but could have simply meant that she was unable to tell which direction I was headed.

The psychologist helped me apply for Aid-to-the-Totally-Disabled. Once I showed signs of recovery on this path, she came to Berkeley to interview me at the Med, a café on Telegraph Avenue, saying it gave her an excuse to get out of her office. It is amazing how the prospect of an income, a sort of grant from the State of California to maintain my Bohemian lifestyle, improved my outlook on the world. However, there were strings attached,—visits to a psychiatrist, medications, and occasional reviews of my condition. It was not going to be easy to play the ATD game.

It was 1967, the Summer of Love. Cheri and I went to San Francisco to the "Gathering of the Tribes for a Human Be-in" in Golden Gate Park. It was overcast, but it wasn't raining. We wandered through the crowd; I've heard that 10,000 people showed up. There was a bandstand, and Allen Ginsberg was up there, along with the fuck-with-love-poet, Leonore Kandel, and Gary Snyder, Ram Dass and Timothy Leary. Some bands played: Quicksilver, Jefferson Airplane, Big Brother. We weren't sure what it was supposed to mean or what we were supposed to do. The event brought together different branches of the emerging counter-culture. I had some poems with me and read to a small circle of Hippies.

We stepped over supine bodies in colorful clothes, and at some point, someone came floating down in a parachute to much applause. I took swigs out of a jug of wine that had been handed to me by a Hells Angel, and I was beginning to feel very high.”

When a three-month, retroactive ATD check arrived (near three grand in today’s dollars), Cheri, pregnant with Theo, and I drove our VW camper to Reno, got married by a Justice of the Peace, camped at Lake Tahoe, visited Cheri’s family in Seattle, drove to British Columbia, boarded a ferry headed to Ketchikan, and kissed the craziness goodbye.

A postscript: Mendocino State Mental Hospital is now The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, a Zen Retreat Center. I was just a little ahead of my time. Yes,—a mental hospital that became a pure land and a mental patient who now sees all appearances and events as the enlightened activities of the buddhas.



From my journal, 2/25/2019.

We are treating John Rawls’ *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (The Belknap Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2003) like it was as a piñata. Dr. Goerger has us critiquing Rawls from different points of view, libertarian (Nozick), Marxist (Coen), feminist (Young), and disability theory (Nussbaum). Rawls theory of justice revolves around the adaptation of two fundamental principles of justice:

(a) Each person has the same infeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all; and (b) Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they are to be attached to offices and position open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle) (JF 42).

Rawls is trying to arrive at a fair system of cooperation among free and equal citizens who don’t always share the same moral values. The question arises: “Can the difference principle resolve all the demands of the citizens in the body politic of a liberal democratic society?”

In *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Basic Books, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2013), Robert Nozick argues against a welfare state, and claims that the only purpose of a government is to protect us from the threat of force and theft. Novick emphasizes the need for liberty over equality and claims liberty is

going to lead some people to accumulate more wealth (ASU 163). Any interference, such as taxation, violates their rights. Entitlements are viewed as the “tyranny of the majority” (ASU 168). It’s just not a just world.

Rawls attempts to correct for irregularities in our natural talents and abilities with his difference principle by having the state take steps to guarantee equal opportunity, to level the playing field, and by offering incentives. In this sense, inequalities are ok, if they benefit disadvantaged citizens (JF 52-53).

G.A. Coen, in *Rescuing Justice and Equality* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2008), claims that the debate isn’t about policy but about the effects of policy. It’s his view that fair agreements cannot contain a coercive element and that distributive justice should not tolerate deep inequality. He suggests there be an “interpersonal test” for any kind of policy (RJE 42). Coen suggests a rich person should look a poor person (say, “Sandy”) in the eye and explain why their gold bathroom fixtures are necessary expenditures, when she is without food and shelter. In this configuration, questions about justice change when we think about real people making decisions.

In her book, *Responsibility for Justice* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, England, 2011), Iris Marion Young points out that Rawls bases his theory on three assumptions: (1) social solutions and personal responsibility are mutually exclusive (pp. 16-19); (2) existing social structures are just (p. 20); and (3) policy makers need only worry about the responsibility of the deviant poor, since other members of society act responsibly (p. 25). These are merely observations made by Young, but by reversing the order, a deductive argument can be made: if people, other than the poor, act irresponsibly, then the background structures are not always just and would reveal that social solutions and personal responsibilities are intertwined,—interdependent, a Buddhist would say.

MY STAND: I believe we should try to embrace and accommodate the most exaggerated condition of malformation in life, because I know from sneaking behind the veil of ignorance to look at the vast array of human suffering, it behooves me to take care of the least among us, because there’s a fair chance that there for the grace of God (and through interdependent causation) go I.

The narrative of my adventures in mental institutions can be read as how the social net can catch a fallen angel and aid in restoring the angel to a state of grace. Or you can interpret it as youthful folly at the taxpayer’s expense. Or, it’s a story of the tolerance and liberality of the Great Society social programs. I did not vote for Lyndon Baines Johnson, nor was I paying attention to his domestic legislation. I hated his misguided foreign policy on Vietnam. There was a draft on, and I was potential cannon fodder.

So: a visit to the loony bin seemed more like a luxurious stay in a resort (with ping pong replacing golf) compared to dying for the insane idea of blood and soil. No excuse, really, I hijacked the system to free myself from the system, and I popped out of the Kafkaesque social network as proof that the background structure of society was not unjust to a white, upper middleclass kid, who had thrown himself bodily into the gears of the system.



## WAITING FOR RAWLS: A ONE-SCENE PLAY

*Two hobos standing by a tree on a deserted road.*

JAMPA: If you wonder whether or not I am sane, I have papers to prove I am.

BOUVARD: Jampa, people who are sane, do not need papers to prove it.



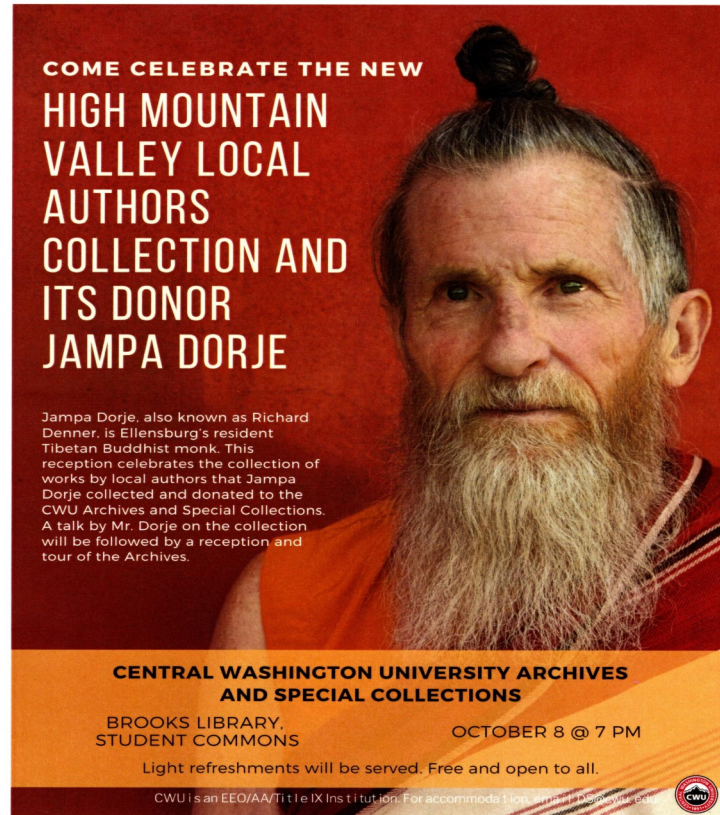
## COMMITMENT

It appearing to the Court on this day the above named defendant appeared to answer a charge, a doubt arose as to the sanity of said defendant

The said Judge dismissed criminal proceedings in said action and certified the above-named for hearing and examination by said Court to determine the sanity of the said defendant; and the attorneys for defense and prosecution stipulated that the doctor's reports could be received in evidence

And the Court considered the evidence presented upon the issue of the present sanity of said defendant and found the said defendant to be insane

It is THEREFORE ORDERED ADJUDGED  
AND DECREED that the said defendant be committed and confined as an insane person until such time as he shall become sane



# THE TALK I GAVE

Jampa Dorje

Kapala Press 2021 Ellensburg

## THE TALK I GAVE AT BROOKS LIBRARY ON 10/8/19

Thank you all for coming. I would like to thank Rebecca Lubas, the Dean of the Library, Julia Stringfellow, the Faculty Chairperson, and archivists Carlos Pelley and Marty Blackson for their support and encouragement, as well as to those who did the data input of the High Mountain Valley Local Authors Collection for Brooks Library. The collection can now be referenced through the websites of World Cat and Archive West. I am pleased to speak



in the Commons in the capacity of a donor. It is an honor (I first typed “horror”, but I caught myself) to address you. Really, it is an honor to share an aspect of myself and highlight this lineage of writers that have a strong connection with Ellensburg and its environs.

I will begin with an epigram by the poet, Jack Spicer, from his book, *A Fake Novel About the Life of Arthur Rimbaud*:

You can’t close the door, it’s in the future,” French history said, as it was born in Charlieville. It was before the Civil War and I don’t think that even James Buchanan was president.

My epigram is intentionally ambiguous because the nature of an archive is essentially ambiguous. For most people, an archive contains books that are saved because they are rare or unique or that an archive is a repository for public records and historic documents, and they think no more about it. But an archive is also a hedge against the collapse of civilization.

According to Jamgon Kontrul, when Atisa, an 11th c. Indian scholar, discovered the store of Sanskrit texts at Pekar Kordzoling, the library of Samye, he was amazed at that the degree to which Vajrayana Buddhism had spread in Tibet beyond what had occurred in India.

We owe a debt (or not) to the 12th c. Islamic philosopher, Averroes, who wrote many commentaries on the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, whose works had been abandoned after the fall of the Roman Empire and without which a strong foundation for scientific enquiry would have been lost.

According to Thomas Cahill, author of *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, everyone today owes a debt of gratitude to the Irish monks of the 5th century, who stored the written record of western civilization and kept it safe during an era of anarchy and constant warfare.

*A Canticle for Leibowitz* by Walter M. Miller Jr. is a post-apocalyptic science fiction novel set in a Catholic monastery in the desert of the southwestern United States after a devastating nuclear war. Over many centuries, the monks preserve the remains of our scientific knowledge until the world is ready for it again.

There is, of course, no guarantee we have a future on this planet. There is no icon labeled “P” to push for Posterity. We are in an era of rampant self-archivisation via social media, but if our electronic infrastructure collapses, the so-called “cloud” would dissipate. The intricacies of digital archives are beyond my expertise; still, the main task of developing any archive begs similar questions. Where does it begin and where does it end? What is to be included and what suppressed?

Let me begin, here, with the idea for my High Mountain Valley Collection. The idea came to me in 2018, following the death of Mark Halperin, a close friend, who had taught creative writing at Central Washington University for many years. I checked to see if his books were in the special collection at Brooks Library. Only his early works were there, and some works by other authors I knew. I noticed two library-bound editions of copies of *Vagabond*, an anthology of poets and story writers, edited by John Bennett, a courageous underground mimeo mag published by John, in Ellensburg, during the small press “magazine wars” of the late 1960s and 70s. There were some of my self-published books in the collection, but there were no copies of the Ellensburg Anthology. This anthology of local poets and writers was initially sponsored by the Ellensburg Arts Festival Committee, a committee that later morphed into the Ellensburg Arts Commission.

Ellensburg Anthology, was sometimes subsidized by a Washington State Arts Grant and had a variety of editors during its run, between 1980 and 1987. I looked for a copy of Dick Johnson’s *Then King Down Came*, a novel I read after my family and I moved to Kittitas County, in 1974, to manage the Diamond Hanging J Floating I cattle ranch out in Badger Pocket, but I came up with a blank. Might be interesting to round up and corral a collection of books published from that time forward, I thought.

The title of my collection comes from a chapbook of this period (which I will dub the Ellensburg Renaissance)—*Anarchist Murmurs from a High Mountain Valley* by John Bennett, circa 1972. It was one of John’s first works after landing in the valley. Dick Elliott, taking the role of Coyote, told him this was a high mountain valley.

Thanks go to Paula McMinn for unearthing specimens of Ellensburg public school writing, to Rolf Williams for connecting me via internet with local authors who sell their books at Jerrol’s Bookstore, to Daniel and Debbie at Brick Road Books on Main Street, to the many writers in the humanities departments at Central who donated copies of their works, to Julie Prather and Jane Orleman, who opened their libraries and presented me with valuable finds, including the holy grail of my search, *Then King Down Came*, and to Marlene Chaney, who has forgiven me for incinerating her copy of Gregory Corso’s *Long Live Man* in my microwave during a preservation experiment. Believe me, a burning book in a microwave is a terrible thing to see.

Here is the blurb at the Special Collection’s website:

The High Mountain Local Authors Collection contains a selection of Central Washington’s unique and noteworthy literary efforts. It includes examples of various literary forms and genres, novels, poetry, history, philosophy, children’s books, romance, science fiction, fantasy, new age, memoir, and essay. The arc of the collection includes examples of academic publishing, mainstream publishing, small-edition-self-published works, mass paperbacks, print-on-

demand books in hardback and soft cover, underground literary magazines, and art zines. For those keenly interested in documenting the history of books and printing, the collection includes a spectrum of printing techniques, letter press, offset, photocopying, linoleum block printing, mimeograph, and calligraphy.

I can send a word file via email to a print-on-demand publisher, like Xlibris, where it will enter a digital template and be run on a production copier, say a Xerox D136 hooked to a Horizon BQ-440 bindery machine, that will print out a single perfect-bound book. The only time a human hand touches the book is when a shipping clerk slips it into an envelope to mail it to me.

Besides preservation, there are two important aspects of an archive. The authority of the archive and the sequencing of the documents—the provenience, which is the place of origin or earliest known history of a work, and the term, *respect des fonds*, a principle in archival theory that proposes to respect the order of a collection of records according to their groupings, that is to say, according to the way they were created or from which they were received. This, in turn, informs the authority of the collection.

I have contracted a bad case of archive fever. How did I catch this bug? When Julia Springfield moved Special Collections from a corner room in the back on the fourth floor, to more spacious digs, here, on the second floor, I saw this as an auspicious opportunity to install a new collection.

Also, while browsing the philosophy section of the library, I came across Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever*, a lecture delivered in London, in 1994, at Sigmund Freud's house, at the time that it was then becoming a museum. Derrida is the founder of deconstructionist philosophy, and his writings lead the reader to consider the nature of an archive, especially an internal contradiction within the Greek word, *arche*—which means both a commencement and a commandment.

I won't lead you down the rabbit holes taken by Derrida in his quest to analyze the notion of archive, but I will note that he points out "to archive" derives its meaning from the Greek *arkherion*, a residence of an arch magistrate, an archon, who as a commander, as a guardian, shields the archive, and since the person who holds this post—be it a house or a fort—has political power to interpret the archives, to "lay down the law" in matters related to the archives. Consider the Supreme Court and the archives of constitutional law. Consider the Ark of the Covenant and the Ten Commandments given to us through Moses from God. Arche is order and anarchy is chaos. Two orders of order, sequence and command. As Lu Garcia says of poetry, "The orders come; they are the only issue."

An archive is both public and private. You will notice this as you enter. There is a bell at the door to signal your arrival. You are seated at a table

away from the stacks. You are asked to put on white gloves to handle the books. The books are brought to you to handle. You can not leave the premises with the books.

From the books in my personal collection and those collected with the help of friends who donated books, by my mining bookstores and the internet—thriftbooks, Abe's, Amazon—I drug a bunch of battered books together and put them into alphabetical order and signed them over to the public at this state university. At that point, they mystically trans-substantiated themselves into both items of reference and items of reverence.

Let me shift from this kind of thinking and discuss the types of books I have collected for the present archive. I wanted there to be breadth and depth to the collection, high art and low, ivory tower poets and street poets, serious and not-so-serious fiction and non-fiction intermingled with scholarly works in these labyrinthian recesses. An archive is like the human mind, and analyzing an archive is a bit like archeology. Some things are on the surface and some things are hidden. Digging down, an archivist may come upon a lost civilization. Perhaps, one will find that the Universe is a vast archive.

Besides being a showcase for the talents of the region's writers, my collection is a platform for the presentation of a preponderance of books, over one hundred, by my many personae. I am a prolific writer and book publisher. My mode of writing is counterintuitive. Rather than beginning with the manuscript, I begin with the book. I initiate the writing process by visualizing the completed form the manuscript of my telling will take, and I fill in the empty pages. Over the years, the books have piled up. And the words might even mean something.

From early on, I collected my poetry and published chapbooks under the D Press logo. The "D" comes from the first letter of my last name, but there are other associations—feeling depressed and it being "the" press. Since the poems reveal my interests, I consider these to be an inner autobiography. Later in life, I began creating a prose narrative of my adventures, and I chose to have these stories told in the third person by a fictional biographer, Bouvard Pécuchet, whose name is derived from a combination of the last names of the protagonists of Gustave Flaubert's novel, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, a pair of court clerks with intellectual curiosity, who delve into all branches of human knowledge with disastrous results. Combine two idiots, and you get one author.

The High Mountain Valley Collection is not my first foray into the art of archive installation. I am fortunate to have three hundred and eight of my books, as well 7 ½ linear feet of my literary detritus, archived in the Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley. In these confines, I rub shoulders with Shakespeare folios and Aztec codices. The Mark Twain Collection—rumors of Twain's demise still circulate—resides in opulent splen-

dor. Here, one might expect to get some well-deserved rest, but after a brief suspension of time, one hears complaints about wormholes and arguments over limited shelf space. Some nights, there is table tipping during seances convened by Madame Sosostriis, and one can hear the sound of tears and laughter beyond the garden wall. Finally, one gets use to being dead. However, that is then, and this is here and now.

Derrida says, archive fever is “...to burn with passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there is too much of it, right where something anarchives itself. It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement” (Jacque Derrida, *Archive Fever*, University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 91). Poets have their city muses. Dante had Florence; Baudelaire had Paris; Hart Crane had Manhattan; I have Ellensburg. My end is in my beginning, my beginning in my end...

Before Mark Halperin died, we talked about our archives. He said, “It’s nice to leave something beautiful behind.” I see my archival impulse as a bit of self-aggrandizement, of vanity, but I also see it as a form of Ellensburg’s amelioration—an attempt at making the public realm better and an opportunity to enjoy a rare sense of glasnost between town and gown.



## AN EMPTINESS SET

JAMPA DORJE

KAPALA PRESS  
2019 ELLENSBURG

Thanks to Clayton Bohnet  
for introducing me to the works  
of Alain Badiou.

emptiness of  
inner things,  
emptiness of  
outer things,  
emptiness of  
inner and  
outer things,

emptiness of  
emptiness,

Pope's phrase: "eternal sunshine of the spotless mind"  
an apt metaphor for meditative absorption.

great empti-  
ness,  
emptiness of  
created

things,  
emptiness of  
uncreated  
things,  
ultimate  
emptiness,

You can't see it, but you  
can sense it

my voice coming  
from within a mirror

where phantoms whirr

where the true phantom  
tells the truth.



emptiness of  
ultimate  
truth,  
emptiness of  
limitless-  
ness,  
emptiness of

dispersion,  
emptiness of  
selfhood,  
emptiness of  
self-nature,  
emptiness of  
the nonbe-

ing  
of self-  
nature

Schelling's 18c. conception—God  
risking a return to chaos—and  
Longchenpa's ontological 14th c.  
state of cognitive emptiness—teeter  
(are poised)  
on the edge of presence.

This teetering is the enigma of  
phenomenal existence. Perfect.

broken  
only by my  
euphoria in  
the vibrant

crepuscular  
haze, as I  
wither  
on the stalk  
of this  
sunyata  
sutra

---

Note: The “emptinesses” are borrowed from Lama Anagarika Govinda’s *Creative Meditation and Multi-Dimensional Consciousness*, Quest Book, Wheaton, Illinois, 1976, page 37.



# 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

A nod to [bing.com](http://bing.com) for the photo

## 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 asshole.

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 l-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]...])ros[...

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.org/essays/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.

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### 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 madresses: 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 renown 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 im-

plicit 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.

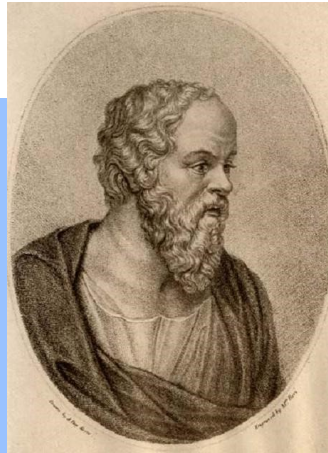
The term “aesthetics” was coined by Alexander Baumgarten, in 1735. The term comes from the Greek word, *aisthesis*, meaning perception. The questions “What is beauty?” and “How do I make aesthetic judgements?” are central to this philosophical field of enquiry. Emmanuel Kant, in his *Critique of Judgement* (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](http://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.



**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 is able to 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 Achilleus..." (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 tranquillity” (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 Simhamukha, 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 bung hole  
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;—and 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 for-

mula 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 anagogical 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](http://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](http://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](http://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.

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#### 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=2GSthI8j0tw&t=606s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GSthI8j0tw&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

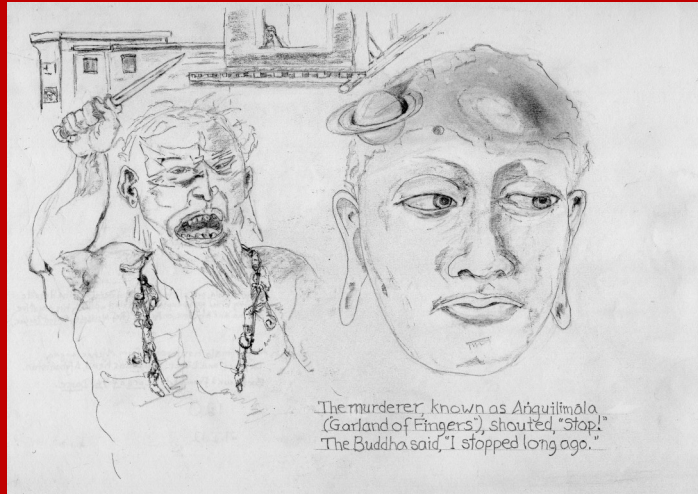
any new information about the soul, it does introduce an immortal allegory, where our heroes speak to me, under a plane tree, along a legendary river. This is a pleasant spot along the river, visually, but there is drama in the history of the spot. There is a sexual vibe transmitted by the location being 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 aphrodisiac (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.





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

**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 en-

rolled 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 steel-trooper 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: shhhhhh 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](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#](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 mind-stream (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”:

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

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 psychic argonauts. On the other hand, maybe not. I am already receiving a transmissions...Nietzsche admonishes me: "If you are fighting monsters, see to it that in the process you don't become a monster."



AN ORPHIC RESPONSE  
TO THE GAMER'S DILEMMA  
*Dithyrambic ramblings by*  
Jampa 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 image from the web



## AN ORPHIC RESPONSE TO THE GAMER’S DILEMMA

|                                  |     |  |
|----------------------------------|-----|--|
| Q1                               | *   | Q2   |
| interior- individual “I”         | *   | exterior- individual “It”                  |
| intentional cognitions           | *   | behavioral, my actions on sentient and     |
| my hopes, fears, desires         | *   | 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 |
|                                  | *   |  |

**In** 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 sociopathological 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 develop-

ment. 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 side-tracked 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. Hmmm, what to do? My father always replied, “Cut your hair and get a job.” “Can’t Dad, pandemic.” This is a circular aporia.

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**JAMPA DORJE**  
**MODULES**  
**KAPALA PRESS 2020**  
**ELLENBURG**

Inspired by  
Dr. Michael Goerger's Philosophy 317: Philosophy of Technology class  
CWU SPRING QUARTER 2020

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

Thanks to Wikipedia for photos of  
Moon Module and Philo of Alexandria

*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 on this voyage 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 synthe-

sis...” 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.

. . .

I am 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 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 that I wrote from a feminine perspective:

### RISKING THE BOUNDARIES

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, 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?

. . .

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 in-

volve 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](http://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](http://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 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 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. Avalokiteśvara 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-programed 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 snoop, 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. This can transpire. 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. My Lama says, "Happy to be here, happy to go."

. . .

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. That is the deal. How we live it is the quest.

. . .

'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 is 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?

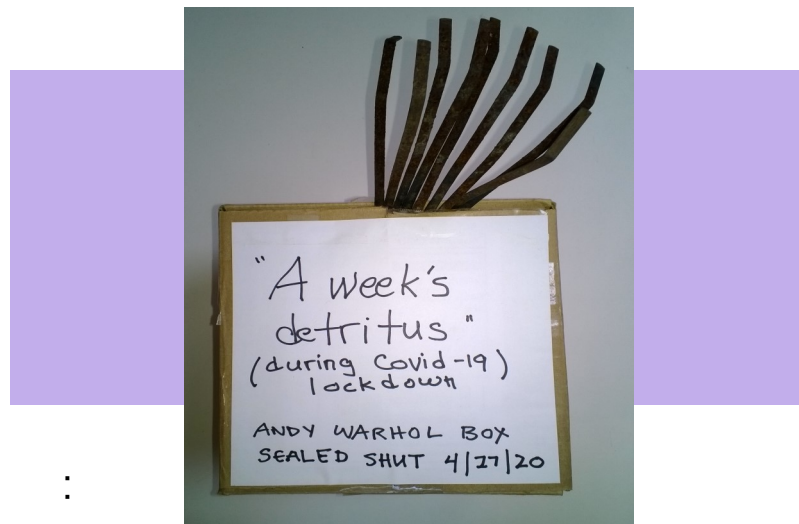
. . .

"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,  $\pi$ ) 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. An old saw of inner transhumanism: "Wherever you go, there you are." With my view of spontaneously arising perfection, new wiring on an old mainframe is not going to change the eschatology.



## TWO ESSAYS



WHOIS, THE ASSIGNEE &  
A THEURGICAL EXAMINATION  
OF TRANSHUMANISM  
JAMPA DORJE

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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,  $\pi$ ) 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 a wiki elf: 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.

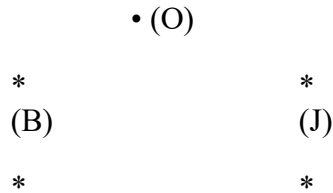
As a monk, I completed a traditional Tibetan Buddhist retreat in a cabin, called Luminous Peak, near Pagosa Springs, Colorado, under the guidance of Tulku Sang-ngag, a Nyingma school lama. My practice required me to follow the structure of four or five two-hour sessions of meditation each day for three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

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# AN INQUIRY INTO CONSPIRACY THEORIES

JAMPA DORJE

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Essays from Dr., Clayton Bohnet's *Beyond Belief?* Philosophy 110 Class  
Central Washington University, Fall Quarter, 2020

Collage by the author

## THE INVISIBLE GOD IN CONSPIRACY THEORIES

*The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing  
the world he didn't exist.*

—Charles Baudelaire

As I write this, President Trump refuses to concede the 2020 election to President-elect Biden and promotes a conspiracy theory that the election was rigged. In our present political climate, conspiracy theories abound. In this essay, I will present some of the central concepts from Quassim Cassam's 2019 book, *Conspiracy Theories*. I will apply them to two contemporary conspiracy theories—The Sandy Hook School Shooting and QAnon. My plan is to posit two separate overviews of two separate conspiracy theories (CTs). I will, then compare these theories and from my conclusions claim that analysis of conspiracy theories is important and aids me in understanding the present social and political unrest.

Quassim Cassam is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Warwick who wrote an article for the digital magazine *Aeon*, in 2015, that dealt with conspiracy theories as “the result of bad thinking and of the intellectual character traits that result in bad thinking” (vi). In his book, Cassam moves away from his earlier thinking about conspiracy theories and presents a new thesis, that CTs are best understood as political propaganda (7). He understands that there are “conspiracies” in the historical record, but his focus is on theories that attempt to explain events by constructing Conspiracy Theory narratives with minimal factual data.

These CTs present themselves with recognizable characteristics. According to Cassam, the special characteristic of CTs are: they are *speculative*, and the ideas are not backed up by reliable evidence; the ideas are pursued by *amateur* detectives; the ideas are always *contrary* to the official story; the conspiracy suggests some deeper, *esoteric* cause to the events; the CT solution has a *premodern* ring to it; and the logic holding the theory together is circular and leaves the believer *self-sealed* in their mindset (97). Regardless of the amateur, premodern, and contrarian nature of the enterprise, the main weakness of the CT are: (1) its speculative nature and the flimsy evidence presented, (2) the allure of the hidden meanings attached to the cause, and (3) the logic used to arrive at the conclusion. If you peak under the surface, you find an abysmal confluence of structural disjointedness. Cassam says:

From the fact that a theory is speculative it doesn't follow that it is false. From the fact that a theory is contrarian or esoteric it doesn't follow that it is false either. Amateurs can and do sometimes discover truths missed by professionals. And sometimes major events do have a deeper meaning. But now put all these things together and you have a type of theory that is unlikely to be true. That's why we aren't justified in believing Conspiracy Theories. They aren't credible (29).



Another aspect of the nature of CTs is in the epistemological biases that appear in the development of the construction from their foundational ideas. Cassam posits three biases: (1) *intentionality bias*—the tendency to assume that things happen because they were intended rather than accidental; (2) *confirmation bias*—the tendency to look only for evidence that supports what one already believes while ignoring contrary evidence; (3) *proportionality bias*—the tendency to assume that the scale of an event's cause must match the scale of the event itself (40-41).

Realizing that my own confirmation bias will enter into how I weight my evidence, I will relate the history of two Conspiracy Theories, The Sandy Hook School Shootings and QAnon, and analyze them in terms of Cassam's ideas.

### Sandy Hook Conspiracy

On December 14, 2012, at 9:35 AM, Adam Lanza, a resident of Newtown, New York, walked into the Sandy Hook Elementary School with a Bushmaster rifle and 10 mags of ammunition and fatally shot twenty children, ages 5-7, and six adult staff members. At 9:40, he committed suicide with his rifle. Within five minutes, he had committed one of the largest mass shootings in modern U.S. history.

Shortly after the tragedy in Newtown, conspiracy theorists began speculating that, contrary to official reports, deeper, more sinister activities were behind the events. Some claimed the events were a hoax; some claimed the events had not even occurred, or, if they had, were different than what had been reported; and some claimed the events were a "false flag" operation, meaning they were a distraction from a different Machiavellian plot.

The *Wikipedia* article "Sandy Hook Conspiracy" details speculations by conspiracy theorists from a world of sources: (1) the N.R.A. claimed it was a government hoax to push through gun control legislation and overturn the 2nd Amendment and promoted armed police in every school; (2) Iranian TV suggested it was a crime perpetrated by Israeli death squads in retaliation for diminished Israel-US relations, echoing other anti-Semitic sentiments; (3) Ben Swann, a *Fox News* host, reported that there were other shooters involved; (4) a blogger offered an unsubstantiated report that the event was connected to a testimony that Alan Lanza's father was to give to a Senate committee in a financial scandal; (5) in a now defunct YouTube video, "We Need to Talk About Sandy Hook," it was revealed there were discrepancies in the time signatures

of early Sandy Hook postings, although, according to a debunker at *Snopes.com*, such postings can occur due pages being repurposed; (7) James Fetzer and Mike Palacek, in a book, *Nobody Died at Sandy Hook*, claimed that the whole event was a Federal Evacuation Drill with child actors—a report that people were walking around in circles, as could be seen from helicopter coverage, and it was deduced that these people, the parents, actually were actors just milling around, waiting to “go on” rather than grief-stricken parents in a state of shock; and (8) perhaps, the most rigorous and egregious assault on the families of the victims was by Alex Jones, of *Info Wars*, who walked a fine line between freedom of speech and defamation, claimed that the Sandy Hook mass killing did not even happen. He now admits it happened and blames psychosis for his claims. He was fined \$100,000, but he remains resolutely uncontrite.

Turning to the intentionality in this tragedy, there are many questions about the motivations of twenty-year-old Alan Lanza that caused him to commit such a heinous crime. An online news show, TVT, reported extensively on Lanza’s physical and mental condition, diagnoses ranging from an obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, Asperger’s syndrome, anorexia, to undiagnosed schizophrenia. He did not leave a suicide note or a screed that detailed his objective or revealed his state of mind.

However, a year before the shooting, Lanza gave an interview on a segment of a New York radio show (called “Anarchist”), and he talked about an event in the news where a chimpanzee, named Travis, who had always been well-behaved, without warning, ripped the face off a woman. He compared this to a parallel attack by a mall shooter, and he chastised the mainstream media for not seeing the similarity, claiming: “Civilization is something which just happens to exist without us having to do anything, because every newborn child is born in a chimp-like state, and civilization is only sustained by conditioning them for years on end.” TVT host Ana Kasparian, who reported on this interview, dismissed Lanza’s claim as being deranged thinking and implied that he had other motives. This aligns with Cassam’s claim (26) that, in general, conspiracy theorists have a premodern feel to them—with Sandy Hook, the ages old “Militia” myth—rather than a causal sequence of events explained in terms of the existential idiom, “shit happens”—an American version of Camus’ character in *The Stranger*. In this reading, Lanza’s random act is an absurd event.

#### QAnon Conspiracy

QAnon followers claim that international liberal elites—mainly Democrat politicians and Hollywood stars—are involved in a Satanic pedophilia cabal. Billionaire George Soros and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton are designated the main culprits, along with such Hollywood celebs as Tom Hanks and Roman Polanski. Q, the anonymous source who has top secret clearance from the U.S. Department of Energy, generated this theory to his followers, during the 2019 impeachment trial, reporting online that President Donald Trump was in league with Special Council Robert Mueller to track down the pedophiles. This theory seems to have morphed out of the earlier “Pizzagate” conspiracy, left-over from the 2016 election campaign, where a child-sex ring was being run out of the basement of the Comet Ping Pong pizzeria, in Washington, DC. During this time, Edgar Maddison Welch traveled to the pizzeria to investigate and discharged his semi-automatic weapon, much to the chagrin of the clientele (*Wiki*). There is no basement at the Comet Ping Pong Pizzeria.

In an expanded cosmos of paranoiac thinking, Q is not a federal employee, working to save us from the Deep State; Q is a disguise for the “Queen of Peace” (Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven). The blurb on the back cover of the book, *The Big Q and the Little Q*, it says:

Everyone has heard of “Q”. Who is “Q” and “Qanon”? In every period there is a book for the time that man is in. This is the book. A must read now. Find out all about the coming storm in this edge of the seat read. A Friend of Medjugorje exposes the Divine mandate upon the earth and how it is manifesting physically and spiritually.

Everyone is invited to investigate with an open mind the events which are occurring in the small Bosnia-Herzegovina village of Medjugorje. I put on my critical thinking hat and headed for Medjugorje, but before I got far, I ran into my friend, Quornesha S. Lemon, a psychic transpersonal life coach and author, who told me:

“The Letter Q in your waking life, dream life, synchronicity, in a name is symbolic of high intelligence, integrity, class, and tenacity. Those who are opponents of the letter Q, will not stand...The letter ‘Q’ is a message that you are to use internal wisdom and call upon the assistance of higher help in every life challenge.”

The letter Q is numerologically an 8. Being a native of the Eighth House, Scorpio—the house of death, sex, and transformations—I was glad for the guidance.

. . .

Both the Sandy Hook and the QAnon Conspiracies display Cassam's 5 aspects:

Sandy Hook, speculative: false flag; QAnon, speculative, based upon a questionable source, Q

Sandy Hook, contrary: shooting did not happen; QAnon, contrary: no person per se (Epstein?)

Sandy Hook, amateur: detectives not at scene; QAnon, amateur: whole CT may be a Alternative Reality game

Sandy Hook, esoteric: Deep State benefits; QAnon, esoteric: Deep State & Satan combined

Sandy Hook, premodern: focus on 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment; QAnon: long history of Blood Libel

Sandy Hook & QAnon locked logic: confirmation biases lead both followers to follow their own biases

. . .

The Sandy Hook Conspiracy mirrors QAnon. You have children in both instances, but in one the children are being disappeared and abused (behind the scenes) and in the other they are being killed with bullets (meaningless bodies on the ground). In QAnon the demons are exterior—out there, beyond my perception, things I fear or hate, Clinton (misogyny) and Soros (antisemitism), and in Sandy Hook the demon is an individual with a triggered psychosis from within the system, a young person killing young children, and then the killer killing himself in the aftermath. QAnon is speculative in the theological and political realms, and Sandy Hook is speculative in the existential and political realms. The two conspiracies involve contrary intentionality biases. QAnon projects a sinister but difficult to prove plot to throw shade on a political opponent, while the Sandy Hook Killings is raw data that must be denied or rendered harmless, for the horror that it is, and to disguise the abject stupidity of guns.

The idea of taking down a Satanic cult of pedophiles can make a person feel sexy or powerful or that one's consciousness is quirkily expanded (religious). As regards QAnon, the union of Soros and Clinton has a parallel with other CTs: the Jacqueline Kennedy-Onassis couple, the Princess Di-Dodi Al Fayed couple, and the Yeshe Tsogal-Padmasambhava couple. Or, it may be merely metrological—a measurement bias—in my case, the shortest distance between two thoughts goes through Tibet.

With QAnon, the proportionality of the scale of response is difficult to

determine, as it is hard to evaluate what documented “event” Q followers are responding to. It can be a Zoroastrian duel between good and evil or a ubiquitous ontological malaise fueled by antisemitism and class warfare—George Soros is a billionaire Jewish philanthropist and Hillary Clinton is a woman and was a Secretary of State during the Obama presidency and should be “locked up.” If you fear women politicians and hate rich Jews and call them “Satanic blood-drinking, pedophilic cannibals,” your potent language, *a fortiori*, helps to indict them. Hatred lets a person focus on a single thing and simplify their metaphysics.

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Hopefully, the Sandy Hook Conspiracy has been laid to rest, but QAnon is alive and flourishing. For no other purpose than to re-elect a tragically failed president and potential tyrant, the QAnonists are now co-opting the “Save Our Children” slogan from a legit non-profit group, the Save the Children Fund, a group that has been working for the last hundred years to improve the lives of children.

Not long ago QAnon was a fringe group, but it networked itself on the internet and became a form of propaganda. Media attention glorified the followers and brought focus to their message. There may be a grain of truth in this 11/06/20 *New York Times* article, “Study Considers a Link Between QAnon and Polling Errors,” by Cade Metz, that states there is

...a strong statistical correlation between state polls that underestimated Mr. Trump’s chances and a higher-than-average volume of QAnon activity in those states, including Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio. “The higher the support for QAnon in each state, the more the polls underestimated the support for Trump,” said Emilio Ferrara, the University of Southern California professor who is overseeing the study.

Ferrara concludes that QAnon is suspicious of polls and avoids them. I cannot vouch for the authenticity of the data, and it may be bogus, but QAnon is now a recognized player on the political stage. If Trump builds a media empire, QAnon will be part of the paying audience and contribute to the furtherance of misinformation and propaganda, and this will not align with my Mahayanist-Madisonian political persuasion.

From a Mahayanist perspective, a dangerous effect of both the Sandy Hook and QAnon CTs is the lack of empathy for the actual kidnapping and mistreatment of children and righteous indignation for those who are (or system that is) to blame. Personally, as a participant in the Red Sand Project to bring about awareness of those suffering in modern day

slavery, I take offence at the shenanigans of QAnon. Cassam points out that conspiracy theorists are more interested in their secret sources than they are about solving human problems:

One effect of obsessing about events that are best explained in personal rather than structural term is to divert attention away from social issues that are best explained in structural rather than personal terms (87).

When asked why I do not cross the aisle and enter debate with conspiracists, I said, “I don’t want to be associated with those freaks.” This is an esthetic bias. I will work on my equanimity and find something adorable about the deplorables, but I am not buying into their Logos.

Jim Jeffries made this critique on his YouTube show, “When you utterly trust yourself, it doesn’t get you to the truth; it gets you to *your* truth, in the Age of Bullshit.” Ok, it is easy to blow all this off as “bullshit”—however, I am reluctant to leaving the Socratic mission to attain clear understanding and lucid thinking in an epistemological outhouse.

Cassam believes that the Internet has had a great deal to do with the spreading of conspiracy theories in contemporary times:

The Internet increases the accessibility of Conspiracy Theories and the speed with which they can be transmitted from one person to another...But if the Internet is part of the problem, then it is also part of the solution. True, the Internet makes conspiracy Theories more accessible, but it also makes it easier to rebut them (117).

Conspiracy theories are seductive. There is a thrill that comes with solving a puzzle. It may be pointless to try and change the mind of Alex Jones, but there are young minds to attended to. As more information flows through the Internet, teachers will have to revamp their pedagogical models to teach critical thinking (combined with resting-in-the-nature-of-mind meditation, I would think) to earlier age groups, in the hope of improving their students’ ability to tell information from misinformation from disinformation. Thinking for yourself and finding space and time to think is a problematic practice, and though the vocation of teaching can be viewed as mundane, it comes with transcendental perks. All blessings flow from the lama.

[References are on page 227.]

## FOLLOWING IN THE WAKE OF QUASSIM CASSAM

How many conspiracy theorists does it take to change a lightbulb?  
 \*\*You won't believe me.\*\*

Conspiracy Theories are belief structures, often with gaps in the construction of the storyline, which reject the official story and propose other causal factors and reasons for the event in question. Since the symbolic nature of these stories is open-ended, they can be uniquely fused together, in part or in whole, to create explanations for any phenomenological activity.

In his book, *Conspiracy Theories*, Cassam distinguishes between theories about conspiracies that occurred in the historical record and those which he designates “Conspiracy Theories” (upper case) because they are bogus explanations of purported events. The Wiki elf says: “Conspiracy theories usually deny consensus or cannot be proven using the historical or scientific method and are not to be confused with research concerning verified conspiracies...In principle, conspiracy theories are not false by default and their validity depends on evidence just as in any theory. However, they are often discredited a priori due to the cumbersome and improbable nature of many of them.” In other words, always carry Occam’s Razor to your intellectual knife fights.

CTs present themselves with recognizable characteristics. According to Cassam, the special characteristic of CTs are: they are *speculative*, and the ideas are not backed up by reliable evidence; the ideas are pursued by *amateur* detectives; the ideas are always *contrary* to the official story; the conspiracy suggests some deeper, *esoteric* cause to the events; the CT solution has a *premodern* ring to it; and the logic holding the theory together is circular and leaves the believer *self-sealed* in their mindset. I will discuss the QAnon Conspiracy Theory with regards to: (1) its speculative nature, (2) the allure of the esoteric meanings attached to the cause, and (3) the premodern ring to the narrative.

QAnon is a group of theories or conjectures created by an anonymous personage, called Q, who works within the government, and sends messages to his followers, and who, in the first generation of the Conspiracy, claimed that there is a cult of Satanic blood drinking baby eating pedophiles running a sex ring out of the basement of a pizza parlor, and to this was added an opposing force led by President Trump, who is

(still) planning a day of reckoning referred to as “The Storm”, during which time the evil forces will face a reckoning of Biblical proportions.

Many CTs arise after a horrific event, and then the suppositions about what happened and why lead to false conclusions (i.e. JFK, 9/11), but QAnon speculates on things that cannot be seen along with things that have not yet happened. The main thrust of Q’s intention is to throw shade on a wide variety of opponents: figures operating in political, financial, and social realms (Hollywood celebs, in general—with Tom Hanks, I am thinking it is *The Celestine Prophecy* CT connection). Mixed into this tossed salad of a narrative are motifs of misogyny (Clinton), antisemitism (Soros), and Satan. QAnon is speculative in both the theological and sociopolitical realms.

On the surface, the QAnon formula appears simplistic—throwing shade with hyperbolic terms. QAnon is more complex, and as regards the esoteric aspect (beyond the strange accusation and Leftist cast of characters), the Satanic element leads down an occult rabbit hole. A traditional Satanic cult (e.g., Wicca) practices witchcraft and nature worship based on ancient rituals, yet with QAnon, the term Satan, in the early generation of the narrative, was used only as a scary derogatory adjective and later became the evangelical end-of-days overlay to a media-morphing Beast. When speculating on the QAnon meaning, there are branches of Cabbalistic, Astrological, and Numerological research that can be explored in a quest for the Source. Most QAnon followers are not versed in esoteric lore, but the connections open onto an array of exotic Biblical and metaphysical speculations, and this aspect can be intellectually enticing (e.g. the letter Q corresponding to the number 8, in the *Torah*, would be associated with the day following God’s well-earned rest from His labors, which would be the day He planted the Tree of Knowledge, and so on).

I said the formula for QAnon appears simplistic, even with a Zoroastrian Cosmic Duel between Clinton and Trump, and this gives it a premodern feel, by resurrecting the Blood Libel Elders of Zion sitting down to eat babies at a world-wide network of pizzerias vibe, but there is a more frightening postmodern aspect to this particular CT—it is an information virus in the form of a virtual reality game that is playing puppeteer with its believers. It is tied to a natural propensity that humans have, allowing us to form pattern recognitions. The term *apophenia* means the tendency to perceive a connection or meaningful pattern between unrelated or random objects and ideas (Wiki).

QAnon has been compared to an Alternative Reality Game (ARG). How-



ever, QAnon is different from a game. According to Rabbit Rabbit's "A Game Designer's Analysis Of QAnon: Playing with Reality" (<https://medium.com/curiouserinstitution/a-game-designers-analysis-of-qanon-580972548be5>):

Here apophenia is the point of everything. There are no scripted plots. There are no puzzles to solve created by game designers. There are no solutions. QAnon grows on the wild misinterpretation of random data, presented in a suggestive fashion in a milieu designed to help the users come to the intended misunderstanding. Maybe "guided apophenia" is a better phrase. Guided because the puppet masters are directly involved in hinting about the desired conclusions. They have pre-seeded the conclusions. They are constantly getting the player lost by pointing out unrelated random events and a meaning for them that fits the propaganda message Q is delivering. There is no reality here. No actual solution in the real world. Instead, this is a breadcrumb trail AWAY from reality. Away from actual solutions and towards a dangerous psychological rush. It works very well because when you "figure it out yourself" you own it. You experience the thrill of discovery, the excitement of the rabbit hole, the acceptance of a community that loves and respects you. Because you were convinced to "connect the dots yourself" you can see the absolute logic of it. This is the conclusion you arrived at.

Joe M (@StormIsUponUs) January 31, 2019, testified: "If you truly loved America, and you came across Q, you would support it even if you thought it was a guy in his mother's basement because of the good it is doing in uniting our fractured nation. MAGA who denounce Q are frauds."

This time, as Q bites his tail and eats crow, after the unfulfilled promise of Trump and MAGA, QAnon is going to assemble other correspondences and continue to be an epistemological nightmare.

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To believe a Conspiracy Theory, a belief holder does not have to have proof of the validity of the belief. An ideology will be accepted as true if it serves to create a sense of continuity, coherence, and cohesion among its members by attempting to explain a given situation and, perhaps, by proffering hope for a better future. An ideology is more than a set of ideas because it promises a path to accomplish practical goals.

Machiavelli, in *The Prince*, claimed that the main objective of politics was to acquire and hold onto power. Ideologies are a useful tool in this endeavor.

Leaving aside the Machiavellian endeavors of *conspiracy entrepreneurs* and the mental quirks of the human mind—e.g., the part of the brain, known as the *amygdala*, initiating what Dennett calls “drafts” of information to create a coherent narrative—the world quite often manifests as incoherent and downright dangerous. When people encounter complicated and confusing information, they look for explanations. CTs, no matter how screwy, offer explanations and pithy slogans to help set the agenda. Beyond the need to understand complicated ideas and a need to control one’s life during an existential crisis, the need to belong to a group that considers one’s ideas sane is a persuasive motivation to adhere to a one size fits all ideology (i.e., the code, “wwg1wga” means “where we go one, we go all”).

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According to Cassam, anyone can get caught up in a Conspiracy Theory. Marginalized people, who feel psychologically and socio-politically disempowered, could well believe in Conspiracy Theories because of their personal experience of oppression, but why would a moderate, white, middle class, socially privileged individual get caught up in Conspiracy Theories? Cassam says: “For all the talk of about ideology and negative life events, there’s also the fact that Conspiracy Theories are actually *seductive*” (58), and he compares a CT to a good detective novel. Cassam pushes this simile further and compares CTs to morality tales. Taking the “morality tale” idea a step further, Cassam suggests there can be a deep religious element inherent in CTs. He quotes Tim Crane (*The Meaning of Belief: Religion from an Atheist’s Point of View*) that the fear expressed as “This can’t be all there is; there must be more to the world” (59) is an eschatological concern of Conspiracy Theorists. At this juncture, anyone of any social status can get drawn into a pattern of connections that give a feeling of meaningfulness. As Cassam says, “The religious impulse is to look for meaning, and one way to satisfy that impulse is to be a Conspiracy Theorist” (60). It feels empowering to fight for an ideal. Honesty and truth-telling are low on the value scale and the first casualties, when in conflict with attaining higher goals.

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QAnon believers are presently on the ascendent. They seem to be predominantly white, poor, and uneducated, and in this they are predicta-

ble by having many of the commonly ascribed traits associated with blood libel enthusiasts and anti-elitist Hillary haters, but personality traits do not a CTist make. On a different plane, I think QAnon believers are dangerously unpredictable. Here is a poem, written in 2016, emailed to me by my friend, Luis Garcia:

#### MEIN TRUMPF

The Titanic sails at dawn,  
but this time,  
I think  
it's going to sink

into that garish light  
now cast  
upon this country's  
rain-soaked lawns.

And, so, it has come to pass. I expect that many QAnoners will go down with the ship, waving their Qs and taking their clues from The Donald, while Q, typing randomly from both sides of the keyboard, will continue cutting oracular farts.

According to the historian Livy, in 186 BCE, the Roman Senate, suspecting that there was a conspiracy connected to the Dionysian Bacchanalia, investigated the cult, arrested and executed many of its members, and allowed the cult to be a part of Roman religion, if no more than five members congregated at any given time (Academia.edu 2010 article, "Bacchic Madness and Roman Justice" by Dwayne Meisner). I do not know if there is anything to learn from this historical tidbit, but I am doubtful the U.S. Senate will pass such a law, as much as it may be needed. Still, I believe that the government infiltrating chatrooms to sew doubt, as suggested by Sunstein and Vermeule (94), is a dangerous step in the direction of institutional mind control. Better to hash this problem out in public through education, media messaging, and conversation.

. . .

QAnon flourished before The Donald and can now morph in many directions. "Satanic-cannibalistic-pedophiles" is potent hyperbole, hitting on all cylinders, and can be used against a variety of enemies. Soon, The Return of The Donald CT will upgrade the Hunter Biden Burisma CT and will include a newly minted Arizona Five Card Monte Electoral College Steal claim. The QAnoners in Congress will clash with The Squad, and

the Newt Gingrich Tea Partiers will be baffled at the power shifts created by Republican Women, some of whom are QAnon followers. An oddity of the “Satanic pedophile” label is that it has not been applied to Trump and his friend, Epstein. This issue may come to the fore. QAnon will continue to speculate and act contrarian, adding ever more esoteric nonsense into its WWWebbery as events unfold.

Given the present polarization in our political dialogue, CTs are a major challenge. The concept of a “fact” is in question. Climate Change, Nuclear Warfare, Plague, these are the Other—out there in the unknown—but, within our minds, the necessary facts (verifiable data) for erecting symbolic configurations (language) that communicate accurate information are questioned and contradicted. We will not be able to address the big items listed above if we cannot agree upon our knowledge and explain how we know what we say we know.

“A fact is an occurrence in the real world. The usual test for a statement of fact is verifiability—that is whether it can be demonstrated to correspond to experience” (Wikipedia). We appeal to authoritative texts and use the scientific method. If these tools are not accepted and considered reliable, we have only our subconscious mind to guide us, oracles to learn from, and rituals to perform from memory. Oracles are easy to corrupt and rituals atrophy. Neither are a reliable foundation upon which to build an epistemology. Cassam believes that facts derived from the research of experts will win out because the “alternative facts” are only opinions. He says: “People may have differing opinions about what the facts are, but actual facts are never a matter of opinion” (114). The challenge is in convincing someone to reevaluate their facts and form a new understanding. This is problematic. Cassam believes that if CTs are harmful, they should not be ignored, but he points out that engaging in debate can “backfire”, because a hard-core CTist will become recalcitrant and harden and “self-seal” themselves in their belief (97-98). There is a basic contrariness connected to CTs, and the followers claim to have their own experts. all of whom have a deep commitment to the theory. Cassam concludes that there is not much hope in changing the thinking of the hard-core and shifts his focus to those that are receptive to CTs without being true believers. Cassam’s strategy is to dissuade the undecided with an attack on the intellectual and the political dimensions of CTs.

The intellectual dimension: (a) ignore the CTs that are too crazy to take seriously (i.e., lizard people); (b) try and undermine the logical foundations of the CT by laying out the case in detail, if you can get the CT believer to listen, and, if not, (c) using social media and private conversa-

tions to publicize the alternative information. Cassam believes that the head on intellectual attack is likely to fail because the causes of the CT are more than just ideas; they are political propaganda and are tied to a follower's world view.

The political dimension: (a) once the CTs are revealed as political propaganda, rather than simply being simple truth-telling, a CT debunker can reveal that there are underlying biases and phobias at play (i.e., anti-semitism, misogyny), that may create a sense of embarrassment in the CT believer. The response is usually that the CT debunker is considered part of the conspiracy apparatus, but Cassam suggests the best way to diffuse this is to help the believer see that real criticism of the government is most effective if it is not disguised in bizarre trappings (110). Cassam suggests that assisting the believer to realize their real ideological agenda (106) can jog their perspective closer to fact-based suppositions. In this dimension, Cassam believes that it is effective to distinguish between actual conspiracies and theories historians have imposed on those events and what he designates Conspiracy Theories (by capitalizing the words) to designate theories about conspiracies that are bogus. He says, "...there are always going to be arguments about whether a particular theory is a conspiracy theory or a Conspiracy Theory. But that doesn't mean that there is no fact of matter or that the truth is relative" (113).

Cassam shifts away from putting too much emphasis on the effectiveness of intellectual challenges in debate, because of the risk of projecting a pompous and possibly arrogant superiority stance by the debunker in the debate. He realizes this is difficult territory. The Socratic method is truly being tested, and Cassam hopes that Education-Education-Education is still the way forward. He proposes the intellectual virtues of open-mindedness, critical thinking, respect for evidence, and instilling curiosity in young students (120), who are now faced with the new challenge of deciphering what is "information" on the Internet. But he also recognizes that intellectual values cannot be separated from moral values (122). In conclusion, Cassam proposes a multi-track strategy of rebuttal, education, and calling CTs out for being political propaganda.

Will Cassam's proposals dissuade people from believing CTs? As a Buddhist and a Humean, I believe that our reason is the slave of our passions (123). And to Cassam's proposals. I would add a need for mindfulness meditation being taught alongside of critical thinking techniques. Presently, there are ongoing Senate hearings on the role of the social media platforms have in influencing our democratic elections. As

the government become involved, the people who fear a threat to their 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment Rights are fleeing Facebook and Twitter for Parlor, an open, uncensored message board. It is a new game of “whack-a-mole” in the making.

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Here, I am going to depart from Cassam and turn to Lecan, and this will take the argument back to the psychological traits of Conspiracy Theorists, who are of the paranoid type. Their theories are delusional. The imagination (fantasy) is linked to the symbolic (language) in a fundamental relationship with the real (an unknowable unknown)—“...a set of operations that would tie together the real, the symbolic and the imaginary, and provide a compass in relation to the enigmatic desire of the Other” (Darian Leader, *What is Madness?* Hamish Hamilton, London, 2011, page 194). Conspiracies do occur, but not all theories of conspiracies are conspiracies that are real. The really real cannot be known, but the imagination contains images of this real-that-cannot-be-known, that can be interpreted, as if they were real, using signs to make sense of the internal contradictions that create confusion in the consciousness of the knower. The Self, attempting to explain events, constructs a sentence about the real-that-cannot-be-known, and this links unrelated events via the syntax of the unconscious (see Lecan’s diagrams) into new patterns of signs that help reduce the anxiety created by attempting to understand the Other—where the signifiers may be at odds with the signified—all while the one doing the signifying is creating a narrative, based on their unique psychological needs, with a data base that is axiomatically unstable. As Dylan sang, “Something is happen’ but you don’t know what it is, do you Mr. Jones?”

❖ ❖ ❖

[In his 2019 book, *Conspiracy Theories*, Cassam had a new thesis—that CTs are best understood as political propaganda. In this paper, I return to Cassam’s earlier contention that CTs are “the result of bad thinking and of the intellectual character traits that result in bad thinking.”]

## THE BORROMEAN RINGS OF A CONSPIRACY THEORY

Whether conspiracy theories reflect what’s really going on in the world or not, they tell us a lot about our secret

selves. Conspiracy theories resonate with some of our brain's built-in biases and shortcuts, and tap into some of our deepest desires, fears, and assumptions about the world and the people in it. We have innately suspicious minds. We are all natural-born conspiracy theorists.

—Rob Brotherton, *Suspicious Minds*

Hitler is alive and well in Argentina. The Masons were involved in the sinking of the *Titanic*. Chemtrails from jet airplanes release toxic chemicals to reduce population growth. The assassination of JFK was a contract hit involving the CIA and the Mafia. Aliens have been living among us for ages. The 9/11 Twin Towers destruction was a false flag operation designed by operatives in the Deep State. If you drink excessive amounts of Red Bull, you will grow wings. These tangled webs of secrets and deception are conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theories are belief structures, often with gaps in the construction of the storyline, which reject the official story and propose other causal factors and reasons for the event in question. Since the symbolic nature of these stories is open-ended, they can be fused together, in part or in whole, to create explanations for any phenomenological activity.

When something novel occurs, we are challenged to put what has occurred into words. We need to weave new sentences from old stories. In a rush, we grab whatever is handy, when the proper method is to think about it and, then think about it again, and then test it in relation to other ideas, before positing contradictory and fanciful opinions,—unless, that is, you underscore this mental product as a work of art and not philosophy. There is a long shadow cast by Plato upon the use of mimesis in the ritual poetry of the Dionysian rites and, by association, with the formal language of the State.

. . . . .

Quassim Cassam, a thorough going Aristotelian, posits politics as the endpoint of his metaphysics. In *Conspiracy Theory* (Polity, London, 2019), he says, “What psychological studies don’t prove is that being conspiracy-minded is a personality trait.” For him, “A different interpretation of the evidence is that the conspiracy mindset is an ideology rather than a personality trait” (45). This approach proves useful since specific profiles cannot account for the wide variety of people simultaneously seduced by CTs across the spectrum of psychological types. By reversing the paradigm, it would be easier to fit the CT to the client. Here, I assume that everyone is susceptible to a pet CT to some degree, since no metaphysical explanation can resolve the internal contradictions of our ontological condition. Looking at various maps of CTs, I

would need to describe a taxonomy of Conspiracies, family, genus, and species.

Deep State conspiracies, Gun conspiracies, Save the Children conspiracies, Alien conspiracies. Each conspiracy type might be attractive because of one aspect—Children with guns, Deep State with child abductions, Aliens with abduction and Deep State connections. Or, using an occult mandala: the Astrological Houses of Conspiracy Theories—the first house, CTs that include the self's role, the Sons of God, the Daughters of the Nile; the second house, the CTs of invasion of property rights, guns, airspace, rangeland, taking away protections; the third house, CTs of miscommunication, official documents, fraudulent elections, messages from Mars; the fourth house, CTs of family, gay couples and creeping values; the fifth house, the god out there, Deep State, Satan; sixth house, hygiene, vaccines, masks; and so forth.

At first, I thought I could delineate families of conspiracy theories—those that are horizontal, those that are vertical—like other researchers who had sets (see below). There are maps of secret societies, linking the Illuminati, Rosicrucianism, Masonic, and occultist conspiracies, like who wrote Shakespeare, or the search for the Philosopher's Stone, or Kabbalistic correlations of sacred texts. When you start a set, you suddenly find correspondence galore, JFK leads to Lancelot leads to Orpheus to Dionysus to Christ to Buddha to the whole Jungian-Cambellian pantheon of sacred heroes and avatars. I shifted to a single structure for all conspiracy theories.

In Darian Leader's book, *What Is Madness?* (Hamish Hamilton, London, 2002), he says:

Where in neurosis the Oedipus complex succeeds in naming the desire of the mother, through an appeal to a normative fiction, in the psychoses the subject has to invent; for the paranoiac, in naming what is wrong with the world; for the melancholic, in naming what is wrong with themselves; and for the schizophrenic, as a perpetual and unresolved activity (87).

Conspiracy theorists seem to be the paranoiac type. I will make the supposition that this can be equated to Lacan's model of the self. The imagination (a fantasy) is linked to the symbolic (in language) in a fundamental relationship with the real (an unknowable unknown)—“...a set of operations that would tie together the real, the symbolic and the im-



aginary, and provide a compass in relation to the enigmatic desire of the Other” (194). Conspiracies do occur, but not all theories of conspiracies are conspiracies that are real. The real cannot be known, but the imagination contains images of this real-that-cannot-be-known, that can be interpreted, as though they were real, using signs to make sense of the internal contradictions that create confusion in the consciousness of the self. The self, attempting to explain events, constructs a sentence about the “real”-that-cannot-be-known, and this links unrelated events via the syntax of the unconscious (see Lecan’s diagrams) into new patterns of signs that help reduce the anxiety created by attempting to understand the Other, where the signifiers are at odds with the signified, while working with a limited data base.

. . .

A Conspiracy Theory is like a Zen koan, and can be approached from many sides of its matrix without there being a definitive meaning. Conspiracies are seductive: you can join a club and share stories, play it as a game of clues, get “metaphysical” with it, treat it like an alternate reality game (ARG), which is defined by a wiki elf as “an interactive networked narrative that uses the real world as a platform and employs transmedia storytelling to deliver a story that may be altered by players’ ideas or actions.” (See *The War Against the Unfavorable Maras*, Kapala Press, Ellensburg, 2020, that details my Buddhist Virtual Reality Game.)

. . .

Going to the *Wikipedia* article, “Conspiracy Theories”, I found that there already were theories on CTs. Jesse Walker (2013) has identified five kinds of conspiracy theories:

The “Enemy Outside” refers to theories based on figures alleged to be scheming against a community from without.

The “Enemy Within” finds the conspirators lurking inside the nation, indistinguishable from ordinary citizens.

The “Enemy Above” involves powerful people manipulating events for their own gain.

The “Enemy Below” features the lower classes working to overturn the social order.

The “Benevolent Conspiracies” are angelic forces that work behind the scenes to improve the world and help people.

Michael Barkun has identified three classifications of conspiracy theory:

*Event conspiracy theories.* This refers to limited and well-defined events. Examples may include such conspiracies theories as those concerning the Kennedy assassination, 9/11, and the spread of AIDS.

*Systemic conspiracy theories.* The conspiracy is believed to have broad goals, usually conceived as securing control of a country, a region, or even the entire world. The goals are sweeping, whilst the conspiratorial machinery is generally simple: a single, evil organization implements a plan to infiltrate and subvert existing institutions. This is a common scenario in conspiracy theories that focus on the alleged machinations of Jews, Freemasons, Communism, or the Catholic Church.[53]

*Superconspiracy theories.* For Barkun, such theories link multiple alleged conspiracies together hierarchically. At the summit is a distant but all-powerful evil force. His cited examples are the ideas of David Icke and Milton William Cooper.

Rothbard: shallow vs. deep:

Murray Rothbard argues in favor of a model that contrasts “deep” conspiracy theories to “shallow” ones. According to Rothbard, a “shallow” theorist observes an event and asks *Cui bono?* (“Who benefits?”), jumping to the conclusion that a posited beneficiary is responsible for covertly influencing events. On the other hand, the “deep” conspiracy theorist begins with a hunch and then seeks out evidence. Rothbard describes this latter activity as a matter of confirming with certain facts one’s initial paranoia.

. . . . .

The sophistries used in CT propaganda resemble literary modes like *da-da*, allegory, and satire. On the Steven Colbert Show <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKr8i23RwiU> (7:32) comedian Sarah Cooper remarked that if you do not understand satire and are the subject of satire, it is infuriating to be yourself (the material). This is how her humorous lip syncs of Donald Trump strip away his visual from his auditory facades and reveal what a bad actor he is. Conspiracy Theories have a subtext of being a satire of the thinking process (Zizek?).

Ideologies are systems of idea that form the basis of maintaining power within some institution. According to the *bingdefinition*, an archaic meaning is “*speculative*, esp. of an unrealistic or idealistic nature.” With Conspiracy Theories, we are resurrecting this older meaning. The *bingdefinition* of a criminal conspiracy is “a plan by a group to do something unlawful or harmful.” This definition lists “opinions” and “persuasion” as associated words.

With Conspiracy Theories there are producers and consumers. Believing in the Conspiracy is optional. There is a marketing of Conspiracy with sportswear decorated with appropriate signs and symbols, protest signs, and maps of interconnective paths from one Conspiracy to another along with books and videos and more books.

. . .

In his critique of the personality-type-explanation for CT believers, Cassam notes a study by Goertzel (44) that suggests that a “monological thinker” (his term) thinks along conspiratorial lines, the more likely this thinker is to believe new CTs. Cassam says that CTs may be universal but that not all people believe in CTs. There may be a kind of conspiratorial mindset, like a mode of thinking, but it not a universal personality trait. This critique applies to neurological explanations, as well. As we discovered in our study of parapsychology, the psychologists and neurologists have pathological approaches to the problem. Cassam explains CTs in terms of political propaganda and sophistry with all the stops pulled out;—if you are going to a gun fight, bring a Shoulder-Launched Multipurpose Assault Weapon.

According to Cassam, the ideology of conspiracism is to throw shade on an opponent in the political arena (31). The QAnon ideology comes from the Right side of the spectrum, but the logic is sealed into a loop, meaning that both sides see the other as conspiratorial. In a world where I struggle to make sense of the changes presented to me via media bombardment, I am at risk of believing anything that gives me a semblance of stability. Such a line of thought, itself, can be viewed as a conspiracy of my educated elite Self, wanting is to be left alone with my thoughts, like Spinoza, only in my case I utilize my creative visualization powers and invoke Vajrayogini, a fierce red dakini, naked with bone ornaments, stomping on a human corpse, holding a moon-shaped skinning knife in her right hand and a skull cup of blood in the other;—she is an emanation of emptiness and wisdom, but I feel her presence in my meditative, panpsychic praxis and reaffirm to myself that the Self is an illusion. This is my inner life, but I keep it private.

. . .

What does *wwg1wga* mean? This cryptic message has been trending on Twitter for several years now. Here is the meaning behind it, says Filiza Mustafa:

Social media has given a platform to a wide array of content creators. From TikTok to Snapchat, there are endless viral videos, dance challenges and trending filters. However, the rise of social media apps, has helped a lot of hoaxes and false theories spread like wildfire, leading to a whole new world of cryptic messages. Twitter posts with ‘wwg1wga’ have been circulating in reference to QAnon and Donald Trump. So, what does the cryptic message mean? The ac-

ronym 'wwg1wga' means: "WHERE WE GO ONE WE GO ALL."

. . .

I recognize a Conspiracy Theory because it is so clunky, so kludge-like, so hokermokered—it looks like one; it sounds like one; ergo, it must be one. Back to my own Zoroastrian conspiracy model: on one side of the battle for good or evil, I have the Satanic pedophiles, organized by Hillary Clinton and Georges Soros, running a worldwide sex slave ring speaking in pizzeria language and on the other The Donald and his minion, Mueller, in cahoots to root out the pedophiles in the Deep State. This is as dystopian as it is preposterous. As QAnon manifests, in what may be a pivotal moment of U.S. history, the followers of the mysterious Q see themselves as chivalrous patriots saving children from a cabal of leftist pedophiles harvesting their blood in the basements of pizza parlors in an attempt to energize a propagandist web of disinformation, all in hopes of changing the outcome of the upcoming election. Of course, this would also be true of a left-leaning CT, where a sex slave ring run from Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets (white meat or dark, thighs for boys, breasts for girls, mashed potatoes for orgies) by the late Jeffery Epstein, who was suicided by operatives of the Deep State, led by reptilian Mitch McConnell, was a false flag to cover up a real cabal of pedophilic priests by packing the court with Catholics.

Cassam's main contention, that the motivation to accept one conspiracy over another is based more on political ideologies than on personality profiles, suggests that there is a seductive quality to believing in a theory that fits into an already evolved belief system. He says that consumers of CTs "...are inclined to accept particular Conspiracy theories or particular types of Conspiracy theory...that are in line with their political outlook" (49). In this sense, it is the epistemological form of the CT that fits the person and not the other way around. If a researcher knows the political persuasion of a person, it is easier to predict what kind of Conspiracy to which they might be susceptible. Having like-minded friends helps to fill the void feeling of existential angst inculcated by a sense of alienation. A push factor for someone to leave the set structure of traditional ideas that do not relieve the angst is the chance to meet others of similar beliefs who can satisfy a need for understanding. The risk factor, in the present case, is that if The Donald loses the election (as he did), it will be a demoralizing denunciation of the QAnon cognitive constructs. Either way, we are in a shitstorm.

. . .

I began this Conspiracy Theory argosy on the flagship *Prolegomena*, and I will conclude my voyage on the same vessel. I would agree with Cassam, that CTs are political propaganda, with one caveat. As an aging epistemologist, it is still important for me to understand how I know what I know, and so, in the spirit of self-reflection, I am led to look at the various psychological paradigms dealing with the evolution of the Self and its belief structures in different cultures. I am looking at Lacan's Theory of Self and the paranoiac characteristic that makes conspiracy theorists so contrarian and set in their beliefs. I am looking at a Jungian angle, as well. Metaphorically, there is no single astrological sign (or personality type or genetic disposition), but within each sign, there are planets with their elements and modes that configure the individual structure of a personality causing it to glom onto a Conspiracy in the inner world of the imagination or into acting out an actual conspiracy in the world of hard knocks. With Conspiracy Theories, we are tripping the light fantastic, while having a toe in both worlds.

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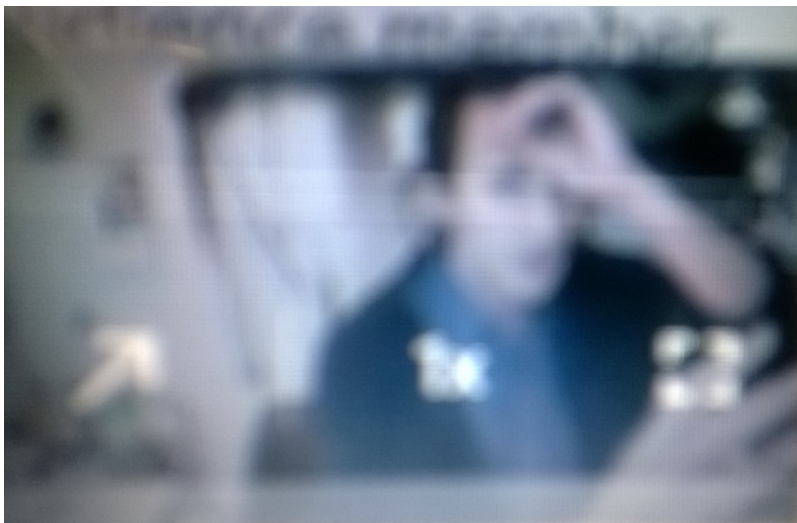
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*Disclaimer: It's important to note we do not endorse any conspiracy theories and hope that this report has maintained objectivity.*



## AN INQUIRY INTO THE PARANORMAL JAMPA DORJE

Kapala Press 2021 Ellensburg

The three essays in this volume are writings from Dr. Clayton Bonhet's *Beyond Belief?* Phil 110 Class at Central Washington University, Fall Quarter, 2020.

Photo of a Bohnet mind transmission via a zoom room.

### HOLOGRAPHIC HALLUCINATIONS

A wise man apportions his belief to the evidence.

DAVID HUME, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

I try to keep an equanimous mindstream and acknowledge the validity of paranormal experiences, while being influenced by both logical positivism and religious dogma. There is still much to discover in the search for the Self, if not in this lifetime, then, in those to come, or in revisiting previous lifetimes before I was born. I have had flying sau-

cer experiences, levitation experiences, and mind-to-mind transmissions from my gurus. I have served as a sorcerer's apprentice. The universe of physicist Max Plank contains events that are non-simultaneous and only partially overlapping,—yet simultaneous events that concur, in scientific and Buddhist cosmologies, manifesting from interdependent origination, can seem magical. I like my reality to be reliable and match the data, but I want mystery in the storytelling.

Some history of the field of parapsychology can be useful when discussing the parameters of an empirical investigation of anomalous cognitions. Tracing the early investigations by scientists in the 19th century reveal a progression of developing rigorous analytical tools for determining the veracity of these psychic happenings. Beginning with simple observations by noted scientists, many were led to the study of psychic phenomena out of simple curiosity. Caroline Watt, in *Parapsychology: A Beginners Guide* (Oneworld, London, 2016), says that the early investigations by Crookes and Rogers led, in 1882, to the formation of the Society for Psychical Research, that claimed it would study PSI events in “the same spirit of exact science and unimpassioned enquiry which has enabled Science to solve so many problems” (5). The game was on,—and with a good deal of passion, I might add, is being played right up to the present.

I have rubbed elbows and exchanged cards with theosophists whose lineages go back to Madam Blavatsky and Alister Crowley. I know that those with an interest in parapsychology can seem flaky, but authenticity is sought, although the rules (and spoons) are sometimes bent. The term *parapsychology*, in its present use, does not recognize all of the occult arts and is limited to ESP, extrasensory perception—which includes telepathy, precognition, and clairvoyance—and PK, psychokinesis, and SS, survival studies (reincarnation). Today's specialists in the investigatory branch of psychic phenomena have impressive collegiate credentials and academic standing, although many of their peers throw shade their way.



No wonder. Research reveals that there is a lot of bamboozlement and devious, if not malevolent, machinations going on in the public use of these powers (if powers they be). However, it is often difficult to tell whether it is the mediumship of the individual that is in question or if more fundamental philosophical issues are under the microscope—issues concerning the notion of causation, of the configurations of cognition and reality, of the fabric of matter, energy, and spacetime.

The statistical predictabilities of parapsychological phenomena do not attain the gold standard of contemporary science, but something in the data, like a *ghost in the machine* (to use Arthur Koestler's phrase), begs to be revealed—mind mirroring itself in etheric entanglement, seeking to see itself seeing the ground consciousness by communicating via vibratory movements on a ouija board. Reminds me of what Jack Spicer says in his poem, "The Scrollwork on the Casket":

Whenever I hammer a nail into the outside of the casket,  
I can hear someone on the inside, also hammering a nail.

In the 1980s, at the University of Central Washington, in Ellensburg, the chairman of the philosophy and religious studies department, Dr. Chester Keller, taught classes in mysticism. David Pond, a part owner of a hippie-style restaurant in town, The Outrageous Taco, was a practicing astrologer and decided to go to graduate school. In 1983, David received an Master of Science degree in Experimental Metaphysics. In 1984, I helped him publish part of his thesis as *The Metaphysical Handbook*. It is a handbook for learning divinatory methods to do psychic readings. In exchange for my labor, I apprenticed myself to David and he taught me Astrology, Tarot, I Ching, Palmistry, and Numerology. I practiced reading Tarot and making charts for the clientele of my New Age bookstore, Four Winds, between 1984 and 1988. Over 200 readings, and like at the U. of Virginia, the results and feedback were positive. I stopped doing readings because of the

heavy responsibility of entering into another person's life and giving advice on serious matters. Counselling is a rewarding endeavor, but it is very stressful, be you a Freudian, a Jungian, or a Adlerian. The *Metaphysical Handbook* is still in print, and David still makes a living as a professional astrologer. Me, I meditate.

People go to psychics out of fear of the unknown, confusion in love, the whole gambit of uncertainties that arise in a world of suffering and impermanence. We seek to see into the future to discover who we are in the present. And we like to be seen and heard and to be given encouragement, even when disaster is in the offing. Here is a David Pond reading for tomorrow, September 21, the Autumn Equinox:

Libra, represented by the scales of balance, strives for harmonious, cooperative, win-win involvement with others. However, it is not enough to wish for fairness—dynamic Libra is called on to be active in bringing about fair, just, and honorable agreements with others. Cultivate the ability to find the common ground with others by being more diplomatic, persuasive, and patient to create win-win negotiations, and if all else fails, be willing to compromise to keep the peace.

Good advice, two days after Justice Ginsberg's death.

Actions should be judged on the basis of intention. Young psychics like the thrill and sense of power over others. Psychics who have developed their abilities know Boerenkamp's data is valid, and that they are magicians, but every so often something shifts, and the reader feels a demiurge channel gnosis. In the Jungian camp, many psychotherapists merge the use of the occult arts with traditional western psychological paradigms. I offer my services at the local branch of Comprehensive Mental Health, teaching mindfulness meditation to counselors who practice Dialectical Behavior Therapy, to add to their toolkit of methods to treat borderline personality disorders.

Parapsychologists prefer to work with pure cognitive activity, cold readings without props, and the data of such studies reveal no validity to the process. However, as every artist, poet, gambler knows, the 1% of the time inspiration occurs and the accuracy of the PSI data defies statistical odds (e.g. the 28 consecutive times a roulette wheel came up black) feels amazing and has an addictive quality. The methods known as "selective recall" (that a client remembers what they want to hear out of many statements), of using "general statements" (that have a high level of probability) work by themselves, but "fishing" (trying to hone in on the problem, if it is not forthcoming, is where the art lies (no pun intended). I favor the astrological sign. The data shows that the average astrologer has difficulty picking out a person's sign, but when the sign is offered, it represents a symbolic point of departure. The lore of western astrology can be traced back to the Babylonians and into the mists of prehistory. I quote the blurb on the back cover of *The Metaphysical Handbook*: "One needn't be a serious student to benefit from the expanded perspective on life that studying metaphysics offers. Even a casual involvement can sharpen your intuition and give deeper meaning to your life."

Skepticism. Formally, it is an epistemological stance, or a school of thought between realism and idealism, of remaining on the fence, holding a theory of knowledge that certain kinds of knowledge are impossible. More informally, skepticism as an expression of questioning or doubt can be applied to any topic, such as politics, religion, or pseudoscience (Wiki). The opposite is Dogmatism:, or believing in a philosophy or religion and adhering to the precepts because they are felt to be proper.

James Randi (b. 1928) is known as "The Amazing Randi," and he has had an amazing career both as a stage magician, appearing on a wide range of shows—in '60s hosting his own magic show on TV; in the '70s, appearing in the Alice Cooper Billion Dollar Babies Tour; and

then, in the '80s becoming a debunker of public psychics who claimed to have paranormal powers. He did not like being called a debunker and preferred to be designated an investigator, claiming "...if you go into a situation calling yourself a debunker then it is as if you have prejudged the topic. It's not neutral or scientific, and it can turn people against you." A sign on his door reads: "Randi—Conjurer" (Wiki).

In 1973, Randi gained national attention with his appearance on Johnny Carson's *The Tonight Show* to confront psychokinesist Uri Geller. As reported online at [groovyhistory.com](http://groovyhistory.com), "...spoon-bending 'psychic' Uri Geller appeared on *The Tonight Show*—and walked into a trap set by host Johnny Carson and the magician/skeptic James 'The Amazing' Randi. It was one of the great 'gotcha' moments in TV history, and a highlight of a feud between Randi and Geller over the nature of magic." For Amazing Randi, this becomes a scientific endeavor, to purify the worldly domain of pseudoscience and psychic fakery, codename PROJECT ALPHA.

Randi's attack was two-pronged. First, he wanted to reveal the use of stage magic by practitioners of PSI phenomena; and second, he wanted to challenge parapsychologists to tighten their experimental controls. He claimed that the scientific community was being hoodwinked by traditional methods used by magicians to fool their audiences—tried-and-true sleight-of-hand and mental suggestion that had been going on since prerecorded history. Project Alpha began in 1979, with Randi creating a hoax, whereby he planted two stage magicians, with no claim to special powers other than their knowledge of stage magic—who claimed to have psychic powers—into an ongoing laboratory experiment at the McDonnell Laboratory for Psychical Research at the University of Washington. When the hoax was revealed, in 1981, all the participating scientists found they had been chasing a rabbit around a bush, when they only needed to look in their hats to see how empty they were of valid data.

The next step in the process was for parapsychologists to prevent themselves getting caught up in anything like a Project Beta. For investigators in all areas of PSI research, the results of Project Alpha had several benefits: (a) tightened security in empirical methodologies, for example trying to weed out publicity seekers; (b) greater insight into how easy it is to be duped by the magician's artform and the general vulnerability of belief systems; (c) an all-around re-evaluation of what more than a century of research had discovered and a clearer focus on the anomalies revealed in that research; and (d) a good old-fashioned shaking-awake of the experts, who have a tendency to drift into dogmatic slumber. In all, it was a decent day's work by a guy who has "Amazing" for a first name.

The psychokinetic activities of James Hydrick interest me. The video of Amazing Randi blocking the performance of Hydrick on the *That's My Line* TV show, in the early '80s was embarrassing. The Little Lord Fontenoy outfit and Prince Valiant haircut and wisp of a mustache was pure camp, and that the dude is a child molester (and one who is caught by police, who hear him discussing his telekinetic powers on a talk show) is karmically poetic. Later, he revealed he developed his trick in prison, and that he had not learned it from a Chinese master on the fourth level of consciousness (whatever that is) as he originally claimed. Hydrick confessed, "My whole idea behind this in the first place was to see how dumb America was. How dumb the world is" (Wiki). Good job, Hydrick, as though we did not already know it. Thanks a lot.

Hydrick is a two-trick pony; he can move a pencil balanced on the edge of a table or move a page of a telephone book with the power of his mind. Actually, he was performing secret blowjobs. I will leave it there. He is still in prison.

Sai Baba may well have used his manifestation magic to impress the poor and the gullible and open them to practice, as well as reward his rich and sophisticated devotees with a bit of hocus pocus. Per-

sonally, I find Sai Baba a bit smarmy as a swami, but his legacy continues. I prefer the warrior-yogi sorcerers. Matter of taste, really.

In an etymological breakdown of the word, parapsychology, a number of words are suggested by the prefix, "para-": above, beside, near; but in our class, we settled on "beyond" to connect to "psyche": soul, personality, spirit, self. Beyond psychology. Beyond the self. Beyond the logos, or reason. Beyond belief.

Parapsychologists are interested in anomalous mental activity, thought processes that are different from the normal, that cannot be explained by the laws of physics or repeated with precision by scientific methods. If these "powers" can be measured, a more comprehensive understanding of how we know what we know can be determined, which is of epistemological interest to philosophy, psychology, and religion. Also, it might be of interest to art. Ted Serios's psychokinetically projected images onto Polaroid film, utilizing a prop he called his "gizmo" (that contained a magnified image prepared in advance of the experiments) can be interpreted as an branch of the Abstract Expressionist school of happening art that was current during the '60s. Ted Sorios' manic "performances" need to be re-evaluated in this light.

Psycho/telekinesis, or psychokinesis (PK) is one branch of parapsychology, and is defined by Watt as "the influence of mind on an object, physical system, or biological system, without physical interaction" (221) . Mind over matter. Until the force of gravity is neatly integrated in a unified field theory of everything, Einstein will not rest in his grave, dreaming of spooky forces from afar. " Woo Woo" has been a term applied to this phenomenon, usually expressed with small, vibratory movements of the hands, perhaps sounding like the haunting sound of a ghost in the popular imagination. The "Woooo" sound can be drawn out.

Uri Geller's shtick was more sophisticated than Ted Sorios' pandemonium. Geller's professional showman style was more appropriate for TV audiences. He knew his way around a sound stage, and his manners were polished. Whether he could bend spoons without first manipulating the temper of the metal is doubtful. Amazing Randi debunked him on *The Tonight Show*, in the '80s. Geller had star quality and was resilient, as he also had (so the story goes) a clandestine career as a globetrotting Mossad spy. We were in the Cold War, and world governments were researching PSI to shift the balance of power among nation states—in other words, a fake psychic power became a prop a world-wide discussion of PSI within the star circuit, feelers being put out, and flags raised in the collecting of data composed of rumors and disinformation and botched transmissions being received in counter-intelligence spying on the. . .but I'll leave this tale for another day. It all leads back to a store of documents in the Nazi archives and from there to the Tibetans.

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## SAILING TO ÆTHERIAL ISLES

### “Up anchor!”—Introduction

I will sail in the fundamental tack as Kant’s *Prolegomena*—asking, how do I know what I know? How is my knowledge structured and verified? Can I determine my knowledge is valid, if it is based upon scientific data, religious authority, or personal experience? In this brief paper, I will compare and contrast two anomalous forms of experience—Out-of-Body Experience (OBE) and Near-Death Experience (NDE)—within the approaches of parapsychology, psychology, neurobiology, and religious experience. I hope that, as I sail between clashing rocks of contradiction, I uncover some semblance of meaningful knowledge.

### “Ruby grapes of Proserpine”—OBEs described

An OBE, or out-of-body experience, is just that, an experience of being outside your body. Culling information from *Medical News Today*, an online zine, and from Caroline Watt’s book, *Parapsychology*, the description of the experience is very consistent. One floats smoothly out of the body, usually to a position above the body, where the person can see themselves and the world from another vantage point. According to Watt, sounds, vibrations, and/or lights are sometimes reported (83). In general, the experience is blissful, and no harm comes to the person. After a brief suspension in space (or in some cases, due to a rude interruption) they return to their body. One in ten persons report having had an OBE at least once in their lifetime (Ibid. 82). Whether something leaves the body or not is still debated; scientific data suggests not.

Since the days of the Fox Sisters (1840s), paranormal experiences have been sensationalized, monetized, weaponized, and scientifically analyzed. Another approach to these endeavors is



to focus on the esoteric explanations of OBEs and other anomalous cognitive activity that may be of significance to someone on a spiritual path.

In 1964, under the influence of a massive dose of peyote, I suffered a psychotic break. In one phase of this experience, while incarcerated in a detention cell (“the hole”) in Alameda County Jail, I thought I was Michelangelo’s statue of David being transported in the cargo hold of an ocean liner from Paris to New York; in another phase I thought I was Duchamp’s *Glass*, which shattered en route. These imaginings led me to further cleanse *my doors of perception*.

In 2013, after four years in a solitary meditation retreat, I felt like I was, finally, fully in my body, and I left my cabin (Luminous Peak) on the mountain and got in my impulse red Toyota pickup, that I had stored, and drove to Santa Fe. Near Cerro Pedernal, a paranormal place, if there ever was one, I had a car wreck—no injuries but two totaled vehicles—that left me, and the two women and baby in the other car continuing in our same bodies yet seriously altered in our concepts of our ætheric bodies.

A Vajrayana OBE would be more elaborate than the usual scientific description because, with training in mind-body separation, you would be able to move your ætheric body across time as well as space: for example, the case of Jigme Lingpa (1730–1798), a Tibetan *tertön* of the Nyingma lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, to which I belong. He was the promulgator of the *Longchen Nyingthig*, the *Heart Essence* teachings of Longchenpa, from whom, according to tradition, he received a pure vision in which the teachings were revealed. The *Longchen Nyingthig* is the cycle of preparatory Dzogchen teachings that I practiced for my three-year retreat. The path of a *tertön* is the self-revelation of their own buddha mind, an ontological level of consciousness, recognized conceptually as the ground of Being. However, I have not yet learned the method of projecting myself into the future, except by archiving my written works.

Another radical OBE, told to me by Tulku Sang-ngag, is about an 11<sup>th</sup> c. Indian yogin, known as Padampa Sangye who was travelling to Tibet with an assistant. Padampa Sangye was young and handsome, and his assistant was old and ugly. During their travels, they found a rotting elephant in a stream of water used by a nearby village and, out of compassion, Padampa decided to transfer his consciousness into the animal by practicing *phowa*—transferring his mindstream to animate a corpse (in this case, a form of psychokinesis)—thereby safely removing the pollution. While the mindstream of Padampa was otherwise engaged, his assistant decided to transfer his consciousness into Padampa's body and leave his own, worn-out body. Upon returning from his PK experience, Padampa (who became known as "Black Dampa") continued to Tibet, where he became the teacher of Machig Lapdrön, the *yidam* (tutelary deity) of my retreat.

"Undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns"—NDEs described

A near death experience (NDE) is the reported experience during a time where this person is in an extreme state of unconsciousness (i.e., medically dead) and then, returns to awakened consciousness. People who experience a NDE report different features of their experience. As reported by Watt, Kenneth Ring found in his research that during the interim, before a person returns from this extreme level of unconsciousness, a similar number of basic components can be present to different degrees: (1) a feeling of peace, (2) a feeling of body separation from the self, like in an OBE but often described as moving through a tube, (3) entering the darkness, (4) seeing a light, and (5) entering a light (Ibid. p. 100). More extensive experiences are reported by theosophists, mystics, poets, shamans, and yogins in the proceeding stages of a death experience;—for example, it is claimed by Lee W. Bailey, in his essay, "A 'Little Death': the Near Death Experience and Tibetan Delogs," that Tibetan *delogs* remain in a NDE for extended periods of time. However, so far, there is no data recording their brain waves in a continuous flatline.

The practice of *phowa* (sometimes called “spiritual suicide”) is a Vajrayana meditation practice. A wiki elf describes this as the “practice of conscious dying” or the “transference of consciousness at the time of death” or the “mindstream transference” or the “enlightenment without meditation” practice. I have some accomplishment in this practice, but only some.

Soon after being ordained a monastic, in 1996, I attended a *phowa* retreat and received a transmission from Adzom Paylo Rinpoche. The ritual includes rigorous mantra recitation, visualization, and physical breath yoga. The vibratory activity of the practice initiates an opening in the cranium of the skull for consciousness to pass through. A stalk of kusha grass is inserted into the gap in the skull to signify the accomplishment of the practice. Of all the practitioners present, I was one of two whose cranium did not sufficiently respond. Adzom inspected my skull and said, “Good enough,” which I took to mean a passing grade but with work yet to be done. I have the transmission and can work on this practice that promises to prevent me from encountering some of the less desirable aspects of the after-death experience,—if there is one.

“A pair of normals”—OBEs and NDEs commonality

OBEs and NDEs commonalities:—(1) usually, they do not last long; (2) there is an experience of “floating” blissfully; (3) the experience is vivid; (4) the amount of *gnosis* (spiritual message) is sometimes minimal and, at other times, of profound importance to the person; (5) unlike ESP and PK, they are not stage magic “tricks” that can be monetized or sensationalized.

One difference is that NDEs are reported less often than OBEs, and NDEs do not always occur near the event of actually dying (Ibid. p.98).. Clinical death is defined by van Lommel as: “a period of unconsciousness caused by insufficient blood supply to the brain” (Ibid. p. 103). If the period is not too long, people have been known to return to “normal” consciousness. Medical scientists look at this return as a lucky break for the patient. Neuroscientists want to probe deeper

into the brain's functions. Parapsychologists want to know if it has meaning. People who have this experience report different features. Being conscious of non-being is a gnosis transmission from Being. As All-knowing Longchenpa (1308–1364), puts it, in *A Treasure Trove of Spiritual Transmissions*:

Mind as pure expanse of space, in which things vanish  
naturally and leave no trace,  
arises with intensity from within, pristinely lucid.

“For 1/32<sup>nd</sup> of a second there is buddhamind, and the rest is delusion”—Psychological approach

Psychologists look at the NDE reports as symptomatic of clients with certain personality traits and or complexes due to trauma. Neurologists look at NDE reports and search for some malfunctioning part of the brain. As for the question of whether there is life after death or not, the experimental data is non-conclusive. Outside of a laboratory of some kind, it is difficult to gather information while NDEs are in progress. Yogins like to think of their cave as a laboratory.

In Orphic literature, upon dying, you encounter two bodies of water, a spring and a river. In the Grail legends you find yourself in a perilous forest. In the Tibetan *Shitro* scriptures (e.g. *Bardo Thödol*) you are confronted by wrathful deities. I am unsure of the source of the idea of a tunnel with light at the end in the standard model NDE, but it sounds hopeful, as in the expression, “There’s light at the end of the tunnel.”

Sogyal Rinpoche added a dimension to the *Bardo Thödol* in his *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, by directing the living to look on the process of dying as offering a person one more opportunity to awaken to the Clear Light of the ground of consciousness. The main point of death, in our transmigratory lives, or in our one & only life, is to help us learn to develop a compassionate heart-mind within this present embodied mind-consciousness.

While studying abnormal cognitive activity in the brain from both orthodox psychological and neurological paradigms, parapsychologists recognize that other explanations of reality and being may have validity. This open-mindedness (or mush-mindedness, as physicalists would have it) opens ontological and epistemological constructs and realms of inquiry usually reserved for literature, comparative mythology, metaphysics, and religion. The concept of what it means for something to exist must be stretched (in the sense of realist claims of the existence of abstract universals) to include areas beyond the Einsteinian description of three dimensions of space and one of time as a minimal requirement for something to exist. If the self, as Tim Newman, writing in *Medical News Today*, suggests, is a “neurological illusion,” what is it that is “dying”? And why (outside of the body experiencing pain in the process) should it be feared? When the physical existence of the self is called into question, a new notion of reality is required. As my lamas like to point out, “No self, no problem.”

#### “You never know”—Neurobiological approach

I have but little terminology and less understanding of this field of study. My daughter, Gina Turrugiano, who is faculty head of the Biology department at Brandeis University and who does research in homeostasis and neural circuit plasticity, told me that, apropos of the paranormal reports of OBEs and NDEs, the intense mantra recitations and visualizations over an extended period of time may allow yogins to develop what they designate as “secret channels” from the various *chakras* to areas of the brain that would otherwise be part of the autonomic nervous system.

#### “The body decays; don’t delay”—Comparing OBEs and NDEs

Drawing the following comparisons from Table 2, page 83, in Watts:— (1) a separation of the mind from the body is felt during an OBE but not in a NDE; (2) in an OBE the body is felt to separate from itself and can travel during the experience; in a NDE, the body remains in place but consciousness moves through a tunnel; (3) a “greater awareness of reality” is reported in an OBE, whereas, in a NBE, a greater appre-

ciation of life is reported afterwards; (4) vibrations can occur in OBE as part of the experience, usually experienced prior to the onset; in NDEs, vibrations from a defibrillator may be felt during a medical procedure; (5) a presence of beings can be experienced in OBEs, being touched or spoken to by another person, interrupting the OBE experience, whereas, in NDEs, persons from other timeframes and/or deities have been reported;—in mystical and yogic literature, these encounters can be interpreted in the context of a theological framework; (6) the experience of time can range for OBEs and NDEs:—without correct training, NDEs can alter physiological processes and create pathological conditions that do not seem to be in the best interest of the person having the NDE, whereas OBEs tend to end abruptly and are risky only when you are having sex and/or while driving at high speeds in an automobile; (7) seeing a bright light:—What kind of light is this? Is it sunlight, electrical light, or Dzog Chen “clear light”? In a Buddhist context, reflecting on the transience of life is an entryway for someone to turn Dharma; and as for feeling connected to the physical body,—if the OBE is a parallel experience to yogic levitation, the knowledge is useful for the yogi’s deconstruction of the sense of Self; if the OBE is induced (84), the entertainment factor of play can be exhilarating.

Entering the light is problematic. In Dzog Chen, entering the physical light, solar or electrical, is an erroneous path (*samsara*). My advice: be cautious with NDEs without a qualified teacher. My retreat wife, Lopön Beth, is doing daily practices, in the dark, in preparation for her Dark Retreat, where she will be sealed into an especially enclosed area for a week to introduce her to the intermediate states, or gap (Bardo Realm), between this life and her next one. She asked me, “Where do you think the light in my visions and dreams comes from?” Good question.

In both psychological and neurological approaches, the OBEs and NDEs are considered to be pathological conditions, as though something has gone haywire with the brain, whereas theosophists and re-

ligious ritual practitioners consider the OBE and NDE experiences to be meaningful. Parapsychologists hold their judgement and are interested in analyzing data garnered from these experiences. In this, they are becalmed in a Sargasso Sea of indeterminacy, while the psychoargonauts are having all the fun.

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## SAINTS, PSYCHICS, AND SCIENTISTS

Sathya Sai Baba was an Indian guru and philanthropist. In 1940, at the age of fourteen he left his home to perform altruistic deeds. At the time of his death, he had founded 1,200 spiritual centers and established hospitals, clinics, drinking water projects, a university, auditoriums, and schools. Estimates of the numbers of his followers

vary from 6 million up to nearly 100 million. Estimates of his wealth run as high as 1.4 trillion rupees, or close to 30 billion U.S. dollars. The usual allegations of financial shenanigans and inappropriate sexual activities have attended his reputation as a holy man, but he appeared to his followers as someone who could walk the talk. Sai Baba was known for his quote “Love All, Serve All. Help Ever, Hurt Never” (Wiki).

With his wild afro hairdo, he looks like a ‘70s used car salesman in a saffron jumpsuit, but whom am I, *Mr. Guru Garb*, to criticize his look. He was a fully-manifested mid-20th century Hindu guru—just what the hippies wanted, as well as spiritual seekers from other lands. And, what if he did use a little stage magic? He was good at it. For beginners, the insight that occurs by entertaining the possibility of a “miracle” may be a first step in developing ritual practice and a more evolved understanding of causality and that, with further practice, can bring self-realization within reach. Should spiritual paths be measured by secular standards? Maybe science should stick with measuring the material world with their material instruments, reducing every particle to its smallest magnitude. just to satisfy the analyst’s need for validity. I asked my lama, Adzom Palyo Rinpoche, if I should merge my visualizations of Avalokiteshvara with my Jesus visualizations, and he said it was not necessary, as there was room for both.

Sai Baba could seemingly make objects materialize out of nothing. Adzom can apparently put the imprint of his hand into solid rock. Both events fall under the PSI phenomena of macro-psychokinesis. Sai Baba conjures gold necklaces out of thin air. Adzom moves matter with mental control.

There are revealed techniques for making things manifest. Check out “Out of Nowhere: Easy Production Magic Tricks” on *youTube*. I watched the video, “Sai Baba’s ‘Miraculous’ Power Exposed,” where he seems to be removing something from beneath the trophy being



presented to a dignitary. The televised sequence was not shown on T.V. because the producers feared it revealed fakery; however it may have been just an awkward moment in the presentation itself, because it is not Sai Baba's usual routine, where the "trick" is more reliably set up by palming an object or retrieving it from his robes. One method of Sai Baba's ability to perform his manifestation of an object is to distract the audience, and another method is connected to the devotion of his followers which touches on their gullibility and shapes their acceptance of the activity. Among Sai Baba's materializations, he produces a substance called *vibhuti*, a "sacred ash" that falls from a large vase and seems to be of an enormous quantity, but (like fine gold chains that can be rolled into a small space of concealment), ash can be compressed and released in small amounts in a continuous flow and appears as more than can be estimated by the audiences' imaginations. In the YouTube video, "Vibhutra Mantra", there is an amazing amount of ash. We see the foreground and not the background from whence things arise. We see what we want (or need) to see.

I was present when Adzom Rinpoche pressed his thumb into a small piece of granite. I was standing inside a small cluster of people, at Tara Mandala Retreat Center, in Colorado, and I heard, felt, those in the front express the clear sound of astonishment, "Ah!" On the top of the rock was a clear imprint of his thumb, but on the back side, there was a trace, a smudge, of his forefinger, that he claimed was due to someone not fully believing. I was sure it was me, but I kept my mouth shut. I thought this last bit of half-finished artwork was a good touch, for believability. Afterwards,—seeing him sitting in a halo of rainbow light and feeling a double rainbow in my heart—watching him raise his vajra scepter at a dramatic moment in an dharma empowerment just as a bolt of lightning struck a tree, near the yurt where we were practicing—and after chanting the heart mantra of a wrathful deity with him during a rapidly approaching prairie fire and seeing it burn itself out when the wind reversed course, I developed devotion and learned to be a sorcerer's appren-

tice. I wanted the knowledge and the insight that would come from it. I could have applied the formula  $x_{n+1} = rx_n(1-x_n)$  that is the logistic map connecting fluid convection, neuron firing, the Mandelbrot set and so much more to the statistical probabilities of these being random events in the natural world without psychokinetic activity being involved, but where is the romance in that?

### The Psychology of Psychic Deception

We go to psychic readers because we are worriers. We cannot see into the future. We have curiosity about fate and destiny but cannot construct a paradigm. Psychic readings are a kind of intoxication—a Grail—a communion with the spirit of oneself, in which all things are possible and all querents are rewarded. A psychic reading promises to let me out of my box, that I may have a temporary suspension of belief—an OBE, while in the body, sitting with the psychic—while ze “fishes around” in hir 3rd Eye, doing a cold reading with the intuitive mind—reading the client, assembling profiling signs from the features and mannerisms of the querent, analyzing the elemental spirit (æther) world, in a word—air, earth, water, fire—and their modes—fixed, cardinal, mutable—attempts to divine the psyche.

Much of this is done by the setting in which the “magic” takes place, the *mis en scene*—because mindset and setting are fundamental to tuning into the psychic channel, before dropping into another “bardo” of consciousness. Incense and crystals, smoke and mirrors.

An aside: My astrologer, David Pond, who has a handle of the position of the wandering planets, as well as the headlines, advises me that the game heats up later this week—10/5/2020, as The Donald leaves Walter Reed and the Proud Boys stand by—as Mars, the warrior planet, gets activated by volcanic Pluto bringing the test of the right use of power. The high road is to use your power in such a way that is in your best interest as well as others, while also doing no harm to self or others. The challenge is in handling the volatility of this potentially explosive energy—as a militia calling themselves the

“Wolverine Watchmen” get caught in a plot to kidnap the governor of Michigan.

### Who and What Left the Body?

When someone feels they are traveling outside of their body, they are having an OBE, an out-of-body experience. Parapsychologists want to know who or what “leaves” the body of the embodied mind. Can my consciousness exist outside the hunk of meat I call my body? Is consciousness a creation of the kludge we call a brain or of some other “spectral” quality? Pretty much the project ends there, and the question, “If the mind exists outside the body, does this indicate it has a meaningful existence?” is left to the poets and philosophers.

Neurological research into the matter takes the physicalist approach further by boring into the tissue of the brain, as though it was a piece of computer hardware gone haywire. This approach is biased by its predisposition to look for pathological symptoms in the brain’s neurological structures and circuitry.

Nobody is really looking sub-atomically. With a “ghost in the machine” well documented by Koestler & Co., it would require a particle accelerator the size of the earth to measure the necessary “strings”—and this is not in the budget. Better to invest money in micrometry, claims Sabina Hossenfeld, a physicist I follow on YouTube. Psychological approach: Clinicians do not want to see abnormal symptoms of behavior, so reporting too many OBEs between sessions, will imply you are self-medicating and intervention will occur with the risk of ensuing lockdown. If these experiences are not self-induced, brain scans and neurological tests can be administered. If the results do not indicated physical problems, psychological problems have to be addressed. Personality types, age/race/class/sex/gender factors come into play. Freud will ask questions about my upbringing; Skinner will implant electrodes; Perls will suggest enhanced awareness (mindfulness meditation); and Jung will ask my astrological sign; and we are back to the first step in parapsychology,

to be curious of the possibilities—can a paranormal experience be a “sign” of connecting with the something outside the box of personality (of Self), a step in the direction of awakening from dogmatic sleep? Or,—it could herald a psychotic break, the hearing of voices and seeing of visions that order me to do evil deeds? Always a risk in these waters. Requires a poet to guide the way.

WHO? WHAT? LEFT? BODY? The four elements of this sentence—who, what, left, and body—require semiotic, phenomenological and inductive analysis within the three approaches of parapsychology—application of empirical methodologies, neurological abnormalities, and personality traits susceptible to pathological cognitive dissonance,—and the added dimension of “spiritual” markers on the slow path to enlightenment—must be supplied before my philosophical judgement is proposed. OBEs have common features with NDEs, the main one being “something leaves the body or is about to leave the body.” Or not.

What and Who, seem to be the same entity, only What has less personality—an essence of the person, a soul, as Christians term it;—or something more robust, something that includes both the consciousness of the person and their unconscious as well, a psyche, as Jungian psychologists term it. Whatever its form or content (and weight, 21 grams?), it “moves.” It “hovers” (like a drone) in an OBE or travels through a “tunnel” (on an allegorical Alice in Wonderland-like adventure), but without the body—in both cases, without the body, that implies disembodied consciousness (a *mindstream*, in a Buddhist context), that, in turn, implies a belief in transcendental dimensions of existence, not measurable by material instruments or delineated by rational interpretations of beingness. This concept in a radical form of idealism, where Emptiness is cognizant.

What is precognition? What is the difference between precognition and presentiment?

Watt defines precognition as the conscious “perception of infor-

mation about future events” (also known as foresight or prophesy) and she defines presentiment as, “the unconscious perception of future events or information...measured indirectly, either through physiological measures or through performance on cognitive or behavioral tasks” (220). The difference lies in the degree of consciousness of the person receiving the information (or, in terms of someone on a spiritual path, gnosis).

Early ESP research, especially the work of the parapsychology pioneer, J.B. Rhine, involved applying earlier methodologies used to test for clairvoyance (observing events or things at a distance) to the phenomena of precognition. Rhine collected statistical data from the experimental use of Zeller Cards (a series of playing cards with 5 different symbols), that required the reader to mentally identify (without viewing with the eyes) a randomly chosen card. After more than a decade of research, Rhine concluded that “ESP is a natural mode of perception and an integral part of mental life (Watt, p.143). However, skeptics persisted in tightening the screws on the formation of the methodologies used to gather data. Kennedy and Uphoff called for more objectivity (144). As Rhine’s methods “improved,” his results were less conclusive (146).

In the 1960s, parapsychologists decided to shift course. Rather than trying to measure the activity of “guessing” (precognition), the focus was on “exploring volunteers’ hunches, intuitions, and ‘gut feelings’” (163). Stanford speculated that the source of precognition was connected to our evolutionary consciousness, that allowed us to sense danger, and was not easily accessed by our awoken mind. Vassy measured the precognitive effects of a volunteer’s behavior when an electrical shock was added to the randomness. In the 1990s, Radin and Bierman refined this to showing volunteers examples of shocking photos in the mix (164ff). The main idea was to “feel” the future, rather than “think” the future. Watts concludes that, as experimental controls have improved, the paranormal ESP events are more difficult to dismiss (168).

From my personal experience I can relate an instance, while I was in retreat, of coming to the end of a million recitations of the Arya Tara heart mantra, something like 900,000, as I circumambulated my cabin, Luminous Peak, and I looked down the valley and saw a shaft of rainbow light engulfing the Tara Temple. High mountain valleys produce many rainbow events, but this one was dramatic, and I regarded the sight as an auspicious sign of accomplishment. My lama would never say, “Good yogi, well done,” but I would know he was happy with my progress, when he gave me further practices to do, which he did,—and I was left to evaluate and integrate the richness of the rainbow experience by myself.

What is the nature and role of criticism in the history of the development of parapsychology?

“Science is the best thing that has happened to human beings...but we can do it better.”

—John Ioannidis ([scopeblog.stanford.edu](http://scopeblog.stanford.edu))

In scientific methodology, a researcher does not initially advance an opinion that a theory is right or wrong but inquires how it has been formed and follows the procedures as to how the theory was arrived at and checks, again and again, to see if the data is valid. Paul Feyerabend, in *Against Method*, says, “All methodologies, even the most obvious ones, have their limits.” Contending that science does not run on fixed rules, he further states that distinguishing science from pseudoscience on objective grounds is not possible (Wiki “Criticism of Science”).

The Society for Psychical Research was created by spiritualist, Edmund Rogers, in 1882, as an attempt to bring psychic research into a more respectable milieu. The field of parapsychology has formally been under attack as a pseudoscience, since John Edgar Coover published the negative results of his ESP laboratory trials, in 1917. By 1927, J.B. Rhine had established laboratory research protocols in-

to paranormal activity. The research had moved from the “spirit raps” of the Fox Sisters, in the 1840s, to studies in telepathy, precognition, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, as well as out-of-body and near-death experiences (Watt, *Parapsychology: A Beginner’s Guide*, Oneworld, London, 2016).

Rhine comes under attack on multiple fronts—“no detectible medium for transference of data,” from the physicists; “too many possibilities for fraud,” from the ethicists; “more to know about the physical brain than with an unknown, imaginary brain,” from the psychologists,—so like reductionists to confuse mind (located in the heart chakra) with a brain that is another sense preceptor, located in the head. Rhine persisted in his vision, refining his praxis, creating an extensive meta-critical level of research into the nature of research itself (143).

Psychologists in the 1970s began to apply their own version of pseudo-yogic meditative techniques (*samatha*, *vipassana*, and guided visualizations) that emerge as the preliminary practices of “ganzfeld” mediumship. The ganzfeld technique attempts to isolate and create a conducive setting for the experiment of transference of image or thought data between two participants in separate, isolated environments. Initially, the data collected by Charles Honorton showed favorable results for the existence of extra-sensory perception.

Critical of Honorton’s work, Ray Hyman claimed there were problems with “sensory leakage between senders and receivers, and poor randomization during the selection of the target” (152). In the process of their debate, they collaborated on a voluminous correspondence concerning research methods. In the 1980s, Honorton improved his methods by building a computerized system that automated and improved his data collection (*autoganzfeld*) and showed improved results for PSI phenomena (153).

In the 1990s, Honorton collaborated with Daryl Bem and produced new, reified results, and this, in turn, brought new scrutiny to ongo-

ing parapsychological research, as well as to the new field of meta-analysis (the analysis of research methods). Social psychologist Robert Rosenthal claimed, "Science in general and parapsychological inquiry in particular have been well served by the...ganzfeld debate" (156).

What most intrigues me in this whole parapsychological endeavor is how the major contribution to science is the amount of work it takes to disprove something and, still, be left with something to prove.

With nothing to prove, I rest in my lama's mindstream.

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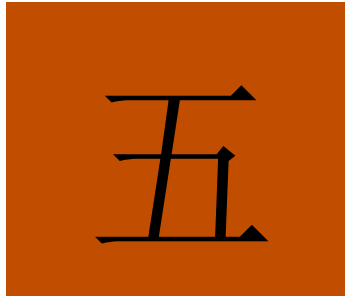
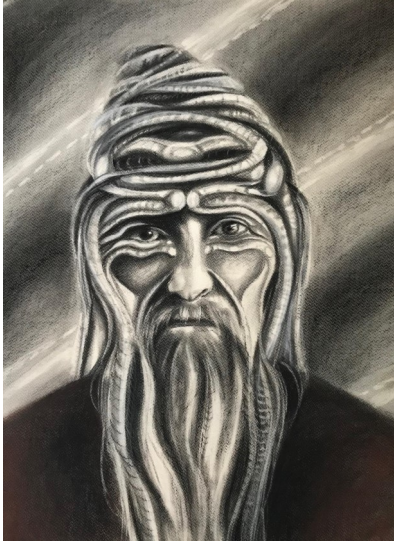
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# JAMPA DORJE THE WU OF WU

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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.

## PREFACE BY BOUVARD PÉCUCHET

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 philos-

ophy 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 his 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. Lobsang 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 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*.  
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.

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.

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

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

Angier writes with knowledge of having lived in a rainforest. The exploration of the Self can be found in Plato's dialogues, as well as in the inner cultivation schools of Daoism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. 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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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."

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. 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.

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.

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

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 required.

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.

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.

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.

Development of inner power (*te*) requires practice. Jampa says, "The greatest impediment to my practice is me getting in the way of myself." 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  
à la mode.

Watched a sea otter dive for crab.  
The sky Gualoises blue, the water  
a shade of jade. Smooth as a mirror.

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

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.

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.

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.  
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?*

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.

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.



## SONG OF WHAT I LEFT BEHIND IN BERKELEY

the president of the univers-  
ity Ph.D LL.D  
acting in good faith  
opened the key to symbols  
and saw

the new requirements  
applicable to persons  
not embarked  
are shown in circles

Do Not Fold, Bend  
Stipple or Mutilate

Beware of kindergartens  
early elements  
exceptional  
specialized  
adults  
credentials  
supervision

TEXTBOOKS  
MAPS

IRS regulations

under the current regulations  
peace and gladness  
cannot be deducted

# PSYCHEDELICS AND PHILOSOPHY

## Jampa Dorje



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### THIS COULD BE MY LAST CUP OF TEA

In his book, *The Doors of Perception*, Aldous Huxley claims each one of us is potentially Mind at Large. By exploring his specific mind, he finds mescaline to be a way to “cleanse the doors of perception” and, thereby, enter this Mind of the universe. The phrase, “cleanse the doors of perception” comes from William Blake’s *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: “If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear as it is Infinite. For man has closed himself up, til he sees all things thro’ narrow clinks of his cavern.” This idea echoes Plato’s Allegory of the Cave.

For Plato, the Allegory is metaphysical, but another way to look at it is epistemologically. What can we know? And how do we know it? Plato contends that we are limited in our knowledge because we only see shadows of the real world. In the cave, prisoners see the flickering images of objects projected onto the cave wall by the light of a fire. One prisoner breaks away from his fellows and ventures outside the cave. He is overwhelmed by the intensity of the true light and the intellectual satisfaction he receives from the display of forms he experiences in the real world; he returns to the cave to tell of his vision; here, no one believes him; and the group convince him he has been mistaken.

On his mescaline trip, Huxley experiences something of the true light, the drab being bright, the inside being outside, the insignificant being important:

Mescaline raises all colors to a higher power and makes the percipient aware of innumerable fine shades of difference, to which, at ordinary times, he is completely blind (27)

and

It was odd, of course, to feel that "I" was not the same as these arms and legs "out there," as this wholly objective trunk and neck and even head (52)

and, finally, he realizes that

Today the percept had swallowed up the concept. I was so completely absorbed in looking, so thunderstruck by what I actually saw, that I could not be aware of anything else. Garden furniture, laths, sunlight, shadow these were no more than names and notions, mere verbalizations for utilitarian or scientific purposes, after the event (53).

My own experience corresponds to Huxley's. I took peyote and had the rush of superpowers granted by Mescalero, wild colors, crazy movements, significant encounters. Here are my field notes from this peyote trip:

I finish my reading Hyatt's *Blind Owl* and ingest eight capsules of peyote. August 1964, I await what a writer of an article in *Time* claims will be the strangest experience of my life. My patience wavers, so I take another eight caps, light up a joint, and drink a beer. Then, I walk to the corner drug-gist and sign for two bottles of codeine cough syrup, knocking them off at the end of an alleyway. A door slams shut behind me.

Streaks of purple light, raw as butchered beef, flood in on a high tide of effulgent hallucination, as one solitary child stands upon the brink of knowing the Meaning of the Universe, partially seeing—furry clouds modulating in confusing colors—the essence as if always known, what does essence mean?—the primary substance emerging in eclamptic convulsions, granted by Divine Sophia *a priori* understanding, a fateful step into the opaque transparency of contradiction, where death is relative to absolute birth, an aftermath of rhythm and sound contrasting with shades of fuming

gray, curling, covering, uncovering the piano of Armageddon.

I lean against the alley wall. Currents of mist form and play in and out between the fence slats—a child's first sight of unrecognizable twinkles of bronze light, a partial appearance in one dusty corner of desolate shapes of undulating turmoil, fluctuating figments of remorse and fear, a paraphrase of past captured, held in wonder, accepted as the fragrant blossom of fragmented eternal fruition—an epiphany of my mortal nature draped in flowing lavender—but as I look closer, my clothes are patterned, my hands are wrinkled, and as these synapses fire, an abundance of paisley swirls are saturated in green and then drip from gashes in my fingertips.

I reach the street, the sidewalk heaving, parking meters drooping like sunflowers, people moving in ectoplasmic quivers—can they see the ecstasy and nightmare of tremulous trepidation on my face?—the street a sulfurous plane of carrion, the sky is yellow, and at my feet an abyss of weird, wild delight and grizzly horror, butterflies of gas and putrid phantoms nourished on tortured prayers.

My heart twists like a snake in hot water, ice-blue blood in my nerves, animal blood cursed and coursing, translucent blood trapped in a fiery alchemical casement, even as this alchemy, converting each moment to the next, fashions freeways in my heart—my life in seaward ruin, retreads bare, a mummy cloth stuffed in my blood-clotted soul, breaking full tilt to the moon.

I sit in the Mediterranean Café drinking double espressos, listening to ethereal voices, then to the Garden Spot for a pack of Gauloises, stop by Mario's for a plate of rice and beans, decide to take in *Battleship Potemkin* at the Cinema Guild—but when Mother Russia comes down the Steps of Odessa, I freak-out and head down Dwight Way to the Steppenwolf where I can be scizoid in peace—*Abandon All Hope Ye Who Enter Here*, and below that, —*For Madmen Only!*

A table of Hell's Angels are deep in their cups with Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer* accompanying their animated movement, strobed by candles in the deep shadows—Scorpio, Scorpio rising, I feel gladness linked to madness. I sit at a small table by the wall down range from the boisterous boys with their furious guise, and the wood grains form hieroglyphs, characters moving in rhythms syncopated to my breathing, waves of color, flowers whispering I am a special guest in this sad dream—knowing, when a moth flies out of my eye, the Dead will teach me to love.

A heavenly biker named Michael joins me, and I focus on what he is saying, but his words come out in slow motion—something about efficient work starts from idle, not from toil, or perhaps his motorcycle idles and he want me to pay the toll, so I project myself frame by frame through the

flames onto an accelerating explosion of leather and chrome. Oh, God, I will keep on until I reach your blessed Paradise!

Like Dante, I returned from my trip to Paradise. There was laundry to do—I had to write my *100 Cantos* (D Press, Sebastopol, 2004). Like Plato’s prisoner, I returned to the cave. After my peyote trip, I knew there was another reality, and this solved my epistemological questions. However, a metaphysical question remained. Why is there a laundromat rather than emptiness? I spent four years in solitary retreat doing Tibetan yogic practices to reframe the question: Why is there EMPTINESS manifesting as something rather than nothing?

. . .

Where do these thoughts come from? What are these pesky shadows, flitting across my brain pan like so many Chickadees. Funny, the name of a bird, that sounds like the language of that bird. Chick-a-dee-dee. God said to name things, and the poet in us names them. But where do these thoughts come from? Are they from my subconscious? But where is that? Do they arrive via neuronal rhizome-like pathways? Have they traveled astral channels connected via the ether to a Muse? Do they self-arise? Poet Jack Spicer says, somewhere, that poetry is a conversation among the dead and that the poet gets it second hand.

Anyway, Chris Letheby, a philosopher working on issues related to psychedelic drugs, has a take on this conundrum. In his “Being for No-one: Psychedelic Experience and Minimal Subjectivity” essay, he posits the Subjective Principle (SP) of Billon and Kriegel (2015) and subjects the concept that *all phenomenal mental states are experienced as belonging to a subject*—that experience requires minimal self-awareness for it to exist—to rigorous logical analysis.

Letheby reports the different counter arguments to the SP, such as mental states that seem to lack self-consciousness for schizophrenics (such as “inserted thoughts”) and mental states that affect patients with depersonalization disorder. Since, the patients can reference their mental states, even if they believe them to be not theirs, the SPers infer there has to be a degree of self-consciousness. Letheby pushes back with examples of narratives from non-psychotic subjects that tell of having mental states that have total selflessness when they take certain psychedelic drugs.

Letheby utilizes the work of Guillot by introducing the concepts of *for-me-ness* (awareness of mental states), *me-ness* (awareness of the self), and *mine-ness* (awareness of the ownership of the thoughts (12). With the addition of the different approaches by the Universalists, the Typicalists, and the Absentists, a confabulation of experiences helps to substantiate SP claims. However, this maxed-out reductionism supporting the Subjective Principle in

no way prevents Letheby from concluding that mental states can exist that happen to no one (22).

Conversely, I am confused as to whether the *samahdi* of my yogic concentration is empty of self-nature or empty with residue. In the Tibetan Dzog Chen tradition, we don't claim the self is totally absent—some minimal mental activity is necessary, or you would be dead—we claim that the self that manifests is impermanent and without essence. The effort of meditation is to choreograph what seems to occupy center stage to a peripheral location, where it will find itself in a harmonious condition and in a beneficial role with its neighbors.

My astrologer informs me that today, 5/5/21, is “a day to go with the flow with the Moon in highly adaptable Pisces.” Also, it is the day that *Eidos: A Journal for Philosophy of Culture* did not accept my essay, “A War Against the Unfavorable Maras.” My essay details the use of the Tibetan Five Dakini Mandala Principle (<https://www.taramandala.org/programs/wisdom-rising-mandalaf-training/what-is-a-dakini/>) in conjunction with the multiple persona tradition (*heteronyms*) of Fernando Pessoa. To stay in the flow, I will activate the White Mirror-like Mind Dakini to soothe the bruised ego of the philosopher. As Letheby points out, “me” is how experience is experienced. A feeling of well-being is how I choose to experience it.

## DIONYSUS HAS A SANCTUARY AT THE ACROPOLIS

In Rob Lovering's “Non-Harm-Based Arguments” essay, he explores different arguments against the recreational use of drugs to see if any of them prove their case. Different arguments are explored: *Instrumental* (i.e. the use of drugs for creative purposes), *Degradation* (i.e. effects that cause low performance in various activities), and *Blocking Basic Goods* (BBG). Lovering lays out the BBG argument in this way: “Recreational drug use blocks (damages or destroys) basic goods; therefore, recreational drug use is wrong” (1). The basic goods he lists (an extended list from John Finnis' original seven items) are life, physical and mental health, procreation, social life, knowledge, rational conduct, authenticity, justice, friendship, religion, aesthetic experiences, fairness, achievement, excellence in work and play, inner peace, marriage, and self-integration (3-4). These basic goods make us happy.

Lovering says these basic goods are derived from natural law theory, a theory with many interpretations but which can be traced to Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy page on natural law, online, Aquinas bases his concept of natural law in a



theological theory of God's providence and the role of a human being's rationality in this providence. Lovering does not want to get entangled in theological conundrums and is content to view natural law in a secular fashion, as based on observable values intrinsic to human nature (2). The paramount good that is emphasized is rationality. Rationality for humans is equated with being natural and therefore equals good. Recreational drugs are not considered to be one of our natural basic goods, nor the injection of them based on a rational choice; so, by deduction, they are considered bad.

Some of the goods listed by Lovering are transcendental concepts—justice, fairness, inner peace—and some are mundane—work and play, social life, procreation. Then, he posits two types of BBG: *the physical and mental health version* (4) and *excellence in work and play version* (5). Data from U.S. Dept of Health research indicates that drugs like cocaine and heroin do chronic physical damage to the body and interfere with rational judgements concerning attainment of BBG in general. Similar data from U.S. Dept. of Justice shows that use of these addictive drugs do not enhance performance at work and play. Research continues, but a report I read today (5/15/21) in Business Insider by Dominik Reuter ([Experts Say Jury Is Out on Microdosing Psychedelics \(businessinsider.com\)](https://www.businessinsider.com/experts-say-jury-is-out-on-microdosing-psychedelics-2021-5)) reinforces the view that LSD in small amounts has risks. Reuter ends his article with this caveat: “When it comes to psychedelics, contrary to the Silicon Valley ethos of ‘move fast and break things,’ experts say it's better to go slow and follow the rules.” Presently, this is the consensus opinion of those in power.

One thing that makes us happy that Lovering does not include in his list of basic goods is pleasure. He treats this component separately (10). There, he undermines the BBG arguments. Following his logic, if pleasure is a better good, pleasure trumps the other basic goods, when these are not living up to their reputation and do not provide a suitable lifestyle.

As the Furry Freak Brothers were fond of saying, “Dope will get you through times of no money better than money will get you through times of no dope.”

Later in the essay, Lovering considers the use of entheogens and opiates as allowing someone to have more control, not less, in ordering the events of one's lifestyle by the creative use of the drugs to enhance some kinds of actions (29). Is there a mystical door in the wall opening here? Can a well person improve themselves spiritually with mind-altering intoxicants?

. . .

Dionysus had a sanctuary at the base of the south face of the Parthenon, in Athens, but His temple was outside the gates. His statue and relics were brought to the sanctuary from the temple during festivals. The Athenians were slow to welcome foreign gods.

Why would a “well” person poison themselves with a foreign substance to see the face of God? Over a cup of tea, a present-day emanation of Aquinas said to me, “God exists, and one will meet Hir visage soon enough. Ze has two attributes besides omnipotence and omnipresence. God is both feral and curious and encounters some of us before our time.”

. . .

## **RADICAL DZOGCHEN IN BERKELEY**

By the time Leary proclaimed “Tune In, Turn On,  
Drop Out,” I had already dropped out  
And turned on to my own tune.

We had no discipline, but we had *l’espirit*.  
We had no patience, but we had the grit.  
Our mantra—sex, drugs, rock ‘n’ roll.

And power to the people.  
We saw the body as a temple, and we abused  
4:4 time until you couldn’t march to it.

After the Magic Bus returned from Millbrook, I saw it parked on Dwight Way, just off Telegraph, around the corner from the Med. I climbed on and looked around. Too cramped, and I got off. I think it would have been fun to ride in it to wherever it was going for an Acid Test. But that is another trip untraveled.

## **IF YOU DIE BEFORE YOU DIE, YOU WON’T DIE WHEN YOU DIE**

Should psychedelics be rescheduled for therapeutic use?

I make a declaration: If one has an inalienable right to life in the wide, wide world, I argue one has an inalienable right to knowledge of what it is to die, to have an opportunity, in a controlled environment, to experience the process of the transformation of consciousness as it is related to the death of the corporal body. One way is to wait and see. Another is to follow a path that offers an understanding of the phenomena of dying. The *Tibetan Book of the Dead* maps this path and acts as a “mind mirror” for us to observe our physical and psychological relationship to ourselves and a world of multiple dimensions of being—being in an awake zone, a sleep zone, a meditation zone, and a dead zone.

The first dead zone, the *chikhai bardo*, is the moment of death and features the “clear light of reality” component; in the second, *chonyid bardo*, we experience a reality of dynamic visionary displays; and in the third, *sidpa bardo*, or bardo of rebirth, hallucinations occur based upon our past habits (Wiki). This map of consciousness parallels the ego death produced by a psychedelic experience. If I had a pill that would show me this panorama and allow me to grasp the noetic quality attested to by many of history’s great sages, I would like the legal right to take it. I say this knowing how far off the rails a TRIP might go, as well as knowing the unlikelihood of such a pill curing my existential malaise without me doing the actual spiritual work.

. . .

Continuing from where I left off at the end of “This Could Be My Last Cup of Tea:

The fission of elements, the power of the sun, freed from gravity and, thus, from time, transformed into a body of light, traveling at 300,000 km/sec—this was me, as I walked the streets of Berkeley on peyote, talking, talking, talking about the New Day. In an art gallery, I judged the art passé and spoke of the coming vanguard. In a barbershop, I saw multiple images of myself in the double mirrors curving towards a confrontation with my end and my beginning and was curious that I might be nothing more than an anti-matter angel peering back.

I entered a church. The outer door was open, but an inner door to a vestibule was locked. A voice said, “This is your house; go in,” and I kicked the door with a Titan’s force, and the wood splintered, and I picked up two long fragments, a sword and a wand and formed a cross. A figure appeared from a side door and grabbed me with both arms, until I broke free and fled through an exit door. I shed my black sport coat because I thought it was a Specter taking possession of me, then, imagined I had wings and was a raven fused with darkness.

Stepping out of civilization into the primeval garden, I discovered the naked lineage of yogic realization in the wrong place at the wrong time. Someone called the police. I was in meditational samadhi when I was interrupted by two policemen. This prompted me to rise and climb the stairs to a laundry room on the top floor of an apartment building on Blake Street. There was a large window open, and I got up on the sill with a plan to ascend to the ether, when a gentle voice pleaded with me not to jump. I looked back and saw a young police officer trembling with a gun in his hand. Beast, Buddha, Angel, now I manifested full-Daddy-O as Jesus Christ on the cross. I uttered my terrible words of doubt: *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* (Matt. 27.47), then fell back into the arms of the Law.

The policemen collected my clothes, helped me dress, and handcuffed me behind my back. The ride to jail was short. The rookie at the wheel and a veteran riding shotgun slowed once to warn a street walker she was in the wrong neighborhood. *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her* (John, 8.7). At the Berkeley Police Station, after I was

interrogated, I was asked to strip off my black suit, and in this they parted my garments, looking for evidence of drugs. "Here's some seeds," said the young centurion. "That's all we need," said the older, "one for analysis and one to exhibit." This was him *who received a seed by the wayside* (Matt. 13.19).

In my cell, I found a *Gideon Bible* and fell to reading *Isaiah*, aloud: "Then said I, woe is me! For I am undone..." (*Isa.* 6.5), and someone in another cell said, "What does this babblers say; he seems to be a setter forth of strange gods..." (*Tim.* 17.18). The wailing and the gnashing of teeth in the cell block brought the guard from his cage. He wrestled the book from me, and I responded by sticking my head in the toilet, saying, **He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned** (*Matt.* 16.16). As I pulled the handle, the guard grabbed me by the ankles and drug me out of the cell, or I would have

The guard put me into a padded cell. "And in the dungeon, there was no water, but mire" (*Jer.* 38.6), and I sank into the mire. I had feces in my hair, on my clothes, on my hands, and I could taste it in my mouth. On my court date, I sat in a holding cell outside the court room. A lawyer, retained by my father, seeing my disheveled appearance, asked, "Do you even know who you are?" I replied, **I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last** (*Rev.* 22.13). She then asked, "Do you think you are Jesus?" And I answered, **Thou sayest it** (*Mark* 15.2). The judge declared me to be incompetent to stand trial and ordered that I be held for observation at Herrick Hospital, in Berkeley, until the doctors' evaluations could be entered as evidence.

When I arrived at Herrick Hospital, I was still spewing verbiage from the deepest recesses of my subconscious mind. It sounded like I was quoting from James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* or enacting the part of Lucky in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, perhaps both at the same time: *riverrun past Eve and Adam's brings us to the stones of Connemara by a circulation of Commodus vicus to the works of Fartum and Belcher past Howth Castle the stones know the secret...*

After listening to me for a few minutes, the admitting psychiatrist left the room, returning with a colleague to listen to my rant. Then, I was allowed to enter the dayroom, where I met my fellow inmates. There was a hierarchy among those that were not catatonic. The matriarch was Mrs. Melick, the Queen of Hearts.

Mrs. Melick confided to me that between the digits of her feet there was toe jam, and in her belly button there was rot, and in her nose was snot, and although it might seem gross, like it or not, if you took a close look, there were bugs with homes and families, who on Sunday went to church, if not eaten by birds on their perch, and in their shit lived microbes, happy as could be, a pure world, dazzling and bright, and what you miss of beauty is what you don't like.

At lunch, the Queen of Hearts sat at the head of the table and was joined by the Mad Hatter, the Cheshire Cat, the Walrus, the Carpenter, and a couple of extras from *Marat/Sade*. At the opposite end of the table sat a tiny

Japanese Seventh Adventist lady who thought she was the Virgin Mary. She said that at the time of the Immaculate Conception, her womb had burned with the heat of a thousand suns. "And who are you?" I was asked. "I'm not sure I rightly know," I replied. "I think I may be Dante, trying to find my way through this dark forest."

The details of my arrest posed a problem for the doctors. I was charged with felony possession of a controlled substance and with a misdemeanor for being indecently exposed in a public place. The drug charge was clearly a criminal offense, but the nudity implied insanity. Combining the charges could mean I would be incarcerated in a facility for the criminally insane. The doctors considered my actions to be a minimal infraction of the law. As I was judged "to be an insane person until such time as he should be sane," they recommend I be transferred to a mental facility near Mendocino.

And so, I began to chill out by regaining a stable routine. Being locked up is like that: three meals each day and lights out at a certain time. I was given Stelazine, an anti-psychotic drug, and the erratic and hallucinatory nature of my mind stream subsided. Indeed, the ability to think on any but the most fundamental level—ground zero—seemed to disappear. Anything I looked at appeared like a cartoon to me, everything hollow to the core, although I could not have said this to anyone. I would have been incapable of forming this thought constructed as a simile.

Television was a horrific visionary experience. There did not appear to be any screen, and the movements were raw and violent. The news programs covered the war in Vietnam. And this, too, was raw and violent. President Johnson, who had become president after the assassination of President Kennedy, was running for his first term against Governor Barry Goldwater, who declared he might have to use nuclear weapons, if elected. I needed a rest from all of this, and this mental hospital was, in some ways, a pure land.

"Do you see any visions? Do you hear any voices?" Here, I'm being interviewed by the admitting psychiatrist. His recommendation: "Just take these pills at pill call and be good for ninety days." I muse on the darkening wall. Friends write letters; family visits; doctors change; books from the Red Cross. This is an extravagant society, elastic in its tolerance. We plant periwinkles and sit beneath shade trees manufactured by Dame Kindness' computer, while within the walls lobotomy is performed, along with shock treatments, straightjackets, and ping pong.

Our food is wheeled in on a steel contraption. Richard, as it would be, is the Mongoloid idiot in the first chair. He is a classic case of bad manners at the table. He stuffs oranges and bananas, peel and pulp, into his maw with delicate, aquiline hands of a bluish hue. After eating, he goes back to rocking in a stationary chair in the dayroom. He looks out the window or at the continuously present TV. He varies this routine by hitting himself with his fists. Then the orderlies on duty outfit him with a football helmet and shoulder pads, and if he begins his bear dance and tries to spar with anyone, he is escorted to his cell. We are warned his bite is poisonous. Richard is here when I arrive and here when I leave, a doppelganger.

This was 1964. The use of psychedelic drugs was increasing, but the

doctors, had not yet received Leary, Alpert, and Metzner's field notes. They were interested in the pathology of bad trips, and I had a room full of shrinks at one of my interviews. I appreciated the irony of being interviewed in the same room where I had once been a guest, during a visit with my high school American Problems class. Now, sitting on the opposite side of the table, I was experiencing what it was like to be a problem.

. . .

A postscript: Mendocino State Mental Hospital is now The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, a Zen Retreat Center. I was just a little ahead of my time. Yes—a mental hospital that became a pure land and a mental patient who now sees all appearances and events as the enlightened activities of the buddhas.

### **KNOCK, KNOCK...WHO'S THERE?**

*If you think you are free, there's no escape possible.*  
—Ram Das

In *The Doors of Perception* (1954), Aldous Huxley uses the term “a door in the wall”—a term he borrowed from H.G. Wells—to indicate an escape from our limited worldview. The drug mescaline was Huxley's door of choice, but anything that can alter consciousness and enable a person to experience new vistas of self-awareness and understanding of one's environs can be considered “a door in the wall.” The use of tobacco was my first and alcohol my second door in the wall. I was well-underage, so there was the risk of being found out, but the suspense-induced adrenaline hit only added to the thrill. I experienced the speeding up and slowing down of time consciousness and the fleeting feeling of well-being in my indulgences. I always felt like a genius between my second and third drink, and the swirls of smoke somehow contributed to this illusion.

Books are a door in the wall. My twelfth-grade American Problems teacher, Mr. Rogers, encouraged us to read far-out stuff. Allen Ginsberg's “Howl” was circulating, still warm with the poet's breath, and seeing those lovely Anglo-Saxon four-letter words—*fuck, cunt, shit, piss*—in print blew my mind. *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821) by Thomas de Quincey and *Opium: Diary of a Cure* (1930) by Jean Cocteau circulated among the intelligentsia, when I was a freshman at university. I dreamed of floating through a wall.

Outside of sampling small amounts of marijuana, a marijuana that was less potent in 1960 than it is in 2021, taking a heroic dose of peyote was my

first psychedelic experience; and it went badly, me being busted in my birthday suit on Blake Street in Berkeley (believing it was a “New Day”) with two seeds of pot in my coat pocket, which the police officers decided was enough evidence to bust me for indecent exposure and possession of a controlled substance (a felony). A trip to the loony bin was ordered by the court. I had not learned about “set” and “setting.” The only thing I knew about psychedelics was what I had read in Time Magazine, and the writer had become paranoid and worried about hurting his family. This did not sound like a good experience around which to establish a mind-set; and taking the caps of peyote in an alleyway behind a drugstore in the center of town was not exactly copasetic. Still, the so-called door in the wall was really, really thrown wide open, and I (?) was swept into a tumbling pandemonium of agony and ecstasy.

I was swept into the byways of my mind while in the custody of the State. In a sense I became a version of the *homo sacer*, a figure of Roman law: a person who is banned and may be killed by anybody but may not be sacrificed in a religious ritual. I was cast out of society inwardly rather than outwards, and while Aldous Huxley was wandering around in the Largest Drugstore in the World in LA discovering his cleugy world of consciousness, I (or my ego-dead self) sat in the day room of Napa State Hospital, feeding bananas to my doppelganger. This type of psychedelic experience is not closed to the public, but I do not recommend this as a ritual.

Still, ego death is ego death; and, as Huxley says, “the man who comes back through the Door in the Wall will never be quite the same man as the man who went out” (79). Whether he or she will be wiser is the question. The Law, the Church, and the Medical Profession consider drug use that is not prescribed by a physician to be prohibited. The Law fears the anarchy of lawbreakers; the Church fears anything resembling a Dionysian cult; and medical practitioners pay dues to AMA to protect their livelihood. Also, the Philosophers are afraid a psychedelic experience might upset their ontological well-being by deconstructing their hold on the Logos. Psychologists fear their patients might cure themselves. Politicians fear the discovery that governments are unnecessary. Corporations fear that the consumer’s desire for goods will diminish. My parents were afraid that I would remain crazy forever. And I have. But I have learned not to get busted when I am high. And I have learned how to get high without taking drugs. I follow William Blake and walk “among the fires of hell, delighted with the enjoyments of Genius, which to Angels look like torment and insanity...” (*A Memorable Fancy*).

I met Richard Alpert in Berkeley in 1964. He was standing on the steps of Sproul Hall talking to some students, and I joined them. He was a celebrity after having been ousted from Harvard over the psychedelic experiments he had performed with Timothy Leary, but he had not yet traveled to India and become Ram Das. He was a co-author, along with Leary and Ralph Metzner, of *The Psychedelic Experience* (1964). I had read this book, which

is based on a loose translation of the *Bardol Thodol*, a mind terma of Karma Lingpa (1326–1386) known as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which I had also read. I had two polished agates in my pocket known as Tibetan God Eyes, which had been given to me by a Berkeley street shaman who was into the occult, and the stones may have been the real thing. I gave them to Richard, because (who knows?) we shared the same first name.

Once Ram Das moved beyond using psychedelics to contemplate the Divine Order of the Universe, he began the practice of meditation. Meditation is another door in the wall. It is hard to sit still and observe one's monkey mind in action. First, the practice of *samatha*, or mind calmness, is taught. Then, *vipassana*, or insight meditation, is taught. They are inseparable, but they are traditionally taught in this order. With insight meditation, I seek knowledge of the nature of reality. It is hard work with many attempts failing. It helps to have a teacher. How to find a good one in the spiritual meat market can be a problem. James Freeman's experience in *The Last Shaman* documentary (Netflix) is a case in point. I got a powerful mind transmission from Sogyal Rinpoche when I first entered the Vajrayana path, but soon after this, he published a best seller, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (2002), becoming a rock star on the Tibetan lama circuit. I found Lama Tsultrim Allioni, an American woman who had a vision of creating a center for long retreats in Colorado and was more accessible, and I joined her and her stable of Tibetan and Bhutanese masters of meditation. I have been a devoted student in her sangha for thirty years. All blessings flow from the lama.

I completed a traditional Tibetan long retreat. Tibetan metaphysicians say that each second contains 1/32 of Wisdom Mind (the true nature of mind), but the wisdom moment always went by so fast I missed it. One year contains 31,536,000 seconds. The cosmological idea behind the retreat is to take all the wisdom moments that would occur in a hundred years and compress them into one framework of time and put this time to good use by doing ritual practices for three years and three fortnights. The regime consists of four sessions of daily meditations and extra ceremonies that must be performed on a yearly or monthly basis. Making it through this door in the wall takes more time than most people have available.

I have banged my head against the wall. I have tried to tunnel under the wall. I have thrown my body against the wall while wearing a straight jacket. Finally, I gently knocked on the wall, and a door opened. I was asked what I wanted. I replied, "More light."





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## DZOGCHEN AND THE ART OF POETRY

JAMPA DORJE

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**Dzogchen** (Wylie: *rdzogs chen*, “Great Perfection” or “Great Completion”), also known as *atiyoga* (utmost yoga), is a tradition of teachings in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism aimed at discovering and continuing in the ultimate ground of existence. The primordial ground (*ghzi*, “basis”) is said to have the qualities of purity (i.e. emptiness), spontaneity (*lhun grub*, associated with luminous clarity) and compassion (*thugs rje*). The goal of Dzogchen is knowledge of this basis, this knowledge is called *rigpa* (Skt. *vidyā*). —Wikipedia

For Clayton

## DZOGCHEN AND THE ART OF POETRY

Writing equals path  
view of what is—vision, action, meditation

The conduct, being a poet 24/7  
view, vision

Winning out against the poem, outside, view of what is, poem as a  
box, “follow the lineaments of desire,” book as measure  
Base of poetry, poetry is everything  
Said Jung, “Try and buy the well  
and it springs up somewhere else.”

Poetry as experienced  
*Rigpa*

Action equals writing, eye-mind-hand conceive, mind-lungs-voice,  
sing speak, dick-gut-heart,  
compose, mind series

Space series, form/content  
logopoeia, melopoeia, phanopoeia

Pithy series,  
Said Pound, “After all’s said and done,  
it’s the feelings remain.”

How we look at the world  
illusion  
material  
both

Williams: *No ideas  
but in things*

## BASE

### The Source

From whence comes the poem?  
“inspiration”  
need to fulfill promise  
result of a prayer, or possibly  
habit

## Inspiration

flooding feeling, bliss  
the zone  
vision-external-vision

## Apocalyptic need

to write like crazy

## PATH

Make the poem  
“We’ve come to bring you metaphors for your poems.”  
mind treasure is a Ter  
Chaucer as Garab Dorje  
Shakespeare as  
Guru Rinpoche

## Build like a box

a Grail for Gail—a poem  
for her birthday, an occasion  
inside out

## Subconscious or nature

best word  
first word  
beauty

outside in      channel  
ghosts, Martians

## The Muse

Demons/Angels  
Mind Ter

## the Unconscious

hypnotic intoxicants, both  
“Just starts to happen”

## Visualization – mind

Breath/rhythm – energy  
Word – body

Tulku Sangnak, beaten in prison, dances  
The Dance of King Gesar

FRUIT

Somehow things come  
together

Brought its own solution  
which was very poetic

Taught me how to draw  
a bunny

Saying something  
is more appropriate  
than you could dream of

Saying something  
more profound  
even if you don't get it

Crow story—  
how he got a drink

In the poem I was  
able to cry

To name it kills it

“My cat died the other day.”

Confessional poem, in the 50s  
like a sheep sheared in a pen,  
and then you stamp it  
Don't want you to miss  
the point

“Capture  
phrases  
that  
come to  
mind”

The occasion arises  
by the occurrence  
then, you somehow write it:

“I met a traveler from an antique land.”

Stuff coming into life  
    that haunts you of  
things I said  
    I shouldn’t have  
things said  
    I could have said better  
things other people said

“It was a beautiful day,  
and I want to remember it.”

“Misery comes from every direction.”

“Whatever are we going to do about it?  
we can’t always be watching TV.”

Inner story  
    a séance  
    a poem  
    a book review  
    a skit  
    the voice of the Supreme Source

“I feel like a  
    blind man who  
        doesn’t know  
            where he is”

“Did you think  
    the Kaliyuga Age was going to be easy?”

Poetry of the mind  
poetry of the voice  
poetry of the body

Internet, reality tv

Am I forgetting anything?

My tale

## ON IRWIN ROAD AND ABROAD

near Emerisa Gardens, I  
found an amethyst, fractured, peered in  
saw Arya Tara  
and Coyote

I know just enough to know  
I know enough to know  
I just don't know

So, I'll say  
"I'll let this go without comment."

Heideggerian questions:  
how to breathe? how to fuck? how to know?

The question is not how there's something  
rather than nothing, but how  
there's something that IS nothing.

On the Pine Ridge Rez  
moving to the Sun Dance  
moving to drum and wind  
midnight visages under a Shinto moon  
zephyr rustling the buffalo grass  
my tent covered  
with tarantulas  
Medicine Man says, "This I've never seen."

.

Jesus Tantra—  
purification  
then, refuge  
raise Bodhi

100 syllable prayer  
mandala offering  
guru yoga, manifest as Mary Magdalene

Where in this mandala are you?  
Can you see the glory? the temple  
not built with human hands?

Tantra wants all your stuff, your baggage,  
your neurosis, your psychosis, your passion

to transform into virtue

Sutra like Newton's physics  
Tantra like Einstein's theory of relativity  
Dzogchen like quantum mechanics  
You = U

.

as above, so below

2 values  
3 values  
5 values

create unrest in the "self"  
a carousel of bumper cars

.

Sane, seine, saints  
lots of holes in my mental net

Juice for neuro-anatomical re-programming

## HOW WE GOT HERE

Lifetimes to find a Human form  
to find the Dharma  
to find my Guru

Tantra is all about stuff  
uses everything to polish the buddha belly

Boiling it down to  
virtue and purification  
Use every sense  
common sense and nonsense

Turn your crap into compassion fertilizer  
Spread it on the floor of samsara  
dry it, cool it off, plow it into

That Garden of Earthly Delights  
That Garden of Horrors Untold

*grandure [sic] of grey dawn in transparent gold,  
Myramids [sic] of restless weary wanderers  
to play the harp strings of youth*

Occult—  
Finding knowledge  
hidden in gambling games  
roulette, craps, blackjack  
auguries

Art—  
 Apollo + mask  
 Muse = Spirit = Subconscious  
sung by Someone
 to close in on the ineffable Source

CLOSE (A.C.D.)—  
*to stop, obstruct*  
*to shut, surround*  
*to bring together, join*  
*to get rid of at a reduced price*  
*to bring an end to*  
*to come near*  
*to grapple, engage in*  
*to agree*  
*to come to an end, terminate*  
*to be worth at the end of trading*  
*lacking freshness*  
*confined, narrowly confined*  
*heavy, oppressed*  
*secretive, reticent*  
*stingy, parsimonious*  
*scarce, as with money*  
*not an open season*  
*near, near together*  
*intimate, confidential*  
*compact*  
*a juncture, a union*  
*not deviating from the subject*  
*short, near the surface*  
*not deviating from the model or original*  
*strictly logical*  
*strict, searching, minute*  
*end or conclusion*



*enclosure*  
*narrow entry, alleyway*  
*(British) a piece of property w/o buildings*

Power of the triad—

Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva,  
Creator, Sustainer, Destroyer  
Father, Son, Holy Ghost  
Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, Nirmanakaya  
View, Path, Fruit  
Body, Voice, Mind  
Truth, Beauty, Goodness  
Id, Ego, Superego  
Imaginary, Symbolic, Real  
Inner, Outer, Secret, Inner Secret Secret

I'm a trust-fund Buddha in voluntary house arrest  
"Voluntary house arrest has the stink of liberty."

Adhere to the samadhi of equanimity  
when it comes to Beauty  
    BUT retain the option to weigh in  
on any kind of

ontological/cognitive/evolutionary dualisms

*It's easier to box than to throw rocks.*

"box" means to categorize  
    aesthetic  
vision \_\_\_\_\_

Allegory of quinine seed  
as a path to samadhi

Sky walking with the dakinis  
they help give shape to my world

"You need to have an ego  
if you're going to get rid of it."

Get rid of something  
that doesn't exist

Point of it—  
Point to it

To come to the point  
and integrate the personae

How deconstruct it?  
Take a chop at it  
cut through  
leap over

Re-evaluations  
Realizations  
Visualizations  
And mantras binges

Leibniz, monadology of self-reflecting selves  
Spinoza, geometrical values of God as substance  
Orpheus, orphic creation

Out of the tip of the branch, making buds  
moon spheres, mind spheres  
cyclic, samsaric  
just say, "I'm sorry."

Help others, so all may rest

Going to do that  
so that  
all my rest  
helps others  
find the four boundless states

One man's search for something enduring  
by making some  
thing out of the ordinary  
making something out  
of the  
ordinary  
to keep love alive

"Elegant portrait of y'all  
wrapped in myrtle,  
leading us into this tale of  
a relationship's travails  
and triumphs! A pure  
pleasure to move through."

Flatworm as a proof of God—  
we inherited a predator's intelligence on the food chain

or we would have remained a sponge or coral

Arrive, May 19, in Newark

Return, May 28, to San Francisco

explore

leaving tracks on the moon

and on the ocean's floor

“Like moons in water”

when I was 10, I

saw an angel in a hollow redwood tree

Blindsided with baptism at 14

in basement of High Street Presbyterian Church in Oakland

at 16

I bought *Why I'm Not a Christian* in a Sausalito bookstore

Atheism leading me to Mysticism

“Like moons in water”

Like moons in water=adverbial phrase

Sights=subject, deceive=verb

Us=direct object

We of second clause=subject

forever roam=verb and adverb

in cyclic chains= prepositional phrase

modifying “we”

So=conditional clause

all may rest in their clear mindstreams

I/Raise/Bodhi

in 4 boundless states

“Like moons in water”

Base

Path

Fruit

two needs complete

Three views

*Terminator*

*Matrix*

*Bladerunner*

Dzogchen Presbyterianism  
Passion as a Chöd Feast  
Immortals, rainbow body, ascension  
empty/exists

“Like moons in water”

Alchemy, chemical, elemental  
Divination, intuitive mind  
Yoga, union of mind-body

Karma cleared up with prajna  
via dharma  
                  slows the wheel  
enough to step off  
but not enough to be detached

“Like moons in water”

Monk stand-up routine  
Monk can joke about death  
Monk can deny existential dilemma  
Monk can deny existence of creator  
Monk can use dirty language

Form is an extension of content  
Content is an extension of form

There is a war  
There is not a war

Emptiness is form  
Form is emptiness

“Why not fly off to Madagascar and pose for tsunami relief?”  
Shutter speed 1/32 second, wisdom moment

# REVEALED CORRESPONDENCES

Revealed correspondences  
to understand the world

Divination  
understand the world in Time

Act on both world and mind, 5-Dimensional  
realm of Emptiness  
realm of Imagination  
realm of Ideas & Impressions

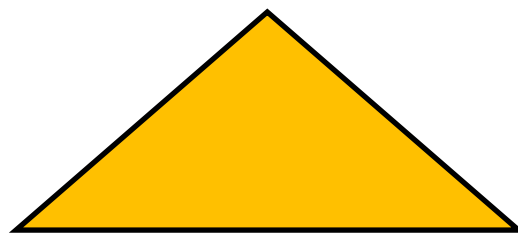
Mind's 3 ways to interpret  
truth, goodness, beauty

Truth, to think either/or  
both/and  
relative truth  
logical truth  
Truth, meaning of U

Good acts  
on/off

Beauty of graven images, *mimesis*—  
invention, to rival nature  
representation, praise nature  
feeling the sap in the vine

Zab-lam sputterings on a spring day



ΑΓΕΩΜΕΤΡΗΤΟΣ ΜΗΔΕΙΣ ΕΙΣΙΤΩ

"Let no one ignorant of geometry enter"

# FROM LASCAUX TO DENDERA

## A STUDY IN PSYCHIC ARCHEOLOGY AND ART

Richard Denner

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### ABSTRACT

I will overlay sacred geometry on the figures in the Well Scene at the cave at Lescaux, France, and relate it to the celestial calendar in the Egyptian Temple at Dendera. Allow me to posit some background data.

### DAGGER OF LIGHT

The Neolithic Indians of the Americas built *medicine wheels* for astronomical purposes. The Bighorn medicine wheel, in Bighorn National Forest, west of Sheridan, Wyoming, made of stacked stones, is ninety feet in diameter with twenty-eight spokes radiating from the central hub, and it can be used to view solar, planetary and stellar alignments.<sup>1</sup>

Many pictographs and petroglyphs of southwestern Indian tribes have remarkable resemblance to celestial phenomena. A set of

pictographs on a overhanging rock at Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, a hand, a crescent-shape and an asterisk-like symbol, may represent the supernova of 1054 CE.<sup>2</sup> In another part of the canyon, Anna Sofaer found a spiral carved on a rock face in a recess behind three stone slabs which allow a *dagger of light* to fall on the spiral in such a way as to indicate the solstices, equinoxes and the nineteen-year lunar cycle.<sup>3</sup>

These early North American astronomers may have been influenced by the elaborate concepts of the Mayan and Aztec civilizations, but it is also possible that this knowledge was retained from their Paleolithic past.

## TIME FACTORING

We know Neanderthal mined bloodstone and put flowers in graves. The origins of esthetics are connected to found objects and to the collectors' sensitivity to texture, form and color. There are unworked stones of curious natural formation in the archaeological sites which suggest animal figures. Among the flint tools, there are pieces that represent both artistic and utilitarian perfection.<sup>4</sup>

A rudimentary geometry is involved in the making of stone tools, both in the process of flaking the stone and in the production from patterns. With geometry we can describe the orbits of the planets and stars, and with a simple numerical system we can keep a chronology—an archive—of events.

The earliest known numeral system is the grouping technique, where a base symbol is selected, and any number is expressed by adding this symbol the required number of times. The Egyptians cut their hieroglyphs in stone in the fourth millennium BCE, but earlier examples of number groupings have been found. The Ishango bone, described by Alexander Marshak, was found on the shore of Lake Edward in Zaire (Congo) and is dated as being over 8,000 years old; it shows numbers (although this notion is disputed) preserved by notches.<sup>5</sup> A bas-relief, the *Venus of Laussel*, carved c.19,000 BCE in the Dordogne, has a crescent with thirteen or fourteen markings, which could relate to the lunar calendar.<sup>6</sup>

Given the thought that underlying the apparent arbitrary movements of nature, there is a pattern of order, given a tradition of accurate measurements conveyed through oral and pictographic for-

mula, given patience and good eyesight, with sticks and stones and a pot of paint, the artists who painted in the caves at Lascaux, France, could have portrayed the proportional limitations of the temporal process. These artists did not have our grid system, yet they discovered patterns of order in nature.

## THE CAVE AT LASCAUX

Boys on a hike discovered the cave at Lascaux in Southwestern France with their dog in 1940. The principal paintings in the cave, according to Georges Bataille, date from the Middle Aurignacian, c. 20,000 BCE.<sup>7</sup> This date is set by a comparison of painting styles, the calcification of different rock strata, and carbon dating. The paintings are extremely well preserved due to a watertight limestone ceiling and the dormancy of the air in the chambers of the cave. However, the paint made from minerals within the cave, which was daubed with brushes and sticks or blown through bones onto the walls and ceilings, is susceptible to bacteria in human breath. The bacteria produces an algae known as *the green sickness*, which harms the paint, so there has been an official closure of the cave to the public.<sup>8</sup>

The paintings in the cave at Lascaux have been deemed a miracle, but their meaning remains an enigma. In general, art historians have concentrated on documenting the caves, taking measurements and tracings, and they have only put forth tentative hypotheses about the meanings of the paintings. There are essentially four categories of interpretation. First, *animism*, in which all things are filled with an immaterial force animating the universe.<sup>9</sup> The portraits are of animal spirits, the painters repainting in order to renew their power over them. This helps explain the many superimposed figures. Second, *the magic of the hunt*, in which invisible spirits must be revered and, if possible, influenced with sympathetic magic.<sup>10</sup> This helps explain certain obscure markings, possibly spears and arrows drawn on the figures or actual holes dug into the compositions, which indicate the animal has been killed or wounded. Third, *the cult of beauty or pure decoration*, in which the artists painted for the pleasure and fascination of representing creatures that were a part of their lives.<sup>11</sup> This helps explain the high degree of competency in their drawing, their under-



standing of animal anatomy, and their incorporation of natural accidents in the rocks as part of the paintings.

The fourth conjecture is *the language of sexuality*, in which the paintings are interpreted in the context of a fertility cult, the bison with a female valence, the horses with a male valence. The prehistorian André Leroi-Gourhan hazards this idea. In *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light*, William Irwin Thompson couples Leroi-Gourhan's idea with the idea of Alexander Marshack, that the animal figures are expressions of time-factoring patterns, to suggest the possibility of a complex cosmology in which the animals are the early forms of the zodiac.<sup>12</sup>

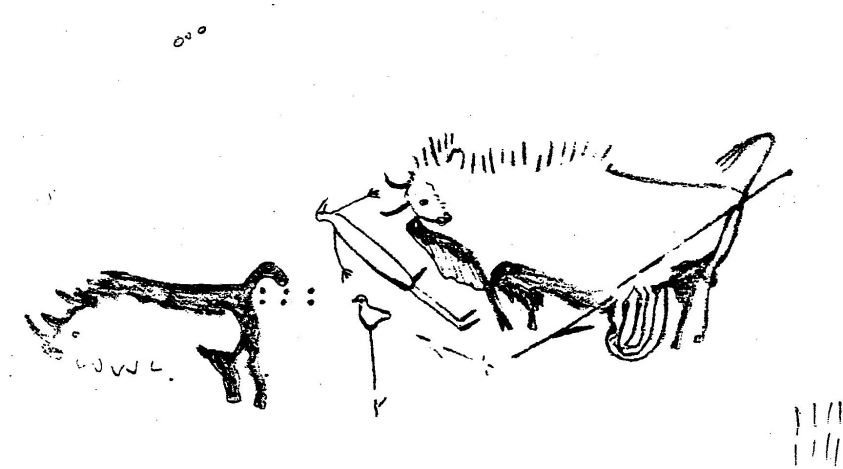
There are nearly a hundred paintings that are intact in the cave at Lascaux, and they incorporate a wide variety of styles, which were evolved over a long period of time. There are not enough paintings to depict every hunt, neither are all the walls decorated nor all the drawings finished. For the most part, the paintings are not mutilated, and the few projectile-like markings appear more like abstract signs than diagrams of the hunt. The pictures are of animals in various attitudes, not hunted, not domesticated—bulls standing, cows leaping, little horses galloping, deer swimming, deer with antlers like five-pointed stars, mountain ponies, sleek gazelles, a few fabulous beasts similar to unicorns, a few felines, one rhinoceros, and one ithphallic therianthropic being, a bird-headed man with an erect penis.

## THE WELL SCENE

Of all the paintings at Lascaux there is none more curious and arresting than "The Well Scene," or as it is sometimes called, "The Shaft of the Dead Man." Many commentators have noted the twisted perspective and have felt there is coherency in the disorder without having found the meditated effort behind the composition.

Abbé H. Breuil, the author of *Four Hundred Centuries of Cave Art*, who first catalogued the paintings upon their discovery, sees The Well Scene as commemorating some fatal accident that occurred in the course of a hunt. The rhinoceros disemboweled the bison; the bison killed the man. As for the pole surmounted by a

bird, he is reminded of the funeral posts of the Alaskan Eskimos.<sup>13</sup>



H. Kirchner, in his article in *Anthropos*, believes the bird-headed man is a shaman in an ecstatic trance. He compares The Well Scene to a representation of a cow sacrifice by the Siberian Yakuts in which there are posts topped by birds similar to the ones depicted in the Lascaux scene. These auxiliary spirits help the shaman accomplish his journey while he is unconscious.<sup>14</sup>

To these interpretations can be added Thompson's theory of the dying male god and the Paleolithic Mother Goddess, a theme, as he points out, that recurs in the myth of Isis and Osiris and is pictured in the "Pieta" of Michelangelo.<sup>15</sup>

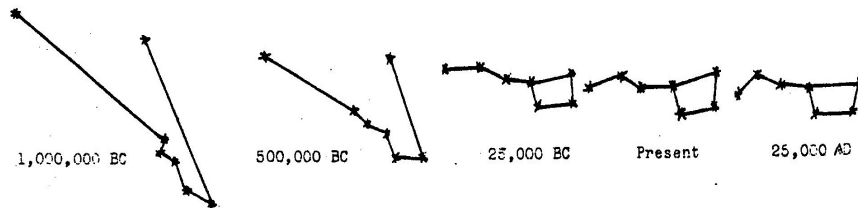
The various explanations of The Well Scene do not exclude one another, for there is symbolism in this Paleolithic painting that could be the source from which later myths and images are derived.

## THE BIG DIPPER

You are familiar with the group of stars known as the Big Dipper. If you have studied astronomy, you know that its apparent change of place is due to the turning of the earth on its axis, which makes it appear that the dipper is moving. The two outer stars in the bowl of the dipper are in line with the North Star, and the handle swings in a circle. The Big Dipper is seen in different parts of the sky during each season because of the earth's rotation

around the sun. Sailors and travelers watch this constellation in order to tell the hour of the night by its position.

You know the light coming from those stars moves fast. A *light year* is the distance that light travels in a year, approximately six million million miles. Since light can travel a distance equal to the circumference of the earth in 1/7 second, celestial distances are enormous. Add to this the sources of the light, the stars, are moving. One million years ago, when Pithecanthropus first looked up, the Big Dipper was shaped more like the leg of a hoofed animal than a dipper.<sup>16</sup>



In France, the Big Dipper is called the Casserole; in England, the same group of stars is known as the Plough. In China, it is the Celestial Bureaucrat who, seated on a cloud, is accompanied on his rounds by his eternally hopeful petitioners. In India and Arabia, seven oxen turning a millstone represent this constellation, and the North Pole is the axle bearing in which the mill-iron turns.

Greeks, Romans, and American Indians see the Big Dipper as a Great Bear. The Sioux say it is looking for a place to lie down and hibernate.<sup>17</sup> In Thebes, a large group of stars, containing the Dipper, was portrayed as a procession of a bull, a horizontal man or god, Ra-Horus, and a hippopotamus with a crocodile on its back.<sup>18</sup>

These motifs in world mythology, with the possible exception of the Casserole, express highly developed astronomical concepts. Archaeoastronomy is the study of the position of the stars in times past. These studies indicate that we have to re-evaluate the theoretical astronomy of the ancients because it has been shown that the temples and megaliths of ancient times represent the codification of a tradition of sophisticated observation that dates back to the Upper Paleolithic.

## ARCHAEOASTRONOMY

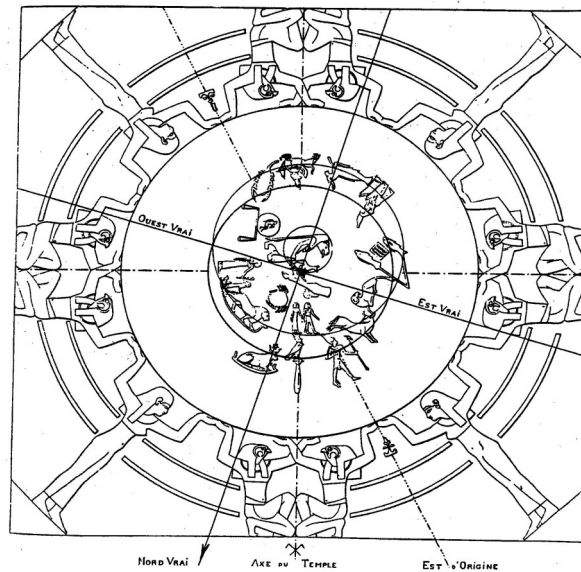
The modern science of archaeoastronomy began in March, 1890, when Sir J. Norman Lockyer took a vacation from his post at the Royal Academy in London and went to the Levant. Lockyer, influenced by Professor Nissen of Germany, who had published the first papers on temple orientations, noted the many changes of direction in the foundations of the temple at Eleusis and thought that there might be possible astronomical origins in their orientations. He endeavored to ascertain whether this subject had been worked out, but he found, after consulting books and archeologists, that the idea was original.

In a series of lectures, Lockyer pointed out that one would ultimately be able to arrive at dates in regard to the foundations of temples. He returned to Cairo, where his friend Brugsch Bey showed him an inscription concerning the foundation of the temple of Edfu, which indicated that his idea was possibly 6,000 years old. Further research and measurements supported his idea that the orientation of the temples had an astronomical basis. To complete the picture, he brought together the data from old Egyptian calendars, myths, and temple orientations.

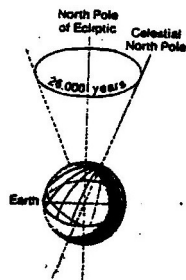
In 1894, Lockyer published *The Dawn of Astronomy*. His work demonstrated that the Egyptian iconography of animal forms represent both mythological personages and actual constellations. Using measurements from the monuments and the text from E.A. Wallis Budge's translation of *The Book of the Dead*, he investigated the astronomical basis of the Egyptian pantheon.<sup>19</sup>

The goddess Hathor, or Isis, personified a star, and the Temple of Hathor at Dendera, which was built on the ruins of much older temples, was used to watch this star. Lockyer described the alignment of the axis of the temple, and he noted that at widely spaced periods of time other stars had risen at nearly this same amplitude. With specially built instruments to make calculations of the position of stars in the past, Lockyer correlated his architectural measurements and the cosmological language of Egyptian myths.

The Egyptologists of Lockyer's time scoffed at his theory. Contemporary archeologists now support Lockyer's conclusions. Schwaller de Lubicz explains how the circular zodiac in the Temple of Hathor shows the ancient Egyptians understood that a new constellation comes into position behind the rising sun at the vernal equinox every 2,200 years.<sup>20</sup>



The precession of the equinoxes is caused by the change in the direction of the axis of the earth in space over a period of 26,000 years. At present, the pole-star is in the constellation of Ursa Minor, but in the past other stars have had this position: Draconis in the tail of Draco at 2,700 BCE, Vega in the constellation Lyra, 12,000 BCE, Deneb in Cygnus about 20,000 BCE, and Polaris again at the dawn of the last Aquarian Age.<sup>21</sup>

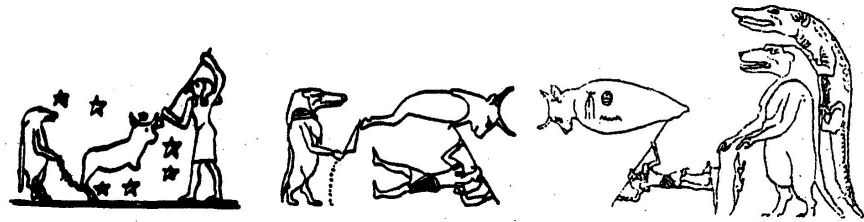


If hidden in the myths there is the awareness of the precession of the equinoxes, then it would have taken many generations (and an occasional Galileo in goatskins) to have performed the naked-eye observations required to produce the results for which the Egyptian temples would be constructed.

## COHERENT DISORDER

To enter the Well you descend from a chamber called the Apse, so-called because it ends in a semi-dome. On the walls are paintings that have been nearly effaced by what Bataille calls “a swarming network of countless etchings.” The entire ceiling and all the walls were minutely carved with many of the figures superimposed. The vast number of engravings is in contrast to the few figures in the Well Scene, as if here an abundance of data was computed into the equation on the wall of the Well.

The cave itself is a sacred space, and the Well is a special spot within this space. The Main Hall opens directly north, and the wall of the Well Scene, as you face it, is a few degrees south of east. The bird-headed man points to the celestial north, and the spear represents the pole of the ecliptic. I consider all the figures in the Well Scene to pertain to one composition, and that composition is analogous to Egyptian charts of the northern constellations represented by a hippopotamus, a bull, and a bird-headed man.<sup>22</sup>

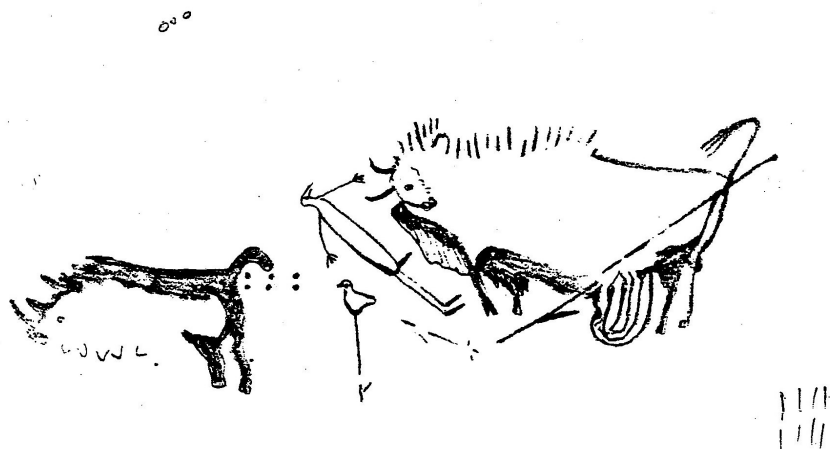


The figures on the far right are from a Theban Tomb, and the figures on the far left are from the square zodiac at Dendera. The center group are a hybrid with the Hippopotamus having donned the cloak of the Crocodile, the body of the Bull taking the shape of the Thigh, and the twisted cord attached to the Thigh becoming an isosceles triangle and ten dots. If the three stars that are in front of the Dipper (those that make up the shoulder and eye of the Great Bear) are added to the seven stars of the Dipper, the shape is similar to that held by the Hippopotamus. The Crocodile could have been an earlier figure for the same constellation, which is presently Draco, the Dragon.

Lockyer notes that our modern astronomers observe the stars at the meridian, but that the ancients considered the risings and settings as significant. In Egyptian mythology, the event of a rising star was represented as *Isis nursing Horus*, or *Isis* (the star goddess) *taking Horus* (the sun god) *from his cradle*. When there was not a rising star at dawn, a grown Horus could dispel the darkness by *slaying* the Crocodile. The symbolic notation was flexible: a god could be a star, a constellation, or a force behind the relationship of a star and a constellation.

We go back now to an auspicious Magdalean Era dawn on the autumnal equinox. The wall of the Well has been prepared to re-

ceive an underpainting of ochre. The rhinoceros is painted in the superior style, although it is unfinished, so it appears to be *drowning* or disappearing over the horizon. The paint used to model the hindquarters is blown on a wet surface, and the front legs are casually sketched. The man is rendered in cartoon style, and the bison, drawn in broad strokes, is a combination of both styles. Many commentators have noted this mixture of styles, and the painting has been used as an axis from which to tentatively chronicle other paintings in the cave.



The *twisted perspective* has been interpreted to mean the artists could not draw in renaissance perspective, so the head of the bison was drawn in  $\frac{3}{4}$  profile to show the animal turning. This is not so much wrong as it is not taken far enough. The position of the hind legs and the shading of the rhino, even the partially rendered front legs and the position on the curvature of the wall, combine to make the figure move out of the composition. Many editors printing a reproduction of this painting crop out the rhino and the six dots entirely.

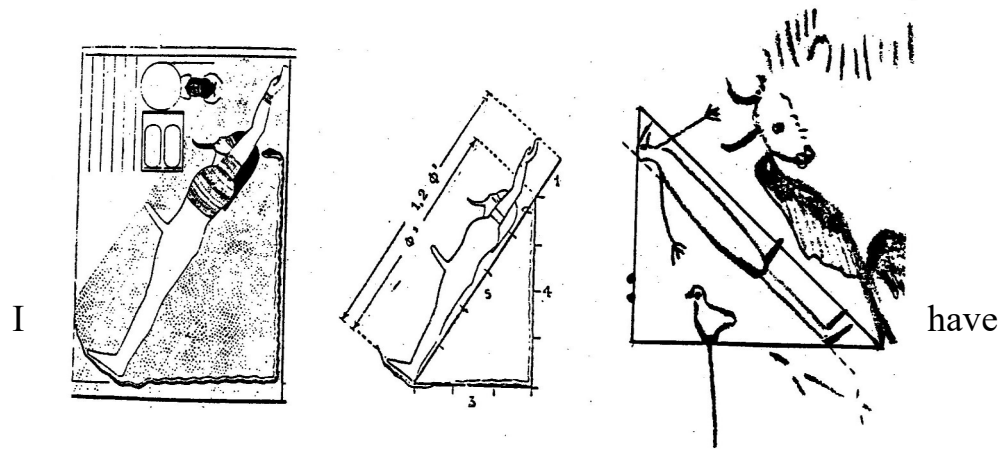
The birdman is very rigid. The front of the bison is also stiff and two-dimensional, and the left front hoof is turned so the cleft is visible. The spear bisects the hind quarters of the bison, and there is a break in the shaft, as there are breaks in the dart and the staff, suggesting a coordinate system with the iconography of eyes, nose, thighs and toes all loaded with symbolic content. Every kind of perspective is utilized. Given flickering torchlight and a dose of an entheogen, a holographic paradigm of cosmic proportions emerges,—but I'll leave off describing a Cro-Magnon ceremony.



## GRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS

The classical method of computing  $\pi$  is by using regular inscribed and circumscribed polygons. Aryabata (c.530 CE) gave  $62,832/20,000 = 3.1416$ . It is possible to arrive at this value from calculating the perimeter of a regular inscribed polygon of 384 sides. In 1967, workers at the Commissariat à l'Énergie Atomique in Paris found  $\pi$  to 500,000 places on a CDC 6600 computer.

Peter Tompkins, in *Secrets of the Great Pyramid*, shows Schwallers de Lubicz's graphic evidence that the Egyptians in the time of Rameses IX had worked out a direct relation between  $\pi$  and  $\phi$ .<sup>23</sup>  $\pi = \phi^2 \times 6/5$ . The figure in the diagram below shows the pharaoh as the hypotenuse of a sacred 3-4-5 triangle formed in conjunction with a snake. The pharaoh as  $\phi$  is split into a  $\phi+1$  proportion by his phallus. The upraised arm gives a  $6/5$ , or  $1.2 \times \phi^2$  ( $\phi=1.618$ , or  $\pi=3.1416$ ).

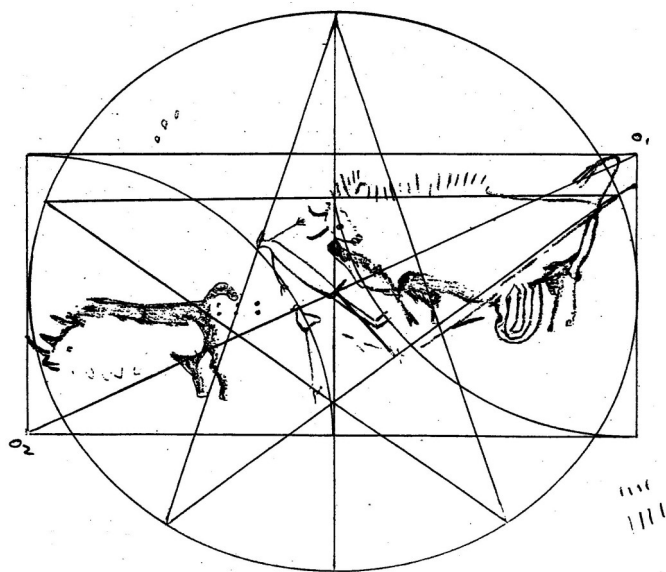


drawn a 3-4-5 triangle on top of the birdman using the two outer dots and the back of the birdman's head as points for the side and the bottom of the bird on the staff, the heel of the birdman and the toes of the bison for the base. The distance from the right toe to the phallus would be in proportion of  $\pi$  to the hypotenuse.

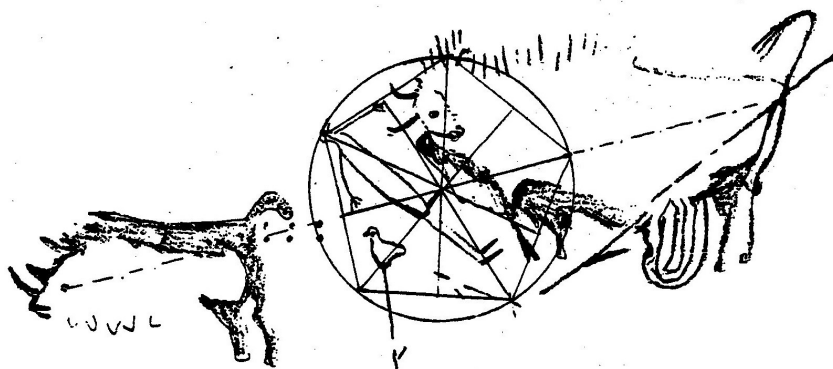
The following diagram shows the Well Scene in a construction of two golden section proportions along a straight line  $O_1$  to  $O_2$ , drawn through the eye of the bird and the butt of the man. An arc of a circle with  $O_1$  or  $O_2$  as the center and the radius being the height of the golden rectangle, drawn from the end of the spear to the horn of the rhino, establishes the birdman lying head to toe be-



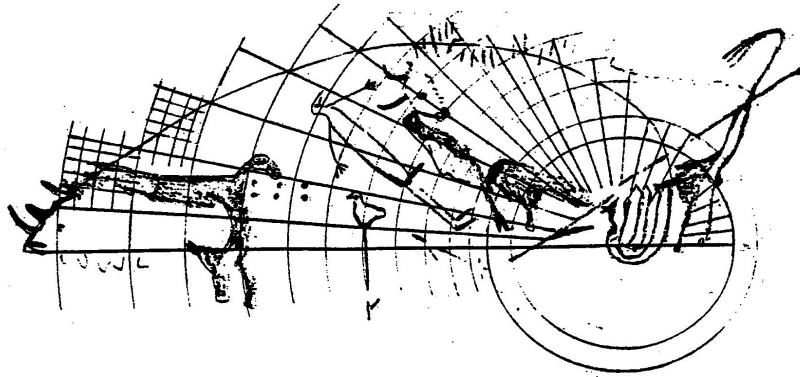
tween these two golden section proportions. The base of the penis is in the middle of the pentagram, which shows the Pythagorean triangle and golden section proportions from the base of the penis to the break in the dart.



The next diagram shows a pentagon inscribed within a circle, which has a radius determined by the distance from the penis to the beak of the birdman. The pentagon's triangles approximate 3-4-5 proportions. The circumference of the circle passes through the eye of the birdman, through a pair of dots, the lower break in the dart, and touches a hoof of the bison. A line from the eye of the rhino passes on the diagonal through the six dots, touches one of the birdman's hands, tips the penis, and passes through the point where the spear lays across the vulva of the bison.



The last diagram shows different relationships in the proportions of the composition measured along neighboring equidistant radii.



Whether it is argued the proportional harmonies revealed in the Well Scene were arrived at intuitively or intentionally, the diagrams dispel the notion of a haphazard or awkward placement of the figures in the composition.

In the Well Scene, the broken line with the figure of the bird at the top resembles a dart-thrower, a baton of command and an instrument with which to make naked-eye observations of stellar positions.

The axis of the temple at Dendera is indicated by the figure of a hawk-like bird on a staff, which precedes a man with a baton and follows a cow with a star between her horns. The hawk is a symbol for both Horus and Boreas, gods who are associated with the north. In the Well Scene, one of the four-fingered hands of the birdman reaches for the staff, and one is between the horns of the bison. The cave at Lascaux has a natural bearing northward, and the drawing on the wall in the Well Scene faces east. The birdman points towards the northern constellations, which the Pythagoreans called the *two hands of Rhea*. The bison then represents the eastern horizon in one framework and the circumpolar revolution of the two Dippers in another.

## EPILOGUE

This essay began when my friend, David Pond, asked me if the Chaldeans invented astrology, and I found that the 6th century

BCE Chaldean Dynasty is credited. This Babylonian dynasty lasted only a brief period, but its priests claimed their science was 473,000 years old.<sup>24</sup>

Sounds preposterous, I know, but the notion gave me pause to wonder how long ago it might have been that humans looked up at the heavens and wondered about their roots in the Ancient Days.

Long before the settlements, before agriculture and pottery and weaving, people were hunters and gatherers, and they lived in or near caves. Some of these caves were used for ceremonial, scientific and artistic purposes. They were the churches, laboratories and museums of their society. As Joseph Campbell so poetically states, “They are the underworld itself, the realm of the herds of the underworld, from which the herds of the upperworld proceed and back to which they return. They are the realm and substance of night, the darkness, and of the night sky, their animals being comparable to the stars.”<sup>25</sup>

Did the anonymous artists of the Franco-Cantabrian Province have the notion that time was a sacred mystery? I have explored the possibility these early people understood the operative forces of their surroundings and celebrated their knowledge with sensitivity and precision.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> John A. Eddy, “Medicine Wheels & Plains Indian Astronomy,” *Astronomy of the Ancients*, Brecher & Feirtag, eds., The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1980, pages 1-24.

<sup>2</sup> John C. Brandt, “Pictographs and Petroglyphs of the Southwest Indians,” *Astronomy of the Ancients*, Brecher & Feirtag, eds., MIT Press. Cambridge, 1980, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Anna Sofaer, as reported by Thomas Y. Canby in “The Anasazi: Riddles in the Ruins,” *National Geographic*, Vol. 162, No. 5 (November, 1982), p. 581.

<sup>3</sup> Anna Sofaer, as reported by Thomas Y. Canby in “The Anasazi: Riddles in the Ruins,” *National Geographic*, Vol. 162, No. 5 (November, 1982), p. 581.

<sup>4</sup> André Leroi-Gourhan, “The Beginnings of Art,” *Larousse Encyclopedia of Prehistoric & Ancient Art*, Prometheus Press, New York, 1962, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Howard Eves, *An Introduction to the History of Mathematics*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, p. 175.

<sup>6</sup> William Irwin Thompson, *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1981, pp. 104-105.

<sup>7</sup> Georges Bataille, *Lascaus, or the Birth of Art*, Skira, Switzerland, 1955, p. 141.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas Mazonowicz, *Voices from the Stone Age*, Thomas Crowell, New York, 1974, pp. 31-32.

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Grimal, *Larousse World Mythology*, London: Paul Hamlyn, 1965, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> Abbe Henri Breuil, "The Palaeolithic Age," *Larousse Encyclopedia of Prehistoric and Ancient Art*, Prometheus Press. New York, 1962, p. 33.

<sup>12</sup> Andre Leroi-Gourhan, as reported by William Irwin Thompson in *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1981, pp. 107-110.

<sup>13</sup> Bataille, *op. cit.*, a commentary by Abbé H. Breuil in the appendix.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., an article by H. Kirchner, "Anthropos," 1952, in the appendix.

<sup>15</sup> Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-112.

<sup>16</sup> The two illustrations on the left come from Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*, Random House, New York, 1980, p. 197 and the three on the right from J. Benbow Bullock, *Stars for Lincoln, Doctors & Dogs*, Gourmet Guides, San Francisco, 1981, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Donald H. Menzel, *A Field Guide to the Stars & Planets*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1964, p. 107.

<sup>18</sup> J. Norman Lockyer, *The Dawn of Astronomy*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1964, p. 151.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., Author's preface, pp. x-xiii.

<sup>20</sup> Peter Tompkins, *Secrets of the Great Pyramid*, Harper & Row, New York, 1971, pp. 172-173.

<sup>21</sup> Lockyer, *op. cit.*, see star map, p. 127.

<sup>22</sup> The figures in the center and to the left are from Thompkins, *op. cit.*, p. 174; the figures on the right are from Lockyer, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

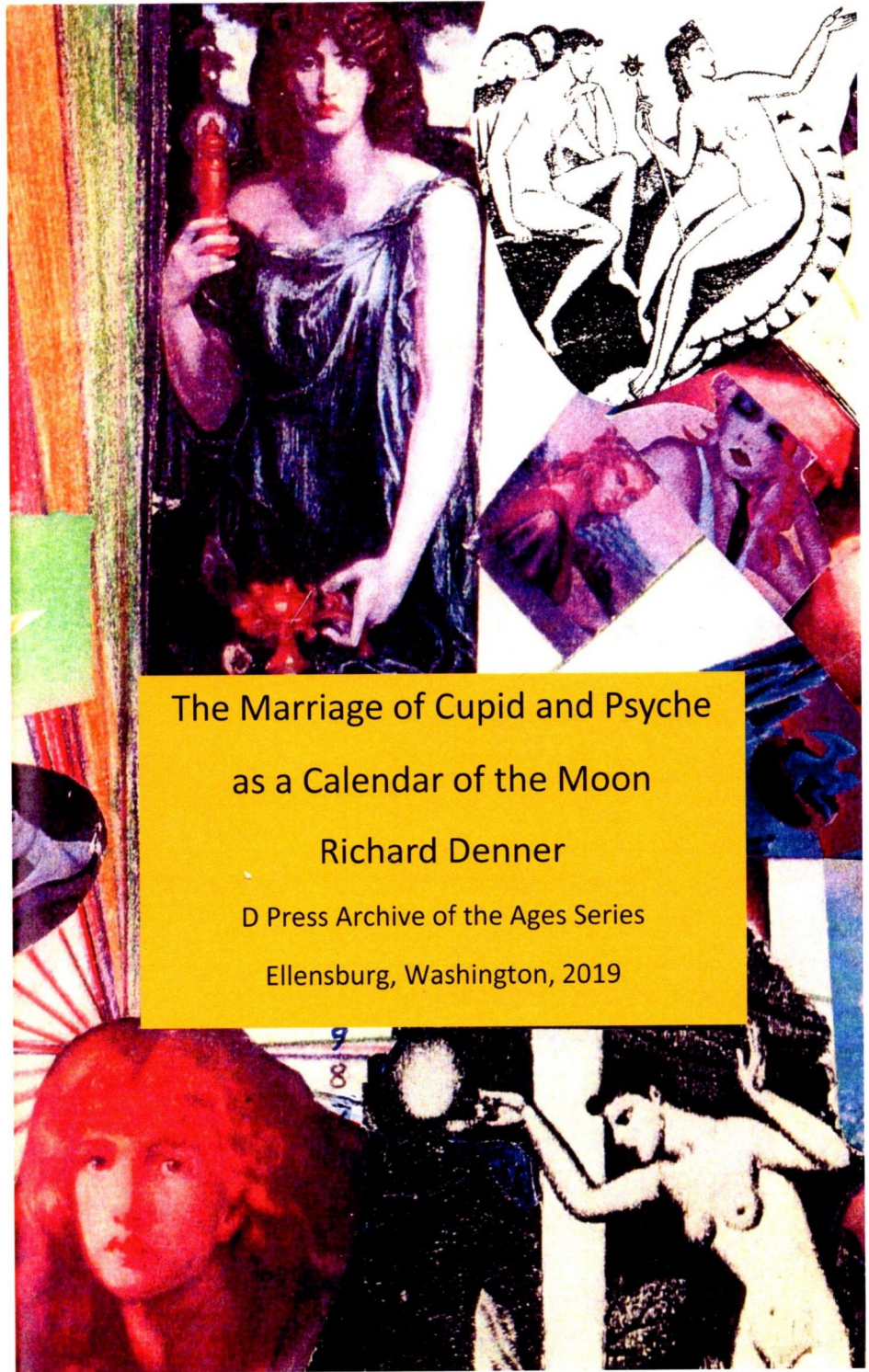
<sup>23</sup> Thompkins, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

<sup>24</sup> Nicholas de Vore, *Encyclopedia of Astrology*, Littlefield, Adams & Co., Totowa, 1977, pp. 51-52.

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, Penguin Books, New York, 1976, Vol. I, p. 325.







The Marriage of Cupid and Psyche  
as a Calendar of the Moon

Richard Denner

D Press Archive of the Ages Series

Ellensburg, Washington, 2019

*The Marriage of Cupid and Psyche As a Calendar of the Moon*  
is a reprint of the D Press Sebastopol edition, 2001.

“Cupid and Psyche” is a story taken from *Metamorphoses* (also called *The Golden Ass*), written in the 2nd century CE by Lucius Apuleius Madaurensis.

**Eros** (Ancient Greek: Ἔρως, “Desire”) is a Greek god of sexual love.  
His Roman counterpart is **Cupid** (“desire”).

**Psyche** (Ancient Greek: Ψυχή [p<sup>h</sup>sy:.k<sup>h</sup>ɛ:], “Soul” or “Breath of Life.”  
The child born to the couple is **Voluptas** (Greek Hedone, Ἡδονή), “Pleasure.”

## **The Marriage of Cupid & Psyche as a Calendar of the Moon**

**P**syche is the youngest, most beautiful daughter of a king and queen. Psyche’s beauty rivals that of Venus, and Venus, feeling dissed, orders her son, Cupid, to wound the princess with one of his arrows. “Make Psyche fall in love with the vilest of men or the most wretched of beasts,” she commands.

Cupid spies on Psyche, but as he attempts to shoot her, he cuts himself with the tip of his arrow and so falls in love with this mortal himself. The next thing you know, Psyche’s suitors have mysteriously disappeared.

Venus puts a curse on the kingdom because no one is worshiping at her altar. The parents consult Apollo’s oracle, with the result that Psyche is to be sacrificed to Apollo. Apollo owes one to Cupid and sets up the escape. Psyche is left on a cliff to await being devoured by a python. She is whisked away by the wind god, Zephyrus.

She wanders, and with the aid of Pan, she discovers Castle Wonderful. Once she occupies

the castle, spirits assist her. Draw her bath. Do her nails. Brew tea. She's disoriented and expects the worse, but she's told by the spirits to relax and to expect her host after dark. Cupid arrives, and although she can't see him, she can feel his downy body and strong wings. She's not sure what he is, but she enjoys him and their lovemaking. He comes to her night after night.

After a time, she complains that she is bored during the day. There is only so much to see and only so much primping she can do. She misses her two sisters. Cupid reluctantly complies with her wish for them to visit. They have been married off to old kings, and although they are comfortable, there is something missing in their lives. They look around Psyche's digs, not fully comprehending where they are, but blown away at how their sister has lucked out. They're gaga and jealous. They tell Psyche she is married to a monster and that she should hide a dagger and a candle under their bed, and when her husband is asleep to light the candle and plunge the dagger into his heart.

Psyche is naive. She has doubts, and that



night, after her sisters have gone, and after her husband is satisfied and asleep, she lights the candle and holds it over her husband's reclining body. Here's an embellishment by Bulfinch that I like. The candle is so excited by Cupid's beauty that its wax splatters on his skin. He awakes, and as he flies off he says, "Love cannot live with Suspicion!"

Psyche wanders on a barren plain in search of Cupid. She comes upon Ceres's temple, which she finds in disorder. She puts the hoes and rakes in nice, neat stacks, and she is rolling the hoses into loops, when she is stopped by the goddess and told to cease and desist. She is instructed to take her problem directly to Venus, and with trepidation, Psyche does as she is told.

She is received by Venus and given an interrogation definitely prohibited by the Geneva Convention. After nearly drowning on a water board and then fouling her gown after being given a hefty dose of Castor Oil, she is assigned a set of impossible tasks. Number one. She has to separate a pile of mixed seeds for Venus's parrot because this

bird likes his pistachios neat. Psyche knows the task is absurd. She sits down and has a good cry.

The elementals take pity on her. Fire, air, earth and water all come into play in the four tasks. While Psyche mopes, the ants sort the different seeds into piles. When Venus returns and sees the fine work of the ants, she can't believe her eyes, and she gives Psyche a thrashing and feeds her some moldy pizza.

Task number two. Get some Golden Fleece. Psyche despairs when she sees the ferocious rams in the field across a raging river. So, she cries and thinks that maybe she'll drown herself. The river hears her, and the reeds tell her to go downstream where there are some rocks she can cross on, and for her to pick the fleece she needs from the thorn bushes. Psyche does so, and when she returns with an armload of fleece, Venus is angry and gives her a good Dutch rubbing.

Task number three. Get water from the source of the River Styx, the river of death. The river issues forth from a cliff face and

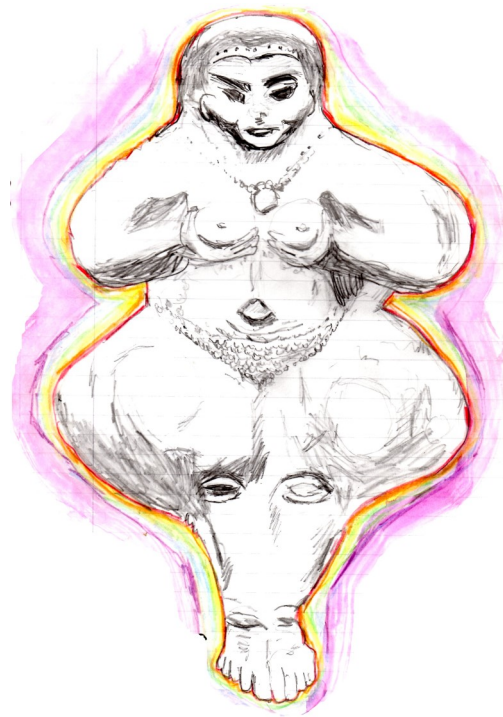
is protected by multi-headed serpents protruding from the cliff walls, their necks capable of covering all directions of approach. Psyche is aided by an eagle, which flies between the serpents and returns with a small jar of the river water. Bamboo splinters under the fingernails, this time.

Fourth and final task. Venus demands, "Get me a drop of beauty, enough to last a day." Psyche is given a box and sent to Proserpine, Goddess of the Underworld. Psyche freaks and decides to commit suicide, an even better solution than crying. She climbs up a tower and is about to jump off, when the tower speaks to her. Psyche discovers a hidden staircase, which she descends, and is given a vial of the potion she requires.

However, and this is where Psyche shines, before she returns the box to Venus, she considers her haggard condition, and knows that if Cupid were to see her in her present state, he wouldn't love her. So, she opens the vial, and a deep sleep overcomes her.

Cupid helps her recover with a kiss, and she completes her task. Cupid intercedes with Jupiter, reminding the dude of the many times he has been helped to score. Psyche is received into heaven. Drinks ambrosia. Is given a nice apartment. And Venus dances at the wedding.

And just to round things out, Psyche gives birth to a baby girl named Bliss.



## **Outline of the story**

An esoteric outline of the story of Cupid & Psyche follows, utilizing the Major Trumps of the Tarot & the following numerological system: 1=beginning, 2=balance, 3=expansion, 4=realization, 5=change, 6=harmony, 7=uncertainty, 8=activity, 9=wisdom.

**0 – The Fool – Moving forward on faith**

**1 – Magus – Access to power – The eclipse of Venus by a mortal, Venus calls Cupid – beginning**

### **New Moon Phase**

**2 – Priestess – Hidden issues – Parents consult Apollo's oracle, Apollo & Cupid confer – balance**

**3 – Empress – Potential birth – Psyche left on rock, aided by Zephyrus – expansion**

**4 – Emperor – Exertion of will – Psyche wanders & finds Cupid's castle, aided by Pan – realization**

**5 – High Priest – Traditional search for meaning – Occupies castle, attended by spirits – change**

### **Crescent Moon Phase**

**6 – The Lovers – Testing, choice – Cupid**

charges her not to look upon his features –  
harmony

**7** – The Chariot – Initiation & mastery of  
opposites – Psyche begs to see her sisters –  
activity

**8** – Justice – Karmic retribution, an unfin-  
ished lesson – Sisters instill suspicion – un-  
certainty

#### **First Quarter Moon Phase**

**9** – The Hermit – Separation from others –  
Psyche beholds her lover & wounds him –  
wisdom

**10** – The Wheel – All things must pass –  
Psyche tells the sisters her tale, sisters fall –  
beginning

**11** – Strength – Lower nature brought into  
harmony w/ higher – Psyche wanders in  
search of Cupid – balance

**12** – The Hanged Man – Enlightenment thru  
limitation, listening to inner voices – Psyche  
attempts to put Ceres's temple into order –  
expansion

#### **Gibbous Moon Phase**

**13** – Death – Transformation, regeneration,  
prepare for rebirth – Punished by Venus –  
realization

**14** – Temperance — Moderation, compro-  
mise, integration – Ants sort grains into  
piles — change

15 – The Devil – A challenge to weakness —  
Venus angry, throws Psyche in dungeon —  
harmony      **Full Moon**

16 – The Tower – A breakup of crystallized  
patterns— Psyche despairs of getting the  
Golden Fleece — uncertainty

17 – The Star – Clarity, insight – Psyche aided  
by the river — activity

18 – The Moon — Venus angry, Psyche tor-  
tured — wisdom

#### **Disseminating Moon Phase**

19 – The Sun – Psyche gets water from River  
Styx, aided by eagle – beginning

20 – Judgement – Psyche aided by an eagle —  
balance

21 – The World – Psyche returns to an angry  
Venus – expansion

0 – The Fool, the process of transformation –  
to get a vial of beauty — realization

#### **Last Quarter Moon Phase**

23 – Psyche goes to the tower to commit sui-  
cide – change

24 – Descent into Underground – harmony

25 – Returns, opens box, falls into deep sleep  
– uncertainty

26 – Psyche recovered by Cupid's kiss and  
completes task – activity

27 – Cupid intercedes with Jupiter — wisdom

### **Balsamic Moon Phase**

**28** – Psyche received into Olympus, she drinks Ambrosia —beginning

**29** – Birth of Bliss, Pleasure, Joy — balance

**0** – A new cycle and, hopefully, the gods are the wiser

**W**hile the outer narrative reveals an arch-typical conflict between the gods and a mortal, Psyche's inner story moves from initial innocence to wisdom. Psyche's adventure concerns her evolution from the earth plane to the plane of heaven, the transmutation of a mortal into a goddess. This is reflected in the Journey of the Fool & in the Zodiac.

The Kore. This maiden's journey begins once her beauty becomes a challenge to Venus and the involvement of Cupid. In terms of a calendar of the moon this is the New Moon phase, a beginning ripe with uncertainty. The triple goddess is made up of the Maiden, the Mother and the Crone. The Mother. The body of the story details Psyche's gaining experience, her tests and achievements. As for the part of The Crone, Psyche completes her tasks and is immortalized.



# TABLE OF CORRESPONDES

## The Marriage of Cupid & Psyche as a Calendar of the Moon

*"Get me a drop of beauty, enough to last a day!"*

|        |    |             |  |   |             |
|--------|----|-------------|--|---|-------------|
| Aries  | 1  | Magus       | NEW MOON   | Eclipse of Venus by mortal, calls Cupid                 | Beginning   |
|        | 2  | Priestess   |  | Parents consult Apollo's oracle                         | Balance     |
| Taurus | 3  | Empress     |  | Psyche left on rock, aided by Zephyrus                  | Expansion   |
|        | 4  | Emperor     | <i>Psyche as Maiden (innocence, consciousness)</i> | Psyche discovers castle, aided by Pan                   | Realization |
|        | 5  | High Priest | CRESCENT MOON                                      | Occupies castle, attended by spirits                    | Change      |
| Gemini | 6  | The Lovers  |  | Cupid arrives, charges her not to look                  | Harmony     |
|        | 7  | The Chariot |  | Psyche begs Cupid for her sisters to visit              | Uncertainty |
| Cancer | 8  | Justice     |  | Sisters visit & fill Psyche with suspicion              | Activity    |
|        | 9  | The Hermit  | FIRST QUARTER                                      | Psyche beholds Cupid & wounds him                       | Wisdom      |
| Leo    | 10 | The Wheel   |  | Psyche tells sisters her tale & sisters fall            | Beginning   |
|        | 11 | Strength    |  | Distraught, she wanders in search of Cupid              | Balance     |
|        | 12 | Hanged Man  | GIBBOUS MOON                                       | Psyche orders Ceres' temple, Juno instructs             | Expansion   |
| Virgo  | 13 | Death       |  | Received by Venus, given 1 <sup>st</sup> task, tortured | Realization |
|        | 14 | Temperance  |  | Ants sort the grains <u>Earth element</u>               | Change      |

# TABLE OF CORRESPONDENCES

|   |   |                              |   |             |
|---|---|------------------------------|---|-------------|
| <i>Psyche as Mother (Knowledge, experience)</i> |   |                              |   |             |
| 15  | The Devil                                   | Venus angry, Psyche tortured |   | Harmony     |
| 16  | The Tower                                   | FULL MOON                    | 2 <sup>nd</sup> task: Golden Fleece                   | Uncertainty |
| 17  | The Star                                    |                              | Psyche aide by the river, she gathers the fleece      | Activity    |
| 18  | The Moon                                    |                              | Venus angry, more torture for Psyche                  | Wisdom      |
| 19  | The Sun                                     | DISSEMINATING MOON           | 3 <sup>rd</sup> task: get water from River Styx       | Beginning   |
| 20  | Judgement                                   |                              | Psyche aided by an Eagle                              | Balance     |
| 21  | The World                                   |                              | Psyche returns to an angry Venus                      | Expansion   |
| 0   | The Fool                                    |                              | 4 <sup>th</sup> task: get box w/ beauty f/ Prosperine | Realization |
| 23  | Aquarius                                    | LAST QUARTER                 | Psyche goes to tower                                  | Change      |
| 24  |   |                              | Descent into underworld, returns w/box                | Harmony     |
| 25  |   |                              | Opens box, falls into sleep                           | Uncertainty |
| 26  | Pisces                                      |                              | She recovers by Cupid's kiss                          | Activity    |
| 27 days 7:43                                    |   | BALSAMIC MOON                | Psyche completes her final task                       | Wisdom      |
| 28  | Coda  |                              | Cupid intercedes with Jupiter                         | Beginning   |
| 29  | Transmorgification of Psyche into a Goddess |                              | Psyche received into Heaven, drinks Ambrosia          | Balance     |
| 29 days 12:44                                   |   |                              | Birth of Bliss  | Expansion   |

The story of The Marriage of Cupid & Psyche illustrates that success comes from realizing your unique achievements, that you can make do with what you've got (Aries). First thing you learn is the need to make concrete sense of your individuality and to seek supports, even if it means pulling yourself up by your bootstraps (Taurus). Evaluation and assimilation of ideas, then, and the ability to communicate these ideas to others (Gemini). Stability is a must. Happiness requires a feeling for home and roots (Cancer). Emotional energies overflow into the environment (Leo). "I love you, but I kill you, but I'll love you forever," that sort of thing. The cycle reaches its apex when Psyche tries to put Ceres's temple into order. Her original impulse is toward self-improvement and hard work (Virgo), but she gets knocked about.

The four tasks are opportunities to figure out what works and what doesn't. Here, she learns to rely on others (Libra). This is the point of the Full Moon. Then, the yoga of managing her energy in order to accomplish the tasks at hand (Scorpio). This is the beginning of the Disseminating Moon phase.

In the Disseminating Moon phase, happiness is

sought by deep study and by crisis and reorientation (Sagittarius), and in the Last Quarter phase, Psyche shows she's got gumption and can get her man (Capricorn). After missing her opportunity for an extreme makeover, she gets a clue that there are larger issues (Aquarius). Finally, in the Balsamic Moon phase, all fruits and final products are realized. This is where karma dissolves. This is where Psyche attains the rainbow body (Pices).

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# SUNDANCE

## Jampa Dorje

D Press 2019 Ellensburg

ARCHIVE OF THE AGES SERIES

Revised version of *Sundance* by Jampa Dorje  
D Press 2005 Sebastopol.

Something to sleep on, that's a good place to begin. We spend a third of our life in bed, so having a good mattress is important when you're camping. I'm always using used stuff. I had a thin, camping mattress I'd inherited from a friend, and I took it with me to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota and blew it up, and the air went right out of it, and I looked at it, and it had half a dozen patches, and I thought, "Oh,

that was silly of me.” We had to go to town the next morning, so I bought a new air mattress, which I could inflate with a pump plugged into the car’s cigarette lighter.

I set my tent on a slight slope and had to prop the mattress up with stuff out of my pack. It was like being on a waterbed, only it was an airbed, jiggled, but I did get a good night’s sleep. The Sundancers had their tents in a separate area, near the sweat lodge. My son, Theo, had plans to dance. I helped Melissa and Kyle, his wife and son, get their tent set up down the road from the arbor and the dance circle. Theo made his camp in the area reserved for the dancers.

Next, we had to cut a tree for the ceremony. First, we went to the wrong spot. We followed a car that went to the area where a tree had been cut the year before, and we looked around, and then we drove back to Eric’s, the medicine man’s, house. We had driven around for an hour, and just as we pulled up and parked, Eric walked out, got in his pickup, and everyone got in their vehicles and followed him, along with another pickup towing a long flatbed, out his driveway and down a reservation road. We drove back to where we’d been. Eric and his helpers climbed down the side of a hill to the cottonwood that had been chosen.

There’s a young girl, who plays the role of White Buffalo Calf Woman. In some ceremonies, there are four girls, but in this case there was just Brittany, the adopted daughter of Don and Kathy, from Ellensburg, Washington, and she took a brand new ax and made a mark on the tree in each of the four directions. Then, a man shimmied up and ropes were thrown to him. The ropes come from the guys that are going to pierce. They have to have their ropes ready. It’s part of their gear. They have to be prepared. They have their pipe and their skirt and their rope. Their pipe has to be wrapped with sage, and they make anklets and bracelets and a crown of sage. They mark their ropes in a special way, and there were bits of colored cloth tied to the ropes, this one with red, this one with a strip of red and blue, and so forth. Eleven men tied onto the tree, the Tree of Life.

We were parked along the road. People drove by and stopped. Little groups of people, family, connected to the dancers. People looking at one another, checking each other out. I’m a Tibetan Buddhist monk, but I wasn’t wearing my robes. I wore my jeans because I wanted to help with the tree, which had to be caught. It can’t touch the ground. All the ropes were attached, and a man took the ax and whacked the tree, and it fell, and while some of us used our hands to steady the tree, others steadied it with their ropes.

This cottonwood didn’t seem so big, down in the gully, but after we caught it and carried it up to the road to the trailer it was more impressive. A chainsaw was called for, and some smaller trees with forked limbs were cut to support the tree on the trailer, so that the branches wouldn’t drag on the ground. A few leaves touched the roadway, but the bulk of the tree was propped up and tied down, and then the caravan set off for the Sacred Circle. It was dramatic, the cars following the tree along the road across the prairie at sunset. People driving the opposite direction stopped their cars, showing

respect. They knew it was a Sundance Tree. They knew these dancers were going to dance for the people.

The arbor for the Sundance was tucked behind a low hill. You couldn't see the arbor coming up the road until you were right on it. The arbor was about forty feet in diameter. Small forked trees covered with pine boughs for shade. Inside the arbor in another circle there were tiny prayer sticks with a tobacco ties at the top. Different colors for each direction. Four gates with larger prayer sticks. Yellow in the east, red in the west, green in the north and blue in the south. At the red end was an altar for the pipes and the Tanka, the buffalo skull. In the center, a pit had been dug for the tree.

By the time we arrived, it was getting dark, and the people bustled around. The ropes were removed, and some limbs were



trimmed off the trunk. And, then, there was the ceremonial process of taking the tree into the center of the Sacred Hoop. There were four stops, and we had to hold the tree above the ground. I counted forty of us, and the tree must've been forty-two feet tall. We could have used two more people. It was that heavy. At each stop, the Buffalo Girl proffered the pipe to a direction, and the medicine man chanted. To the north, to the east, to the south, to the west, and we held the tree off the ground.

After these stops, we took the tree through the East Gate, and again held the tree, while women tied prayer ties in the upper branches, along with special objects. A bundle of wild cherry branches. The skin of a buffalo, cut in the shape of a buffalo, with the hair in tact. And a cardboard cutout of a man with a hoop in one hand and a pipe in the other, which was tied in the branches above the buffalo. While the women worked, we held the tree. Standing there, I heard a crackling, buzzing, crunching sound, and I turned, and above the East Gate, a meteor was burning up in the atmosphere. Crackling and blowing up.

There's a character in the Lakota lore called Fallen Star, so a falling star seemed appropriate and a good omen for the Sundance. Then, all the dancers that had plans to pierce tied their ropes onto the tree for a second time. At this point, the ropes were used to raise the tree, and everyone huffed and puffed and pulled and pushed. The men with the ropes spaced out around the circle and steadied the tree, while some packed the earth around the base.



The tree is considered to be alive at this time. It represents the axis of the world and is a symbol of rejuvenation, of renewal. The medicine man, who is known as the Interceptor, and his helpers did their ceremonial thing. The ropes were rolled up, and we went to bed. The ropes dangled from the tree, ready for the time when the piercing would begin.

Piercing is the most dramatic part of the Sundance, but it is not the biggest part. It happens near the end, but before then, there is a lot of dancing. There are different sides to this dance: a physical side, an emotional side, an intellectual side, and a spiritual side. These correlate with levels of interpretation. A literal level, the dance, the sun, the heat. Then, there's the emotional pressure on staying the course. The metaphorical or allegorical side is revealed in the stories behind the ceremonies. The flesh sacrifice that mirrors the Lakota tale of Inyan, where the first creation was accomplished through giving blood, giving life force. And, there's the spiritual part. The dancing for the people. The sacrifice of something that is yours alone to give. To renew, to purify and heal, like the Chöd practice, in Tibetan Buddhism, where we symbolically cut ourselves up into small pieces with a knife and feed our demons.

The women don't pierce. But they cut pieces of flesh from their arms. They can cut one piece or one hundred pieces. Not big pieces, just big enough so they bleed. There are different reasons to give flesh offerings. It's part of the myth of rejuvenation. This is the offering that connects you with the totality, to propitiate the cosmos. It may be you do it for your grandmother, who is ill, and at the same time you do it for the people as a whole. And then, you do it for yourself, for the vision, for the courage, for the honor, for fortitude. To return to the roots of your personality. A solar return.

The dancers don't always have extensive knowledge about the symbolic qualities of the dance; some have more, the medicine man and his helpers; but for most it is enough to know what they are doing is good for the people. It's natural for there to be a macho attitude, but I've heard that there are Sundances where a person who is just into body piercing can go and pay money and pierce. The Lakota consider this a desecration of their tradition.

Again, the piercing is not the main part of the Sundance. It comes near the end. The main part of the dance is dance. The drummers drum; the singers sing; and the dancers dance. There are pipes to be smoked and prayers to be offered up to the Great Spirit, Wakan Tanka.

I was there to help Melissa and Kyle and to support my son. The Lakota culture has a division of labor. There's men's work and there's women's work. Old men were traditionally left in the camp with the women and children, while the young men went off to hunt. Old Buddhist monks fall into another category, as I will tell about later. As an elder, you get a lot of perks. Like you can wear moccasins if you dance.

And then, a windstorm came along. Blew tents over. Blew tarps away. Blew about 18 hours straight. Kept everyone awake all night. So, after getting the tree set up and a day of dancing, everyone had an exhausting night of sleep. The dancers get nothing to eat or drink. No food or water. Four days dancing in 100 degrees of heat. But the prairie was still green. There had



been a thunderstorm just before we arrived. The year before it had gotten up to 107° and the ground was scorched. This year it stayed in the high 90s with a sweet zephyr, so it was tolerable in the shade. Still, with the sun beating down, I could see that Don was getting second degree burns. Theo, who has tattoos covering his back and shoulders, lucked out, because they covered his tattoos with a paste made from finely-ground pipe stone, most likely so there wouldn't be a conflict of religious symbols. This saved him from severe burns. Theo said the dancers found some sun screen, and they used it, although they weren't supposed to, but they did because it was there, because when you're at higher altitudes, the air is rarified and the sun burns ever so more deeply.

The medicine man decides what medicine they need. One day they got a plum. Theo said it was the best plum he ever tasted. One day there were lemons. They sucked them and ate the peels. But they didn't get much sustenance.



And then, they smoke. Tobacco. It's the Indian thing. Maybe not *Marlboros*, and they didn't pay attention to the Surgeon General's warning. Theo, who chews, started smoking during his breaks because he couldn't spit on the ground inside the Sacred Hoop. They smoked and they sweat. They went from sweating from their dancing in the sun to sweating in a sweat lodge. Rigorous.

Nobody failed. Well, one dancer had a close call, nearly passed out, but he was pierced deeply. In the Spielberg TV series, *Into the West*, the young medicine man, Beloved of the Buffalo, pierces and dances from sunrise to sunset, but he was seeking a particular vision. The Sundance on Eric's land began later than sunrise, but it still had to do with ritual time. There were so

many rounds that needed to be completed each day.

The first day, I wanted to see the dancers get started. I wasn't sure of the etiquette. I had heard all kind of things. No shoes, no jewelry. No photography. But I'd read some. I'd plowed through a copy of Maile's *Sundancing on the Pine Ridge Reservation* and a copy of Black Elk's *Sacred Pipe*, which Theo bought when we stopped at Battleground National Monument in Wyoming. It was important to tune into this battle scene. I overheard a man ask a young Sioux clerk at the museum if she had any more the Custer's Last Stand T-shirts, and she made an interesting Freudian slip. "No," she said, "we ran over them."

At the Sundance site, Kyle and I took folding chairs and went to the arbor. We found a place to sit near the entrance. The drummer and singers began on a cue. The dancers walked in procession, led by the Interceptor and White Buffalo Calf Woman, around the outside of the arbor and entered the East Gate. They took their places in the circle. This is where they would dance and where they would eventually pierce. Theo was on the far side. Number two, low on the totem pole because this was his first Sundance. Last year he had been a helper. Now, he was prepared for the real thing. On his right, Wade, one of the dancers who, the year previous had split before the dance was completed. Cordel was on Theo's left. Cordel is a friend of Theo's from Ellensburg, and he too is a dancer who had broken ranks the year before. Therefore, Wade and Cordel had dues to pay. Theo said that he was put next to Cordel to lend him support. A controversy rages around the issue of Wasichus (Whites) dancing in the Sundance. I heard a Lakota say they must try and keep the purity of their tradition, so that their children and their children's children will survive and prosper in the sacred manner intended by the Great Spirit. I heard another Lakota say that anyone interested in learning the Lakota way is welcome, and that this has always been the way.

At any rate, we were there, and we entered the arbor. The grass under the arbor was sharp because they had mowed it. The grasslands in general are beautiful, lush, an ocean of grass. The prairie, so many grasses. I looked them up: big bluestem, little bluestem, switchgrass, Indian grass, prairie sandreed, prairie cordgrass, western wheatgrass, green needle grass, blue grama, side-oat grama, ricegrass, dotted greyfeather, buffalo grass.

Imagine tens of thousands of buffalo. Imagine wagon trains waiting two or three days for a herd to pass. The Sundance has to be conceived in this context. The grasses, the buffalo, the dancers dancing for the people who follow the buffalo.

Kyle and I found a place to dance. I danced in my robes. When a round of the song was finished, the dancers raised their arms to the sky. This is called a *pushup*. There might be twenty pushups to a dance. And at the end of each dance, the dancers lined up at the South Gate and presented their pipes, two or three at a time, to people picked from under the arbor by the helpers. By the end of the day, all the pipes had to be smoked. The pipe is presented four times, and on the fourth presentation, you take the pipe back to your group and share it with your friends and the people in the group next to yours. This allows people to meet one another. The pipe is passed, and the expression, "Mitakuye oyasin" is said after you have taken a few tokes on the cherry bark mix in the pipe. The expression translates as "to all my relatives." The word "Lakota" means an alliance of friends.

The dancers dance in place. They are given a place and they dance there. They dance to the beat of drum. The step can be to every beat or to every other beat, so some dancers dance faster than others. Some dance higher; some dance with their feet closer to the ground. Wade danced high. Theo danced lower, but Theo had a double step. I saw only one other dancer use this step. He touched his heel and the ball of his foot to the ground, a double-action two-step. Don said he thought this step was more complicated than

was needed, but he said it was important to find a step that worked for you, because you were going to have to use it day in and day out for four days. The ground gets hot. You dance, and the grass is gone, and you have to dance on the bare ground. You have to have a step that works for you.

While the dancers dance, they blow a flute made from the bone of an eagle's wing. Some don't like to blow the flute, because it takes extra energy, so they forget their flute. Theo looked for one. He asked at Prairie Edge, a store in Rapid City that sells Indian regalia, but they didn't have one, so he was able to say he tried. Most dancers blow the flute, which has a tinny sound when you hear it from a distance. The combination of the regular beat of the drum and the randomness of the high-pitched flute is eerie and other-worldly.

Purification and sacrifice. That's the path. I had arrived thinking the dancers danced day and night after they pierced, for four days, without food or water. So, I was relieved to find out they only danced during the day without food or water, that they pierced near the end, and that they got to sleep at night. This is surely a painful religion, but it is a religion of thanksgiving, a religion of rebirth, renewal, and healing.

To some extent, the flesh offering resembles the Crucifixion of Jesus. The tree with the cherry branches attached is the cross. The Sun Dance. The Son of God. So, there are crossovers in symbolism, and many of the dancers are Christians. However, the Sundance has its place in a tradition separate from Christianity. The dance was given to the Sioux by White Buffalo Calf Woman maybe a thousand years before Christ or maybe 500 years ago. Where were the Sioux a thousand years ago? This was before the horse. They would have used dogs to haul their belonging. Driven buffalo off cliffs and speared them. Ethnologists say the Sioux came from North Carolina, were pushed up to Minnesota, and then came a great migration in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and with this was the fusion of the horse, the bow and the buffalo that made the rise of the Sioux Nation on the prairie possible. But it is also possible that some of the people were already on the plains, that they had been practicing their theology around the Black Hills from time immemorial. Certain archaeoastromical aspects of their religion indicate that this is so, and the Lakota would like to believe it.

Man mirrors the universe. This is the anagogical side of the dance. *As above, so below*. The human reflects the divine. Again, the Sundance is one rite given by White Buffalo Calf Woman. She was a maiden. Two warriors saw her in a mist. She was naked. One of the warriors had lustful thoughts, and he tried to rape her. She turned him into a nest of snakes. The other warrior was humble, and she revealed the seven ceremonies to him. Then, she turned herself into the white buffalo. The ceremonies on earth unite the people to the ceremonies that are being performed in the heavens.

Among these rites is the Pipe Ceremony. The smoking of the pipe begins with loading tobacco, or other substances, into a pipe and then acknowledging the four directions, as well as Mother Earth and Father Sky, and ends with a final offering to the Great Spirit, Wakan Tanka. The pipe is held by the bowl with the stem pointed outward while it is smoked, and in the last

step the pipe is held with its stem pointed straight upward, out into the center of the universe. This is how your spirit is unified with the spirit of the Great Mystery. It acts as an interface between you and the divine. Not to be disrespectful, but in this respect the pipe is Jesus Christ. Black Elk said, "You killed your Jesus Christ, but we never killed our pipe."



In another way, this is very Buddhist. Wankan Tanka is like the Dharmakaya, that which is beyond quantification. Then, there are Superior Gods, like the great Bodhisattvas of the Sambhogakaya. Inyan had no beginning, since he was there before any other. His spirit was Wankan Tanka, and he was the first god. Inyan felt a need to exercise his power, so he spread himself around in a great disc, which he named Maka. To create Maka, Inyan opened his veins and bled. His blood was blue and made the waters and the sky. At first, Inyan was like a soft cloud, but after giving his life force to create the world, he became hard, like the rock.

It is said Wankan Tanka gave the buffalo to man. The entire industry of the Lakota was the buffalo. Hides for clothes and shelter, bones for tools, meat for food. And to follow the migration of the buffalo and renew the cycle, the Lakota had a very time-factored lifestyle. They had to be in the right spot at the right time doing the right thing. There was a strict ceremonial sequence to be followed. The stars, to the Lakota, are the language of the spirit world, and what was happening on Earth had to coincide with what was happening in the heavens. Therefore, the Lakota followed the sun and imitated the story in the stars as they journeyed through the Black Hills. On the vernal

equinox of spring, it was their practice to collect their tobacco for ceremonies and to prepare for their journey. From their winter camps they moved to Bear Butte and from Bear Butte to the Devil's Peak for the Sundance on the Summer Solstice. Every step of the way, a star symbol showed them the path. All things are related, and each part represents the whole, the same as in the tradition of Hermetic Philosophy.

There's a Sacred Hoop that surrounds the Black Hills which is mirrored in the constellations. The Hoop is the path of a great race run between the four-legged creatures and the two-legged creatures. The Black Hills reside on both sides of the border between South Dakota and Wyoming and stretch from southern Montana to Nebraska. The whole panorama is multi-dimensional. The stories relate to the stars, and the stars mirror geographical locations on the ground. But they are not fixed. For example, the stars in the constellation of the Hand relate to the story of the Chief who lost his arm (stars which are part of the constellation of Orion). In another context these same stars are the backbone of the constellation of the Buffalo.

Anyway, back to the dance. Once I found out elders get lots of perks, and I'm an elder by the fact of my age, I relaxed. I had my own practices to do, but I was fascinated by the dance. I got a good step going, and since there is a Refuge Tree in my tradition, I did my refuge mantras to the beat of the drum and danced and did my mantras all day long.

So, I supported my son, got my work done, and at the same time made a spectacle of myself. Who is this monk? The natives were curious. I got some interesting looks. A little girl, named Megan, crawled twenty feet from her mother across the prickly grass, climbed up into my lap, and began to finger my mala. I guess she was a little tulku, a reincarnated lama, who recognized those beads. The young men wanted to know what I was about, what religion I was. I told them stories. I made comparisons between our two traditions, not suggesting the Tibetans were directly related to the Sioux genealogically, although there is anthropological evidence that the Native American culture has roots in the Asian migrations over the Bering Sea, but that the rituals contained similar elements. The idea of the flesh offering and the nature of "cutting through" in Chöd particularly interested them.



CHÖD ON THE RANGE

Among the dancers there is rivalry. A lot of gallows humor goes on. Someone might say, "Tomorrow, you'll be hanging" or "I'll see you hanging." The dancer next to Theo, Wade, had dues to pay from the previous year. He had to high-step it. He had to dance like mad. For four days he was Lance Armstrong on steroids. Dance, dance, dance, dance. Beautiful. And the guy on the other side of Theo, Cordel, an old rock-n-roller who's played with many of the rock bands in the Pacific Northwest, kind of a tough guy, kind of a boozier, but at his core, he's a brave heart. He, too, had cut out the year before, and he was making amends, showing that he had it together this year. I was proud of Theo. He danced steady. He told me later that he had his moments of doubt, but he didn't show it. None showed weakness. There were some older guys, who wore moccasins, and there was a woman, but they all danced every round.

Then, there was the young girl, Brittany, who had the role of White Buffalo Calf Woman. She's a Lakota, the adopted daughter of Don and Cathy. Part of the adoption agreement Don and Cathy made was that Brittany would stay involved in the Lakota Way of Life, but Brittany is a modern teenager, and she would like to not. She thought she could get out of the role she had been cast into. She put up a fight. She had attitude.

Another man had brought his daughter, Shannon, and she supported Brittany's rebellion. She might have gotten into the spirit of the ceremony and danced in support of her friend, like Kyle did in support of his dad. Instead she sat around all day looking bored. But I'll hand it to Brittany; she stayed the course, even though her snottiness got her dad a few demerits, which he paid for in flesh. Teenagers. Drama.

Lots of politics, too. Eric, who leads the dance had inherited this Sundance from his father, Vernon. The year before there had been a schism in the group. A dancer named Pauly, Eric's second-in-command, had a vision to do his own Sundance, and he had pulled out this year, and it left the dancers in a quandary as to who they were going to follow. Theo felt that since he had committed with Eric he should stay this year. He likes Pauly, but he felt he should be loyal to the group. He had been a helper for Eric and was invited to dance this year. So, he was there to dance.

Eric is married to his second wife, Angie, and she has still to prove herself competent as the medicine man's wife. Some of the older women don't think she's up to snuff, and there's gossip. There's always gossip. On the second day, she asked Melissa and Kathy if they would cook a lunch. And the girls made an arrangement to have the food delivered early in the morning.

Melissa is a trifle skittish. She's studying to be a psychologist, and I bet she'll make a good counselor. She's the mother of four. She's a grandmother. But she is still in her 30s, which is young for a grandmother. She's a strong homemaker, takes great care of her brood, gets perfect grades in school, but she's susceptible to getting stressed out. Surprise. And her friend, Kathy, I love her, too. She's got a sense of humor. However, she can suddenly take off in an unpredictable direction. Get in her car, drive around, looking for lost Indians who need a ride home. She has heart and soul. But, I could see this cooking lunch for fifty or sixty people might go askew.

So, we discussed the project with Don's wife, Cathy, who has had more experience, and she suggested Melissa and Kathy take the food that's delivered in the morning and get started, while she and I go over to Brittany's grandmother's place and prepare the rest. We'd go to a city called Sioux Nation and shop. Next morning, I met Cathy and we drove to a house trailer with about twenty junked cars scattered about, and dogs, and debris, no grass, a creek bed filled with garbage. Let's not judge it, but it was not a pristine site.

There was a car with a pair of bare legs sticking out from under it and a guy sitting on the fender talking to whomever was under the car. A group of young children were playing a game in the dusty driveway. One little girl asked another, "Are you a boy or a girl?" The other girl replied, "A boy," and the first girl said, "Well, boys run backwards, and girls run forward." That's it, I thought, now I know how it works.

We knocked on the door of the house trailer, and it opened and we entered. Inside, there were maybe three or four bedrooms. I didn't go back to look. A bathroom on the right, off the entryway, a living room with a curved couch. TV. Kitchen with a sink full of dishes. Kitchen table next to the wall. Three teenage girls, looking very hung over, sat on the couch with a baby and a toddler. The grandmother, sitting at the kitchen table with coffee and cigarettes. Two hulking men, one with a crew cut, dressed as a gang-banger, the other with a pitted complexion and long hair. I'm introduced to the grandmother, Sandy, but as I was standing over her right shoulder, I reached around and shook her hand in reverse fashion. When I was introduced to the gang-banger, he gave me a high five and we went through a hand jive routine. The longhair gave me a conventional, albeit limp, handshake. I was introduced to Sandy's husband, Junior, and was told he was a priest in the Native American Church. The Native American Church is not the Lakota religion, comes from the Southwest. Junior was into peyote, and there was a decidedly hallucinatory vibe to him. Right away, he wanted to tell me about a special medicine he knew of that would keep the bullets from penetrating my robes.

Sandy snapped at one of the girls on the couch, "Wake up. You can't be watching that baby if you're asleep. That'll teach you to stay out all night." The men excused themselves and went outside, and I was offered coffee and cigarettes, which I declined. Said I was fasting, and Sandy said she understood.

I excused myself, and I went to the bathroom. I lifted the lid on the toilet, and the seat fell off. The faucet was dripping, and I could see that the grout was missing from the tiles around the sink. Obviously, there wasn't a handyman in this household. I went back to the kitchen, where I was introduced to another member of the family. A young man in his late teens, named Curtis. Crew cut, cowboy shirt and boots, silver and gold rodeo buckle. Bright eyes. Had an aura about him. I was told later that he has a mental disorder, has a problem with directions. Has to be told what to do. He does what he's told until he's told to do something else. Childhood abuse. Still, this boy had charisma.

The day before had been Cathy's birthday, and Sandy asked Curtis to sing "Happy Birthday." Curtis sang a truly heart-rending version of this song. Right up there with the one by Marilyn Monroe. It came from deep within him, like he was channeling the song from another dimension, like there was an ancient songster singing through him. Changed the whole dynamic of the gathering.

Then, we talked about the lunch for the Sundance, said we would buy some potato salad at the grocery store, but Sandy wouldn't hear of it. "No," she said, "that's not the right way. There's no spirit in that kind of food."

I said, "But we have to have this meal ready by 2:00, and it's past 10. I'll be glad to help." But Sandy said they could do it, that I couldn't help because it was the women's responsibility to prepare the meal. So, we headed for Sioux Nation in her SUV. There was a monitor on the speedometer that beeped when we exceeded 65 mph, and the beeper beeped steadily, as we sailed down the road.

At the Sioux Nation Supermarket, I again asked if I could help, and I was again told it was women's work, so I wandered over to a section of the store that had books and bought a copy of Ronald Goodman's monograph, *Lakota Star Knowledge*, which has helped me in understanding a little of the steller theology connected to the Sundance.

A Sioux lady came up, while I was reading, and asked me what I was. I told her I'm a Tibetan Buddhist monk. "Where's that?" she asked. I told her I'm living in California caregiving my elderly mother but that my home is in the Four Corners area of Colorado, at Tara Mandala Retreat Center. "What are you doing here?" I said I was at a Sundance, that I was waiting for some women to buy groceries, that they wouldn't let me help. She said, "Well, that's not the Lakota way. If you offer to help, they should let you help." I thanked her for this information.

We bought \$192 worth of supplies. Chopped ham. Cheese. Chips. Hotdogs. Buns. Mustard. Ketchup. Mayonaise. Pickles. Potatos. Flour. Onions. Gatorade. Bottled water. Ice. Lard. There's a saying around there: "If it uses lard, it's good." Outside, getting the groceries in the SUV, we were approached by a young man wanting money for gas. Sandy railed at him, "Get a job. I've worked every day of my life. You don't have to beg."

Begging is endemic on the reservation. When we first arrived on Eric's land, there was a car stalled in the middle of the road, and one of the men asked if he could have \$20 to buy a part to fix the car. A hose was blown. He had a piece of the hose in his hand. He said he was one of the singers for the dance. As I knew I was going to give something to the singers at the end of the ceremony, I decided to give it to them in advance. I knew it was a scam. The car started up, after they had their money. He knew I was an easy touch. His name was Sam, and I gave him another \$5 for cough drops later on.

We drove back to the trailer lickedy split. I told Sandy that a monk is really neither male or female. I told her what the girl in the supermarket had said about accepting my help, so she put me to work chopping pickles. Sandy made fry bread, and Cathy boiled potatoes. When the pickles were chopped, we peeled the cooked potatotes, twenty pounds of them, and cut



them into small squares.

The mother of the teenage girls, who'd been putting a fuel pump on the car, came in and headed for the shower. She reappeared in flashy clothes with hair slicked back, dress tight on her ample hips, cigarette dangling from the corner of her mouth, nodded at me, and went out without a word. A lot of woman.

I cut thin slices of chopped ham off the block, and Cathy slapped on a sheet of cheese and made forty sandwiches. We had two tubs of potato salad, a pan full of sandwiches, and a whopping good-size container of fry bread. We jumped back in the car and headed for the Sundance, arriving just on time. Melissa and Kathy were relieved to see us. Everyone ate happily, while paper plates, styrofoam cups, and napkins blew about in the wind. These people are doing what they have always done. They're a nomadic people, camping out in house trailers, getting together with their extended family to feast, leaving their garbage where it lies. The thing is, modern garbage is not biodegradable, and the people are not moving on. For the most part, they've never learned the trades of plumbing, carpentry, and electrical work. Their houses fall down around them. It's a repair man's dream come true.

Junior showed me a little repair he had done in the kitchen of his trailer. He had nailed a strip of cherrywood around the edge of the counter, where a piece of the These are sociological judgements, and I am not a historian of the reservation. But I listened. An elder, known as Uncle Eli, told me he was skeptical of the politicians, given their history of broken promises. The federal government has acknowledged it has completely screwed up the bookkeeping on the money it has collected since the 1880s, when it leased the Lakota land to timber, mining and oil interests. It owes Naoriginal trim had fallen off. It was neat enough, gave the counter a rustic look, but he must have put the wood on while it was still green, and it had shrunk, and a quarter inch of the plywood behind the strip showed through. I told him it was nice.

tives Americans billions of dollars, but the whole issue is tied up in court.

Meanwhile, on the Pine Ridge Reservation, there are three and four families living in run-down trailers or sleeping in junked cars. Something like ninety percent of the people are unemployed. Alcoholism is rampart, without there being a treatment center. Uncle Eli, who is in his 70s and has recently recovered from quadruple bi-pass surgery, is luckier than most. He and his wife, Caroline, run a tipi bed and breakfast. But they have their problems. Recently, one of Uncle Eli's eight sons died, and now they are caring for thirteen underage grandchildren.

I met a man who worked for the housing authority. He was at cross purposes with himself because it was his duty to kick people out of their homes if they aren't keeping them up, but his Lakota way isn't to make poor people homeless. He said, "It's like we're living in a third world country. Like a concentration camp. POWs after the Battle of Little Big Horn. We are still paying for that one. In my opinion, it's a Custer fuck by a bunch of circle jerks."

I heard another bitter saying: "The Cheyenne did the fighting. The Sioux got the glory. The Crow got the land." I drove through the Crow reservation,

down through the Crazy Mountains. Things looked more prosperous there. One thing I discovered: the Lakota are a fierce, friendly, fickle and forgiving people. They are like the French in that they are proud of their language and culture. Their language holds them together as a people. They do things the way they do them, and they aren't going to be coerced into doing anything differently.

The Sundance continued, round after round. Kyle did his best to imitate his father's step, and I danced by his side. We stood with the sun on us, so we suffered, too. The idea of the suffering is that you are doing it so the people may live. A ritual for past favors granted. A rite that draws down divine power into the pledges, the dancer being a channel for the Great Spirit. Theo could see us. We danced to support him and the others.

I saw different kinds of piercing. There's the piercing of the skin on the breast. There's a team with a scalpel. I saw one of the scalpels stuck in a tree. It was a medical instrument, but not exactly antiseptic. The patient lies down on a buffalo skin laid out at the base of the tree. The Interceptor and his lieutenants talk with the dancer who is to pierce. They draw a circle on his chest where they are going to cut, rub a bit of dirt on the spot, make two incisions, and insert a wooden peg. If the guy being pierced has had forethought, he has sanded the rough edges off his pegs. A short piece of rope is tied to each peg, and that piece of rope is tied to the longer rope which in turn is tied to the tree. After you're done, and you've popped off, they plug the hole with a mushroom. I've heard there are cases of infection, but Theo has done this twice, and he has had no problem healing, so the mushrooms must have some power. The wound heals and leaves a small scar, about the size of the tip of your little finger. This is not exactly a science, more of an art, I would say, in the sense that there are a number of factors that determine a piercing.

It sounds grotesque, but it is really beautiful. There is a humor about the whole process. The dancers tease one another. They psych themselves up, and if you don't like being teased, it's not the place to be. One side of the experience is to be prepared for the physical pain, and another side is about prayer. The spirit moves in mysterious ways when you are in an altered state. The dancers look for their visions. It's individualistic. Everyone is doing their own thing. There's no dogma. If you listen to five different people on the subject, you get five different takes. So, you have to piece your answers together and put it to use as best you can.

When the dancer is pierced the frontal way, and the rope extends to the tree, the Sundancer doesn't want the rope to be loose. He wants it taut, so he leans back while he dances. He dances awhile, and then he moves up to the tree, where he prays. He does this four times, and the fourth time, he pulls back and pops the pegs out of his flesh. Or he tries to. Theo did it without any problem. Pulled his shoulders back and freed himself. Others had more difficulty.

There seems to be three variables. One, how thick-skinned you are, your physiology. Two, how deep the Interceptor cuts you. And three, how the spirit or randomness enters the equation. Mark, Kathy's husband, only hung from his right side because the cut on his left side was imperfect, so he was

somewhat imbalanced, hanging from one side only. And the year before, he broke free on one side but not the other, and Kathy pulled him off. So, for two years running, he had an odd experience with his piercings.

Wade tried to pull himself free three times without success, and the Eric pulled him off. This may have been to humiliate him in some way because of his earlier performance. The same with Cordel. He's a big man, but he couldn't pull free. Some say this is good. The longer you hang and the longer you suffer, the better for you and the people. Two dancers charged across the circle to Cordel and made a linebacker tackle to free him. Afterwards he said, "Now, I feel like a real Sundancer."

Another way of piercing is to pierce on the back and haul seven buffalo skulls tied in tandem around the perimeter of the circle, maybe fifty yards. Buffalo skulls are bigger than cow skulls. One of the dancers I saw do this was dancing for his grandmother, who was ill. She limped behind him on a cane. I suppose he wanted to be pierced deep, so he could drag the skulls a long way. And he did. He drug them around four times, and then he tried to break loose, but he couldn't. A couple of the dancers sat on the skulls, and he tried again, and again. Still, he couldn't free himself. So, the Interceptor made a couple of precision cuts, and with a good tug, the dancer broke loose. People were crying, as he jogged around the circle a last time, carrying two staffs with eagle feathers attached.

Wade pierced again, on the back this time, and they brought a rope which was thrown over a fork in the tree and attached it to him, and he stood on a two-by-four, which two men lifted, while his family held onto the other end of the rope. He was given eagle feather fans, one for each hand. These he held out away from his body, and when the two-by-four was removed, he was left hanging in the air, flapping his arms like wings. He didn't break loose, and you could hear sobs coming from the audience. Then, the Interceptor and a helper yanked him down. I saw blood gush. Wade fell to his knees and held onto the trunk of the tree. Then, he collapsed, and they layed him on the buffalo skin, and his family gathered around him. I couldn't hear what was said, but I am sure they were thanking him for his sacrifice, his bravery, his fortitude. He had redeemed himself.

When Don drug the skulls, he broke loose after about thirty feet. So, it's hard to know how much is punishment and how much is the way the spirit moves. Don pierced on the last day. Some dancers psych themselves up and want to pierce sooner. Some wait until the ordeal is nearly over. On the fourth and final day, there was extra ceremony. A healing ceremony and a teasing ceremony. In the teasing ceremony, a painted clown splashed water on the dancers. She guzzled water in front of them, but they ignored her antics.

After the final dance rounds, after the Interceptor had pierced, all the dancers walked around the arbor and shook hands with the onlookers. One thing that I had been warned about early on was that no one was supposed to walk across the East Gate. And just as everything was winding down, a couple of little kids ran across that space. One ran back, and everyone said, "No, no," and then he ran across again, and I thought maybe the dancers

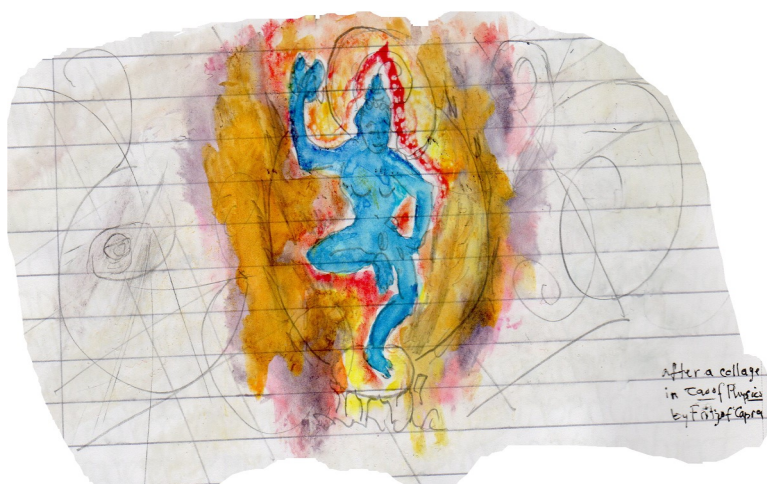
would all have to pierce again or go to the sweat lodge, but Don caught the kids and took them back to their parents, and all was forgiven. Their timing was excellent, right at the end, like they wanted to jinx the whole ceremony.

Then, we feasted. The dancers hadn't had much sustenance, a plum, some lemons, a splash of water. But now they were offered a full banquet. Beef stew, sandwiches, salads. They chowed down, but it didn't take long for them to fill up. People hugged. They congratulated one another. They wanted to talk about their experiences, or not. They were exhausted but ecstatic.

The next day, we took the boughs off the arbor and picked up a mound trash. Then, we loaded our gear in our car and took the extra food over to Eric's. He was just getting up, and there were a pile of kids on the front room floor under blankets. We talked awhile. Said how much we appreciated everything. I told him a little about Buddhism. Asked him if it was ok that I danced in my robes. He assured me it was, and he asked if I would attend next year. I said I'd try.

Before leaving, I saw Uncle Eli. "Who is it says the Lakota way is in jepardy? It's the ones who leave the reservation and come back and think they can improve things by doing it the white man's way, the New Agers." He paused, and then he continued, "Did you feel that wind? That's how the Spirit moves. It can see you, but you can't see it."





# STARS

BOUVARD PÉCUCHET  
WITH JAMPA DORJE

D PRESS 2020 ELLENSBURG

I think if some of the great poets had lived in our time  
they might have been not poets but scientists.

—Alfred North Whitehead

Science is defined as the systematic study of facts and principles. The facts and principles are determined through an application of what is called the empirical method, which is knowledge derived through direct examination of phenomena.

The first sciences that Jampa took an interest in were chemistry and astronomy. Jampa's dad succumbed to entreaties and bought him a Gilbert chemis-

try set from the toy department at Montgomery Wards. Chemistry deals with the composition of substances and the elementary forms of matter. Jampa followed the directions in the text that came with his chemistry set, but it was not long until his predisposition towards abstract expressionism took hold, and he created stink bombs.

Jampa would gaze at the heavens and wonder about the cosmos and the meaning of his being on a planet in a solar system in a galaxy, a speck in the vastness of space. When the opportunity arose to visit Chabot Observatory, in the Oakland hills, Jampa was excited to go with Mr. Shriner and some of his fifth grade classmates. It was cold that night up on the platform. Astronomy requires a tolerance for cold weather. They looked through the 20-inch telescope at the moon and at Jupiter and Saturn. It was the beginning of a life-long love for a subject that involves not only empirical data but contains mythic lore—the starry heavens.

It is one thing to be told that the moon is pitted with giant craters, that the planet Saturn has rings and that Jupiter has many moons, and it is another thing to observe this with your own eyes. When Jampa was dropped off at his driveway by Mr. Shriner after their trip to the observatory, a night with a full moon, Jampa howled like a wolf.



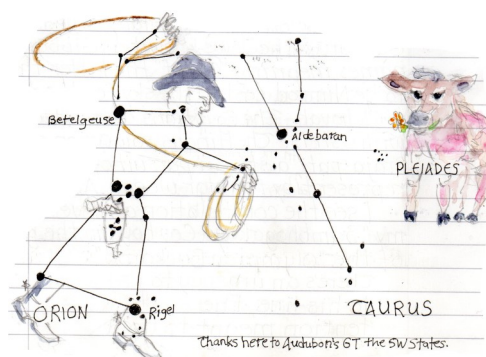
It is more in the domain of epistemology than exact science that the discussion of the triad of the perceiver, the perception, and the object of the perception occurs, but the root of scientific investigation is in observation and in trying to show how we know what we know. Scientific Realists view objects of knowledge (ideas as well as things) as separate from our awareness of them, as having real existence and of being constituted of matter and energy. On a human-planetary level this seems to be the norm of experience.

In his *The Physical Principles of Quantum Theory* (1930), Werner Heisenberg declared that on the sub-atomic level, if the location of an object is known, its speed cannot be determined and vice versa. This “indeterminacy principle” has ramifications not only in cosmology but in theology and philosophy. Another aspect of this view is that an act of observation can alter what is observed. The tools of measurement have a qualitative effect on the space-time co-ordinates of the object or force measured in the physical sci-

ences, and the presence of an observer effects the data collected in the social sciences. Perhaps an anthropologist is told a cock-and-bull story because the aboriginal client feels that it is what the researcher wants to hear—"Yes, a woman is filled with child after she passes between those two rocks."

In Buddhism, not only the observer (the "I" or self) but the objects of reality have no permanent substance or enduring characteristic. Their essence is emptiness (*shunyata*), although their nature is to manifest. To arrive at this understanding, so that it can be more than an intellectual concept, a yogi trains hir mind to have the experience of "emptiness." The techniques of meditation that are observations of inner states of consciousness, of thoughts and emotions and their habitual patterns, help the yogi to understand that the nature of the reality we usually believe in is a phantasmagoria.

It is tempting to compare the findings of nuclear physicists to those of the yogi, but as Keith Dowman pointed out in a talk at Tara Mandala, in 2008, the terminology of the mystical endeavor obscures the physicist's description of reality, while the physicist's terms do nothing to clarify the hypothesizes of the yogi. To the extent that the yogi approaches reality through systematic observation and experimental methods, subjective though they may be, this system can be said to be scientific; and the more the theoretical physicist reveals his findings for a unified theory of everything, hir quest verges on a kind of music, if not mysticism.



## INTERVIEW

"What's that shining thing?" she asks him. At first he tries to hide it, but then he says, "It's a star, Ma. I picked it."

—André Brink, *Praying Mantis*

BOUVARD: Jampa, which are your favorite stars?

JAMPA: Those that make up the constellation of Orion. To me, the mighty Hunter-Warrior is one of the most beautiful things in the world. Of course, it's not an object nor is it in the world. It's a group of stars in a particular configuration, some within our galaxy and some far outside, but the startling

brightness and unique arrangement of this grouping of stars (some of them galaxies) dominate the sky and have been commented on since people first looked up and became conscious of stars and deep sky objects. At first, we were probably not aware of the great depths of outer space. The second century astronomer, Ptolemy, who believed that the earth was the fixed center of the Universe, conceived of the heavens as like a colander with tiny pinholes for light from the outside to shine through, a dome over our planet, which moved over us, within which some bodies, “Wanderers” (other planets), circled. Now, we understand the daystar (our Sun) to be at the center of our Solar System (a heliocentric system), and with the aid of the Hubble telescope, we find ourselves to be at the edge of one galactic arm (the Milky Way) amongst billions of galaxies.

#### PERFECT

Arguing into the early hours  
About the global economy  
And the greenhouse effect  
We solve the world’s problems  
For another night  
While the stars shine  
Through the colander of the sky  
After you leave I continue to drink  
Until I’m topped up and tipping over

Miserable fuck that I am  
I crawl across a gravel pit  
And down a culvert  
Where I find a pinhole of firelight  
And I laugh and laugh  
Happy to find light  
In the middle of the tunnel

BOUVARD: Return to Orion, Jampa.

JAMPA: I am reminded of a slight discrepancy I caught in the movie, *Men in Black*, when the boss tells his agents, played by Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith, that there isn’t a galaxy on the belt of Orion. True enough, for the belt itself, but new stars are being created in the Orion Nebula that is an area of Orion’s sword that hangs from the belt. However, it would have complicated the plot to mention this, since the “belt” was actually a collar on a cat, named Orion, in the movie. The word “Orion” (according to Richard Hinckley Allen in his *Star Names: Their Lore and Meaning*, Dover, NY, 1962) comes to us from the Greek, into the Latin, *Oarion*, as transcribed by the Roman poet, Catullus, from the *Odes of Pindar*. There are many names attributed to the Orion constellation by the ancients. The Syrians called it *Gabbārā*, and the Jews knew it as *Gibbōr*, both names meaning “Giant,” the latter thought to be Nimrod cast into the sky for his defiance of Jehovah. The



Egyptians associated Orion with Osiris. The Hindus saw Orion as the god Praja-pati in the form of a stag in pursuit of his daughter, represented by the star we call Aldebaran. I see the constellation as a celestial cowboy.

### RODEO OF THE EQUINOX

There's an urgency to his line, the  
Tension meant to hold

A wonder. Orion  
Lassoed an Atlas-bred heifer.

Sterope is tied hard and fast  
With hemp.

Not too shabby, all agree  
And space is taut in admiration.  
The Olympian buckaroo  
Puts a silver buckle on his belt.

Sterope licks her burn in the calf pen.

BOUVARD: Who is Sterope?

JAMPA: One of the daughters of Atlas, a Titan in mythology, portrayed as holding the earth on his shoulders. She is one of the contenders for being the Lost Pleiad, a star in the constellation called the Pleiades, a small cluster of stars near Taurus, the Bull, which has become indistinct to the naked eye. It could be seen among "the Starry Seven" in Roman times, but was dim, and was used to check a soldier's eyesight. A story is told of Orion pursuing Sterope and her being made invisible by Apollo. The Pleiades, although they take up a relatively small area in the sky, are a glittering eyeful and have been compared to fireflies, a silver braid, a silk sash covered with gems, a necklace, a flock of birds, as well as old wives and nanny goats.

### PLEIADES

Orion chased them.  
Sterope fell into a faint.

Vulcan set a net to catch  
Venus in her embrace of Mars.

Sappho saw the seven sisters set.  
She knew love makes a poet into a boar.  
You say, "All's fair,"  
And I, "Boars have wings."

BOUVARD: There is not enough room here to relate all the lore of all the constellations. Tell me about your astrological sign, Scorpio?

JAMPA: It is said that The Scorpion stung The Giant and killed him. Scorpio rises on the horizon, and Orion descends, running scared. Because the position of the stars have a striking resemblance to the outline of a scorpion, it has this form in many cultures. It has also been known as Eagle, as Snake, as Azure Dragon. In Egypt, during the reign of the Pharaohs, the priests had eleven rather than twelve signs in their zodiac. The Romans added Libra to create their Julian calendar, and they pruned the stars that were The Scorpion's claws to make this sign. Since Scorpio (with its powerful Mars energy) was in such close proximity to Virgo, it was prudent-minded of the Romans to insert an inanimate object (the sign ♏ representing a book or a set of scales) between these potential lovers, something like the proverbial bed sheet between the Traveling Salesman and the Farmer's Daughter.

### EYE OF THE SCORPION

Is issuing from the brain  
Shining upon us to block  
Our knock off

A pearl in wine  
The web of life, and a worm  
Weaving deep in the earth  
A wooden bowl being filled  
With blood to make bread  
As the cauldron boils

More gold, more gold

Is issuing from the brain  
White is holding a corpse  
In the east of the brain

Yellow is holding an arrow  
In the south of the brain  
Black is holding a skullcup

In the north of the brain  
As the worm weaves  
In the eye of Scorpius

I have always enjoyed being a Scorpio native, investigating the mysteries of sex, death, and transformation. A perfect fit with the Vajrayana. Ideal for a yogi.

BOUVARD: The poet's muse is compared to heavenly beauty in Byron's poem—I hope I have it right—"She walks in beauty, like the night/Of starry

climbs and spacious skies.” Have you had such a muse, Jampa?

JAMPA: Among my lovers, I would elect Laura. Not the Laura at Coffee Catz, another girl, from Mississippi, who visited Ellensburg briefly to check out the university. She wanted to study with Roger and Debbie Fouts at the Chimp Lab. She said she would need work and a place to live. Had other schools to look at. I liked her. I was up front and offered her a packaged deal—a room in my new house, a job at Four Winds, and dinner that night at a restaurant with candlelight. She accepted my invitation to dine. We talked. She was intrigued but wanted to go on with her trip to U.C.L.A. and the University of Arizona that had programs in Primatology. She said she would stay in touch by phone, and she did. She was not the shy type. She said she found my offer attractive. She liked my house, my bookstore, and me. We talked on the phone as she traveled southward. For a while she was staying with a friend in Hollywood. Then, she went to Tucson. Central Washington University still looked good to her. There was just one hitch—a boyfriend back home she was having a hard time leaving. She would see, she said, but after she returned to Mississippi, there were no more phone calls. She was a Miss from Mississippi with four “eyes” who was blind,—or had 20/20 foresight.

MAID OF MISS  
for Laura

Something small  
The size of a star.  
Did you make a wish?  
Far away,  
Far, far away. Hard,  
Hard like a star.

A miss, a mysterious  
Maid made of mist.  
A face that enters  
My dreams  
And a kiss I miss  
When awake.

Love sighs  
Never, forever.  
The world is small,  
The heart huge.  
Love signs  
Never,  
Forever.

Pisces quivers  
On the horizon.

Venus exalted,  
Her dream is deep  
She fairly bristles  
With romance.

She walks  
To work on the stars,  
A goddess in her constellation.  
Believe me, the stars  
Are really  
There.

The stars,  
Music,  
Joy in all weather,  
And those few  
Moments  
We made real.

She walks  
To work on  
The stars.  
Love's location  
Is hidden in  
The tiniest of  
Spaces.

BOUVARD: Lovely, I like the allusion to Grauman's Chinese Theatre, while Laura walks to work in Hollywood. Let us turn from the starry heaven to the silver screen. Off the top of your head, who are your favorite movie stars?

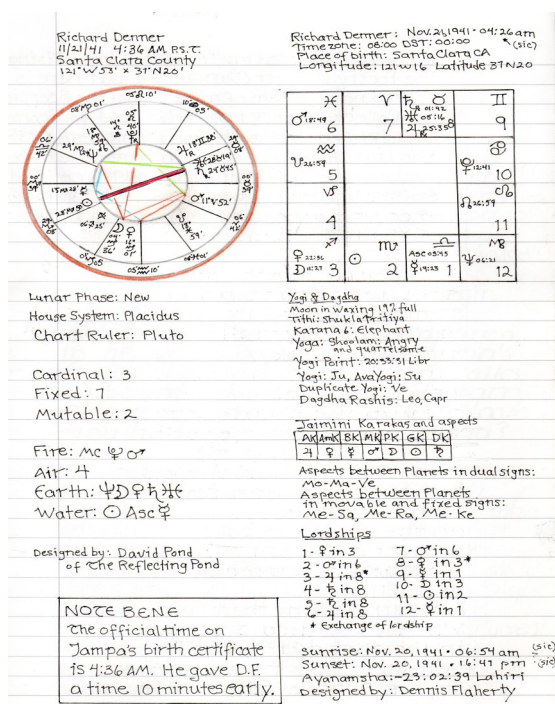
JAMPA: Let me see...Falconetti facing her tormentors in *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, Max Von Sydow playing chess with Death in *The Seventh Seal*, Louise Brooks looking innocent in *Pandora's Box*, Giulietta Masina street walking in *Nights of Cabiria*, Buster Keaton leaping aboard a locomotive in *The General*, Marlon Brando yelling "Stella," in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Lee Marvin with a silver nose in *Cat Ballou*, Marleen Dietrich being wicked in *Blue Angel*, Paul Newman eating eggs in *Cool Hand Luke*, Audrey Hepburn just back from Paris in *Sabrina*, Gregory Peck being diabolical in *Moby Dick*, Humphrey Bogart going crazy in *Treasure of the Sierra Madres*, Elizabeth Taylor walking into the kitchen and saying "What a dump!" in *Whose Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Toshiro Mafune shrugging his shoulders in *Yojimbo*, Alec Guinness on the telephone in *The Horse's Mouth*...Jack Nicholson ordering a sandwich in *Five Easy Pieces* and trying not to step on cracks in *As Good As It Gets*, Tom Hanks with shell shock on the beach at Normandy in *Saving Private Ryan*, James Arness as the Thing...the robot in Fritz Lang's

*Metropolis*, the somnambulist in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, Klaus Kinski's lips twitching at the sight of blood in Herzog's *Nosferatu*, the zombies in *Night of the Living Dead*, Jimmy Cagney dancing in *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, Marisa Tomei going on about cars in *My Cousin Vinny*, Briget Bardo's talented backside in *And God Created Woman*...Brad Pitt's fancy moves as Achilles in *Troy*, Brando having a heart attack in *The Godfather*...Greta Garbo as Queen Christiana of Sweden, The Duke always The Duke, Humphrey Bogart as Rick, Mickey Rooney as Tom Sawyer, Debbie Reynolds as Tammy, Dean Stanton as the Repoman, Anthony Quinn as the strongman in *La Strada*, Sophia Loren as the mother in *Two Women*, Elizabeth Taylor as Cleopatra, Katherine Hepburn as a missionary in *The African Queen*, Eric Van Stoheim as a butler in *Sunset Boulevard*...Betty Davis in *Of Human Bondage*, Orson Welles in *Touch of Evil*...Harold Lloyd hanging from a clock, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy pushing a piano up a flight of stairs, Charlie Chaplin eating his shoe...and me...

## AT THE LIBERTY THEATER

waiting under the marquee for Corrine  
how long have I been waiting  
how long should I wait

am I early  
am I late  
or am I





## FURTHER REACHES IN MATHEMATICS

Bouvard Pécuchet with Jampa Dorje

D PRESS 2010 ELLENSBURG

⊗ 1 2 3 4 5 MATHEMATICS

CALCULUS  
for Sabrina

*In this formula there is no limit  
to my feeling — X follows Y  
across an ocean of space.*

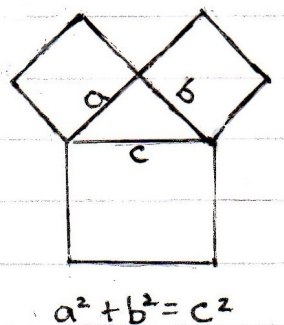
According to Scott Buchanan, author of *Poetry and Mathematics*, what is most concrete in poetry is least concrete in mathematics, and what is most concrete in mathematics is least concrete in poetry.

In poetry, nouns and verbs—dog, car, café or walk, drive, eat—are concrete. Prepositions, conjunctions and modifiers—to, toward, and, but, with, very—are abstract. In mathematics, the numbers are abstract, and the functions are concrete. The number 1 can stand for anything, an orange or an apple, but if you add them together you get fruit. “And” is the same as to “add”; “is” is the same as “equals.” Ezra Pound alludes to this concept, in *ABC to Reading*, when he says, “philosophy has no pictures.”

Still, mathematical concepts can be suggestive of a picture. The Greek letter pi ( $\pi$ ) in mathematics is used as the symbol for the ratio (3.141592+) of the circumference of a circle to its diameter.  $\pi$  is called an “irrational number” because the relationship cannot be expressed exactly by a ratio of two whole numbers. A pattern in  $\pi$  never repeats itself. Therefore,  $\pi^2$  (an irrational multiplied by itself) is a good symbol for “confusion.” In the days when printing was done with moveable type (and this could still apply to graphic designs done on a computer)  $\pi^2$  represented a mix of printing types used in an indiscriminate manner. Any **mesS** can be referred to as  $\pi^2$ , so long as it is mindboggling.

Jampa had a public school education in mathematics—arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. Besides having enjoyed solving quadratic equations, Jampa liked plane geometry the best. The simple definitions by Euclid seemed profound to him. A point: *something that has position but not extension, as the intersection of two lines*. A line: *a continuous extent of length without breadth or thickness*. A straight line: *the shortest distance between two points*.

When Jampa reached the 47th problem of Euclid, which is the Pythagorean Theorem: *In any right-angled triangle, the square which is described upon the side subtending the right angle is equal to the squares described upon the sides which contain in the right angle, or  $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$* , he might well have exclaimed “Eureka,” just as the great sage had done when he found it, but he more than likely said, “Wow!” Where Pythagoras had sacrificed a hecatomb (a hundred bulls) to the gods for receiving this mystical insight, Jampa merely became a lover of the arts and sciences.



Mathematics, as defined in the *American College Dictionary*, is “the science that treats of the measurement, properties and relations of quantities.” In occult philosophy, numbers are used to determine qualities, as well. Jampa swings both ways, when it comes to numbers.

Pythagoras heard music in mathematic figures, and he viewed the world as constituted of numbers. From his philosophy, a system called “numerology” has been derived that claims to reveal hidden meanings in common things, such as your address, the date of your birth or the spelling of your name. Through a set of correspondences between the

letters of an alphabet and the numbers through 9, aspects of your life can be determined.

#### TABLE OF CORRESPONDENCES

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R |
| S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z |   |

Numbers in this system are manipulated to arrive at a single number, which has a symbolic meaning. Jampa's birth name is Richard Lee Denner, and he was born on November 21, 1941. Numbers are added together in groups and reduced to a single number, except for 11, 22, and 33, which are considered cosmic numbers and have their only meaning. So, for the birthday,  $11+21+1941=1973 \rightarrow 20 \rightarrow 2$ . The integers derived from the vowels and consonants of his name combine, finally, to 8. Together,  $8+2 \rightarrow 10 \rightarrow 1$ . A #1 is one who follows his own calling and is not beyond spending years in meditative retreat seeking the answers to his questions about the universe. This is Jampa's situation, at present.

JAMPA: Bouvard, please stop mudding the waters.

BOUVARD: Well, then, let me turn to an analysis of the mathematical references in your poetry. In the oil pipeline poem, "Big Foot," you use a big number:

One drop goes a long way  
to ease the friction.  
100 billion barrels, that's  
ten to the tenth power—  
while the answer is hair,  
warm nights in fur,  
and the best investment  
is Sasquatch.

And in "Once I'm Up to Speed on Quark," you use a small number:

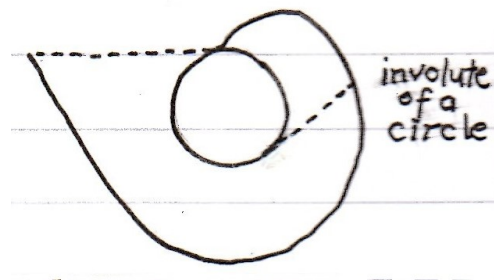
After the first 10 to the minus 43rd second  
a new layout to the universe  
bouncing bubble, a ball of strings

A hundred things to delight  
fountains, flags  
a butterfly of gas in flight



The pipeline poem is skewered towards deep ecology. Jampa is saying, "Before you turn up the thermostat, put on a sweater."

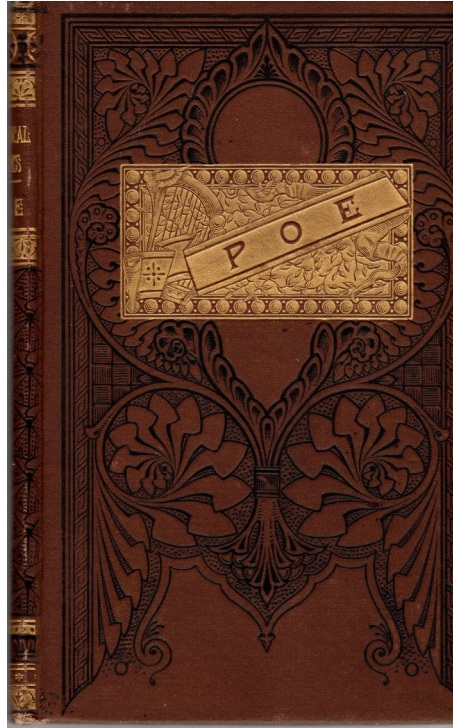
JAMPA: Size is relative in the universe. The amount of oil we pump out of Alaska is a fraction of what we use. The time that elapses for the universe to take shape was just that—the time it took (an instant,  $10^{-43}$  second), since time and space were co-emergent from the singularity at the moment of the Big Bang. Georg Cantor reveals by his Set Theory that any given area of space (and by extension, any period of time) contains a "perfect infinity of the number of points in the universe," and so, at any given point (call it  $-1+1$ ),  $10^{-43}$  second can be an extremely long period of time. Also, from a cosmological point of view, the universe, when considered as containing all of what Max Plank calls "simultaneous but only partially overlapping events" (consisting of energy-matter in time-space), might well be an *invoid* (my word), an object folded in upon itself, although we perceive it as moving outward. The universe includes itself. From a theological point of view, God is in each thing and God is everything. From a Buddhist point of view, the universe is an expanse of rainbow light whirling in the supreme mindstream of emptiness-bodhicitta.



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## READING

BOUVARD PÉCUCHET

KAPALA PRESS 2016 ELLENSBURG

As Borges has written, in his *Prologues to a Personal Library*, “A book is a thing among things, a volume among the volumes that populate the indifferent universe, until it meets its reader, the person destined for its symbols. What then occurs is that singular emotion called beauty, that lovely mystery which neither psychology nor criticism can describe.” Jampa was blessed from an early age to discover that emotion and has worshiped at its fount throughout his life.

Jampa has lived the life of a Romantic, meaning that he has been influenced by acts of chivalry, of marvelous achievement, of historical events, of the supernatural, of heroism and kindness, brutality and rapaciousness, anything that appeals to the imagination—most of this, for him, found in books.

Early books that Jampa read with interest were biographies. He

had an orange cloth-bound set for young readers: Abraham Lincoln and Davy Crockett were his favorites, perhaps inspiring his love of words and of living in the outdoors. Jampa checked out a copy of *Early Man* from the Bret Harte Junior High School library, and this book enlarged his understanding of history, greatly expanding what he knew from reading *The Bible*. He remains astonished at the length of time we spent chipping flint and how this industry continued to very recent times. In it are embedded modern science and technology.

There was an edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in the family's home. Jampa read at random articles on Yugoslavia, on the Peloponnesian War, on the Pegasus, and the pelvis. There were not many books in the family library. His parents read magazines—Time, Life, Ladies Home Journal, Redbook, the Reader's Digest—but Jampa checked out books from the library. Mr. Roberts, the teacher for Jampa's American Problems class, which was for seniors in High School (Oakland '59) where questions could be raised about what was really going on in the world, had an extensive reading list that he recommended to his students. Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* introduced Jampa to theories of psychology, as did Alan Watts's *Psychotherapy East & West*.

Jampa liked Freud's bold ideas and style of writing which brooked no argument, but it was Watts, who lived just across the Bay on a houseboat, in Sausalito, that resonated at his wave length. Jampa, having avidly read a clandestine copy of Ginsberg's *Howl & Other Poems*, was drawn to City Lights Bookstore where he found *Beat Zen*, *Square Zen* and *Zen* by Alan Watts, *Gasoline* by Gregory Corso, a broadside of *Abomunist Manifesto* by Bob Kaufman, *Kora in Hell* by William Carlos Williams, and a witty little book called *Twink* by Robert Shure, a book that Jampa enjoyed giving to the girls he dated.

Other books on Mr. Robert's list that raised Jampa's consciousness: Margret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*; and Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*. These anthropological texts introduced Jampa to the way other people in the world lived and undermined a tendency to view others in terms of race. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* extended this frontier. Its themes of colonialism and racism became a model for the "ugly Ameri-

can" and an allegory for the U.S. military incursion into Vietnam during the coming decade.

At Cal, besides the books assigned in class, there were interesting books on people's coffee tables. Jampa discovered James Joyce's *Ulysses* and read what he could with the help of Stuart Gilbert's interpretation and the same for *Finnegan's Wake* with the help of Joseph Campbell's *skeleton key*. Salinger's works were popular. And Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* and Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum*. And, later, the *Artaud Anthology* and Alexandria David-Neel's *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*.

Ernest Blank, one of Jampa's mentors, introduced our young scholar to the Morrison Room in the Doe Library. Here, Jampa heard a man read from Homer's *Illiad*, and although he could not understand the story, he could hear the clash of arms on the battlefield. Spoken word recordings followed, and he began to appreciate the sound and rhythm of language. He liked to sit in this luxurious setting, sink into an armchair, and read. He found it to be one of the greatest pleasures in life.

A lifetime of reading would require a lifetime to relate, perhaps as many lifetimes as those of the characters in the books themselves. It was during Jampa's stint as a bookseller, in Ellensburg, that he became less of a purist, in the sense of reading only "great" books, and he learned to enjoy reading genre literature. Mysteries, science fiction and fantasy, espionage and suspense, and, yes, romance all had their places on Jampa's shelves. And since this popular literature paid Four Wind's rent, Jampa felt he should sample his wares.

Who are Jampa's favorites? He likes his spies to be crafty. He thinks John Le Carré writes as good a sentence and develops a plot as well as any writer of fiction that has come along, past or present, and his *œuvre* creates a picture of the clandestine world and all its moral ambiguities that is epic in scope. Jampa likes his detectives hard boiled. Dashell Hammet's *Continental Op* is the prototype. In fantasy, Jampa is charmed by Ursula K. LeGuin. Jampa distinguishes between science fiction and science fantasy in that sci-fi usually has some hard science at its root, whereas sci-fan just gets you where you are going by a

magical means. Jampa is a fan of Huxley, Heinlein, and William Gibson. For suspense, it is hard to improve on Poe, but Steven King is certainly a worthy successor and just as "literary." As for romantic novels, no one has improved on Jane Austin. Jampa is still a classicist in his tastes. While in retreat, Jampa seldom reads, but when he does he mainly reads dharma books, although he has read an occasional secular work, like the amazing *Moby Dick*. He considers *Jitterbug Perfume* by Tom Robbins to be a dharma book.

Jampa's first encounter with Tibetan Buddhism occurred as he was walking up Telegraph Avenue, in Berkeley in 1959, and he saw a *kapala* (a human skull made into a bowl) and a *kangling* (a human thighbone trumpet) in a curio shop window. He was immediately aware that they were ritual items and assumed they had made their way to Berkeley because Tibetan refugees had been forced to sell their sacred relics to survive. "Weird," he thought, "show me more."

Buddhism was a new subject of interest to Jampa. Knowledge of the Vajrayana (Tibetan Buddhism) was still esoteric. Zen was the form mostly practiced in the West. Jampa received glimmerings of Buddhist thought from reading Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and *Dharma Bums*. In 1963, while visiting New York, he saw a copy of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* on a coffee table. He asked his friend, Jon Springer, if he gave any credence to the ideas in this book. Jon replied, "Why would I believe in such primitive notions?" When Jampa returned to Berkeley, he bought a copy of this fascinating but difficult to read book at Moe's Bookstore.

Jampa read on. He read Christian mystics with joy: *The Dark Night of the Soul* by Saint John of the Cross, *Way of Perfection* by Saint Teresa of Ávila, *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, and *The Cloud of Unknowing* by Anonymous. Thanks to Ernest Blank, Jampa was able to peruse the two-volume set of Jacob Boehme's *Mysterium Magnum & Signatura Rerum* among the rare books in the Doe Library. After his bust for flagrantly plagiarizing from Alfred Kazan's introductory essay to *The Portable Blake*, Jampa retained an interest in all things Blakean. Boehme was a major influence on Blake, and William

Blake became a major influence on Jampa as a printer-poet.

A study of the occult became necessary. *The Secret Doctrine* by Madam Blavatsky, *A New Model of the Universe* and *Territum Organum* by P.D. Ouspensky, and *A Vision* by William Butler Yeats found their way into Jampa's hands. Jampa continued to have interest in Eastern religions and philosophy. He read *Essays in Zen Buddhism* by D.T. Suzuki, *One Hundred Poems from the Chinese*, translated by Kenneth Rexroth, and *Rip Rap and Cold Mountain Poems* by Gary Snyder. He read *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Yogananda on a bus ride to and from Los Angeles. Believing he had a calling, he tried to enter a monastic order at the Vedanta Society but was told by a Swami that he would have to attend a few meetings first.

He had not yet learned how to meditate, other than to light a candle and pass a joint. The philosophies of the East seemed paradoxical and ambiguous to him. Not that Church Fathers were easier to understand.

On November 23, 1963, he was in Moe's Bookstore reading the *Summa Theologica* by Saint Thomas Aquinas when the music program on KPFA was interrupted and the assassination of President Kennedy was announced. This pulled Jampa out of his enchantment with the Middle Ages. He walked out of Moe's and up the street, but at the corner of Haste & Telegraph he was unable to cross, feeling a heavy sadness and a smoldering anger and seeing a dark stain on the world, an indelible stain. He knew he could not return to that age of bygone glory.

In the sense of turning an idea into action, the most important book Jampa ever read was *How to Live in the Woods on \$10 per Week* by Bradford Angiers. Living in Ketchikan, Alaska, in 1968, Jampa was inspired to move with his wife and child to a cabin near Deep Bay, fifteen miles by boat from the nearest road. Among the books Jampa took to the woods was a treasured copy of *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* by Henry David Thoreau. He also took Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* by Lama Anagarika Govinda, and two novels by T. Lapsang Rampa, *Cave of the Ancients* and *Doctor from Lhasa*. These last two books, by an Englishman who one day came

downstairs for breakfast and told his wife that he was a reincarnated Tibetan Lama, had a profound effect on Jampa. Fictional as they are, they created a vibrant, romantic portrait of the Land of the Snows and the meditation masters who lived there.

The hodgepodge of ideas welling in Jampa's brain began to be sorted and put in a kind of order at the University of Alaska, in Fairbanks, which he attended between 1972 and 1974. He took classes in Western Philosophy and Eastern Philosophy from Professor Walter Benesh. The students in the classes were usually the same students, so the discussions were far-ranging, mingling The Pre-Socratics, the Taoists, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Nagarjuna, and Husserl, all stirred into a heady stew—or, better, for Jampa, a maturing of intellect that now meant he could be comfortable at any table, whether the subject was Dewey's instrumentalism or the feudal Confucian emphasis on the rectification of names.

It is fitting and agreeably ironic that a plagiarist became a poet and an avid reader and convicted book thief became a bookseller. The Four Winds opened in Ellensburg, Washington, in 1978, selling new and used books, coffees, teas, cards and prints. For seventeen years, working off a karmic debt, Jampa tried to find the right book for the right person at the right time and for the right price. He would like to make it clear that the "O.P." marked in pencil in the upper right hand corner of his used books, next to the dollar amount, meant out-of-print, not over-priced. At the time, he did not really believe that there was life after retail. And, now, in long retreat, he thinks...

Han Shan would laugh—  
It only seems I've moved ahead

He heard wood choppers, whereas  
I hear chainsaws on the valley floor

And in my cabin, Luminous Peak?  
Not one but two shelves of books



# POETRY

**BOU-**

**VARD PÉCUCHET**

**KAPALA PRESS 2014 SANTA FE**

Jampa picked a point of departure and committed. When he heard that there was to be a two-week long poetry conference in Berkeley, he asked his professors if he could submit work that would get him C grades in his classes, if he left before finals. His Drama credits were assured with the successful staging of *Waiting for Godot*. His Philosophy professor stipulated that he must stay abreast of current events. He was required to turn in the journal he had been keeping for one English class. His professor in his other English class said he knew Robert Creeley, who was to be at the conference, and that Jampa would learn more in two weeks studying with Creeley than he would from staying through the rest of the quarter at Cal Poly. With his teachers' blessings, Jampa hitched a ride out of San Luis Obispo to Berkeley.

When Jampa got to Berkeley, he scored a kilo of Mexican weed, the kind wrapped in waxed butcher's paper in the shape of an adobe brick. He sold half to recoup his investment and stashed the remainder. On the first day of the conference, Jampa stopped by The Piccolo and wrote Elio, the Italian barista, a short poem for a shot of espresso. This seemed to Jampa to be an auspicious beginning to the adventure about to begin. He met Richard Kretch on his way to California Hall. Somewhere along the way, perhaps when they climbed up to the window sill to listen in on Creeley's lecture, Jampa tore the crotch out of his pants. It was the Berkeley Poetry Conference, a good place to let it all hang out.

Here is Jampa's recollection:



It was a hot day. The windows were open. Creeley was saying, "There is a war. There is not a war." Robert Duncan, who was sitting in the classroom said, "Why don't you let those guys come in?" Creeley gave his ok, and we hopped down and joined the I.W.W. of Poets. I expect Richard Baker, who was in charge of collecting admission fees, might have had a concern, but nothing was said about it, and from there on it appeared the events were free, as it should be with poetry.

Jampa introduced himself to Robert Creeley, and Bob asked him if he knew where he could score some weed. That afternoon, Jampa took Bob and Ed Dorn to the carriage house where his friend, Patrick Gore, lived and they all turned on and did a deal. Afterwards, Patrick, amazed at their talk, asked, "Who were those guys?" Jampa said, "Just a couple of poets."

Besides Robert Creeley, the only poets on the roster that Jampa had heard of, and the only ones whose poems he had read, were Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder. Bob and Ed seemed like cool cats, so Jampa sat with them at the New Poets reading. Ed told Jampa he should read, but Jampa was too shy. He was not too shy, however, to announce an impromptu party for Allen Ginsberg at his ex-wife Patricia's house on Derby Street. What Jampa had neglected to do was to inform Patricia or to make any preparations for such a gathering.

#### ALL THE HEADS OF THE TOWN LIT UP

I filled vials with violets and grass.  
I made baggies of marigolds and grass.  
I loaded a wine bottle with grass  
And announced a party for Allen.

I underestimated by a hundred  
How many would attend this bash.  
I was in a spot, so I put out my stash  
And passed my Stetson.

Olson filled the papa chair  
And passed his pipe—that was some pipe.  
Orlovsky and I made it to the liquor store  
Much to everyone's relief.

Kretch read a diatribe seated on the commode.

Lew Welch swung from the chandelier.  
It was Creeley, demanding everyone know  
Where the fireman & police were located

That cleared the place.  
So, I added up the cost & the cost of the cost.  
Nothing was stolen & nothing was broken  
Save for the chandelier.

Allen Ginsberg was one of the first to arrive at the house on Derby Street. I think that Jampa was both relieved and amazed at this. His tokens of marijuana had worked their magic, but Allen could tell that this silly boy was unprepared for the entourage that followed in his train. He opened his coin purse and put some folding money in Jampa's hand and told him to pass his hat. With a wad of cash, Jampa went to the liquor store, accompanied by Peter Orlovsky, who Allen no doubt sent along with the young, mustachioed poet to be sure he did not abscond with the loot and to see that he made wise purchases for the party.

When they returned, the house was full of guests, and Patricia had fled upstairs. Charles Olson had arrived and was seated in a large, stuffed arm chair. He was a big man, something like 6 foot 8, with girth. Jampa filled his pipe with weed. It took most of an ounce, a lid. Jampa had decided to make an offering of what was left of his kilo, and he broke it up on a sheet of newspaper in a bedroom that opened through sliding doors onto the spacious living room. Joints were consumed as fast as they were rolled. Smoldering bombers were arriving from every direction, along with jugs of Red Mountain wine.

The readings of the younger poets from the conference spilled over into the front room. The scheduled readers had been Gail Chiarello, David Bromige, Jim Thurber, and Gene Fowler, among others, many of them students from Gary Snyder's class—now, the street poets read, seated on an antique commode that had arms and a seat on hinges, so it served as a throne.

Creeley arrived late, and he was not in a good mood. Jampa had given him a triangular shaped wine bottle (one of Patricia's keepsakes from their courting days, when they had spent an evening at a Flamenco restaurant, near the La Brea Tar Pits, in Los Angeles). In the bottle, along with buds of marijuana, was a map to the party, designed like a treasure map in a fantasy kingdom: "Here, the Faculty Glade with its Saxon Hunting Lodge (Beware of Trolls!); here, Ishi's Wigwam; here the International House; further along, the Blind School; and here, where the road bends, marked with an X, you will find the

pool where dwells the Salmon That Fed on the Nine Hazel Nuts of Poetic Art.”

Creeley did not exactly demand that people know where the police and fire departments were located. He merely pointed out that few people knew where they were and where to turn in case of an emergency. From that time onward, whenever Jampa moved to a new town, he sought out the location of the hospital and other municipal buildings, and tried to orient himself in his surroundings. He considered Bob’s remark very sensible.

[For an alternative take on this evening, visit the “Outrider” section of *Berkeley Daze: Profiles of Poets in Berkeley in the ‘60s*, online at Big Bridge, and read Patricia Turrigiano’s “Why Do Women Fall for Poets and the Day I Met Allen Ginsberg.”]

Jampa made excellent use of his time with the poets, getting sound advice on many life matters. He told Gary Snyder about his plan to go to Alaska and earn enough money to start a bookstore in Berkeley. Gary said that Berkeley had enough bookstores already, and suggested Jampa find a town somewhere that did not have a bookstore and take Berkeley culture there. Jampa ran with this idea. After he retired from seventeen years of bookselling in Ellensburg, Washington, and a two year stint in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, he moved back to California to care for his elderly parents. After he had been in Santa Rosa for a few years, he went to hear Gary read at Berkeley Community College. It was a mixed bag of poetry with music and visuals. Gary’s work had recently been translated into Russian. Gary spoke on Siberian shamanism—you cannot suppress the teacher in Gary Snyder—and, then, he read some of his poems and the woman who had translated his work read the poems in Russian. When he had the opportunity, he approached Gary and re-introduced himself and mentioned how he had followed Gary’s advice and how things had worked out over the past forty years. Gary smiled and said, “And now you’re back.”

The readings and lectures at the Berkeley Poetry Conference still reverberate in Jampa’s consciousness. As John Bennett put it, in his *Air Guitar* article on Jampa, it was “an event creating a white light intensity that rivaled any drug high and had more staying power.” Jampa remembers Olson striding across the stage in California Hall, his arms spread wide, as though he encompassed the breadth of the universe—“36 billion light years and still expanding, will it return to its origins and repeat the performance?”—and when he began to read from his work, he stammered and returned to the beginning and caught the meter and his voice was strong and the measure sure, and Jampa felt that a poet like Homer or Chaucer was present.

Ginsberg read from his journal, poems that would soon be published in *Planet News*. He had been traveling the globe and had insights into what was

happening on Planet Earth. He had been in Prague and was crowned “King of May” and færie dust sparkled in all his words.

When Creeley read, Jampa sat in the front row in Wheeler Auditorium, and the halting, sorrowful, soulful lines flowed into Jampa’s heart, as tears flowed from Bob’s one good eye and from the socket of the eye that had once been wounded.

Olson was drunk the night that he read in Wheeler Auditorium. In their collaborative poem, *Spade*, which Jampa and David Bromige wrote years later, each has a different remembrance of Olson’s performance. David felt it was a poor showing, ill-mannered and insulting, and he refused to applaud. Jampa was more tolerant. He knew that Olson was suffering from heartbreak after a young woman had left him and that being recognized by his friends at the conference as “President of the Poets”—whatever that meant—was not the acclaim he ultimately sought, as the heir of Ezra Pound’s lineage. He was a sad sack that night, but he did put on a show; both Bromige and Jampa would attest to that. And it went well past closing time. The janitors waited in the aisles, mops and buckets in hand, actually clanking the mops on the buckets, indicating their impatience for Charles to conclude his reading.

The poet who had the most far-reaching impact on Jampa’s work was Jack Spicer. As Lew Harris says in “D Press: A Jewel in the Net,” his introductory essay to Jampa’s *Collected Poems*, “It was Jack Spicer’s molding of ‘series poetry’ into little books that had the most singular effect.” Without an understanding of Jack’s concept of the “messages” in poetry, it would seem that he was speaking Martian. Dana Gioia includes a few of Jack’s poems in his anthology, *California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present*, but he dismisses Jack as a minor poet. What Mr. Gioia does not get is that Jack is a poet’s poet, and one of very few whose work is on solid ground.

Jampa was blessed to be able to sit with Spicer in the back seat of an old car and listen to him cleave morphemes and cantilever syllables. He was Orpheus, marked by Thantos, and soon after the conference, he died.

## POETICS

What is the point, Jack?

If poetry a conversation

Among the dead, and the poet

Gets it second hand, a vampire

Moon sucking off the sun

And the poet, Jack?  
A battered radio transmitting  
Static between the stations  
On a lonely stretch of road or  
Punch-drunk fighter who's taken  
One too many hooks to the head

Powerful emotion recollected,  
The most exasperating art—  
Potts makes an analogy  
With Mahamudra, Williams hears  
A sort of song, Lu Garcia invents  
A ragged song, and Yeats sees  
Tattered clothes upon a stick

Belle says poetry is experience—  
I awake with morning light  
Thoughts sweet as honey  
Buzzing in my brain  
Swatting them I get stung  
By real bees in a dream garden

When all was read and done, the brooms and mops put away, and the bards had departed, Jampa returned to his place at the marble table in the Med [Caffe Mediterraneo]. The morning after the conference concluded, he was drinking espresso, and he looked up and made eye contact with a man who very much resembled himself, thin, with dark hair and a wispy mustache, tweed sports coat, vibrating at a high level of intensity.

Luis Garcia introduced himself and said, "I saw you around the conference, and I wanted to meet you and invite you to a continuation of poetry readings with a few of my friends at my house in the hills." The house on San Antonio was Lu's family home—his parents were away for a spell, and Lu, who had an apartment on College Avenue, took advantage of their absence to stage a mini-poetry conference.

Luis Garcia is the unacknowledged Poet Laureate of Berkeley. He was born and raised there and, now in his mid-seventies, still has a home in the Berkeley hills. In 1964, he traveled to Chile and while there published his first

book, *The Calculated Lion*. See *Una Cita en Santiago: Luis Garcia en Chile* by Gail Chiarello, Workwomans Press, 2014, [www.workwomanspress.com](http://www.workwomanspress.com).

When he returned to Berkeley, he was lionized, and soon plenteous books appeared: *The Mechanic* from White Rabbit Press, *Beans* from Oyez, and *Mr. Menu* from Kyack Press.

Many of the poets that came to the San Antonio house to read and converse have remained in close contact with each other. Lu calls them “the invisible circle.” They read and wrote poems; they dropped Acid and got high and made love in a true cultural efflorescence.

Jampa typed some of his poems on a special typewriter that belonged to his dad, who used it to type his speeches. It had a 16 point typeface, and this made the type easier to read from a distance. On Lu’s maiden Acid voyage, Jampa handed his binder of poems to his friend, and when Lu opened it, he got his mind blown.

In the beginning

It was done

On a blank page

With this warning—

Do Not Fold, Bend

Stipple or Mutilate

Lu introduced Jampa to Doug Palmer, who was putting together an anthology to be called *Poems Read in the Spirit of Peace and Gladness*. This would contain work by poets in the local scene, many of whom had read at the Berkeley Poetry Conference. Gail Chiarello was an editor, and she was reading poems for the anthology. Inexperienced, Jampa gave her a sheaf of his originals; but, not long afterwards, he became nervous they might get lost. He went by Gail’s apartment and, as no one was home and the door unlocked (not uncommon in Berkeley in those days), he went in and retrieved his poems. And so, when the anthology came out and the poets read at Cody’s Bookstore, Jampa was in the audience but was not one of the performers.

There was one poem, however, by Marianne Baskin that referred to Jampa, entitled "For Rychard."

Handing  
flowers  
    child of  
    God  
there's rue  
for you  
    Ophelia  
lost  
tears  
mirror  
the flowers  
floating  
in the pool

What happened  
to you  
    child of  
    God  
casting  
flowers  
to the riders  
on the winds

Lost souls  
drowned  
in the petals  
pointing  
in the whirling  
lines of  
tears.

One cannot live on poetry alone, although Jampa made a concerted effort to do so. Where did he live? What did he eat?

As for food, there is usually a pot of spaghetti and a jug of cheap wine to be found in a Bohemian village such as Berkeley. When he had money in his pocket (often thanks to the largess of his parents), he ate hamburgers at Kips, chow mein at Robbie's, or shish kabob at the Med. As for a place to sleep,

he crashed where he could. After the mini-poetry conference at Lu's parents' house wound down, he stayed with Lu at his apartment on College Avenue, where Dwight Way makes a jag, across from Gilman Hall, where Jampa had lived when he was a student.

The apartment had a small kitchen, a bathroom, a living room (where Lu slept, when he slept, which was erratically), and a small bedroom that was set up as a study and art studio, where Jampa had a mattress on the floor. Among the books Jampa discovered in the study were the writings of the poets he had recently heard read: *All the Heads of the Town Up to the Aether* by Jack Spicer, *Roots and Branches* by Robert Duncan, *The Maximus Poems* by Charles Olson, as well as other works he was unfamiliar with, like the poetry of Lorca and Williams and a copy of *Tender Buttons* by Gertrude Stein. All illuminating.

The legend that Lu and Jampa kidnapped Robert Duncan stems from this time. It must have been something the poet said. In truth, the young poets spotted Duncan waiting for the light on the corner of Haste and Telegraph and whisked him off to their pad and held him hostage for a couple of hours at the point of their poems. Duncan would not accept any weed, but he did seem to get high on the words of his young admirers.

Jampa held a séance one night, while Lu was absent. Jampa's friend Chela, from San Luis Obispo, came to visit with two of her friends, Charity and Raven. Jampa had left Chela his Berkeley address, an apartment he had (but no longer) shared with a girlfriend, Mary. He was in the neighborhood, visiting Patrick Gord, across the street at the carriage house, when the three of them pulled up in Chela's VW bus.

Jampa had visited Raven and Charity at an old farmhouse they lived in, the night he and Mary spent the night together in Chela's bus, when she came to visit him with Serge and Nancy Scherr. Serge and Nancy stayed at Jampa's apartment, and Jampa and Mary parked Chela's bus on a slight hill near Raven and Charity's farmhouse. The emergency brake in the bus was broken, and when Jampa and Mary began to make love, the bus began to jerk backward down the incline with each passionate thrust and counter thrust of their coupling. The bus would stop when they stopped and begin to move when they moved. They giggled in happy blending.

Mary and Jampa were no longer giggling. Mary and Patrick had become a couple. Patrick said, "I always sweep up after your messes." Jampa left with his friends quickly, so there would not be a scene. Jampa took them on a walking tour. He showed them his favorite spots along the Ave from Dwight Way to Bancroft. Shakespeare & Co, The Continental, Moe's old bookstore next to the green door, the laundromat next to the Med, where Congo drummers gathered at night to beat out their frantic rhythms, the Forum coffee-



house located where the Lucky market had been. After the tsunami of Hippie refugees arrived from the Height-Asbury, Telegraph Avenue, the main drag on the south side of the campus, was widened to help facilitate street artists in the selling of their wares. Head shops with black-light posters were the rage.

There was still much of Berkeley that reflected the values of the older generation. Frazier's Furniture Store, where Patricia and Jampa had picked out Franciscan Ware for their wedding dishes, Nicole's Gallery, where one could buy a Picasso or Miró original. As Jampa writes in his preface to *Berkeley Daze*:

Berzerkley is, or was in the 50s and 60s, the Athens of the West—the Berkeley of Baroque music, the Berkeley of Nobel laureates and little old ladies in tennis shoes,...the Berkeley of George Goode's haberdashery, where you could have a bespoke suit cut; of the Cinema Guild & Studio which was run by Pauline Kael and Ed Landberg—a street with tobacco shops and Mom and Pop grocery stores, like the Garden Spot, or the Co-op, where Allen Ginsberg had a vision of Walt Whitman among the artichokes—a street that, in those days, supported many and various bookstores. I would bop down the street, get the time from the clock on the campanile by looking into the mirror in the doorway of See's Candy Store, peer into Creed's Bookstore and salute Big Daddy at his chessboard, check out the marquee on the movie house, buy a pack of Gualoise cigarettes at the Garden Spot, and then cut across the street to the Mediterranean Café [sic] for a shot of espresso.

Jampa is being nostalgic, but he tempers his sentiments with:

O, too surreal—of course the street needed to be liberated—there is only so much bourgeois charm one can stomach before the homeless puke on your shiny shoes, and the street vendors camp on your doorstep, and the unread copies of Marx's *Communist Manifesto* clog the drains.

Chela said to Jampa, "You belong here; this place is you." He led Chela, Raven, and Charity through Sather Gate, took a short cut along Strawberry Creek to the Faculty Glade, showing them spots where he turned on, stopped at Kroeber Hall to look at the Ishi Exhibit, then back off campus to see Bernard Maybeck's Christian Science Church with its Belgium glass windows and trellises, winding up at Lu Garcia's apartment on College Avenue.

Chela's bus was parked nearby, and the friends went there to eat food Chela had brought in a wicker basket. Also, in the basket was a bag of homegrown weed that Chela said was a "hidden treasure" she had found under the dash, put there by her husband, Frank Wakefield, who, at this time, was building a

stupa for W.Y. Evans-Wentz at the base of the sacred mountain of Cuchama, near San Diego. They took this treasure back to Lu's place, lit a candle and passed a joint—the old magic—and when they had all gotten high, Jampa recited a poem.

## PATTERNS

Look at the numbers  
Kant 478a-79d  
There is beauty in the moral order  
And Bacon who should  
Be in Everyman's Library  
Knew Augustine confessed

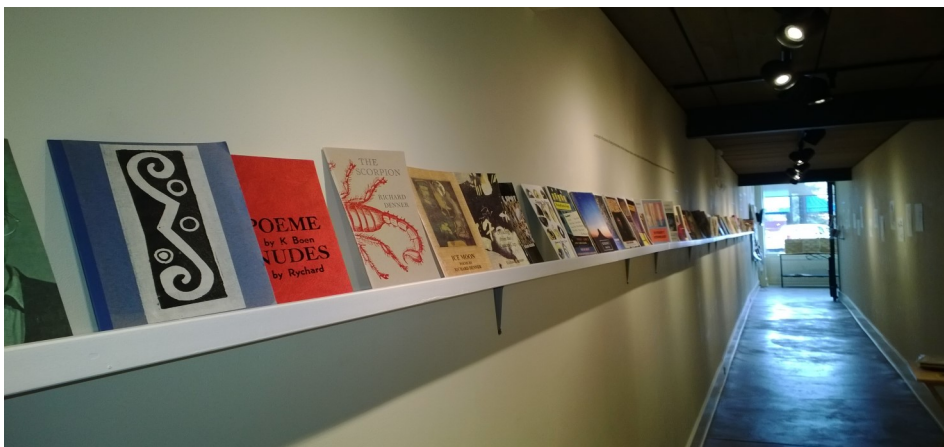
I have a friend who says  
There are 3 principles  
The good, the bad  
And the whichisneither

As for the whichisneither  
My friend told me to stop  
Smoking, which changed my life  
Because I smoke 2 to 3 packs

I write this sitting  
On a Persian rug  
Listening to a harpsichord  
On a Victrola play  
Partia #2 in C minor  
Schmieder 826

478 79 3 2 3 2 826

There was silence. Then, Raven said, "I think you raised some old ghosts. For a moment there I saw Plato's shade. No wonder he expelled the poets from his republic. All you do is create confusion and cause trouble."



## THE BOOK AS MEASURE: PRINTER AND PRINTED

### THE ARCHIVAL ARC OF D PRESS; OR, A SKELETON KEY TO *THE COLLECTED BOOKS OF RICHARD DENNER*

“Archive” is only a notion, an impression associated  
with a word and for which...we do not have a concept.

—Jacques Derrida, *Archival Fever*

My daughter, Lucienne, told me I should write about the intricacies of my oeuvre before I die, since my mode of writing is counterintuitive. Rather than beginning with the manuscript, I begin with the book. I initiate the writing process by visualizing the completed form the manuscript of my telling will take and fill in the empty pages. Over the years, the books have piled up.

From early on, I collected my poetry and published chapbooks under the D Press logo. The “D” comes from the first letter of my last name, but there are other associations—feeling depressed and it being “the” press. Since the poems revealed my interests, I considered this an inner autobiography. Later in life, I began creating a prose narrative of my adventures, and I chose to have these stories told in the third person by a fictional biographer, Bouvard Pécuchet, whose name is derived from a combination of the last names of the protagonists of Gustave Flaubert’s novel, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, a pair of court clerks with intellectual curiosity, who delve into all branches of human

knowledge with disastrous results. Combine two idiots and get one author.

I am fortunate to have twelve volumes of *The Collected Books of Richard Denner* archived in the Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley. I couldn't be deader—and yet dead in quite illustrious company. I rub shoulders with Shakespeare folios and Aztec codices. The Mark Twain Collection—rumors of Twain's demise still circulate—resides in opulent splendor. Here, one might expect to get some well-deserved rest, but after a brief suspension of time, one hears complaints about wormholes and arguments over shelf space...there is table tipping during seances convened by Madame Sosostriis...and there is the sound of tears and laughter beyond the garden wall...but that is there, and this is here and now.

Now, I am assembling a group of ideas around the notion of my archive. After this brief introduction, I present a photo-collage of an art installation that I did in Ellensburg, Washington, at Gallery One. Following the photo-collage is a pastiche of two of my essays on the history and technical procedures relating to my writing mode. I conclude my triptych by positing a sample of the Richard Denner papers that reside in the Bancroft collection.

Beginnings and ends. Knowing where your work fits in, in the larger scheme—60s Berkeley street poet and Pacific Northwest spiritual poet—living within the scale of these worlds, as well as knowing how to navigate is the trick. The secret entry to *The Collected Books of Richard Denner* is to open Volume Six, which has my first chapbook, *Breastbeaters*, published by Berkeley Pamphlets, in 1963, during the Little Magazine Wars. This is a secret entry because it's where the self-publishing of my poetry begins. Volume One is the formal entryway for *The Collected Books*. This volume begins my canon with the first books I self-printed after I owned a personal computer.

Go to [www.dpress.net](http://www.dpress.net)

Volume One begins with an epigram from Jack Spicer's *A Fake Novel About the Life of Arthur Rimbaud*:

"You can't close the door, it's in the future," French history said, as it was born in Charlieville. It was before the Civil War and I don't think that even James Buchanan was president.

**T**he muse may be embodied in a person. My first contact with this spirit of inspiration was Juanita Miller, the daughter of the flamboyant, 19th century California poet, Joaquin Miller. She lived in a vine-covered castle among her father's monuments to Moses, John Frémont, and the

Brownings, nestled in the Oakland hills, in what is now Joaquin Miller Park. In our neighborhood, she was unusual. On a foggy Halloween night, some friends and I spotted her in a white nightgown walking barefoot through the eucalyptus. We were sure her house was haunted and dared not go to her doorstep to trick or treat. She rode with my family to church on Sunday, and on one occasion she signed a copy of a collection of her father's poems and presented it to my mother. I revered this book. I would open it and gently touch her signature. It amazed me that we knew someone who was associated with the arts.

I memorized a poem from Miller's book, a poem to Lily Langtry, a popular singer of his day. I recited this poem in the 4th grade, and the next year in Mr. Shriner's 5th grade class, when asked to memorize a poem, I recited the same poem to fulfill the assignment, and the class jeered me, saying they had heard this poem before. A red-headed girl came to my defense and said she still thought the poem beautiful. A muse can be old or young, peaceful, joyful or wrathful, and sometimes they are teachers. In the 6th grade, Mrs. Latimore whacked the back of my hand with a yardstick for passing a scatological note when I was supposed to be diagramming sentences. Professor Traugot reprimanded me in front of a freshman comp class at Cal for plagiarizing from Alfred Kazan's essay on Blake, and Professor Parkinson proclaimed my essay, "My Home," the worst thing he had ever read. I may be forever re-writing "My Home," but I have learned to disguise my sources with better craft.

Kenneth Rexroth was the first poet I heard read. Ernest Blank opened my eyes to hidden beauty in poetry by explicating Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress." Mike Sneed critiqued my first poem, a parody of Poe's "The Raven," pointing out that poems are not Freudian soap-operas. While guarding the balcony of the Campanile on the U.C. campus, Don Bratman taught me how to scan a poem's lines. Dennis Wier fired my interest in printing by showing me how to burn plates with a light bulb in an orange crate in his closet. Vic Jowers promoted my first chapbook at the Sticky Wicket, near Aptos. Up to this point, I was dabbling, but I was primed for allegiance to this art when the 1965 Berkeley Poetry Conference was announced. My English teacher said he knew Robert Creeley and that I would learn more in one day at this conference than I would in a whole year at Cal Poly, so I thumbed my way back to Berkeley.

A major turning point—an injection of rocket fuel. I want to thank Gary Snyder for telling me Berkeley didn't need another bookstore and to take the nuts and bolts of what I had learned and move to the hinterlands where I was needed. Thanks to Allen Ginsberg for revealing that I could be both a good poet and a good businessman. "Just be good," he said, and I took the meaning of this to apply to both esthetics and ethics. Thanks to Charles Olson for showing me the meaning of epic scale. It was a mind transmission watching him bebop through the universe fusing Gilgamesh and quantum mechanics.

To Robert Creeley, who laid down two laws: William Carlos Williams's "No ideas but in things" and Ezra Pound's "Make it new!" To Jack Spicer, who admonished, "Poet, be like God."

It was during these days many lifelong friendships started. Luis Garcia, my closest friend and collaborator, has been my greatest mentor, always present with insights and humorous twists of perspective. I met Lu right after the Berkeley Poetry Conference, and we continued meeting with other poets for weeks to come. Lu's style of writing is unique—playing with the words within the words, he directed me to meditate on the morning light and helped me understand that it was important to forge a blade, as he put it. Lu's poems sizzle. They move so fast, if you aren't ready, you miss them. By imitating Lu's use of jazz rhythms and breath notation, I began to read my poems aloud. Just like Leadbelly learned to play the 12-string, I learned my craft by putting my spine against the piano.

After I acquired a 1927 Kelsey "Excelsior" hand press, I began printing in an attic apartment in Ketchikan, near the ball field. I'd come home from a day's work in the back shop of The Ketchikan Daily News, and I'd print 100 pages and hang them to dry on cotton string along the roofline of the apartment. On the weekends, I bound my books together, set type, and prepared for the following week of printing. The printing was smudgy and uneven, but I pressed on. The typefaces were worn, so I over-inked and pressed harder, pressing the letters into the paper, embossing the page, letting the ink bleed through. Grant Risdon taught me how to cut linoleum blocks, and in a rush of visual imagery, I tipped my linoleum nudes into the books, alternating poems and blocks, giving color to the big words.

After reading *How to Live in the Woods on \$10/Week*, I moved with wife and child and press to Deep Bay, fifteen miles from the nearest road by boat. D Press moved into a new dimension. Pouring the words right into the type case seemed natural. I began to break my poems into smaller and smaller units. Tried to express myself with just the Anglo Saxon. I was printing with 60 point Bodoni type, and this limited the number of words that could be arranged in a 4X6 inch type case. Constraints can be liberating.

### **Toward the book through the computer**

One of the uses of a computer is to solve the problem of justifying lines. Justified lines are the even alignment of letters at the margins of a text. It is the demarcation of where a line of type ends, not the end of a rhythmic line, where the number of scanned syllables makes one line a bit longer than the next because of the constituent parts of the sentence in various scripts and fonts. It's the printer's task to choose the right font and make the line end at a given spot, to choose the point size of the font so the longest line fits in the type case, within the margins. Poetry is usually justified to the left margin

and proceeds as a dance of consonant and vowel. The carcass of prose is anchored to both margins with hyphenated word breaks. In letterpress printing, lines are justified by filling the space between pieces of hand-set lead type. In a computer, this operation is accomplished in a text box by clicking the appropriate format icon on the tool bar.

## **Mapping the book**

Mapping the book. First, I estimate the size of the book. Then, I make a dummy of the book by figuring out how much of my text will fit on a page, say 8½x11 inches, folded in half, or half-letter size. I count the lines and estimate how many pages it will take, adding a title page, a page for acknowledgements, a dedication, and so forth. I divide by four since there are going to be four pages on a sheet of paper folded in half. I take that number of blank sheets, fold them, and write the page number and an abbreviation of what text will appear on each page. This guides me since the opposite sides of the page are not consecutive. For example, in a 32-page book, page 1 is next to page 32, page 2 is coupled with page 31. If a given page is going to be blank, I write "blank" on it. I design the page setup in landscape and create my master pages, using a booklet publishing program. All this to say, if I want to add a new page of text, I have to think in terms of four pages.

Although the cost per copy decreases slightly when you reach certain print amounts, the unit cost per book is essentially the same for one book as it is for one hundred. This is in contrast to offset and letterpress processes where the setup cost is much higher and the runs must be longer in order to make back the initial investment in labor and materials. I make short runs. I use the book as an editing tool—more, I often begin writing into the book, once the process takes hold, printing one copy at a time until I am satisfied with the layout and content—then, I run a handful of copies to be archived in the collections of a few friends. I sell books at readings and exchange books with poets that I meet, but, at present, I am not as interested in marketing my books as I am in the process of creation.

## **Backward process**

I work from the final form, the book that is already accomplished, like in a Tantric visualization, I develop the book by extending the vision, adding the ornaments, which are the poems. Marllarmé conceived of the book as a spiritual exercise. To me, the book fuses Newtonian sequence and Blakian simultaneity. It's a vehicle to write poems, the book as pen. I am writing with the book. Jack Spicer is my inspiration for molding serial poetry into small books. The poem arrives on the page, whether I collage it together from bits or carve it from a single block, whether I dream it or work it out as a puzzle.

Once it makes it onto a sheet of paper and can be read, the poem is already a part of a book. And, once in a book, it gets lonely, wants to speak to other poems. I let it breathe, let it percolate, let it draw to itself magnetic companions, let them be a piece of a larger poem. What starts it?—a metaphor, maybe, or some scribbling on the washroom wall, something fleeting, a little synaptic firing in my brain. I get these firings into words and onto a page because I have developed a modicum of mind-body coordination, and the words might even mean something. I keep making books, this book overlapping the next, being sure to leave a bit undone, like a Navajo weaver bringing a thread to the edge, allowing the spirits to come and go.

This is not the whole story of D Press. The roots of my printing can be traced back to a rubber stamp press that I had as a child, to my job as a bindery clerk at State Farm, to the various project books I made for my classes through my school years—there is an entire English grammar I meticulously copied for Mrs. Weismiller in the 10th grade—and to my connection with Dennis Wier at Berkeley Pamphlets. I gained further experience working on a letterpress with Wesley Tanner at Arif Press, in Berkeley. I learned graphic design and photography from my newspaper experiences at the Ketchikan Daily News, the Polar Star, the Berkeley Barb, and the Queen Anne News. I assisted John Bennett with his mimeo mag, *Vagabond*. I took a printmaking class, in Alaska, with Terry Choy. While working at Sprint Copy Shop, in Sebastopol, I utilized their photo coping and bindery equipment.

I have printed with most media, from potato prints to the computer, linoleum block printing, wood block printing, mono prints, etching and engraving, mimeograph, offset and letterpress. Also, I combine printing techniques in a single volume. The rationale behind the making of small books and the controversy surrounding self-publishing is explored in detail by Belle Randall in her essay, “Having Tea with Blake: Self-publishing and the Art of Richard Denner,” online at Big Bridge (Vol. 7), and which originally appeared in Vol.13, No.2 of *Raven Chronicles*.

The thrust of Belle’s argument is that a poet has more control over his material, over the selection of materials, layout and design elements and so forth. She points out that there is a long, honorable tradition of this kind of publishing. Small presses, which are often run by poets, publish not only their own work but the work of their friends, who may have presses of their own, and reciprocate in like fashion. I call this “collaborative publishing.” There are also “co-op” type publishing enterprises, where a group of poets join together to edit, design, work on marketing, and then job out the printing of their members books. A new wave of publishing—although some of it has the look of being turned out by a cookie cutter—has arisen in the mainstream with the advent of “print-on-demand.”

Initially, this technology enabled all authors to be their own publisher by simply submitting their manuscript to a company that designed and marketed



their book. Now, the author chooses from a number of templates and designs their own book. The finished design is maintained on file, and copies of the book are printed whenever a copy is needed, on demand. Publishers are not burdened with large and taxable inventories, and, as authors, their works appear on lists in the market place with the International Standard and Library of Congress book numbers.

My English publisher, Verian Thomas, used Xlibris to produce my *Collected Poems: 1961-2000*. He explains his vision:

Comrades Press was founded in 2000 as a direct result of its on line magazine. The amount and the quality of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction that we received was staggering, much of it from previously unpublished writers. We decided to rectify this by becoming publishers ourselves and, with no funding whatsoever, set about the task of bringing the work of the misplaced poets of the world to the world.

By utilizing print on demand technology and on line stores, we are able to produce quality books without many of the overhead costs associated with traditional methods. This means that we are prepared to take risks that would probably have other publishers waking up in a cold sweat in the middle of the night. Rather than publishing what we know will sell, our goal is to publish work that we like, work that we believe in, which should be the only reason for anybody to publish anything. Comrades Press works on a non-profit basis. If we make any money from our publications, it sits in the bank account just long enough for us to make the red numbers a little smaller before it is channeled straight into our next publication.

This also allows us to produce short-run chapbooks from brand new authors whose work grabs you by the throat and demands to be read or picks away at the back of your brain until there is no choice but to go for it.

Verian left me to slug it out with Xlibris, it being a branch of Random House, which is an American corporation. He paid for the primary cost of the book, and I worked with the layout artists. Verian's idealism might have been dampened had he experienced the confusion and setbacks that I encountered. Every glitch surfaced: lost files, uncorrected changes, inventive designs, and just when things would be going smoothly, the layout artist would change, and it would begin over, a new horror story. But credit should be given where credit is due.

A work the size of *Collected Poems: 1961-2000* is not a small undertaking. It contains nearly 500 poems spread over that many pages with forty illustra-

tions. It required diligence by the graphic artists who worked on the book to be mindful of the nuances of line breaks and stanza separations; this is not required with prose which can be poured into linked text boxes without mishap. The shift to self-design came with improvement in the software.

*The Collected Poems* took one year to produce, and it emerged in good form, very close to my intentions. The head honcho at Xlibris rolled up his sleeves at the end and worked on it himself. Everyone learned; the system evolved.

When I moved to Santa Rosa, in 1998, to care for my elderly parents, I bought a used computer from Don Satnick, in Ellensburg, a Compac with one gig of memory and an early Windows operating system and began to data input my poems already published in a handful of chapbooks and manuscripts from a group of spring-backed thesis binders. My *Collected Poems* is organized into sections of poems reflecting my geographical locations: Berkeley, Apotos & San Luis Obispo, 1961-68; Ketchikan & Deep Bay, 1968-70; Fairbanks & Preston, 1970-74; Ellensburg, 1974-95; Pagosa Springs, 1994-97; and Santa Rosa & Sebastopol, 1998-2000. Of the 462 poems with titles (many are serialized under one title), just under half (229) are included in the Santa Rosa & Sebastopol section.

Most of the poems in Santa Rosa & Sebastopol section were new works, but some were revitalized from older, abandoned works. In retrospect, this two-year period was a flowering of my confidence in myself as a writer. By learning to use a computer to design my chapbooks, I returned to my Blakean muse at Deep Bay, pouring my poems directly into the Grail.

I found it expedient to have blank templates of various sizes and formats that I could copy and use without building them from scratch, and this became my personal form of print-on-demand. My creative process accelerated. In 2003, I had the inspiration to put all my chapbooks sequentially into bound volumes. These volumes would contain the books with their original typefaces and covers. Since all the masters were in my computer, it seemed to be an easy matter, simply print them out, reverse alternate pages, run them two-sided on the copy machine at Sprint, and then cut the stack in half and combine them into volumes. Easy to envision but not quite the way it was to be done in reality. It took more time to organize and assemble 108 volumes in *The Collected Books of Richard Denner* than I had anticipated. The basic idea was sound for each individual chapbook, to cut and stack the pages; but the color cover had to be run off separately and inserted, and the process repeated for each chapbook, until the whole volume emerged and could be glued. I glued four books at a time in two groups to produce one eight-volume set, each with a cover in a hand-made box. Once complete, it was a history of D Press.

A professor of neurobiology at U.C. Berkeley, who I met at a Dzog Chen retreat, bought a set and said, “It is the history of your mind.”

The title pages of *The Collected Books of Richard Denner*, each with a Tarot card symbol, imitate the Black Sparrow edition of *The Collected Books of Jack Spicer*. Here we touch upon an aspect of my oeuvre that Belle Randall has called my “forgeries,” meaning that some of my books imitate already existent and recognizable books. Evermore the outlaw/outlier/outright liar, I write under a variety of aliases, cautiously trailing in the wake of the Portuguese poet, Francesco Pessoa. I have written as Richard Denner, Rychard Artaud, Jampa Dorje, Bouvard Pécuchet, Jubal Dolan, Doug Oporto, Luis Mee, and Thuragania. We have written poems, novels, plays, and belles-lettres. There is mystery, intrigue, humor, romance, and adventure. Call it a life.

## **A SAMPLE OF THE DENNER ARCHIVE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BANCROFT LIBRARY**

Containing works by Richard Denner and works under various nom de plumes, as well as collaborative works with other authors

### **INVENTORY OF D PRESS & KAPALA PRESS BOOKS**

*The Magic Bear*, a saga by Jampa Dorje

Kapala Press, Pagosa Springs, Colorado, 2009

Hand-printed with drawings by the author

*Jampa's Worldly Dharmas* (9 volume boxed set) by Bouvard Pécuchet (Richard Denner pseudonym) Memoirs, Kapala Press, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2014, perfect-bound, calligraphy edition with illustrations

Part 1, 120 pp; Part 2, 118 pp; Part 3, 116 pp; Part 4, 118 pp; Part 5, 122 pp; Part 6, 126 pp; Part 7, 126 pp; Part 8, 122 pp; Part 9, 126 pp.

*Jampa's Worldly Dharmas* (3 volume boxed set) by Bouvard Pécuchet (pseudonym). Memoirs, Kapala Press, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2014, perfect-bound, print edition with illustrations, Drawings and water colors the author. Vol. 1, 268 pp; Vol. 2, 272 pp; Vol. 3, 268 pp.

*My 20 Years in Tara's Mandala* by Jampa Dorje (Richard Denner's monk name), Kapala Press, Santa Fe, 2014, 120 pp perfect-bound)

Collection of poems, short stories, and essays (illustrated)

Artwork by the author

*A Book from Luminous Peak* by Jampa Dorje

Poetry, short stories, and essays, illustrated by the author

Kapala Press, Santa Fe, 2013, 260 pp, perfect-bound

*A Book of Drawings from Luminous Peak* (Volume 1) by Jampa Dorje

Kapala Press, Santa Fe, 2013, 176 pp of drawings (with 22 pages of notes), perfect-bound, Pencil drawings, watercolor and colored pencil

*A Book of Drawings from Luminous Peak* (Volume 2) by Jampa Dorje

Kapala Press, Santa Fe, 2013, 128 pages perfect-bound  
Pencil drawings with some watercolor and colored pencil  
*A Book of Drawings from Luminous Peak* (one volume) by Jampa Dorje  
Kapala Press, Santa Fe, 2013, 304 pages of drawings (with 22 pages of notes),  
perfect-bound, Pencil drawings and some watercolor  
*Wild Turkey Pecking* by Jampa Dorje  
D Press, Pagosa Springs, Colorado, 2009, 12 pp, hand-sewn. Artwork by the author  
*Up, Down, and Sideways* by Richard Denner (one volume edition, perfect-bound), Fictional  
ized version of *Jampa's Worldly Dharmas*, D Press, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2014,  
perfect-bound, 574 pp. Cover art by Claude Smith  
*Up, Down, and Sideways* by Richard Denner (3 volume edition, perfect-bound)  
*Up*, 188 pp; *Down*, 188 pp; *Sideways*, 198 pp.  
*Get Off That Alligator* by Richard Denner (flash fiction)  
D Press, Santa Fe, 2014; cover by the author; 114 pp, perfect-bound  
Preface by Gianna De Perslis Vona  
*Rychard's Assemblages* by Richard Denner (art work) D Press, Santa Fe, 2014, 46 pp, hand-  
sewn, Photos of artwork by the author and one set by Mike Burtness, Cover  
photos by Lynda Davaran

### **One of a Kind Editions (1-3 copies):**

*Sitting in the San Juans* (Poems for and about Tulku Sang Ngag) by Jampa Dorje, Kapala  
Press, Luminous Peak, 2009, 12pp, hand-sewn  
Calligraphy and photos by the author  
*Ikkyu's Libido* by Jampa Dorje, Kapala Press, Luminous Peak, 2009, 24 pp, hand-sewn, Cal  
ligraphy and drawing by the author  
*So Remote the Mountains* by Jampa Dorje (Eleven Poems Beginning with a Line by Saigō),  
Kapala Press, Luminous Peak, 2009, 16 pp, hand-sewn, Calligraphy and watercolor  
by the author  
*Recipe for Disappearing Egos* by Jampa Dorje, Kapala Press, Luminous Peak, 2009, 8 pp,  
hand-sewn, Calligraphy and watercolor by the author  
*A Thrush* by Jampa Dorje, Kapala Press, Luminous Peak, 2009, 16 pp, hand-sewn, Calligra  
phy and artwork by the author  
*An Interview with Fashion Icon Yeshe Tsogel* by Jampa Dorje, Kapala Press, Luminous  
Peak, 2010, 10 pp, hand-sewn, Calligraphy and artwork by the author  
*A Time to Go A-berrying* by Jampa Dorje  
Kapala Press, Luminous Peak, 2010, 12 pp, hand-sewn  
Hand-printed, a watercolor and drawing by the author  
*You Who Taste These Berries* (first draft of "A Time to Go A-berrying") by Jampa Dorje,  
Kapala Press, Luminous Peak, 2010, 8 pp, hand-sewn  
Calligraphy and drawing by the author  
*Dakini Woodchopping Chöd* by Jampa Dorje, Kapala Press, Luminous Peak, 2010, 12pp,  
hand-sewn, Calligraphy and drawings by the author  
*Pink Fox Goes All the Way* by Jampa Dorje  
Kapala Press, Luminous Peak, 2010, 12 pp, hand-sewn  
Calligraphy, drawing, and watercolor by the author  
*A Book for Laurence* by Jampa Dorje, Kapala Press, Luminous Peak, 2011,  
16 pp, hand-sewn, Drawings and poems by the author

### **Kapala Press books by other authors:**

Johnathan Barfield, *The Story of I*, Kapala Press, Pagosa Springs, 2009, 16pp, hand-sewn,  
Cover art by Lama Gyurmed Rabgyes  
Lily Brown, *Poems to an Old Monk*, Kapala Press, Luminous Peak, 2010,  
16 pp, hand-sewn, Calligraphy, watercolors by Jampa Dorje  
Áine Pierandi McCathy, *Tomorrow's Clew*, Kapala Press, Luminous Peak, 2010, 8 pp, hand-  
sewn, Watercolor by Jampa Dorje, 30 Copies

### **D Press books by other authors:**

Lara Bache, *As Dreams Give Way to Day*. D Press, Santa Fe, 2013, 24 pp. Photo by the author  
Miranda Smith, *Traceless* (with the working title “Craving” and corrections)  
D Press, Santa Fe, 2013, 32 pp, hand-sewn, Photo by the author  
Áine Pierandi McCathy, *My Rakusu: a Personal Lineage*, Memoir/essay  
D Press, Santa Fe, 2013, 20 pp, hand-sewn, Photo by Jampa Dorje  
Michael Irwin, *Peldaños*, D Press, Santa Fe, 2014, 24 pp, hand-sewn  
Watercolors by Jampa Dorje

### **Online Art & Writings (and miscellaneous detritus):**

Nine bound volumes (leatherette back and plastic cover) of different lengths  
Years 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008-2012  
containing works published online at different e-zines, along with flyers from poetry readings and art shows at different locations, re-views, rejection letters, and the occasional drawing  
*Tribute to Richard Denner*, 2007, Big Bridge #12, 150 pp., [www.bigbridge.org](http://www.bigbridge.org)

### **Other bound volumes:**

*Berkeley Daze: Profiles of Poets in Berkeley in the 60s*, edited with a preface by Richard Denner, foreword by J. Poet, and introduction by Gail Chiarello. dPress, Sebastopol, 2008, 494 pages, perfect-bound  
*The Episodes* by Richard Denner (leatherette back and plastic cover) manuscript, Handwritten copy contains drafts of “The Episodes” (approximately 200 page, 1-side)  
*The Episodes* by Richard Denner (spiral bound) D Press, Santa Rosa, 2008  
Typewriter copy (200 pages, 2-sides)  
*1960s Love, War, Revolution...* an excerpt from volume one of *Visions and Affiliations: A California Timeline: Poets & Poetry: 1940-2005* by Jack Foley (Pantograph Press, 2011)  
that contains a section on Richard Denner with excerpts from *Berkeley Daze* by Richard Denner. 150 pages, spiral-bound and inscribed “For Richard—This nearly final draft—note particularly pp. 142-150—Good luck in CO! Jack”  
*A Set of Lessons Introducing the Aspects of Poetry* by Richard Denner  
A set of lessons developed for California Poets in the Schools under the supervision of Arthur Dawson, Sonoma County, 2001, 30 pp. bound with plastic cover and leatherette.

### **Collaborative Works:**

*The 100 Cantos* by David Bromige and Richard Denner  
This series of books reveal the evolution of the three-volume epic poem (*Spade*, *The Petrarch Project*, and *Garden Plots*, a collaboration by David Bromige and Richard Denner, which was written in stages, in Sebastopol in 2004, and was published by D Press  
*The Spade Cantos 1-4*, *Spade Cantos 16-18*, *The Spade Cantos 1-5*, *Spade Cantos 1-8*, *Spade Cantos 11-13*, *Spade Cantos 16-20*, *Spade Cantos 27-33*, *Spade Cantos 1-11* (all hand-sewn with corrections), *Spade Cantos 1-15*, *Spade Cantos 1-25*, *Spade Cantos 1-26*, *Spade Cantos 1-33* (perfect-bound with corrections), *The Petrarch Project Cantos 34-36*, *The Petrarch Project Cantos 34-42*, *The Petrarch Project Cantos 43-46* (hand-sewn with corrections), *The Petrarch Project Cantos 50-61*, *The Petrarch Project Cantos 34-49*, *The Petrarch Project Cantos 34-66* (perfect-bound with corrections), *Garden Plots: The Hung Chow Cantos* (hand-sewn with corrections), *Garden Plots Cantos 67-75*, *Garden Plots Cantos 67-88*, *Garden Plots Cantos 67-96* (perfect bound with corrections)  
One set of *The 100 Cantos* with black covers and tipped-on titles  
One copy of *Spade* with cover by Luis Garcia

One copy of *The Petrarch Project* with cover by Sam Albright

*Roses of Crimson Fire* by Gabriela Anaya Valdepeña and Rychard Denner

An epistolary novel told in letter, poem, and photograph, this book evolved through a series of emails between Richard Denner and Gabriela Valdepeña, in 2006, and was originally published as a D Press “Scorpion Romance”—Still under the Scorpion Romance trademark, it was republished by Darkness Visible Press, La Jolla (edited by Douglas Martin) in 2008, where it won the 2009 San Diego Book Award for Poetry

*Could Be Silk* by N.C. Sappho and Bouvard Pécuchet, D Press, Sebastopol, 2007, 16 pp, hand-sewn

*Wild Silk*, by Nancy Cavers Dougherty and Jampa Dorje, D Press, Sebastopol, 2007, 24 pp, hand-sewn

*Silk* by Nancy Cavers Dougherty and Jampa Dorje, D Press, Sebastopol, 2007, perfect-bound

*Silk* by Nancy Cavers Dougherty and Jampa Dorje, Pillow Road Press, Sebastopol, perfect-bound

### Sets of Books:

*The Collected Books of Richard Denner*, volumes 1-12 (Volumes 1-8 in a box)—1 set, all perfect-bound, books are from 243 to 284 pages in length, including color covers and original chapbook design; the books include the D Press letterpress books from the ‘60s and ‘70s, the offset books of the ‘80s, and the computer books up to 2008

5 boxed sets with different groups of hand-sewn books with wrap around covers (40-48 pp) by Richard Denner:

One box includes *Letter to Sito*, *Chainclankers & Linoleum Nudes*, *Islam Bomb*, *New Gravity: A Collection*, *Tack Shack*, and *On Borgo Pass*—One box includes *Dead Man Finds Happy Trails*, *Beginnings and Ends*, *The Episodes*, *Vajra Dance Mandala Odyssey*, and *From Lascaux to Dendera*—One box includes *Bad Ballerina Dances Against Violence*, *What Zen Wisdom (with Eve West)*, *Second Boiling*, *Imaginary Toads* and *Green Fire*—One box includes *Vajra Songs* (by Jampa Dorje), *Another Artaud* (edited by Richard Denner), *Selections from the Writings of Bouvard Pécuchet* (edited by Rychard), *Richard Denner & Co.* (edited with translations by Bouvard Pécuchet), *Wavetwisters* (by Artaud), and *What Zen Wisdom* (by Joie Phenix & Bouvard Pécuchet)

*A Sleeve of Books* (cover art by Mark Nolen), each includes 4 small books:

*These Proud Lovers* by Jampa Dorje, Kickass Press, Sebastopol, 2005

*Special Relativity* by Jampa Dorje, Kickass Press, Sebastopol, 2005

*Poised* by Jampa Dorje, Kickass Press, Sebastopol, 2005

*Bouvard Pécuchet’s Twenty-two All-time Favorites*, Kickass Press Sebastopol, 2005

David Bromige’s *Shorn of Duration*, Faerie Gold Press, Sebastopol, 2005, hand-sewn, 16-20 pp, photos by Richard Denner, a boxed set of 15 books with titles taken from poems by W.B. Yeats:

*Apples of the Sun*, *Nature But a Spume*, *Flame Upon the Night*, *As Goldsmiths Make*, *To Cypher and to Sing*, *What Careless Muses Heard*, *What Star Sang*, *Great Rooted Blossomer*, *Honey of Generation*, *Body Swayed to Music*, *Another Troy Arise*, *Some Old Gaffer*, *Burdensome Beauty*, *Stubborn with Passion*, and *Vague Memories*

*The Kickass Review: A Journal of Art & Literature*, ed. by Bouvard Pécuchet

Volume VI, No. 1, Kickass Press, Sebastopol, 2006, 100 pp, perfect-bound, cover by Claude Smith

Volume VI, No. 2, Kickass Press, Sebastopol, 2006, 100 pp, perfect-bound,

cover by Lorenzo Ghibilline  
 Volume VI, No. 3, Kickass Press, Sebastopol, 2006, 120 pp, perfect-bound,  
 cover by S. Mutt  
 Volume VI, No. 4, Kickass Press, Sebastopol, 2006, 122 pp, perfect-bound,  
 cover by Mike Burtness  
 Volume VI, No. 5, Kickass Press, Sebastopol, 2006, 106 pp, perfect-bound  
 (with CD), cover by Mark Nolen and Donald Guravich  
 Volume VI, No. 6, Kickass Press, Sebastopol, 2006, 124 pp, perfect-bound,  
 cover by Bobby Halperin  
 Volume VI, No. 7, Kickass Press, Sebastopol, 2006, 120 pp, perfect-bound,  
 cover by Sam Albright  
 Volume VI, No. 8, Kickass Press, Sebastopol, 2006, 126 pp, perfect-bound,  
 cover by Guy Lombardo and Sandy Eastoak

#### **Notebooks:**

1 notebook "Rate Florid" (a collage-type notebook) containing poems and ramblings,  
 circa 1988 (8 1/2x11)  
 13 spiral-bound (6x9") notebooks, 2006 through 2012  
 1 notebook with Chinese-style cover (contains Tibetan Ngondro numbers)  
 1 notebook *Holy Nights* workshop 2001-2002

#### **CDs:**

*Jack Straw Writers Program 2004*  
 2 CDs Belle Randall interview, 2 CDs vocal workshop  
*Man-Hat-Tan-Dialapoem*, Claude Basquiere & Steve Fisk,  
 Kickass Records, recorded 4/1/85 in Seattle



## PROTECTOR OF THE BENT

a heart vowed to eradicate hells,  
if I don't help who will?

warrior of the byways  
plunging into black chaos

into the unknown  
into the matrix of the world

I watch where I step—

if it's green with whiskers  
it's probably a Leprechaun

if it's soft and steamy  
it's probably a cow pie



## SITTING IN THE SAN JUANS

taking teaching from Tulku Sang-ngag  
who was incarcerated in Chinese prisons for ten years.

He relates how happy he was when he discovered  
the blissful state of samadhi and could enter it  
while he was working at cutting logs  
but how this got him into trouble with the guards  
and the beatings he received.

He teaches us how to enter this state  
with a breathing practice called *tsalung*  
but while he is teaching this practice, a pickup arrives,  
and the port-a-potty man pumps out the honey box.

Tulku Sang-ngag is explaining how the seed syllable  
in the crown chakra melts into nectar  
when the odor of shit wafts through the yurt.

Eyes roll, noses lift, but everyone seems determined  
to maintain their composure as they realize  
the essential unity of the relative and the absolute.

Then, the lama laughs, and we join him.

## DECISIONS, DECISIONS

So many decisions, so much chance for derision—  
the deadly wind of praise and blame.

Birget's luscious Tara statue stands before the throne,  
but Tulku Sang-ngag says he would prefer it on the altar  
with the mandala offering placed in a lower position.

He does not mention which direction  
the Tara statue should stand on the altar.  
Should it face the lama when he's teaching  
or should it face the entrance?

I opt for Tara facing the throne—wrong.  
Rinpoche gives a lion's roar of laughter  
when he finds he must prostrate to Tara's butt.

## PARTY DOWN, RINPOCHE

And night time is a time for song and dance.  
After the Riwo Sangchod Retreat,  
we party at Tsultrim's and David's new house.

Tulku Sang-ngag feels expansive and dances  
the Warrior Dance of King Gesar,  
jabbing at the air with an African spear.

Ani Tersing translates one of the tulku's poems.  
Although her English falters,  
her voice is star-flecked.  
She knows more than she knows she knows.

"Red bird...big bird...a vulture...eating  
dead people on the mountain."

We are inspired to sing 'Blackbird Singing'  
and, much to David's chagrin,  
'Row, Row, Row Your Boat' and, then,  
'Om Tare Tutare' to flute and drum.

Given the right rhythm, even the dead can dance.

## EVERYTHING IS PEACE

I enter the quiet where flies buzz  
and leaves rustle in their immortality.

The silence ends at a yellow bird,  
a Western Tanager— I looked him up—  
atop a stalk of last year's mullein.

Each moment has its own climax.

## A FLOATING REFLECTION

I drift in infinite space,  
or no space,  
an illusion of myself  
in an obscure place—

Emptiness holds me up.

## HUM OF AN INSECT

During pointing out instructions  
a fly flies in my mouth,  
and I wonder if I will ever get it.

Stabilize in rigpa, that is.

I'm sitting, and then the fly flies in,  
and I sit with this fly in my mouth,  
all revved up, but I'm sitting still,  
and the fly walks out of my mouth  
and along my upper lip and onto my nose  
and then buzzes off into the limpid, blue sky  
and I am left feeling empty  
and a trifle confused.

During the question and answer period,  
I ask Rinpoche, "If I am sitting in rigpa  
and the fly is inside me, is the fly in rigpa?"

Tsok Nyi says, "We'll have to ask the fly."

## **SAMSARA IS AN AIRPORT**

Samsara is an airport surrounding a delayed flight.  
I'm stretched out with my eyes closed  
listening to the travelers and the intercom.

"...want my money back..."  
"...want to be in San Francisco, now..."  
"...really no reason for this..."  
"...is it a red color code, today?"  
"...is it really raining there?..."  
"...will my luggage arrive?..."

"...will the pilots for flight 2807  
please report to Gate A6?..."

All this inside me.

## **DIRGE**

everybody knew  
your friends knew

your family  
your psychiatrist knew

but you kept drinking  
and drinking and drinking

and now your friends say prayers  
by the oven where you are cremated

and we did a puja in the gumpa on a full moon night  
Tashi heard your voice, it was raining through sunlight

two rainbows appeared, so she put flowers on the shrine  
and Jack got a message, "What's up with the dead flowers?"

## INTO THE LION'S MOUTH

It's a very relaxed atmosphere in Hidden Valley.  
Des and Norbu are playing "Lion."  
They are making growling noises.  
Horses graze in the shade of the big elm.  
We've had a short puja, and we're all laid back.

I pluck up the courage to ask Rinpoche for a teaching  
on the *Dance of the Three Vajras*, which I'm learning.  
Mind transmission of OM AH HUM as the essence  
of the Five Seed Syllables of Samatabhadra.  
Inner, outer, secret, and innermost secret  
oral instructions on the Vajra Dances.

The body is a mandala, the world is a mandala,  
the movement, a dance of light and rays and sound.  
Manifesting as Tara or Avalokitesvara,  
receiving the blessings of the siddhis.

Purification of all realms occurring  
as we move through Samsara,  
and while we dance we are manifesting  
The State of Natural Perfection, our true nature,  
the actualization of the Energy of Dharmadatu.  
I shut up after this and enjoy the picnic.

When I get back to the mandala,  
I no longer have to look at my feet.  
I am transported into a realm of clarity and movement.  
The sky, the clouds, my breath, the scent of rabbit ear sage,  
*A La La Ho.*

**1-800-BUDDHAS**  
**for Joe**

you have reached the offices  
of Guru, Dharma & Sangha  
this is a recorded message  
if you have a touch-tone phone  
press the appropriate button

having pure intention  
and you want to take refuge  
press 1 for Hinayana  
press 2 for Mahayana  
press 3 for Mantrayana  
press 4 for Dzogchen

if you miss part of the transmission  
it will repeat itself upon completion  
if you have any questions  
press the # key, and a Bodhisattva  
will come on the line to assist you

for those with desire-attachment  
or guests of karmic payments  
we suggest dialing our new number  
1-900-Distract

press 1 for a crazy-wisdom bitch  
press 2 for yidams in leather  
press 3 for assorted hindrances  
press 4 to be listened to attentively

## **RAINBOW HEART**

**for David**

84,000 passions give rise  
to flowers, rivers and mountains

appearing in a rainbow sphere  
dancing with bell and drum

she feeds her demons  
and dissolves duality

white feast  
red feast  
black feast

essence of the elements  
conquest over hope and fear

## **SKYLINES**

Sky in my mind  
Sky in my voice  
Sky in my heart

Walking the path  
our fingers touch  
beneath the stars

We make funny sounds  
in the serious stillness

Much laughter  
much joy  
pervasive and empty

## **AND PUS FOR THE HUNGRY GHOSTS**

I'm sitting, happily reading  
in a mandala of sunlight  
a goddess with golden hands  
feeling neither anger  
nor joy  
my forgiving heart  
sends out a secret mantra  
to prevent war

## **DHARMA TALK**

Blue flurry near where  
my prayer flags flutter.  
A jay drinks  
from one of my offering bowls.  
I try to teach this jay to chant  
without much success.  
He nods inquisitively  
then continues his way beyond training.



## TARA-PEACH TRANSMISSION

Adzom wants to learn how to can peaches.  
Tsultrim is telling him how, step by step.  
Erik translates. Adzom takes notes,  
while giving Tsultrim a short version of the Tara practice,  
which he wants included at the end of the main text.  
I sit outside the tent, chuckling to myself,  
waiting for the text to emerge,  
so I can run off another edition of the book.

Adzom is transmitting it word by word.  
Tsultrim writes down each word in phonetic Tibetan,  
and Erik translates it into English.  
Then, another step in the process of canning peaches,  
and Erik translates that into Tibetan,  
and Adzom writes it down in his notebook.  
Then, another line of the Tara practice,  
and Tsultrim writes that down, and Erik translates.

*OM CHAG TSAL JETSUN TARE*  
*OM* Homage to Jetsun *TARE* Goddess  
Wash jars, rinse. Place jars in hot water.  
*TU TA RA E YI DUNG WA KUNCHOB*  
*TU TA RA E* Save from all suffering  
Pack the sliced peaches into hot jars.  
*TUGJE TOGMED TURE PALMO*  
Unimpeded compassion *TURE* Glorious One  
Leave one finger of space at top of jar.  
*DAK LA DRUPCHOK TSOL CHIK SWA HA*  
Grant me the ultimate siddhi *SWA HA*  
Cover with boiling sryup, leaving headspace.

## GOOD QUESTION

Adzom asks me if I have meditated  
on my answer to his last question.  
I tell him I finally understand,  
and I give him a new answer.  
Then, he asks me, “Where is your mind?”  
And I say, “I don’t know, in my shoe?”

Adzom picks his nose and looks at me, fixedly.  
Then, he asks if he can beat me. “Why?” I ask.  
“What am I to do when I am angry with you?”  
He is leading me somewhere with simple questions  
and answers that I don’t intend to give.

I am walking up the trail to the stupa, when it hits me.

that presence  
that is all  
that is

given each  
breath

Tears shoot out of my eyes— I can help it—  
I have such gratitude for this revelation.  
I lean my head against the upper part of the stupa.  
A dakini comes around from the other side  
and asks me what is wrong, and I say,  
“I just feel incredibly blessed.”  
“Yes,” she says, “the stupa is a powerful, living entity,  
giving off its blessings— it’s a good place to cry”

## DEJA VOODOO for Ashlee

o, never always  
would the mind  
let go

even the grass  
will attain  
liberation

**WARM LIGHT**  
**for Brent**

spring soon  
still winter

still winter stillness  
the brown ground moves

bees have no attainment  
bees have no non-attainment

**THINGS CHANGE YET ARE ONE**

Mountain Blue Bird  
Varied thrush  
Starling  
Stellers Jay

A jay and a lizard in a fray,  
Lizard tugged by jay.  
Jay pecks yet kept at bay.  
Clap of hands—jay flies away.

Porcupine  
Red Squirrel  
Shrew  
Wood Mouse

Lists never end, nor do difficulties  
and obstacles.  
Not easy to outwit the fox of desire.

## **ADDLEHEADED IN SAFEWAY**

beyond joy and woe  
where I can do what I do  
without having to lie

Jigme Lingpa arises in the eggplants  
transmits mantra to my inner idiot

OM AH HUM OM AH HUM  
WICHA TYE TYE WICHA TYE TYE  
CUMA ROMA CUMA ROMA HEY HEY

coming before coming before  
coming way before coming

## **SPACE & LONGING & A FEW FLASHES OF LIGHT for Jane**

Early morning in the garden  
different intensities of color  
grass and stone.

So hot— no hurry— heavy air  
water-loaded air moving slowly  
across the yard.

Practice no-resistance  
just a fan and a hammock  
in Tornado Alley.

## BACK FROM A RETREAT

This morning, feeling  
 that I am finally integrated into my normal,  
 Santa Rosa routine body,  
 noticing the levels of protective shield forming,  
 able to get through the day,  
 driving the freeways,  
 maneuvering the shopping lanes,  
 reduced awareness of the intense abrasives and chaos,  
 still a few reverberating visions lingering  
 at the threshold of the doors of my senses,  
 but my clam shell is nearly in place,  
 once again robotic responses to samsaric stimuli  
 are practically automatic.

## BASELINE

I've been told. I've been shown.  
It's been pointed out—the path, the fruit.

I see a little dog.  
I wonder why he doesn't have a tail.  
I wonder why he doesn't have any hair.  
I wonder why he doesn't have any eyes.  
I wonder why he doesn't have a head.  
I wonder why he doesn't have any feet.  
I wonder how he is trotting down the street.

As Jigme Lingpa says, “Through examples,  
one recognizes the meaning.  
Through signs, one comes to believe.”

## A SIGN

I'm walking up a trail, deep in conversation with Debbie.  
We are talking about *tigles*, tiny rainbow spheres,  
when I see a little flash of light shooting down the trail,  
and a young chipmunk runs under my boot.

With its spine crushed, blood running from its mouth,  
and it writhing in the dust, I tell Debbie to walk ahead.  
She'll not want to watch what I am going to do.  
I've lived on farms.  
It's reasonable to put down a suffering animal.

A blow to the head with a rock, and the creature is still.  
I dig a small hole, put in a few leaves to make a cushion,  
and lay the body of the chipmunk in its grave.  
I chant a mantra.  
I cover it with earth and place a cobble on top.

During one Dharma talk, the subject of killing comes up,  
the difference between accidental and intentional acts of killing,  
so I tell about it, and Adzom says, the first act was accidental  
& didn't involve me in the chipmunk's karma in a negative way,  
but that my intentional act of "putting it out of its misery"  
was more serious in its repercussions, that I should have left it  
to "burn out its karma" without interfering in the process.

Such is the difference between the East and the West.  
My chances of being reincarnated as a chipmunk are very good.

## PARDON MY FRENCH

We are studying the Ngöndro text,  
and Erik suddenly chokes and says  
that we shouldn't say the next line.

There's a mistake in the phonetic Tibetan.  
A word is misspelled, which has then become  
a colloquial term, so that the line reads  
"naturally arising Fuck Body."

## ON THE ROAD HOME

Driving through the small village of Gem,  
I point to a twenty-foot stack of elk antlers  
in front of a shop, probably a tannery,  
where there's a sign, "The Buck Stops Here."

Lama Gyurmey Tsering's eyes get really big,  
and his mantra machine kicks into overdrive.  
Within a mile, a huge rainbow arcs across the road.  
"Man, Tsering, you liberated a whole herd of dead elk."

## STUFF OF LEGENDS

It's getting late, going on midnight.  
Where is my ride?  
I phone camp, but no one picks up,  
so I keep on printing.

I'll hike back— only fifteen miles.  
Shouldn't take but half the night.  
I'll make it in time for the puja.

But I don't have a coat.  
What can I use to keep warm?  
This door cover with an eternal knot embroidered on it?  
I see myself walking all night wrapped in a door cover,  
carrying a box of Tibetan texts along the county road.

Then, I'm hiking the last three miles,  
wishing I knew how to do yogic fast walking,  
when I encounter a mountain lion in the dark.  
All that's found of me are shreds of the door covering,  
the scattered texts, and a leg bone,  
which makes a good thigh bone trumpet.

## AND HERE I AM

mistakes in my mind  
but light in my heart

Ol' Dog  
dancing to a drum  
with feathers on

"Look!"

I'm growing wings  
I'm

falling in love

## SIT LIKE A MOUNTAIN

I'm in the tent of self-produced mind  
late at night, candles flickering  
soaking up his mind essence, like  
being in Tibet a thousand years ago  
with Guru Rinpoche, tough and gentle.

He taught three words that hit the vital point  
Lama Wangdor, doing it the hard way  
sitting on his ass in a cave for twenty years  
until his bone touched the stone  
listening to waves of bliss-emptiness  
crash on the shore of nirvana.

Noise floods in from the street  
here in the pure land of Santa Rosa.  
One taste in the supermarket aisle—  
and new asanas for highway maneuvers.



**CHACO RIVER BEING**  
**for Gaela**

what is it  
gives pleasure  
in a minim?

don't ask,  
let's not  
force it

**OL' DOG AT THE END OF SUMMER**

not sure which side's up  
doing my doggie thing

going to town to print some poems  
only it's Labor Day

and the streets are empty  
except for flags

I flap about  
have a cup of tea

figure, since it's Labor Day  
I'll honor the struggle

lucky me, others mostly  
have to work harder to make

ends meet

## **BIG MAP**

summer signing off with a scorcher  
kids hit the water with a vengeance

at the city pool, parking places full  
cars soaking up the sunshine

I'm sitting here, feeling transparent  
and not particularly real

maybe it's all this talk of war  
the West Nile virus in our blood stream

or the battle around who's  
going to pick up the garbage

how can I take myself seriously  
when everything's the world

everywhere it's happening  
everything is everywhere?

## **PRAISE AND BLAME, LOSS AND GAIN**

To be peace— empty, clear, compassionate in this  
Jumble of good and evil and not escape through sleep  
Through normalcy, through wrapping myself in the flag

A prayer tree flutters in our town square  
Prayers for war to disappear in this warm breeze  
The leaves are prayers blowing in the deadly winds

## **BUDDHA'S LAST WORDS**

This stuff is just stuff.  
Keep on keepin' on.

## **TELECOSMOS**

the sunshine  
beyond the actual sun

is a song you sang  
along the San Juan

a canticle of water and air  
a riff of iridescence

## **COASTWALK**

I walk along the lost coast  
I become limpid blue sky

seaweed seaspray  
seagulls and sand

dry wet high low  
empty full fast slow

bored blessed

## AT COLD MOUNTAIN BOOKSTORE for Charles & Nancy

At my reading  
a man named Neah  
asks if he can say  
a few words.

I say, "No," and  
he turns away.  
And then,  
the mist clears,

and I ask him to do  
his thing—  
a bit from Jung  
on the *eternal fountain*.

Try and buy the well,  
and it dries up  
and then springs up  
somewhere else.

My shadow and I  
make a wise choice  
on this western face  
of Cold Mountain.

## SAMSORRY

I'm looking for an exit  
from this buddhadrama

an exit out  
of the head

an exit in  
to the heart

grasshoppers jump for joy  
when the grass is liberated

## EARTH TERMA

I find Tulku Gyurme on the path  
bent over with the dry heaves.  
I'm patting him on the back  
when I hear my name called,  
and Adzom beckons us to come.

He points to a rock, moves his hand in a circle.  
I remove the rock.  
He hands me a sharp stick, and I dig.

It's daylight, but it is like a long night.

A piece of paper appears.  
I can see Tibetan script bleeding in the damp.  
I want to unfold this dark treasure,  
but Adzom makes a gesture for fire,  
both hands upturned, fingers wiggling.

I try to build a small fire with wet leaves and twigs.  
Ani Sherab comes with a box of kitchen matches,  
and we light the whole box and hold the paper  
over the flames between two sticks.

The paper catches and curls into a question.

Adzom dances in a circle, flapping his arms.  
We all bow to one another and go our separate ways.  
Later, I ask Erik, who translates for Adzom,  
what all this was about, and he says,  
"So, you're becoming a magician's apprentice."

## MORE LIGHT

my dad gulps air  
jaw slack, hands astray  
in front of the TV  
sound on full blast

he can't make out the words  
but the music helps him sleep  
it's Ida Lupino Month on *TCM*  
May and December

his 75th Masonic Anniversary  
at the Luther Burbank Lodge tonight  
proud he can walk to the East  
worried he won't remember the Word

how to tie his tie is a real mystery  
his first car, a 1916 *Buick*  
I drive into the fire  
to help him

## ENERGY

At the end of summer  
two boys and a dog  
splash in the river.

Light through the leaves—  
no death in them.

# The Lama and the Carpenter *and* Dance Mandala Odyssey



卐 Jampa Dorje 卐

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## THE LAMA & THE CARPENTER

Around midnight, I am called to fix the lama's bed. He has come home late, after phoning his students in China, and he has knocked his bed loose from its moorings. Earlier, I had made up the bed, making sure the frame was level. His tent is on a slight slope, and I had leveled the frame with wooden blocks. The path is visible in the moonlight, so I make my way from my tent to the tool shed, near the out-door kitchen, where I gather up more blocks, a hammer and nails, along with my level, and I wend my way through the scrub oak to Adzom's tent. Adzom Paylo Rinpoche is a big man, well over six foot tall. He's going to be hard on the furniture.

The tent flaps are tied back, and there is a battery-powered lamp in the tent, casting a feeble light. I can see that the bed has a radical tilt. Anne Klein is seated on a cushion on the floor; she will translate. Anne says, "The bed is lower at this end, and Rinpoche can't sleep with his head lower than his feet, and if he turns the other way, his feet will be pointed towards the statue of Tara." I take off my shoes and bow in obeisance. The lama motions me to sit.

I push back the covers on the bed and put my level on the frame, and, sure enough, it is way out of kilter. Adzom is curious, and he climbs down and sits on the floor next to me. He asks to see the level, so I hand it over to him, and while he is occupied, I go around to the other side of the bed and look at the legs. The bed has slid off the blocks. I set them back under the legs, and nail them in place. When I look up, I see that Adzom is moving the level back and forth, this way and that, with a big smile on his face.

I take the tool from him and again lay it along the edge of the bed frame, so he can see that the bubble is in the middle of the glass tube, which indicates that the structure is level. Adzom gets excited. "I understand; I understand," he says. "I am very smart." He's like a big kid with a new toy. I start to collect my things, but Anne asks me if I would like to stay and have an interview with the lama. "Sure," I say, "why not?" The smell of incense is heavy. The lamp casts a shadow off the statue of Tara on the wall of the tent. Here, in the Rocky Mountains, sitting at the feet of a Dzog Chen master, I feel I could be Tibet a thousand years ago. I sit down again, and Adzom climbs up on his bed. He looks directly at me, rolls his eyes back in his head, and asks, "Do you want my mind essence?"

This dude is serious. "Yes," I say, "yes, I most certainly do." He asks me a question that could be answered in a number of ways, but lately I have been focusing more on my energy because I have prostate cancer, and cancer is said to be caused by an interruption of the energy field, a possible break in the immunity system, so energy is of paramount importance to me, and I tell him so. Adzom says I should meditate on this and come back in a few days. I stand and bow and pick up my tools. As I am leaving, he says, "I might have to steal your level."

A couple of days later, I am in Pagosa Springs, and I stop at the hardware store and look for a small level, something Adzom can pack in his suitcase. I find a short carpenter's level with replaceable bevels made by Stanley, not as classy as the antique I use, which was patented in 1896, but more portable. It will serve the purpose. Near the levels, are metal squares of different sizes, and next to them are brass plumb bobs.

I have an idea. I am a Past Master of the Order of Freemasons, and the secrets of Masonry are transmitted through the use of sign and symbol. In Buddhism there are three jewels: the Guru, the Dharma, and the Sangha; and in a Lodge of Masons there are three objects that are called the movable jewels: the Plumb, the Square, and the Level. These are the working tools of a Fellowcraft Mason. Inspired, I decide to buy these tools and present them to Adzom Rinpoche.

I know I risk being disemboweled and having my organs thrown to the beasts of the field for revealing Masonic secrets, especially as I will have to communicate them through the translations of a woman; but, damn me, I am frustrated by these limitations. I do believe that it is important to maintain secrecy in esoteric matters by not revealing secret knowledge in the wrong context, and I will only show Adzom the parallels between a set of symbols in these two traditions. It is important to forge links between minds of dif-



ferent cultures. Adzom is a buddha, who is leading me to enlightenment, and I have a rare opportunity to share some of my experience with him and enter into the field of his wisdom.

A gana puja, a ceremonial feast, is to honor Padmasambhava, the founder of Tibetan Buddhism. This is an auspicious day to practice, and all the benefits of practice will be greatly multiplied. Tsultrim, the founder of Tara Mandala, gives me a traditional Tibetan text and asks me to make five copies for those who can read Tibetan. The shape of a text like this is long and narrow and printed on both sides of the page, the back side reversed from the front side, and there are no Arabic numerals to follow. The text runs to one hundred pages, so this task is going to take some time to complete.

After dinner, I get a ride to town. I warm up the copy machine in our business office, and I figure out a procedure to keep the pages in order. I begin with the first page and run five copies. I make a small mark on the right corner of the top copy in pencil and turn the master over and place the five copies in the tray and run the other side. Then I cut them to size and lay them out on the counter face down. I repeat the process with the next page and the next. The text has corrections made with small squares of gold leaf, and in the margins there are some drawings—a design which at first seems to be a bottle with flowers and, then, becomes a psychedelic, mazelike pattern—and I meditate on these mysterious lines, until I realize that it's getting late, going on midnight.

Where is my ride? I phone camp, but no one picks up the phone in the kitchen, so I keep printing. If nothing else, I'll hike back. It's only fifteen miles. Shouldn't take more than four or five hours. I'll make it in time for the puja. However, I realize I don't have a coat. What could I use to keep warm? I look around, but all I can find is a door cover with an eternal knot embroidered on it. I envision myself walking all night wrapped in a door cover, carrying a box of Tibetan texts along the county road. Then, I'm hiking the last three miles up the forest service road, and I encounter a mountain lion in the dark. All that will be found of me are shreds of the door covering, the scattered texts, and a leg bone, which will make a good thigh bone trumpet. Heroic fantasy. The stuff of legends. Wish I knew how to do yogic fast walking. I try phoning again, and this time someone does pick up. Brian, our cook. He says Gwen is still at Tsultrim's house, waiting for Adzom to finish phoning China, but that he will come and get me. If I'm lucky, I will get a few hours sleep before the puja.

I'm always thrilled when I awake. What a miracle! It doesn't take long for things to get weird, but for awhile I am in awe and grateful. And so, when the bees start stinging the people climbing the hillside to the site of the puja, everything seems to be about normal. A couple of us rush back to the kitchen to fetch some Benadryl and baking soda. The sun is beating down with intensity, and I'm sweating profusely, as I struggle back up the hill. Everyone calms down once we start administering plasters of baking soda and ap-

plying Benadryl to the wounds.

Rinpoche arrives. He sits on a throne under an umbrella. His assistant, Lama Gyurme Tsering, has a video camera and is documenting the event. I shoot a picture of him—a lama in his robes with a video camera—a classic cultural cross-over. The sun is beating down harder; and this is turning into an ordeal, because Adzom, a true Dharma machine, will recite the whole text. We are on the verge of heat stroke by the time the puja is dedicated and Adzom starts to speak about his vision of a temple on this site. I was right; he is a temple builder, and I know he needs a plumb, a square and a level.

After the puja, I spend the rest of the day napping, get up for dinner, and go back to bed. I sleep through the night, manage to make it to practice the next morning, afterwards going back to bed and sleeping through to the following morning. I am drained. I will have to pace myself to regain my momentum. So, I have come to this, a place of exhaustion, and how was I to know? So easy to use up one's reserves. Adzom is in my dreams. We are walking together about a foot off the ground. He is giving me instructions about fast walking. He tells me that fast walking is a form of flying. The trick is in keeping my feet close to the ground so that I appear to be walking and not flying, which is really what is happening. I awake doing the Tara action mantra.

Tsultrim wants me to make the Green Tara practice into a chapbook. She is having Erik Drew translate, and both he and Anne go over her rendition. Tsultrim's way of translating is poetic, Anne's is more academic, and Erik's, very literal. Getting them to agree is going to be an interesting process, and getting the book finished before the end of the retreat will take planning .

Added to this, Adzom wants to learn how to can peaches. Tsultrim is telling him how, step by step. Erik is translating. Adzom is taking notes, and he is also giving Tsultrim a short version of the Tara practice, which he wants included at the end of the main text. It's only a few lines long, and the action mantra is imbedded in the verse. Adzom is giving it out word by word, and Tsultrim writes each word down in phonetic Tibetan, and Erik translates it into English. Then, Tsultrim gives another step in the process of canning peaches, and Erik translates that into Tibetan, and Adzom writes it down in his notebook. Adzom gives another line of the Tara practice, and Tsultrim writes that down, and Erik translates.

OM CHAG TSAL JETSUN TARE  
OM Homage to Jetsun TARE Goddess  
Wash jars, rinse. Place jars in hot water.  
TU TA RA E YI DUNG WA KUNCHOB  
TU TA RA E Save from all suffering  
Pack the sliced peaches into hot jars.  
TUGJE TOGMED TURE PALMO  
Unimpeded compassion TURE Glorious One  
Leave one finger of space at top of jar.  
DAK LA DRUPCHOK TSOL CHIK SWA HA

Grant me the ultimate siddhi SWA HA  
Cover with boiling sryup, leaving headspace.

I call this the Tara-Peach transmission. I sit outside the tent, chuckling to myself, waiting for the text to emerge, so I can run off another edition of the book.

I've been told; I've been shown. It has been pointed out—the base, the path, the fruit. In a dream, I see a little dog. I wonder why he doesn't have a tail; I wonder why he hasn't any hair; I wonder why he doesn't have eyes; I wonder why he doesn't have a head; I wonder why he doesn't have feet. I'm guessing that I am this dog. The lama says, "Through examples, one recognizes the meaning. Through signs, one comes to believe."

Not dreaming, I'm walking up a trail deep in conversation with my friend, Debbie. We are talking about *tigles*, tiny rainbow spheres, when I see a flash of light shooting down the trail, and before I can change my pace, a young chipmunk has run under my boot, and I have crushed its spine. It is writhing in the dust, quivering spasmodically, and blood is running from its mouth. I tell Debbie to walk on ahead, as I don't think she will want to watch what I am going to do.

I have lived on farms. It is reasonable to put a suffering animal out of its misery. More people are coming up the trail, so I carry the chipmunk over into the trees, where I can dispatch it quickly. A blow to the head with a rock, and the creature lies still. I dig a small hole, put in a few leaves, just to make a cushion, and lay the body of the chipmunk in its grave. I say an appropriate mantra, cover the chipmunk with earth, and place a cobble on top.

Adzom has been giving interviews to the retreatants and separating everyone into two streams. The majority are in an advanced group doing Yeshe Lama practices in Hidden Valley. These practices are being led by Anne, Harvey, and Tsultrim. I keep on with my karma yoga, but I notice there are just two students sitting with Adzom Rinpoche. They meet at his tent, and he teaches them the preliminary practices of Ngöndro. I have seen pictures of Adzom teaching in Tibet. He teaches the multitudes. The pictures show a valley full monks and nuns and lay folk of all sorts, men, women and children, camped out to hear Adzom. Looks like a Grateful Dead concert.

I get permission to sit in. During one dharma talk, the subject of killing comes up, the difference between accidental and intentional acts of killing, so I tell of my experience with the chipmunk, and Adzom says that the first act was accidental and did not involve me in the karma of the chipmunk in a negative way, but that my intentional act of "putting it out of its misery" was more serious in its repercussions, that I should have left it to "burn out its karma" without interfering in the process. Such is the difference between the East and the West. No doubt about it, my chances of being reincarnated as a chipmunk are very good.

A humorous occurrence in one talk. We are studying the Ngöndro text, and Erik suddenly chokes, and says that we shouldn't say the next line, because

there is a mistake in the phonetic Tibetan. A word is misspelled, which has then become a colloquial term, so that the line reads “naturally arising Fuck Body.”

Lama Gyurme has been having stomach cramps. The cramps persist, so I am asked to take him, with Harvey to translate, to Mercy Hospital in Durango. Sitting in the emergency room lobby, I wait for the lama. An obese lady to my left, wearing shorts and a tee-shirt, paints her toes copper. A tall Indian in formal dress, a set of tails, no less, with his hair tied back in a braid, a turquoise and bone necklace, dark glasses and cowboy boots, paces the floor. A tough-looking guy with a tattoo of a dragon on his calf, with his right eye mangled, bounces a baby on his knee. *Aliens 3* is on the TV. Which realm is this? Which planet am I on?

The doctors can't find anything wrong with Lama Gyurme, so we head back to Tara Mandala. On the road home, we pass through the small village of Gem, and I point to a twenty foot stack of elk antlers in front of a shop, probably a tannery, where there is a sign, “The Buck Stops Here.” Lama Gyurme's eyes get really big, and his automatic mantra machine kicks into overdrive. Within a mile, a huge rainbow arcs across the road. “Wow, Lama,” I say, “you liberated a whole herd of dead elk.”

Next day, on my way to deliver some photos to Harvey, I notice Lama Gyurme on his hands and knees spitting up white foam. He is coughing and sweating and seems to have knots in his shoulders when I put my arm around him. I am patting him on the back, offering words of comfort, when he sees the packs of photographs in the plastic bag I am carrying. He loves photos. I decide Harvey won't mind if I show them to him, and we are looking through them, when I hear my name called from behind. I look around, and there is Adzom, near a portable toilet, motioning us to come in his direction. I stoop down to put the photos back in the bag, but Adzom motions me to leave the stuff where it is and to hurry. When we are near, Adzom points to a rock and moves his hand in a circle. I remove the rock. He hands me a sharp stick, and I dig. I hear chanting in the meditation yurt on the hill. It is daylight, but it seems, oddly, like a long night.

Adzom points to another spot, and I dig. Still nothing. He crouches down while I am digging, and the stick flips up a big clod of dirt on his robes. I freak out, thinking I have sullied the lama, but he ignores this and points to a new place to dig. At this point, Adzom's sister, Ani Sherab Rinpoche, appears, and she takes the stick from me and walks a few steps away, looking at the ground, and then comes back and hands the stick to me and points to a place right next to where I had originally started to dig. I dig again in this spot, and this time a piece of paper appears.

I think, “Good Lord, we've discovered an earth treasure from Padmasambhava.” The chanting in the yurt reaches a crescendo, and I can see ink marks bleeding on the damp paper. The paper, however seems to be a regular sheet of typing paper, folded over maybe three times and not the reputed, golden scrolls with secret dakini script in lapis lazuli. I'm hesitant. I'm not

sure I want to unfold this sheet of paper and find out it is an advertisement for a 2-for-1 sale at City Market.

Ani Sherab stops me from unfolding the sheet, and both Rinpoche and Lama Gyurme, who have come up close, turn their hands upward and wiggle their fingers. I am not sure what they want, but Ani Sherab is holding the piece of paper between two sticks, and I guess they want me to build a fire to burn the thing. I have a pack of matches, and I strike one, and Ani Sherab holds the paper over the flame, but the paper is damp, and it won't burn. I build a small fire with leaves and twigs. A wind begins, then vanishes. I blow on the flames, as the paper catches and curls like a question mark. Lama Gyurme's nausea is gone. He is rapt in attention and makes sure every last piece is burned to ash, and then he stirs the ashes. I look up and see Adzom doing some kind of a lama shuffle. At the sight of him dancing in his robes and tennis shoes, I can't help but laugh. We all look at each other and laugh and shrug and leave our separate ways. The sky is full of rainbow light. I don't know what this was all about, but I think we got rid of something bad. You never know what you might dig up in America, old gum wrappers, hidden *termas*.

The next morning, I am called from breakfast to fix the Lama's bed. He has broken a couple of boards. I get my tools, and I take along the plumb, level, and square I want to give to Rinpoche. Adzom is eating breakfast at a table under the awning, so I go in and look under the bed and see that the screws that hold the brace that supports the cross structure has given way on one side. I remove the covers from the bed and turn the frame on its side, and, in doing so, I bump against the alter and tip some water out of the offering bowls, which spills on a notebook. The top page is soaked, and I grab my handkerchief to wipe it up before the ink runs, but I am too late, and I smear the letters. I hope this is only a few insignificant notes and not a sacred transmission.

Adzom returns, just as I am finishing my repairs. I point to the mess I made, but he doesn't seem disturbed. He sits on his bed and bounces a couple of times and smiles. Anne is nearby, and I ask her if she will translate for me. I tell him that I have some tools I would like to give him, and that it occurred to me that he might like to know the esoteric significance of these tools. I tell him that I don't presume to be teaching him, but that I feel compelled to share some of my knowledge with him. He smiles broadly and asks me to sit.

I give him, in turn, a small plastic level, a metal square, and a brass plumb with a string. I explain that the Level is symbolic of equality, the Square of morality, and the Plumb teaches rectitude of conduct. The plumb is an instrument used by operative masons to raise perpendiculars, the square to square their work, and the level to lay horizontals. In Speculative Masonry, the Plumb admonishes us to walk upright in life, squaring our actions by the Square of Virtue, always remembering that we are traveling on the Level of Time towards that Temple in Heaven not made by human hands. Anne does her best to translate this into Tibetan, and I ask her to tell him that these alle-

gorical ideas seem to be parallel to a similar concept in Anu Yoga about the inseparableness of our conventional being (*samayasattva*) with our wisdom being (*jnansattva*). Adzom nods with enthusiasm, and he says it is unusual for him to be giving mind training while receiving training in carpentry in return.

When my little talk is over, Adzom asks me if I have meditated on his last mind-training question. I tell him that I finally understand, and I give him a new answer. He gives me further private instructions, and I soon realize he has turned me around again. I am walking up the trail to the stupa when it hits me. I am completely aware but not thinking. I am just there, everywhere, on the trail, in the universe.

That presence  
that is all  
that is  
given each  
breath

Tears shoot out of my eyes—I have such gratitude for what has been revealed. I lean my head against the side of the stupa. A dakini comes around the corner and asks me what is wrong, and I say, “I just feel incredibly blessed.”

“Yes,” she says, “a stupa is a powerful, living entity, giving off its blessings. It’s a wonderful place to cry.”

## VAJRA DANCE MANDALA ODYSSEY

Five weeks should be enough time to overcome all obstacles and paint the dance mandala. I am a volunteer at Tara Mandala, a Tibetan Buddhist retreat center, located near Pagosa Springs, Colorado. I glue together several lengths of a building material called Tyvec and then cut the material to fit the circular dance platform. I start at the center and paint outward, laying down a coat of color—Jade Green, Royal Blue, Medallion Yellow, Summer Red—straightening the lines, cutting the darker colors into the lighter in increasingly larger circles. I follow my plan. I’m adding color to another ring, now, cutting in the fifth ring, the green against the red, roughly one hundred feet of curved line along the outside, when it starts to rain, and the rain makes the paint run, and I have to roll up the mandala. There’s not much I can do but head for cover. When the storm subsides, I unroll the mandala and look at the splattered mess—blue and yellow making a yucky green, red and yellow making an awful orange. This is not my plan.

This is a lesson in impermanence. When it dries, I’ll repaint it. And it dries, and I repaint it. I’m proud of my work. The next morning, after our work meeting, I take my teacher, Lama Tsultrim, up the hill to show her the

mandala, the luxurious colors, the clear lines. I'm gesticulating with both hands as we crest the hill and see the mandala scrunched up in the middle of the platform with a coat of frost still glistening in the morning sunlight. We approach quietly and look at this tossed and twisted agony of a shape. I can see the paint is cracked and peeling, and my eyes well with tears when Lama Tsultrim says, "You'll just have to start over."

I'm reminded of the teacher-student relationship between Marpa and Milarepa. Marpa had Milarepa build three towers and then demolish them. I stretch out the mandala and put down more rocks around the edge and get out my pocket knife and start scraping the torn paint and sanding the edges and filling the gaps with caulk and coating the patches with primer and repainting the color and making the lines clean.

At the next work meeting, I report that in another day, if the weather holds, I should be back to where I was the previous week. The weather does hold, and I paint my way into the outer rings. Then, one morning on my way to practice, I look down the hill and realize the mandala is missing. I run down the hill to the dance platform and discover an upturned can of paint still dripping through the boards and the mandala and the plastic milk container with the other cans of paint in a heap in a ditch by the pond. I pull it up and find another mess of spilled paint and twisted fabric.

Yes, Marpa, I know, put the rocks back where I got them and begin again. It's an important test of some kind. Lama Tsultrim suggests I do the Long Protectors' Practice. The Dharmapalas, the mountain gods, are unhappy with me and don't want me disturbing things in this location. I had better get myself aligned with the forces at play if I'm ever going to finish this project. So, I sit by our stupa, a reliquary, and burn juniper and do the practice every day. *Eight classes, all-powerful guardians, I speak to you, please accept these clouds of desirable objects, filling the sky! Magnify all that is wholesome, pacify all that is bad! Be of service day and night and fulfill my wishes, easily, swiftly!*

I spread out the mandala and secure it with strips of lath, which is what I should have done in the first place. I'm learning that there is no should. Now I know, and now it's done, and I clean up the mess and start again. The mandala is covered with patches of white paint and looks apoplectic.

Lama Tsultrim returns from a trip to Santa Fe, looks at my work and says, "It doesn't seem to have changed."

I say, "Yes, Lama Tsultrim, it has changed; believe me, it has changed. I just haven't made any headway."

I clean up the patches and straighten out the lines. I must have painted nearly a mile of lines by now. The paint is drying, and the mandala is finally stable. I've been doing the protectors practice, and the mountain gods have been peaceful. I put a heavy rock, shaped like a heart, in the center to keep the occasional breeze from making the mandala plane and take off for the wide, blue yonder, but the rock has scraped the surface of the white paint. I'm repainting it just as heavy clouds roll over Ekajati Peak.

It doesn't rain right away, but in the middle of the night it breaks loose with flashes of lightning and blasts of thunder. I know it's raining hard be-

cause there's a river running through my tent, flowing in from the unprotected side. And the mandala? I don't want to think about it. I give it a quick glance on my way to practice. That's enough. I can see something is wrong. Seems to be covered with a misty vapor.

After practice, I go down to the platform to sweep off the rain and do a set of Qigong exercises. The white paint from the center circle has spread over half the colors and is still floating in the pools of rainwater. Yes, Marpa, I know, nothing lasts. Clean it up, and chill, dude. I swab up most of the paint and let the rest dry. It only requires a light coat of each color to bring back the luster. If the weather permits, I'll be on track in a day or so. I'm three-fourths done, and there's still a week before the arrival of Namkai Norbu Rinpoche.

More rain. I rush off to find a tarp. I don't want a repeat of the last fiasco, so I put the tarp over the wet paint, not noticing the tar on the flip side of the tarp. When I pull the tarp up after the rain has subsided, there are black splotches scattered over most of my near perfectly painted center designs. Oh well, this cleans up with gasoline, which lifts the tar but also lifts some of the soft paint and leaves yellowish smudges. I add another coat of paint. This painting is beginning to have a lot of character, a texture and patina like an old masterpiece with many repairs.

Kim, a dharma sister, helps me paint the black lines that divide the mandala into sections. We've laid down two strips of masking tape leaving about an inch for the black lines. We've painted two lines, and I'm laying down the third set of tapes, when we discover if you pull up the tape, the paint comes with it. Kim is beside herself. It's a sweltering day on the platform, and we're blowing it. Kim is pulling her hair. I try to soothe her, but she is inconsolable. I decide that it's best to shut up.

Yelling obscenities and tears bursting from her eyes, Kim grabs a brush and paints all the lines without any tape, one after another, one brush width, right on, no error, as straight as I could want them. What might have taken all day takes twenty minutes, and all I have to do is patch a few spots, retouch the lines, and were done. Voilá.

Rinpoche arrives the next day, and there is not a cloud in the sky. "Bene, bene," he says, "very hard work, very good. Bene." Prima Mi is with him, and she will teach the Vajra Dances. She looks at the mandala and says that it is very beautiful.

There are twelve of us plus Prima Mi. Nine women and three men will learn to dance The Dance of the Liberation of the Six Lokas and The Dance of Three Vajras. These dances are not performances. They are esoteric Dzog Chen meditation practices, which integrate sound and movement. Prima Mi is not sure if this is going to work. She has never taught these practices under such conditions.

She wants to start early, but in the morning there is frost on the mandala. This melts, and then we mop up the water. We have to dance barefooted because our shoes scrape the paint and our socks get soaked. Soon, it's too hot for bare feet on the dark colors; the winds whip us; the lightening cracks on



the hilltops; and we're not at all sure we can survive the elements. But we are unanimous in wanting to learn these dances.

I bring a box covered in black plastic to house our shoes, so they won't get wet, and I bring a clean tarp to huddle under when it rains. Others bring water bottles and incense and a tape recorder. A crystal ball is put in the center of the mandala to represent the Dharmakaya, the absolute. It's perfect, and we're captivated. Wilderness, fresh air, and a heaven of wildflowers surround us. No distractions obstruct the path. We have the mandala beneath us. We are ready to enter the immutable space of Vajrasattva and liberate the beings of the six realms. Now, our training begins.



## A LOG OF JAMPA'S TRANSMISSIONS

Compiled by Bouvard Pécuchet

Kapala Press 2021 Ellensburg

*Samsara and Nirvana are both creations of the mind.*

—Padmasambhava

What follows is a list of empowerments, oral transmissions, and teachings that Jampa has received from his masters.

SOGYAL RINPOCHE

1989 Seattle: Dzog Chen Introduction to Mind

1990 Oakland: Dzog Chen Retreat

Longchen Nyintik Ngöndro

Rigzin Düpa: *The Sadhana of the Embodiment of the Vidyaharas*

*Daily Practice of Unsurpassed Vajrakilaya* (terma of Ratna Lagpa)

Yanta Yoga

CHOGYAL NAMKHAI NORBU

1992 Vancouver, BC: Wangs and lungs for a variety of practices to be undertaken under the guidance of Lama Tsultrim Allione

1996 Conway, Mass: *Avalokitesvara Korwa Tongtrug* (terma of Adzom Drugpa)

1999 Tara Mandala: Blue Tara and Green Tara and Vajra Dance Empowerments Training by Prima Mai in Vajra dances

Sadhanas extensively practiced: Tuns, short, medium and long

Waxing moon: Guru Tragpur; Waning moon: Simhamukha

Simhamukha: *The Profound Essence of Simhamukha, Queen of Dakinis & Mandarava: Sphere of the Vital Essence of the Vajra* (Norbu terma)

Guru of the White AH: *A Kar Lama Naljor*

Xitro: *Practice of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities*

*Gharuta Practice*

Adzom Drugpa's *Sang Chöd*

*Song of the Vajra* (Norbu terma)

9.9.99 Consecration of Stupa for Nyagla Pema Duddul

Note: after the consecration of the stupa, on 9/9/99, by Namkhai Norbu (the tulku of Adzom Drugpa) and the arrival of Adzom Paylo Rinpoche (the tulku of Gyurme Dorje, a son of Adzom Drugpa), Lama Tsultrim moved away from Norbu Rinpoche's teachings and began to focus on those of Adzom Rinpoche. Jampa followed his female lama.

During 1995 through 1998, three summers and two winters, Jampa lived near Tara Mandala and worked in its bookstore, then located at the Spring Inn plaza, in Pagosa Springs, Colorado. He had opportunities to receive dharma teaching from many lamas and experienced practitioners.

1995 LAMA RINCHEN

*Guru Rinpoche's Seven Line Prayer* 1995

ANNE KLINE & HARVEY ARONSON

Guru Rinpoche Drup Chug

1997 TSOK NYI RINPOCHE

Dzog Chen Retreat (again in 2008)

1997 TULKU ORGYEN

Medicine Buddha Retreat: *Sky Dharma "A Stream of Lapis Lazuli"*

1997 GANGTENG TULKU

*White Tara Empowerment of the Wish-fulfilling Wheel*, along with *A Short Preliminary Practice of Longchen Nyingthig*; (Crestone, 2000)

*Excellent Path of Awakening: Union of Samanthadra's Intentions*

2000 LAMA WANGDOOR

*Three Words That Strike the Vital Point* (and again that year in Berkeley, and again at Tara Mandala, in 2009)

In 1998, Jampa moved from Pagosa Springs to Santa Rosa to be a caregiver to his elderly parents; his father was 98 and his mother, then, 89. Each year, for the next ten years, Jampa returned to Tara Mandala, either in the summer or the winter, for a retreat to receive teachings. During those years that he lived in his parents' home, he was in semi-retreat. The West Coast Tara Mandala sangha met monthly at Christine Ho's house, in San Anselmo, where they rotated Adzom Rinpoche's practices and held Drup Chugs (accomplishment practices).

The path as laid out by Adzom Rinpoche is structured differently than that of Namkhai Norbu. Norbu's is more of a Dzog Chen approach. He holds nothing back, empowering his students to practice many sadhanas. He gives the wangs ( empowerment), and you practice what seems to fit the level you are at with your sangha, getting lungs (explanations) from senior teachers. What Adzom presents may be abbreviated for people with busy lifestyles, but the path is a gradual one and must be accomplished step-by-step in the following stages: (1) completion of Ngöndro (the foundation practices); (2) Mahayoga: completion of the three roots: (a) Lama Rigdzin Dupa (Guru Rinpoche), (b) Yidam: Practice of Xitro, (c) Dakini: Practice of Green Tara; (3) Chöd: *Laughter of the Dakinis*; (4) Rushen: Tri Yeshe Lama; (5) Trekchöd and Togal.

ADZOM PAYLO RINPOCHE

1999 June 18-26, Tara Mandala: Nature of Mind Retreat. At this retreat, Jampa received pointing-out instructions. Called late at night to fix the lama's bed, Jampa was asked if he would like an interview, after he had put things right. The story is told in "The Lama & the Carpenter" (*A View from Ekajati*, D Press, 1999).

It was a peak experience for Jampa, having his mind essence revealed in a traditional setting, literally at the feet of the lama. His faith in and devotion for Adzom arose, and Jampa began to attend a small gathering, a group of four, to whom Adzom taught the Longchen Nyintig Ngöndro. At the time, Jampa was unaware of the significance of this rare and special opportunity. In Tibet, Adzom Rinpoche is something like a rock star and draws crowds that fill an entire valley.

2000 July, Tara Mandala: Dzog Chen Retreat

2002 May, Alameda, California, at Orgyen Dorje Den: *Xitro wang* (empowerment)

2002 Fall Residential Retreat at Tara Mandala, where Adzom (Rigdzin Dorje Ngag Rab Tsal) revealed a mind treasure (ter): "Trömai Drubtab Sang wai Yeshe Zhug" (*The Practice for Accomplishing Tröma, Known as Secret Primordial Wisdom*)

2003 Sonoma County: King of Retreats Drup Chen

2004 Sabud Center, San Anselmo: talk on the Union of Mahamudra and Dzog Chen

2005 Tara Mandala: Rigzin Dupa Drup Chen with Vajrasattva Empowerment

2005 Tara Mandala (at Lama Tsultrim's house): Ordained as a novice monk (*genyen*). Jampa happened to be holding one of his chapbooks in one hand and his pocket knife in the other, and Adzom Rinpoche named him Jampel Dorje (Indestructible Sword of Knowledge). Jampa maintains use of his refuge name, Jampa Dorje (Indestructible Lovingkindness), as the change of one syllable created both audio and ontological confusion. "Jampel" is the Tibetan name for Manjushri, one of the Eight Great Bodhisattvas, and "Jampa" is Maitreaya, the Buddha of the eon to come. In either case, Jampa has a lot to aspire to.

2005 & 2006 Tara Mandala: *Tri Yeshe Lama* training while in retreat

2006 Calistoga: *Phowa Transference of Consciousness* at a residential retreat center

2007 Tara Mandala Residential Retreat, in December, back to back retreats in Houston

2008 Houston: Vajrasattva Empowerment, along with an ongoing exposition of Longchempa's "Commentary on the Meaning" in January.

Adzom has also transmitted the "Laughter of the Dakinis" Chöd and a Green Tara from *The Luminous Vajra Treasury*. "Osel Dorje Sang Dzö Ley Pagma Drolma Zangmo Shug So" to Jampa in retreat. Adzom's sister, LAMA JETSU KACHOD WANGMO, has given a Green Tara Empowerment to Jampa twice, once at Tara Mandala in 2000, and once at the Calistoga Phowa Retreat, in 2006.

. . .

In the aftermath of 9/11, Jampa found it difficult to travel wearing his robes. One official told him, as he was entering La Playa Airport, near Durango, that his experience had been that Lamas carried daggers. Jampa told him that *purbas* were ritual tools, but that he was not a lama. At San Francisco International, he was asked if he would rather enter a glass box or be frisked for explosives. Jampa said he preferred the box with the air currents—"Makes me feel like the Flying Monk"—a joke that was lost on the official. At the airport in Houston, it was announced that joking about hijacking was not acceptable. When Jampa asked why he was being searched, he was told it was because he was "bulky."

On Jampa's return to Tara Mandala, in 2008, there was a change in the public's perception of monks. No one was yelling at him, "Go back to where you came from!"

The down side of the "Free Tibet" protests during the 2008 Olympics was that the Chinese Authorities got tough with the Tibetans. They confiscated Adzom's passport and forbade him to travel, even in Tibet. This left Jampa on his own to figure out what to do in retreat. Lama Tsultrim suggested he begin a cycle of practices called *Dzinpa Rangdröl*, which is a complete path from the preliminaries through the high Dzog Chen and is a mind treasure (*terma*) of Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje (1860-66). It features Machig Lapdrön (1055-1145), who established Chöd practice in Tibet, as the White Dakini.

Tulku Sang-ngag, who had moved with his family from Montana to Santa Fe, New Mexico, was planning to introduce *Dzinpa Rangröl* ("Self-Liberation of Clinging") in July of 2008. Tulku Sang-ngag is an incarnation of one of Padmasambhava's heart sons (first disciples), and he received the transmission for this cycle of practices from H.H. Dilgo Khy-

entse, with whom Tulku Sang-ngag had studied, after spending nine years in a Chinese prison.

During Lama Tsultrim's visit to Tibet, in 2007, she was recognized as an emanation of Machig Lapdrön by the resident lama at Zangri Khangmar, the place where Machig spent most of her life. Jampa asked if there would be any conflict with what he had been doing with Adzom Rinpoche (Longchen Nyingthig) and this new cycle, and Tulku Sang-ngag said that they actually complimented each other, since Do Khyentse was the mind incarnation of Jigme Lingpa (1730-98), who discovered the Longchen Nyingthig Cycle. It all seemed to Jampa to fit together and be auspicious, and he began with the *Yang Sang Khadro tug Tig Ngöndro* ("Exceedingly Secret Heart Essence of the Dakinis Preliminary Practice") in retreat at Luminous Peak.

TULKU SANG NGAG (6th Gochen Tulku)

1996 Dudjom's "Extracting the Quintessence of Accomplishment" (Mountain Dharma Retreat)

1998 Riwo Sang Chöd Retreat at Tara Mandala

2008 Bardo Teachings at Tara Mandala

Introduction to *Dzinpa Rangdröl Tsoygyel Karmo* (White Tsoygyel).

Jampa received the refuge name, Rangdrol Rigzen (Self-liberated Knowledge Holder)

Completed 10% of *Yang Sang Khadro Tug Tig Gi Ngöndro*

2009 Tröma Nagmo: *Quintessence of the Heart White*

*Tsoygyel* Drupchen (August 23-31)

Chöd: *Reflection of the Countenance*

Chöd: *Accomplishment in One Seat*

2010 Red Vajrasatva, lead by Khenpo Ugyen Wangchuk during the ceremony following the death of David Petit

2014 Trechöd and Tögal transmissions given at Rinpoche's land (The Seat of Longchenpa) near Gloieta, New Mexico

After the *White Dakini Drupchen*, in 2008, Jampa performed five days of fire pujas with Beth Lee-Herbert, his "retreat wife" (who did her retreat in the cabin called Karuna), and then he was again sealed into retreat by Lama Tsultrim, Khenpo Sonang, and Khenpo Ugyen Wrichuk. After they had completed the traditional three year retreat, there was a ceremony conducted by Tulku Sang ngag at the Tara Temple on June 19, 2012. He honored Beth and Jampa by announcing that they were *Dzinpa Rangdröl*/Lineage Holders, and he gave them each the hat of a Drupta (a lama who has accomplished the dharma in retreat). Lama Tsultrim could not be present for the ceremony, but she sent a poem.

A POEM FROM LAMA TSULTRIM ALLIONE  
For Beth and Jampa, June 19, 2012

A young yogini and an old yogi  
went up on the hill for three years,  
To dance with bears and mountain lions,  
Lightning and thunder,  
Snow and rain.

Their gods and demons  
Accompanying them through perilous winters, sweet summer days,  
Wind blown Springs and the stark clarity of the autumn sky.  
Moons waxed and waned,  
feasts were offered,  
hair grew,  
clothes became tattered,  
hearts opened,  
minds stabilized.

They went knowing a little and longing for full awakening,  
Held by the sweet arms of Tara  
Tumbled by Trompa's stomping dance,  
Shattered and reconstructed in their subtle bodies by the tsa lung  
And opening into the vast clear sky of the nature  
of mind in the Trekcho.

Always brave, humble and diligent.  
Supporting each other, praying for everyone.

I have known you both from the beginning of your paths,  
And here you are at this time of fruition,  
The first to finish three-year retreat at Tara Mandala.

Setting such a good precedence for those who will follow you,  
With your strong hearts of devotion,  
You have done it like it was done in the old country.  
Setting the foundation for true discipline and accomplishment.  
Becoming learned in the ritual arts,  
Caring for family and Sangha,  
Praying for those in need,  
No time off,  
Full time practitioners...

My heart is sad not to be there with you today,  
But my heart swells in joy and love and celebration  
For what you have done for all beings.

EMAHO! EMAHO! EMAHO!

2014-2015: Jampa lived in Santa Fe with Lama Gyrumé and practiced at Pema Khandro Ling with Tulku Sang-ngag. Jampa was installed as the Lama of the Boundries and lead the mantra chain at the White Dakini Drup Chen at Tara Mandala for seven years with Tulku Sang-ngag and two years with Lama Karma, until 2018.

2016: Jampa attempted to return his vows as a monk and was rebuffed with, "You don't want to return your vows; you want to break your vows" & "You've already moved on." He self-liberated himself as a monk and reinvented himself as a householder with refuge vows plus the vow of chastity.

2016-2021: Jampa returned to Ellensburg, Washington, and he now studies philosophy and religion at CWU, while practicing at the Ellensburg Zen Center, at the Ecumenical Church of Ellensburg, 400 N. Anderson Street, founded by Tuck Do Yu Forsythe.



## SOLITUDE AND BEYOND

Bouvard Pécuchet

Kapala Press 2016 Ellensburg





merson criticized Thoreau: “Instead of engineering for all America, he was the captain of a huckleberry party.” Jampa would like to consider himself a member of that party. Thoreau writes in his essay, “Walking”: “Every sunset which I witness inspires me to go to a West as distant and as fair as that into which the sun goes down.”

Jampa replies:

Thoreau would envy me  
I live in the Rockies  
The West of his future—  
A pretty walk from Walden Pond

In the East, sacred wisdom  
That I can also find looking  
Far to the West and entering  
My lama’s mindstream

Like the 19th century naturalist, whose studies seemed to his contemporaries to be mere idleness, the reasons for wanting to be a hermit in the 21st century may appear to be the lifestyle of a slacker, but as the 14th century master of meditation, Longchenpa, admonishes: “Avoid places of diversion and distraction; remain in solitude.” This is a sure way to deepen meditation.

For Thoreau, the fruit of his meditations and observations was to come into harmony with nature, while retaining the advantages of the arts and sciences. For Jampa, the fruit of his path is the view that he has never, in actuality, been separate from his original state.

Long periods at Luminous Peak without  
A reference point. Life goes on in the world—  
An airplane leaves a contrail, headed west.  
At night, a distant light, a car moving, then  
Gone around a bend—

I do some shadow dancing and laugh.  
Maybe, I've gone around a bend.

Jampa is not one to be lonely, although 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,” if he has attained the Youthful Body in a Vase, that is emptiness.

Jampa is alone because the path he follows to become a Vidyadhara is well-blazed, and he feels the presence of the great masters to whom he often appeals for support. Jampa:

I follow the masters of meditation—  
Their bony fingers gesture  
“Up here; we’re up here!”  
Luckily, I have my flashlight.

As a boy, Jampa hunted and fished alone or with his dog and on horseback, but he found he did not need a reason to go into the wilderness. Like Thoreau, he could enjoy a walk, or as Thoreau calls it a “sauntering,” a word derived from French sources. The English have the word “to stroll,” meaning to meander, or walk in an indefinite course, for pleasure. When Jampa was a bookseller, in Ellensburg, and business was slow, he would hang a “Gone Fishing” sign on the door of the Four Winds and let the shop’s namesakes blow him hither and thither.

In retreat, at Luminous Peak, Jampa’s boundaries are set. He has been ritualistically sealed in.

My retreat boundary extends  
Ten feet beyond my deck—  
I’m overwhelmed by the infinite  
And all I’ll never see here

There are two days of the week when he walks up the gravel road to his food box, on Tuesdays before noon, to deliver his food list, and on Thursdays, at 1 pm to pick up his supplies. It is not a long walk, but Jampa turns it into a promenade, on some occasions, and on other days, he does a walking meditation, taking trouble-free steps, going without arriving, in the style practiced by Thich Nhat Hahn.

On some of these rare outings, Jampa stops by a tall, first-growth Ponderosa pine with a hollow core, the kind of a tree a Shaman might enter into another realm.

That tree on the path  
Knurled, with withered limbs  
I give it a hug—I'm old & knurly  
With a withered limb, too

Jampa claims he asked the tree its name and was told to call it “TM”—and Jampa asked if TM was its first name or its last name—and the tree replied that TM represented its location, since a tree has no need of a self. TM asked Jampa if he was at all lonely in retreat, and Jampa said, “Actually, it gets a bit crowded living in tight quarters with one hundred peaceful and wrathful deities,” so you can see there is a good-natured comradeship, but that is as far as it goes.

“Embracing the Tree” is a basic Chi Kung exercise, but that Jampa creates imaginary dialogues with a pine tree is an indication that he sometimes misses human contact. This usually occurs when his practice falters, and he has doubts about his path.

A morning of mantra muddle  
Mudra mangle and fuzzy yidam—  
Put paid to this condition  
Of frustration and confusion

When there is this kind of “eruption,” Jampa remembers Adzom Rinpoche’s pith instruction: “When your practice gets difficult, do more practice.” And he does.

## Here's a Jampa story: THE YOGI & THE LIZARD

A lot of creatures hereabouts are young and skittish, but one old lizard pulls up and we palaver. He (or she) gets a bit of Dharma from me, and I get a bit of lizard wisdom from him. The usual from me: "Rare is one's luck to find the Holy Dharma. All things are impermanent. Consider this and practice, so you will be free of regret at the time of death."

From him: "Rare is the opportunity to rest in the sun in a solitary place safe from predators (and busy bodies) and close to a hidey hole. While I rest, I visualize myself as a winged dragon, and I ascend into the sky, soar once around Ekajati Peak, and fly across Hidden Valley to Chimney Rock, being very careful not to spook David's horses. Then, I settle on my rock again, in a state beyond image, and hang out.

All kidding aside, Jampa takes his retreat seriously. He is in Luminous Peak to achieve the two accomplishments of merit and wisdom, his own attainment of Buddhahood in this lifetime and to aid in the enlightenment of all sentient beings. These are not empty concepts to him. He has faith in the dharma and devotion to the gurus who have brought him, through their blessings, to a level where this is a possibility.

Jampa has been fortunate to have four lamas and two khenpos assisting him: Lama Tsultrim has made an environment for long retreat through her vision; Adzom Paylo Rinpoche gave Jampa pointing out instructions and ordained him as a monk; Tulku Sang-ngag Rinpoche has transmitted Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje's terma, *Dzinpa Rangdröl* (a complete cycle of teaching, which translates as "Self-liberation of Clinging"); Lama Gyurme Rabgye, Khenpo Urgyen and Kenpo Sonam, performed the necessary rituals and gave Jampa many teachings and instructions as they sealed him in and set the boundaries. Then, the training began in earnest.



Jumping ahead, let me insert the announcement of the completion of Jampa's retreat at Luminous Peak from Tara Mandala's website.

Tuesday, June 19, 2012 was an auspicious day for Tara Mandala as it marked the successful completion of the first Three Year Retreat to be held on this sacred land under the auspices of Tulku Sang-ngag Rinpoche and Lama Tsultrim Allione.

In the early hours of the morning under a cloudless, pure blue sky, Tulku Sang-ngag Rinpoche performed fire pujas and opened the boundaries of the mountain cabins where Beth Lee-Hubert and Jampa Dörje (Richard Denner) have been living in solitary retreat for over three years. Afterwards, the entire community greeted the two of them along with Rinpoche and Khenpo Ugyen Wangchuk at the Tara Temple with the joyful sounds of traditional Tibetan drums, cymbals, horns, conchs and the waving of beautiful, pure white silk katags.

Rinpoche led the community in a White Dakini practice and then a bountiful and delicious Tsog was offered. During the feast and celebration, Rinpoche conducted another special ceremony for Beth and Jampa Dörje and presented them with the traditional red hats that are given in the Nyingma Tradition to those who have completed a three year retreat. The hats are trimmed with the colors of the five Buddha families and images of the sun and the moon are embossed in the center of the front. Gifts and poems and songs were offered to Rinpoche and Beth and Jampa Dörje by Beth's parents, members of the local community, Tara Mandala staff and volunteers, and other friends and relatives present. Rinpoche was surprised at how many people were there and said it was a wonderful sign that the group included so many members of the younger generation!

Lama Tsultrim, who was on a European teaching tour at the time, had written an extraordinary poem for the two retreatants which was read during the ceremony honoring them.



### A Poem from Lama Tsultrim Allione

For Beth and Jampa, June 19, 2012

A young yogini and an old yogi  
went up on the hill for three years,  
To dance with bears and mountain lions,

Lightning and thunder,  
Snow and rain.  
Their gods and demons  
Accompanying them through perilous winters,  
    sweet summer days,  
Wind blown Springs and the stark clarity  
    of the autumn sky.  
Moons waxed and waned,  
feasts were offered,  
hair grew,  
clothes became tattered,  
hearts opened,  
minds stabilized.  
They went knowing a little and longing  
    for full awakening,  
Held by the sweet arms of Tara  
Tumbled by Troma's stomping dance,  
Shattered and reconstructed in their subtle bodies  
    by the tsa lung  
And opening into the vast clear sky of the nature  
    of mind in the Trekcho.

Always brave, humble and diligent.  
Supporting each other, praying for everyone.  
I have known you both from the beginning  
    of your paths,  
And here you are at this time of fruition,  
The first to finish three-year retreat at Tara Mandala.  
Setting such a good precedence for those  
    who will follow you,  
With your strong hearts of devotion,  
You have done it like it was done in the old country.  
Setting the foundation for true discipline  
    and accomplishment.  
Becoming learned in the ritual arts,  
Caring for family and Sangha,  
Praying for those in need,  
No time off,  
Full time practitioners...

My heart is sad not to be there with you today,  
But my heart swells in joy and love and celebration  
For what you have done for all beings.

EMA HO! EMAHO! EMAHO!

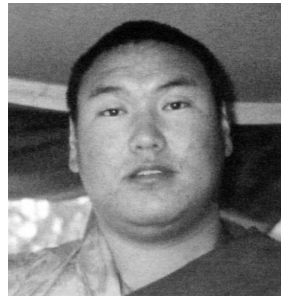
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# CHEEK TO CHEEK

## Jampa Dorje

dPress 2018 Ellensburg

*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 na-  
ture of the topic.*

—Averröes, TAHAFUT AL-TAHAFUT

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

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

Parmenides asked Socrates if he held  
*that the Form*  
*as a whole, a single thing,*  
*is in each of the many.*

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

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

Ol' Soc questioned this.

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



*and nevertheless is not separate  
from itself?*

Parmenides replied with a metaphor,  
telling Socrates:

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

Ol' Soc agreed.

*Only a part would be over each one,  
and here he let the argument rest.*

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

But Russell admonished the sage:

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

*Socrates, there is no logical reason for you to  
capitulate because the distinction between reality  
and appearance cannot have the consequences  
attributed to it by Parmenides.*

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

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

Thuragania, a gleam in her eye, spoke next.

*This argument is based  
on two premises: What is is,  
and what is not is not,  
and I realize that  $A=A$  therefore  $\sim A=\sim A$  is more than  
an idiosyncratic hang-up  
on the law of identity for you*

*Parmenides, it's an ontological  
argument that nothing*

*is, as Heidegger, if he were present,  
might put it, nothing, [Here she drew lines through  
the word "nothing" on a small chalk board]*

~~nothing,~~

*a something  
for which no thought  
corresponds and, as such, has no  
being, existence, or reality whatever.*

*Believe me, a soul can experience bliss,  
even in lowest level of heaven  
but here our discussion revolves around  
an argument from language  
reflecting your realist view  
that what names name are real.*

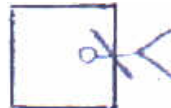
*Socrates might argue that the sail  
covers the man in the same way  
as the day,*

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

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



or be



*for, if the latter,  
then it can as well be said  
that the man is covered by only  
a part of the sail.*

*Now, if the sail is cut apart, then it could be said  
that the whole part  
covers the man  
but not the whole sail.*



*At this point, Russell jumped in.  
The problem derives  
he explained,  
from a misunderstanding of  
relative terms,  
from a belief that it is a contradiction  
that if something, say **A**, is greater than **B** and less  
than **C** it must be both great and small, part and  
whole.*

*Yes, said Thuragania,*  
[http://petermaxlawrence.com/Art/WEB/PLAG/PLAG\\_L\\_AOthuragania.htm](http://petermaxlawrence.com/Art/WEB/PLAG/PLAG_L_AOthuragania.htm)

*the basic premise of monism  
is that the real is essentially one.  
For Parmenides,  
the only true being  
is the One, which cannot be divided because the  
whole  
is everywhere present.  
That nothing changes follows  
from his argument that what is is, for*

*if it came into being, it is not: nor is it  
if it is going to be in the future.  
Consequently, there is no change  
in Nature, as defined as things  
coming into being or ceasing  
to be. And so,  
to return to the sail,  
if the whole is everywhere present,  
then the whole sail  
covers the man,  
even if part of the man is  
uncovered.*

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

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

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

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

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

Parmenides: *That is so.  
It must either be altogether or not at all.*

*Ah, continued Lao Tzu, for me it is  
altogether and not all.  
This is known as  
the mysterious sameness. (I,I,3a)  
Your One, Parmenides, seems  
to be a  
substance,  
like Thales's Water  
and Heraclitus's Fire; it is indestructible and eternal, but  
unlike Heraclitusian flux, it is unchanging."*

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

There was a murmuring sound.

*As I recall, said Ol' Soc, just the other day Feibleman  
(Ontology, Greenwood, NY, 1968)  
made the point that the later Platonists  
opted for the idealistic side of Plato, yet Plato does not  
contend  
the illusory world has no being; he contends  
only that it  
has no reality. Both worlds  
exist—the world of Forms  
(based on the unchanging One of Parmenides)  
and the world  
of Appearances (based on the flux of Heraclitus)*

*are two parts of one world.*

*The other day  
I was hanging with Mañjushrimitra,  
The Master of the Chariot of the Nine Yanas  
and he showed me a great commentary he has written on  
Plato's work.*

*Mañjushrimitra feels Plato was  
unable to unify the plurality of Forms,  
even with his concept of the Good.  
His insistence that something must be either A or ~A  
to be real is derived from the assumption that  
the wholly real must be  
wholly knowable. I, as you are well aware, take  
the opposite position—for me there is no reason  
to suppose the real to be  
knowable, especially when the  
real is considered as  
transcendent, yet even this conclusion is  
insufficient.*

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

Opening a tattered thesis binder, Lau read:

*What cannot be seen is called  
evanescent;  
What cannot be heard is called rarefied:  
What cannot be touched is called  
minute;  
And so they are confused and looked upon as one.  
(I,xiv,32-32a)*

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

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

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

“Now, let your eyes hold fast to my insight.  
The difference in the terms used to describe the  
*tao*  
can be used to distinguish  
the nature of the *One*, for  
the *One* transcends being.  
As Russell points out, being is the first  
sequent upon it.  
The *One* is  
unpredictable: we can only say,  
‘It is.’”

Thuragania, bowed to Plotinus and said,  
*You are an idealist, Plotinus,  
in that you contend Matter  
has no independent reality from Soul.*

“Yes,” he replied, “Soul generates  
its image, which is the sensible world,  
and at the same time  
it is intent on elaborating order  
on the model of what it has seen in

the Intellectual-Principle.”

He touched his finger tips to her hand,  
“The intellect, what I call *nous*, is  
intermediate between the *One* and the *Soul*.”

He paused,  
and we stood transfixed,  
while he sang:

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

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

Lao Tzu, cheek to cheek w/ Plotinus, sang:  
*Gods in virtue of the One have their potencies;  
The valley in virtue of the One is full;  
The myriad creatures in virtue of the One are alive;  
The myriad creatures in the world are born from Something and  
Something from Nothing.*

*There you go, Socrates, said Thuragania,  
now, you can see that the part  
and the whole,  
which are two,*



*are one in the vision of the Intellect,  
and that it is There that  
all is all and each all. Each of them is great; the  
small the great.*

*And, thus, it would follow  
that the great would be the small and each would be the  
all in all; and, further,  
the many would come from the One  
as the One from nothing,  
or more precisely, from nothing,  
the thing  
showing itself  
as itself.*

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

*Russell, who loves to get in the last word,  
Given you begin with a false premise, anything can  
be proved.*

*Unable to contain himself, Ol' Soc  
rose to the bait:  
If  $2 + 2 = 5$ ,  
prove you're the Pope!*

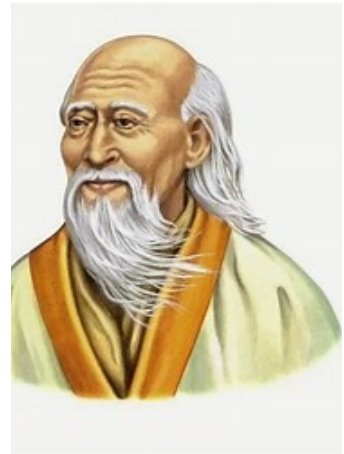
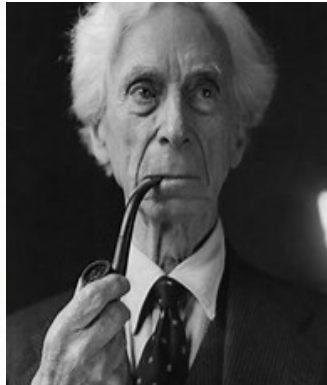
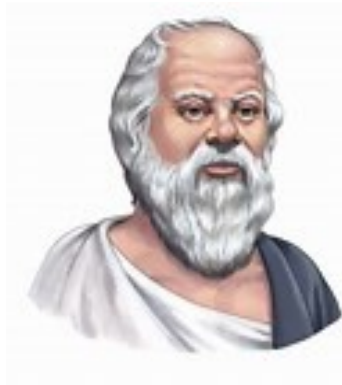
*Russell shot back,  
 $4 = 5$ ;  
subtract 3 from either side;  
 $1 = 2$ ;  
the Pope and I are two,  
ergo, I'm the Pope.*

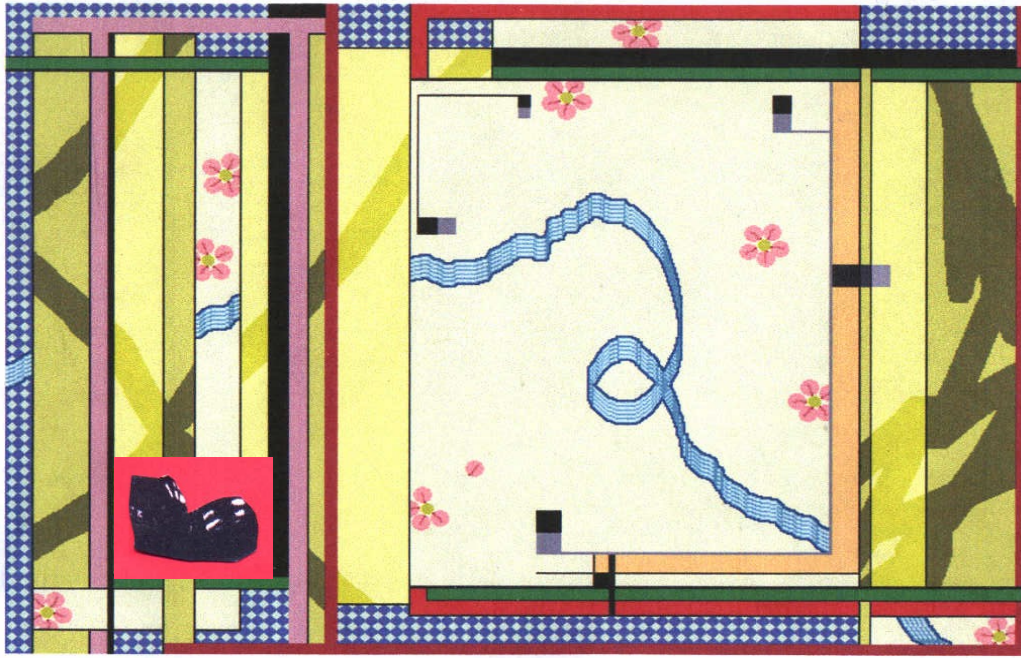
*Ol' Soc grabbed Russell and flew with him, past*

Kennsington Circle, in Berkeley, to a parking lot, where they entered a drainpipe and followed it underground until they came to an iron grill in the floor of the storage room in Hagstrom's grocery store.

Giving Russell a good shake, he said,

*What's the point  
in discussing anything with you?  
Your ideas are just puffed wheat.*





# POISED

## Jampa Dorje

KICKASS PRESS

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[www.dpress.net](http://www.dpress.net)

2005

Artwork by Mark Nolden

## POISED

*for Webster Hood*

Why is there a Universe!  
How did the Universe come into being!  
Shouts of joy or fear or accusation.

Bumping my head against the wall  
like La Motta in *Raging Bull*,  
“Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!”

Bertrand Russel’s frustration  
when, as a child, he asked,  
“What is matter?”

And the answer, “Nevermind.”  
“What is mind?”  
“It doesn’t matter.”

The Universe is big  
and getting bigger, expanding fast  
and ever faster—a basketball

Crossing twenty-four time zones  
on its way to the hoop.  
Only there is no hoop.

No end to an expanding Universe.  
I drift in infinite space  
(or no space), an illusion

Of myself in an obscure place,  
a floating reflection,  
nothing holding me up.

What’s nothing’s circumference!  
*Pi* and *light*—  
the defining functions.

A circumference of no-space expands  
@ speed of light towards a critical radius.  
The impalpable algebra of infinity.

This U  
a sub-atomic structure  
of a larger U.

No U, just dots on a time line,  
or like a bulb on a timer  
on/off.

Vacuum soup. Eternal Mind.  
An egg, a holy word, a string.  
Winos and zinos in stasis.

Black bodies, black holes, blue lights.  
Anti-matter, negative space and big bangs.  
The quarks of love and strangeness.

And the quirkiness of God.  
No limits: multiple Universes.  
Limits: a one night stand.

*Singularity* is the “instant”  
the Universe appears, every region  
squeezed into a single point.

On an axis of time.  
Poised.  
 $A = \pi r^2 - 1 / \text{Threshold} / + 1 E = MC^2$

Empty: does not exist,  
has never existed,  
will never exist.

Empty: has *potential* to exist.  
Primordial mind pool.  
Heap of awareness.

What is truly empty!  
Every minim has stuff—  
even without mass, there's spin.

Exists and not-exists at the same time.  
Either/or, neither/nor, both and.  
Nothing spinning—no word for this.

Given previously annihilated U,  
then there's *potential*  
for a new U to come into existence.

Things are already out of hand  
by the time the Supreme Source  
spontaneously gives birth to U.

Bodhisattvas in a lowrider cruise by  
with automatic weapons in their laps.  
I hear them peel out

On the corner of Hall & Piezzi,  
laying down a streak of rubber  
before their *Dunlops* dig in.

A mirror in the void.  
A flight of photons combat  
the resonate emptiness.

Can't see the bullets coming.  
A bullet on the charts—  
and one to the heart.

Spirit tries to reach me  
but hits an event horizon  
like a bug on the windshield of a car.



## ART IS MEDITATION MEDITATION IS ART

Jampa Dorje

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Questions will arise concerning the artist's intent, the artist's life experience, and who or what influences the artist's art practice. One can compare the artwork to other artworks (standard categories) and how they differ from those categories, compare the artwork to other works by the same artist, compare the works to other works in the same gallery, look to see if there is a narrative or whether or not the work makes a statement or is a symbol of something else. And, then, there is the artwork's construction, how the paint is applied, its texture, the colors and shapes in the composition, whether the composition is balanced, if there is one perspective or many or none. Whether information from a broader context is used to better understand a piece of art or whether one stays within the formal constraints of the artwork itself, the viewer's personal interaction and response to the literal and expressive qualities of the artwork are engaged.

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

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

The multiple drafts are the different ideas that arise in the mind and are held for a period of time. An idea arises; then, this idea liberates itself, and another idea arises. Ideas keep arising, until enough data are accumulated to form a more comprehensive understanding; then, the earlier ideas are abandoned. Likewise,

in Dzog Chen (or Ati Yoga in the Tantric Buddhist tradition), concepts are resolved in openness, or self-liberated. In his *Treasury of Natural Perfection*, the 14th century meditation master, Longchen Rabjam, better known as Longchenpa, writes:

Here is the essential meaning of resolution in openness:  
Coming from nowhere, abiding nowhere and going nowhere,  
External events, unoriginated visions in empty space, are ineffable;  
Internal events, arising and released simultaneously,  
Like a bird's flight-path in the sky, are inscrutable (15).

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

The intangible Samadhi that lacks any field of meditation,  
Pristine, simple, intrinsic gnosis,  
Consumes all events in consummate resolution,  
And all experience spent, itself is consumed.  
Since the consuming or non-consuming is resolved in absence,  
Its existence as ineffable is never in question.  
What is, is a vast non-referential panorama,  
All experience consummate, 'no mind!'  
And that is the yogin's delight! (113).

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

small area of the white space of the literal page, and in terms of the main focus of the mind (bare awareness), the ink (ideas) could, be considered as insignificant.

In his book, *The Psychology of Contemporary Art*, Gregory Minissale reports that “various psychological studies suggest that creative insights occur in the state when the mind is relaxing from tasks that require our full attention” (240). Normally, it is assumed that it is harmful to the learning process for the mind to wander or that errors can occur in the processing of information if attention is not paid to details. However, as Minissale points out:

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

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



An experiment: I posit my extended viewing of Darwin Davis’s untitled sculpture in front of the Language and Literature Building on the CWU campus. My viewing has both objective and subjective elements. This metal sculpture is made of a rising, continuous, visual line. This “line” is formed of fabricated steel with a dimension of eight inches on each side. The line rises six feet from a concrete base and curves outward three feet and returns in the opposite direction before turning in a converse direction and then curving again upward to a height of fifteen feet. The sculpture has a strong design element, reveals fine

welding technique, and displays a natural patina of rust. I walk around it, and it seems to change shape, the vertical and horizontal converge into different patterns and shapes, as my movements around the sculpture seem to compose it, bringing different aspects of the sculpture into view as a form of active involvement, helping me to feel the sculpture's dimensionality, and this perceptual awareness is accompanied by intuitions of passing time, time seeming to unfold in experience and space within what I perceive in the immediate present being a retention of perceptions just past, and this retention in the present overlaps in the perception that is coming to be, not isolated from others or fixed alone in time but flowing into each other, continually becoming different, going nowhere, and I returning to where I began with the sculpture not having moved from where it is located.

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

Dzog Chen takes the mindfulness meditation a step further, where the viewer simply cuts through the ego with direct experience, after having the nature of mind pointed out by a master;—then, one sees that the relative and the absolute are concepts of the mind. The essence of mind is emptiness (transience, impermanence), but still awareness manifests. The same is found to be true for the nature of reality. The essence of objects is emptiness; yet their nature is to arise spontaneously in the mind. Longchenpa says in *The Treasury of Natural Perfection*:

When nothing whatsoever is perceived as real in essence, the duality of delusion and freedom from delusion is resolved, and thereupon we lose any preference for samsara [the relative] or nirvana [the absolute]" (116).

Kant characterizes the aesthetic experience as an act of feigning disinterestedness, and this is true for meditation, as well. But the focused aesthetic and meditative experience also produces what Baumgarten calls a *vivid experience* and

Longchenpa calls *a clear, luminous experience*. It could be said that all experience is aesthetic experience, based on the perspective that all experience is perception. Like Croce, I take the position that art does not exist independently of the experience of art. Therefore, an understanding of the aesthetic experience is important in arriving at a definition of art. George Santayana, in *The Sense of Beauty*, developed the idea that an aesthetic experience is one that does not involve pleasure for a specific part of the body, but is rather “a lifting out of ourselves” and an appreciation that involves no wish to possess what is being appreciated:

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

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

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

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

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

## AFTERWORDS

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

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

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

Over a period of years, parallel to my Buddhist practices, I have played with developing a number of literary personae: Bouvard Pécuchet, a critic; Jubal Dolan, a gangster-type; Rychard Artaud, a collage artist; Jampa Dorje, monk and scholar; and Thuragania, a pre-Socratic woman philosopher. They each have their own body of artwork—paintings, poems, novels, critical works, and letters—and the personalities of these characters seem aligned to the weakness

and strengths of the five Buddha deities. The white deity of the Buddha Family is intellectual; the red Padma Family deity is magnetic and dramatic and tragic. Blue Dharmakaya deity purifies with space. The yellow Ratna deity, is artful and nurturing. The green, All-accomplishing One is powerful and successful, and each liberates the self from attachment and clinging. After much practice, I wind up with five literary personae/tutelary deities occupying my empty consciousness continuum, and I recognize that there is only the text out there, as there is no here in here.

There is irony in a Buddhist writing an autobiography. There cannot help but be ego-gratification, even as one reveals the absence of a Self—a sort of succor to assuage the sense of loss of something non-existent. The Tibetans call the obstacles to one's path *maras*, and a memoir can be a weapon in the War against the Unfavorable Maras. Confession assuages the conscience and is a form of purification, a kind of homeostatic resetting of moral plasticity, to adapt a phrase from neurobiology. There are the maras of sexual pleasure in excess. There are the maras of negative views. There are the maras of seeking to be recognized, to be understood, to leave a mark (hopefully not a smudge), that from one angle is pride and from another is the bodhisattva's wish to alleviate suffering by the contribution of something remarkable that enables each sentient being to find their original face.

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