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World Voice: Invisible Lines & Mindfulness and Peaceful Living

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Mindfulness and Peaceful Living

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I (the author) believe that we should teach to inspire others and ourselves with all that we do and create. I write this book not merely for the respective stroking of my ego but out of curiosity to explore issues that are a part of my daily life and our world. Lastly to write something out and explore an issue from all sides can make an issue more clear for you, as it does for me. In this book and others you may read from me you'll find me exploring an issue from many sides, and that is normal and natural as a part of growth and self evolution. It also is a goodness for any human with a consciousness to be connected enough to his/her own life and world to do so. I write to inspire, share, explore, teach, and learn from you.

By the time you get this book it maybe sometime after the thoughts and learning's have been tumbling around inside my head and onto this page. The very next thing you may read from me is about a topic maybe a little different and the opinion of the last topic maybe thought of differently for myself. Again that is a natural condition that occurs due to curiosity, playful flexibility of mind, current events, and self evolution. I certainly hope you concur and disagree with the many things I bring to light. It is my hope that you might take the time to share your voice about your take from what you read in here or present something that we haven't thought of yet. When writing in please state clearly what it is you're responding to or writing about and really take the time to enjoy the experience of working it all through you! You're voice has a good chance of not just being read but being heard in the next World Voice. Thank you for your time and patience. Don't ever stop sharing your world voice!

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Dedication

There are many people that I love and likewise those that have kept me somewhat sane in making this book. To these people I dedicate this book. Each name presented is in no special order except those of my own cataloguing thoughts.

Mom and Dad(Doreen and Celin Santiago), Paul Rogers, my sisters De, and Jean, Morgan, my cousins Randy and Jeff Scibilia, Josh Scibilia, Paul Moyihan, Jenn Mcewen and Draven, my cousin Ron Albamonti and Beth, Nevaeh, Roger Dillon, James Sousa, Matt Harma, Nate Armstrong, Papa(John Rogers), Nana, Brian, Jason, Steven Connell, Bill Waddicor (Mr. Bill), Steve, Irina, Zhou, Sophia, Judy (JIYUANYUAN), Danand Cathy Bigman, Carolyn C Hames, Karen Sherman, Richard Travisano, Robert Leuci, Andrew Winters, Don Smith, Kiev Tuen Atreides, Charles Collyer, Henry B. Biller, Deborah Gardiner, Richard P. McIntyre, Herlita Oktavianti, Poia Poia, Bonnie Jean Kessler, Pankaj Ahire, Eva Jones.

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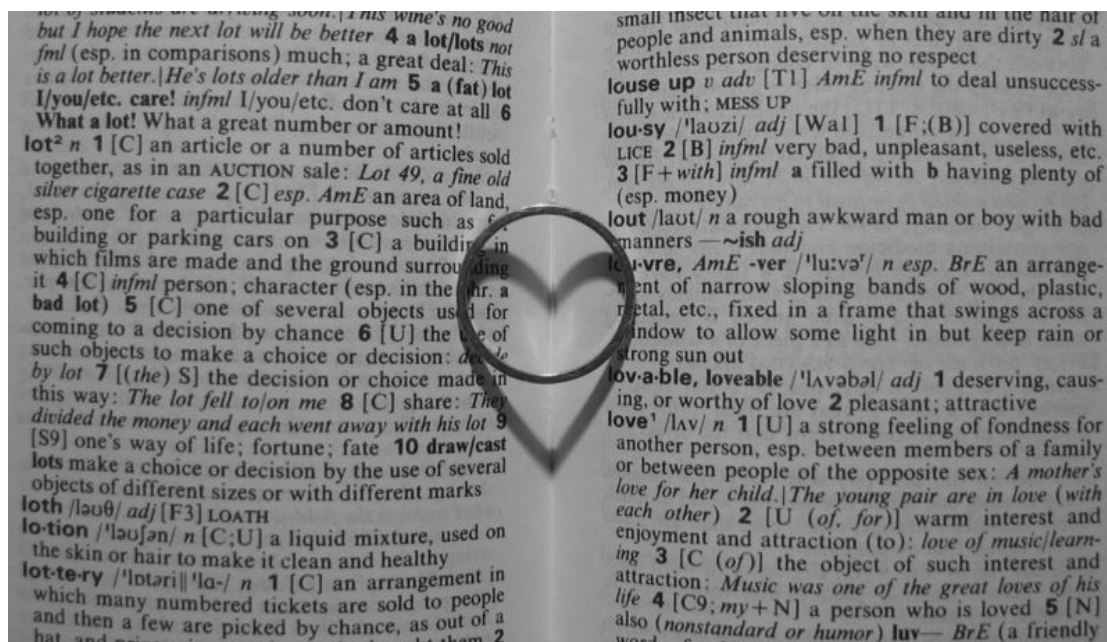
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Opening Up

Have you ever wanted to take time out from your life and figure out for yourself what the big picture means for you? At the moment I write this I am thirty three years old and this is a description of my search and my path. I have felt like I've been in search for a spiritual and everyday path for as long as I can remember. I have tried many faiths, talked to many people about their personal and spiritual philosophies, and just like everyone else I began to develop my own thoughts and beliefs. There have been times in my life where I have felt that my everyday philosophy and path were at odds with my spiritual path. It now seems ironic that we think we need to step out of everyday life to find the sacred. The problem I was having is I wanted to take something from outside myself and somehow apply it to clarify my whole existence. It is from that psychological position I began to ask questions of myself to find some answers and experiences in this interconnected world. In the end I found that these two things were not really at odds at all.

One piece of my perceptions about life was that it is meant to be hard. This is what I was taught at Sunday school! That each one of us is filled with sin, that sin fills the world and all that we did was measured and weighed to decide our fate. There is a time for all of us when we recognize what we are being told and what we see are two different things. I remember our church talking about the goodness of a person and in the same sentence speak of how he might be damned. I began to wonder what if my church focused on all that was good within people, stopped trying to filter what they thought, or what they did, except to recognize the common communications of goodness between every religious myth of faith through the lives of every person. What if my church showed approval when we did something good for each other, and not because we were supposed to, but because we wanted to.

I imagined someone going over my actions and thoughts and asking questions of me, and being proud that I strived to do, and be, something better every day. Instead I found that whatever your position, if you look to the bible to prove yourself in the right it can be done. I started reading stories from one faith that mirrored another, and I found that the people who were telling me how I should be interpreting my beliefs in my spiritual self and a god, had an incomplete understanding of it all themselves. An argument sprang up inside me. Are we all divine or is nothing is divine. Every religion was created by men, and emphasized by a ruling class to give them added authority to rule. All religious spiritual beliefs empathies what is good and lawful in the eyes of the religion at the times of its creation.

Laws are often created and enforced because of a religious belief and this is no different today. For example: you have time and a half on Sunday for many work places, how many spouses you can have at one time, same sex marriage issues, and many more. I have felt for some time that it was not healthy for me to allow someone else to dismiss my thoughts and tell me I am wrong for not embracing their interpretation of things. The stance of an organization can say I am wrong strictly speaking on their position of an issue, but I feel that my opinion can survive along with any other opinion out there. I don't believe there would be a creator that would want us to stagnate in our thoughts and not grow and change while seeking to know this universal mind. I don't believe there is a religious club and a company line to swallow to be spiritually alive.

I believe that whatever your belief you should gain a better understanding of where it came from, and how it evolved. This is an interesting time to be in as we will see religion as we have known it begin to change as the world around it has changed. What I will share here is bits and pieces of my own inner and outer journey. Anything I choose to share should be taken as

another way of thinking, and if your own views on the subject differs step into a new perspective and discover for yourself how it may strengthen your own stance. Trying out another point of view will certainly allow you to understand its strengths and weakness better. What I share here is pieces of my exploration and articulation of the many sides of my path.

You will find me teaching some of the philosophies of my path, and sharing some reflections of the many things that come up along the way. How this will unfold as a book is life by association. This book is not a spiritual finger saying good, bad, or hmm maybe. It is my brief association of some things I have thought of, things I've put into practice myself, interesting finds, and questions meditated on without giving complete conclusions by any means. I don't believe there are complete conclusions in terms of spirituality, and I believe we all share in discovering the highest truth for each other and ourselves. I believe that students should be taught by becoming inspired by their learning's, encouraged by their teachers, and asked to speak about what they see and believe to be true and are passionate about. It is my hope that others may use this book to stimulate a dialogue in themselves, within a classroom, or with a group of friends.

Each person may argue a stance of what they have read within these pages, agree and add to the knowledge within, or propose to share something entirely different on another topic. By putting pen to paper, or fingers to the keyboard, a student may choose to send their thoughts here and maybe get published in the next volume. In this way each student can begin to see what they choose to act on and believe has an affect on the environment at large, the thoughts and minds of others, and perhaps even discover harmony of thoughts from someone across the world. It is by our individual strivings that we can choose to come together through communication and commonality no matter the geographical distance. All my books encourage people to share their

world voice. Throughout this book you will find images of the sacred through many different traditions, cultures, and positions. Thank you for joining me on this experience.



Inner Dialogue

Humans have always struggled to understand the meaning of their existence to try to unravel a grand plan and anticipate this plan's designs. As inquisitive creatures, we have always asked questions about things around us, and in turn, these questions lead us back to our own being. Often, we seek to tie ourselves to something more than us, be it to a partner, a higher power, children, a career, or to some fated action that will change the world. Ideally all of us seek a way to live peacefully with each other and with ourselves.

To know what is meaningful and right for us is to be happy and in harmony with our needs, wants, and desires. We all have some concept of what we seek in the world and of ourselves. For every single person, the idea of what is meaningful, and how we recognize we have that meaningful thing, will often be a little bit different. I would then say to recognize, seek out, and create meaning in our own lives, we first must be mindful of what we want, expect, and can imagine of ourselves, our surroundings, and the world. You may say, Should this idea be qualified by saying that people are capable of being in such a state of seeking? Clearly, this state is not always our cognitive and emotional focus.

All of us being the inquisitive creatures we are we ask questions that ultimately lead us back to our own being-ness. For some, human life has become a economic equation and a commodity. In their 1996 report, "The State of Humanity: Good and Getting Better," writers Julian L. Simon and Sheldon Richman declared our species better off in just about every measurable material way, asserting that "Only one important resource has shown a trend of increasing scarcity rather than increasing abundance: the most important and valuable resource of all—human beings. There are more people on earth now than ever before. But if we measure the scarcity of people the same way we measure the scarcity of other economic goods—by how much we must pay to obtain their services—we see that people are becoming more scarce even though there are more of us."ⁱⁱⁱ

I would then have to answer perhaps it depends on who is asking the question and from what position. Is it the light of your spiritual being who asks, the everyday worker who wonders if he will make his rent, the parental figure, the manger, or the economist? I would say the answer received from any question is incomplete unless a person is mindful of the perspective and position a question is asked from. A question posed about the correct course of action to a

mother, a manager, and a clergy man asked the same way, and with the exact phrasing of words will often be much different. Mindfulness for me is made up of several characteristics.

Mindfulness is an open (unprejudiced and nonjudgmental) awareness that is directed by the core of a person to become more associated, more disassociated, appreciative, connected, present, alert, and conscious of something through the present moment.

That focus of attention is morally neutral. A fighter could be very mindful of how his body is moving and sense the technique and flow of his opponent so that the fight is easily won. A lover may be feeling his heart quicken as he moves in for a kiss. The world begins to slow and the lover is suddenly aware of the space between his body and his partner. The recognition of how the other will move and the anticipation of sensation as it seems, leads one person to connect with the experience of the other. In both of these examples, the awareness of one person enfolded onto another and the person being mindful began to unconsciously hook up with the experience of the other perceived as somehow connected with his or her self-awareness.

These examples show an open state of mindfulness as opposed to a narrow or closed state. Narrowing down our focus closes every connection except what you are focusing on. Think about anger for a moment. You see red; many people say because you are focused on how angry you are. You are not thinking of any other point of view aside from your own, and worst of all the idea of consequences maybe far from your mind. Narrowing the focus of our attention communicates to our mind that this point of attention is of great importance. This is best shown by our fight or flight response. In a fight or flight response, you are not running probabilities through your head. You want out of there!

The narrowing of our focus only serves a purpose if we can bring that object of focus into the bigger picture. Otherwise it is just an idle exercise of attention where your mental faculties

close off contact with the inner and outer worlds. Here is at least one good reason why your mother told you not to argue with an angry person. You are more apt to lash out and cause a bigger problem for yourself. This situation illustrates exactly why your mother shared with you her guideline she may practice herself. People can be hurt in an argument, and do not easily forget angry words. In an argument with someone you care about you want to be an empathetic ally, and stay open to the other person. You do not want to be adversarial, closed off, and grilling them as if you were a lawyer attempting to get the conviction.

To achieve a semblance of coziness and a balanced way of living, we have inner guidelines as to what is important to us for a peaceful and happy life. Human beings have woven a series of more or less mythic events around one's own life since the dawn of time. People all over the world have shared their sense of values and theories of life and death in the myths of their culture. The ways in which we share with the world what is important to us and who we are has not really changed much in the last few centuries. Yet how we go about becoming that person we wish to be, and the idea of that person in itself has changed considerably in the last hundred years.

Today, you must ask yourself what is important to you about how you appreciate the opportunities of harmony and goodness in your life. I hold honesty to be something of great value to me. Honesty is necessary in any lasting relationship that any person will have. It is not always easy to be honest, nor should it be. Jobs, money, family responsibilities, bills, and deadlines are some keywords that have intertwined themselves so thoroughly in people's minds as "have to-s" that most people rarely think of any genuine reality beyond them. Today many people seem to believe it is a kind easy habit to tell little lies instead of telling the truth because it

may cause an argument or sound bad. In a social arena or at work you are expected to just be nice a little lie is often looked on acceptably.

No one is perfect, and we will all have times of weakness when it comes to truth. Deceiving others is as bad as deception toward ourselves. In lying, we chip away the freedom of choice and opportunity of another person. We are essentially stealing from any person we lie to. There is no difference between an outright lie and a lie of omission. In both cases, a lie strips away the existing sense of what is right, real, and true. In this definition, there is no difference between a liar and thief. I believe that the harshness of any truth depends on the manner in which it is delivered.

We will all come into conflict as we move through the world. And if a person should name or label you something that you do not like or agree with, communicate respectfully saying so to that person. Think of this name or label you do not like in context with your entire life, and notice how meaningless any insult would be to your overall makeup and identity. You would have to take this hurt to heart and manifest it every day to make it real. We create meaning for ourselves every single day. We should not mix up any label, name, or rank with our personal identity. If a name or label is true, it adds nothing to you as a person, nor could it take anything away. If this name or label is untrue, the label can easily slip away inaccurate and empty.

I believe in two types of truth. For me there are only infinite and subjective truths. Infinite truth is something that will always be true, and it is the highest level of reality and understanding. Subjective truth is any truth that man has created, developed, and described while being bound into being-ness. Subjective truth is not absolute truth but successive approximations of infinite truth. On this level of interaction and experience judgment and prejudice of others is ludicrous. Personal responsibility, right, wrong, ethics, and moral codes depend on the

internalization from multiple sources of information to ultimately give people the opportunities and experiences to understand what works for themselves and why.

If something is infinite truth it doesn't need to be defended by a name or personality. To believe truth needs to be guarded or it needs a champion to come to its defense is to fall into a trap of ego and power politics. Nobody can make infinite truth untrue. Yet scores of people everyday resist and deny truths about themselves and their world simply because of fear of labels or in guard against the influence of the person trumpeting a particular truth. To deny a truth out of spite is to lose track of the fact that we are ultimately only competing with ourselves.

We are the ones that get the rewards as well as the punishments. It is our own mindful image of ourselves that moves the inner compass of values to decide what costs are acceptable and when emotional choices win out over logical ones. Many of us live in a world where the truth is perverted into something that is more opinion than honest truth. In many ways, we are fed the party line on what we want to hear, and at times we cannot help that we do the same to others. We want to believe that we can hold back the passing of time so we believe the ads that promote youthful beauty and anti-wrinkle products. We want to believe that a war is going to stop terrorism, but there is always another war.

We want to believe in the reality of what we dream, yearn for, and trust that must be possible. There are multiple industries to feed our fantasies and target our insecurities. These insecurities are peddled back to us with more fantasy, prejudice, company values, scripted drama, current events, and advice from these experts at a price that they will be thrilled to sell you on. In relationships, we sell our biased stories to keep the peace or preserve the relationship. Hiding behind lies we smooth over the bumps waiting for something other than our own choice to make us take action or change. The sadness of our reality is but a dream that we swallow

hoping that it isn't so. However, it is so! Reality isn't very easy when you first choose to begin to face it.

Is the whole truth possible in every circumstance? I don't know, maybe not. All I know is that sometimes the varnished truth chips away at the very fabric of love, life and the spirit itself. It leaves behind a hollow kind of life that is the result of a living by hype or spin of any created reality. That is why money, power, and status seldom make people happy in the long term. These things are fleeting and mostly illusory. Money and status can make life physically comfortable but cannot guarantee happiness. You can have lots of money and yet choose to indulge yourself in all sorts of negative thoughts that will make you unhappy. On the other hand you could be happy with bare necessities of life if you focus on positive things in your life.

A good example of above would be the actors and actresses who undergo plastic surgery. Plastic surgeons have observed that no matter how beautiful their patients become after the surgery, the patients are never fully satisfied with the way they look! Celebrities like Michael Jackson and many prominent Hollywood actors and actresses have resorted to plastic surgery to make themselves more beautiful, younger, more attractive by industry standards, and even risking it all to become whiter. Most of these screen idols are never fully satisfied with the results of the surgery and keep coming back for making more changes to their faces or the way they look. When it comes to their bodies, many stars have trained themselves to be overly critical and forgotten how to appreciate the beauty they were. What's worse is many people just like those people of status are losing touch with what makes someone really beautiful.

For myself, every day I practice being truthful and I am not always successful. It is far too easier to be a peacemaker who covers over the harder facts that occur in everyday life instead of one who does not. In reality, for myself, I would much rather be told how something is but

having a rosy outlook can be more important to others. Finding that balance is where enlightenment lays. I am just not sure the cost is worth it.

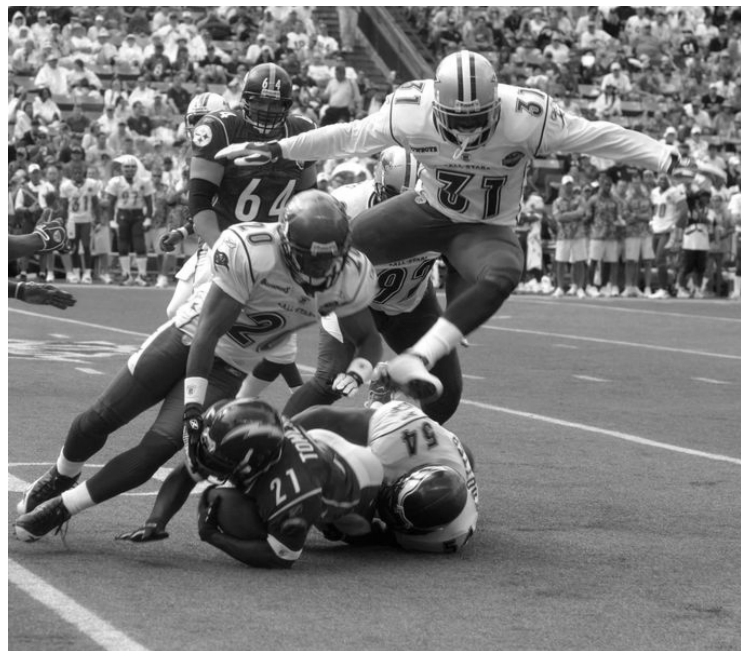
The scores and figures of institutions cannot easily measure our values, or our personal truths, so the responsibility of attainment and cultivation has been passed on to the individual quietly. The cultivation of these values has been thought of as a spiritual quest, and yet it is a journey we all must make. While we make this journey together, many of us choose to do no harm. Being nonviolent is not an easy choice in itself until you make it. We each have to ask ourselves what is violence and what is causing harm? The answer will depend on our upbringing, environment, and our culture.



A Shoalin monk will think nothing of sparing with his brother monk at full contact. Whereas a Quaker would want no part of sparing within their community, as they would consider it extremely violent. Many Shoalin monks would say the killing of farm animals is violent and back away from that dinner plate. The moral here is violence can be in the eye of the

beholder. It is up to us, then, to decide what constitutes harm and use that as our confirmation of violence.

For harm to confirm that an action or inaction is indeed violent there must be intent to cause purposeful injury or damage physically, emotionally, or psychologically to another. For a good many people, getting a skinned knee or even a broken bone is not necessarily violent. To an athlete, injuries are often part of a sport, and unless they feel another player meant to injure them purposefully, they are often shrugged off as accidents of the game. This definition of harm as purposeful violence is a good one as it allows for a distinction between rough play, discipline, training, and the conscious decision of causing pain for sake of hurting another being.



Somehow, too often, religious perspectives on such definitions have always seemed to take the diabolical approach of good versus evil when coming into confrontation with another point of view. The time tested approach by religions has often been to immediately state it is a moral stand and the belief of faith should be imposed on another. Religious judgment tends to be

closed, unquestionable, and extremely egocentric concerning its tolerance toward other perspectives.



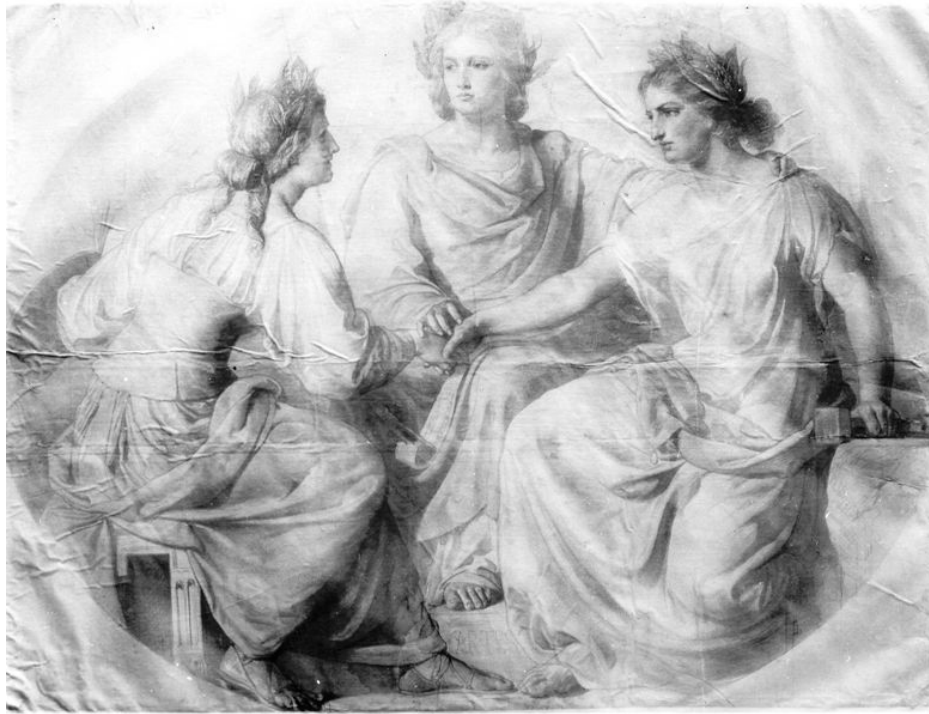
All cultures have usually depended on spiritual beliefs such as a higher power, karma, guides/angels and reincarnation. We should look at learning as an extension of the spiritual process. Understanding that all that we learn, practice, and experience changes who we are as a person, the path we walk, and the opportunities we have, it should be no surprise that what we learn lightens or burdens us spiritually. If we are each in different places spiritually, with something unique for each of us to learn, then how can we really say for sure what choice is the right choice for someone else?

Have you ever wondered if you made the right choice? I would wager that everyone has had that question pop up in his or her mind. Everyday mindfulness is realizing that there is no one perfectly right course of action. We are actively creating meaning for ourselves, what is happening around us, and the “why” behind our actions every day. If there is no exact course of action except to recognize the laws of the land, our beliefs, and the guidelines we adopt for ourselves, the knowledge of what we are truly responsible and accountable for should be firm in our minds.

As human beings, we have to come to terms with many things. One of the things that we must learn is that none of us has absolute control over our own bodies and we will never have that complete control over anything or anyone in this life. There will always be something that is beyond our reach. Since we cannot have total control over what will happen to us in our lives, we can only take responsibility for those things that we can control. Our thoughts, our position, and our perspectives determine what we focus on in our lives.

The kinds of thoughts we think affect our emotions and our emotions influence our hormones; our hormones turn on and off the DNA that determine the quality of our health throughout our lifespan. What we think about, focus on, love, hate, imagine, hope for, aspire to, our perspectives, and more, are influenced by what we learn. What we learn is an extension of our spiritual selves, and we are responsible for what we choose to think, study, and imagine. We are not responsible for what others may think. Keeping in mind the idea of bearing no harm and sharing your thoughts with another... You may open their eyes to a new perspective, and learn that the act of convincing someone of another point of view is never wrong. The act itself is neutral, but the intention of the act will be reflected by the delivery of the message. The person

delivering the message must weigh the silence of indirect communication, and the comfort a person feels when having an important conversation with a friend.



vii

You manipulate a screwdriver to tighten a screw, and sharing your thoughts with someone is a different experience completely. As long as you allow the other person to make up their own mind, you do not seek to cheat them, pressure them, lie to them, or purposelessly intend to leave them worse off, you have fulfilled your duty to share your heart and thoughts with another and done no harm. The way you do something is just as important as how you perceive it and share that knowledge. Mindfulness is about appreciating the joys of clarifying, organizing, and shaping our own inner self, as much as it is to respectfully and peacefully enjoy sharing in the lives of others.

To consistently appreciate and respect what we are focused on it must be part of our mindful procedure to enjoy opportunities to improve our performance of a task and the quality of our experiences. Starting from how we think about something, and on to how we consciously

choose our response from what has been already learned. We can improve anything in our lives that we wish to even if it's just a little bit by adjusting the position, perspective, or the procedure of how it is done. It is with the reflective action of mindfulness that we look inside ourselves to realize the quality of our experience too discover if we are responding or reacting to something, and if we are getting the result/consequences, we desire by an action.

While we may not be responsible for how someone interprets what we say or do, we are responsible for the interpretation we bring to the table. The meaning of your communication is shown by the response you get. We can say, the meaning of our communication to any other person is the interpretation of our message sent, but there are clear signs that two people maybe attempting to come together from two different places and choose two very different interpretations. We should than recognize what we communicate is an action we are responsible for and that we should attempt to monitor our communications consistently.

As we become more aware of how we communicate ourselves we begin to start recognizing when someone you are communicating with is really asking for assistance to ensure all parties are on the same page, and even where to go next in the social context. Every person manages what they say, dress, how they groom themselves, and what they surround themselves with to varying degrees. Yet still every day many people wait for something bad to happen before they make a change. This philosophy will share what works for the social individual who seeks the still point in the shifting changing self and the world.

You do not have to wait for something negative to happen to make a conscious decision to improve who you are. To be mindful of the messages we send out we must attempt to glimpse how others are receiving us. We will never know with exact certainty what another is thinking

and why. Neither should we judge another person simply on a few thoughts. What we must do is begin to connect to others by mindfully stepping into their shoes.

All the beliefs and images that go into our self concepts have one thing in common not one of them was with us when we were born. Each of us is born with definite physical characteristics and undiscovered potentials, but no one is born knowing that they are male or female, black or white; nor does anyone come into the world already believing they are stupid or smart, pretty or ugly, shy or confident, strong or weak, lovable or unlovable, superior or inferior. All beliefs are learned and subconsciously more than consciously picked up from myriad of attitudes and behaviors that surround us.

As far as ideas and impressions of ourselves are concerned, as newborns we begin life with a vague outline on a blank canvas. Just as we later learn what sex we are, the color of our hair, what our name is and who our parents and siblings are, so too, we learn to think of ourselves as stupid or smart, pretty or ugly, shy or confident, strong or weak etc. In early infancy, nonverbal communication played the most crucial role. Depending on how much affection, food, physical touch and warmth we received as infants we formed general impressions about whether we were loved and worthy. Then with the development of our language abilities we began to translate these general impressions into specific words within our minds. We learn to name and label. While we come to know the world through our own experience and by what others told us about ourselves, and what our experience should be. Others started to have as great an impact on our developing self concepts as how they treated us. This is the simplified soup of where our self image was born.

People are deeply influenced by the attitudes of others toward the self and over the course of time; we come to view ourselves as a comparative mix of self images and which includes how

we believe others view us. As we grew up and learned basic ideas about who we are as a person and what life is, we also learned conflicting ideas about who we should be and what we should be doing. Whereas our ideas about who we actually are make up our self image or perceived self, our ideas about who we should be begin to form our ideal self. Every day we stop to compare our perceived self to our ideal self, and the wider the gap between the two the lower our level of self satisfaction.

None of the ideal standards by which we judge ourselves was with us at birth. We were taught to believe we should be a certain way, and the specific ideals and standards by which we judge ourselves often require close examination to see if we really believe the sentiments we so casually express. It is important for us to be fully aware of our own self image and aware too of what our ideal self is. Both our self image and our current notion of our ideal self will change over the course of our lives, but without mindful curiosity into who we are and what is important to us. Too often it is all simply left up to chance.



Creating a Inner Script for Improvement

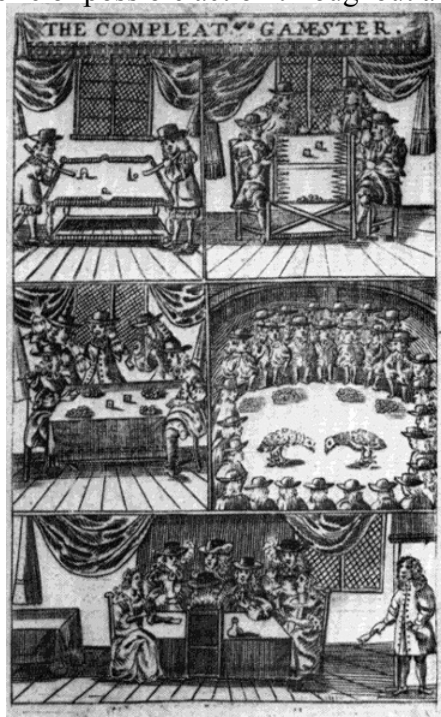
Think of something you wish you could improve even if the quality of the experience would only be slightly changed for the better. You can run through your mind a trial run of some action you wish to do. Notice how the other person is responding to you and feeling as you run through this mental meditation. See the action through your own eyes (associated position) and see yourself watching from the above (disassociated position) to fine tune your responses and design the strategies you wish to practice in this interaction so you'll enjoy playing them out. Pay attention to how everyone moves, and be open without judgments or prejudice of the whole person. Once you have a good sense of the person and circumstances run through the action you wish in many different ways.

Do not just imagine presenting an action in the same old tame manner you are use to. Try to do your action in different ways by changing your perspective from mild to wild and notice how it changes the emotions within you and the person you're communicating with. Becoming conscious of the emotions you take into a communication will allow yourself to become aware of the feeling being conveyed back to you, and being responsive with the emotion you return will often open up the opportunity for both parties as well as their responses. We all possess different gifts, abilities and innate talents. The idea is to touch others with what makes us beautiful, and invite solutions and interactions that leave all parties better off than when they came. That is easier said than done, and is not always possible. Your intention to do this will come through as a sincere interest in others.

Through this mindful perspective taking the action may have not changed much or at all throughout this creative mind play, but the emotions attached to your communication most likely has. Stop, and ask yourself, "What is it that you want to result for this action? How many

different actions will lead to the same result? What is it that all parties want? Is there a way to satisfy us all now?" Start from the actions you intended and go from wild to mild and back again. Starting from the procedure of how you would go about something you did before you began this mindful perceptive taking will allow you to create a baseline from which you can decide if this exercise was helpful and leaving you better off or neutral and having little effect at all. You may surprise yourself with the attitudes (perspective) and actions (procedures) that give you the same result in a different way. No one that honestly steps into this mindful perspective taking can come through without gaining some useful learning's and renewed associations to all that is our world and our understanding.

When you are satisfied with the multiple paths you're now aware of to get the result by your action do the most important thing...a reality check. You do a reality check by acting out these responses in the world. By doing this mindful exercise of positioning, you will expand your range of behavior and your repertoire of possible action throughout all areas of your life.



When getting into the habit of relating to others with openness and respect, we invite others to emulate our example when they see mindfulness at work. The aim is to make mindfulness an essentially continuous part of everyday life. Living peacefully is learning to continue a mindful connection between our thoughts, our actions, our reality, and walking our own path in a world filled with people who are on their own journey. This introduction is only the basic groundwork of what could make mindfulness work for you on a daily basis.

These ideas are the shaping of the constellations of culture I had been exposed to while in China, from a background in martial arts, personal studies in peace psychology, and determined curiosity about people and the world we live in. I believe this is a starting point for anyone who wants to live a peaceful and mindful way of life. We position ourselves everyday standing by what we know, what's familiar, and sharing what we hold to be sacred and true. To use mindfulness daily as a exercise in creative mediation, you begin to understand it takes more than simply uttering a few words publicly to commit yourself with this and make it part of you. When following these guidelines, mindfulness becomes who you are and not just what you do. This book is a record and a mosaic of my question fueled journey to know and experience all that I am, and how all of that connects into the infinite.



PANKAJ

While sitting down to write out and organize my thoughts on a mindful life I began to think of Gandhi. I have often thought of Gandhi and how his philosophy has touched the people of India. I met a graduate student while putting this book together and I started to talk with him about his culture. I believe that in order to better understand the perspectives of another culture, it is imperative that a member of such a society be called upon to describe their life. Even more advantageous is to have an individual who has experienced diverse cultures by living in these societies and having that person share what they have experienced. The following is a small portion of our talks that followed our meeting and ongoing friendship.

Pankaj is a graduate student who is here in the USA for his studies from India. India's national hero is Gandhi. Gandhi's principals are taught throughout India while peace and mindfulness are emphasized as a part of the societal and spiritual culture even while competition for jobs is extremely high. Pankaj has experienced life as a person growing up in India and as an adult is now living in the United States and experiencing the ups and downs of western life. The following is an account of his experiences of peaceful and mindful living in daily life.

Growing Up In India

Pankaj is from Bombay, now known as Mumbai in India, born to liberal cosmopolitan parents in the 1980's protectionist Indian society.

“Growing up in India can be clearly divided into two important parts – the protectionist era of the 1980's and the free market economy of 1990's in India. Both these divisions have been instrumental in my life, as I have seen a sea change of attitude in the way of life of Indian people. But most importantly all throughout my growing up, life in India was always a struggle between opportunity and competition, all of it punctuated by amazing celebrations of festivals, family and friends.

As a country, you will find Indians celebrating on any possible occasion, even if it is just the arrival of rains after a torrid summer, an important win in a sporting event and of course, the umpteen festivals that happen almost every month. In a country that has amazing levels of poverty, you will somehow still see more smiles on faces of people in India than anywhere else. For the vast majority of Hindus, the most important religious path is Bhakti (devotion) to personal gods.

There is a wide variety of gods to choose from, and although sectarian adherence to particular deities is often strong, there is a widespread acceptance of choice in the desired god (Ishta Devata) as the most appropriate focus for any particular person. Most devotees are therefore polytheists, worshiping all or part of the vast pantheon of deities, some of whom have come down from Vedic times. In practice, a worshiper tends to concentrate prayers on one deity or on a small group of deities with whom there is a close personal relationship.

Puja (worship) of the gods consists of a range of ritual offerings and prayers typically performed either daily or on special days before an image of the deity, which may be in the form

of a person or a symbol of the sacred presence. In its more developed forms, puja consists of a series of ritual stages beginning with personal purification and invocation of the god, followed by offerings of flowers, food, or other objects such as clothing, accompanied by fervent prayers. Some dedicated worshipers perform these ceremonies daily at their home shrines; others travel to one or more temples to perform puja, alone or with the aid of temple priests who receive offerings and present these offerings to the gods.

The gifts given to the gods become sacred through contact with their images or with their shrines, and may be received and used by worshipers as the grace (Prasada) of the divine. Sacred ash or saffron powder, for example, is often distributed after puja and smeared on the foreheads of devotees. In the absence of any of these ritual objects, however, puja may take the form of a simple prayer sent toward the image of the divine, and it is common to see people stop for a moment before roadside shrines to fold their hands and offer short invocations to the gods. Seeing those things Indians always yearned for more like them. It was this important fact that also prompted a wave of emigration from India into other countries. Most people after seeing imported things started associating a more peaceful, mindful way of living with the western life and hence made it their goal to adapt such a life for themselves.

This was also the time when almost all things western was also looked down upon very unfavorably by top officials. For those people who could not for any reason emigrate outside the country and not adapt this new life of supposed freedom, it was imperative to denigrate such a life as filthy, new-fangled and completely opposed to their own culture. Hence, the 1980's was also the time when a common contempt towards western way of living was quite prevalent. Jeans were frowned upon and both boys and girls were supposed to dress up soberly in muted colors.

In fact, the society as a whole relied more on gossip and state controlled television or radio channels. Somewhere in the early 1990's, 1991 to be precise, a huge momentum was built up against this protectionist way of life, the fall of USSR was a major blow to the Indian government and people were starting to get restless.

This turbulent time in India's history also saw revolts by students and riots which claimed hundreds of innocent lives. The assassination of a previous Prime Minister during election campaign by extremists triggered people to press the government on liberalizing its policies. Finally in early 1990's the Indian government recognizing the tremendous pressure on itself, liberalized the economy making it a free market economy. This is something that has always happened in democracies after all. India happens to be the world's largest democracy and time and again people in India have brought into effect a sea change in the direction of the country's policies. This was one such major change. This was also the time when most people would discuss politics passionately. Peaceful living in their opinion at that point of time was revolution, a change.

Companies like Coca Cola, Pepsi finally entered India in early 1990's, with a host of other international products following them. With the arrival of new television channels and advertisements, people started to soften their stand on western culture after seeing movies and cartoons and slowly but surely there was an acceptance of revealing clothes, more intimacy. The Indian culture has always followed a very staid approach on sex and intimacy. Sex was never discussed and was never even seen in movies during the protectionist era. Liberalization changed that and true like many other things questions about sex and sex education started to be raised.

India today is a very modern nation, the roads have improved you get “Evian” bottled water everywhere, the TV channels have all the modern programs you can ask for, including the latest seasons of various soap operas. Advertising is rampant and the nation is moving forward as a confident young nation with people mimicking the west in almost every respect. But the most amazing thing about India is that people in India are starting to modify centuries old customs in such a way that they don’t abandon the custom completely but still carry on with a confident modern life.

This fits in very neatly with the tribulations of modern life. After all in all the running around, if you still feel that you are connected to your God and you will ultimately achieve a salvation through that connection irrespective of how non-traditional your life is, it does give a very peaceful demeanor to a person. If you think about it, in the western culture the most dissonance and deviation from mindful or peaceful living is found in people who have been mandated by the religion to be doing something really wrong in the eyes of God and hence will be admonished to hell.

All of us human beings, no matter how disconnected we become ultimately do find solace in a higher being who is supposedly looking out for us. Life merely becomes very morose when this belief system is taken away. Most modern Indians realize this fact and hence do hold on to their past, the reasoning being that it is after all the past that is the key to the future and through all of which is the road to a peaceful and mindful living going to be possible.”

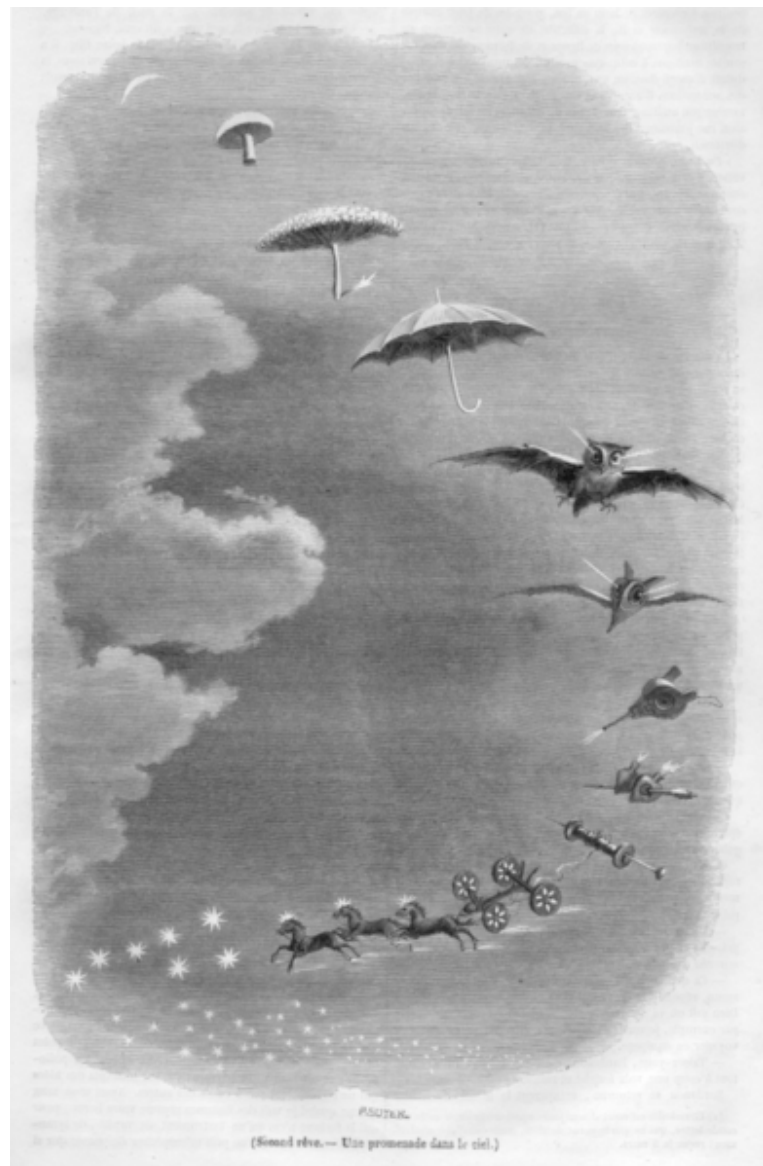
Peaceful Living in Day to Day Life

“As an Indian, growing up amongst a heavy influence of western culture, my outlook of life can be classified as liberal. Especially being a person of different sexual orientation, I have to constantly unite the dichotomy of my traditionalist belief and my identity. Growing up, I was treated with kindness and respect by my parents, who taught me the values of goodness, kindness and honesty.

They always say to me – “As long as your intentions are not to intentionally hurt anyone, or commit any sort of malice towards anyone, you are perfectly fine and will be dear to God”. This is something I totally believe in. I believe in the sanctity of self and only by loving who I am will I be able to appreciate the God within me. The lucidity of this thought is so pure and plain, that it is possible to be spiritual and yet be of an orientation that not many people like. I believe in my God and I pray to him in times of desperation. This might seem like an escapist mechanism, but I rarely run away from my troubles. I only derive strength from my God to ward off these troubles, to calm my nerves and to soothe myself. In a way I think this is a perfect combination of spirituality with contemporariness.

Indians have always been big about their family and friends. Unlike Americans, Indians do not believe that self is the most important thing. For an Indian their family and friends are usually the most important piece of the puzzle and the self is usually sacrificed willingly in favor of the group wishes. This is an important paradigmatic shift from the western world to the Indian world. When the whole group starts thinking and identifying as a group the dynamics of interaction changes in the society. Indians are more informal with their friends and as such are more inclined to share their deepest thoughts and feelings with their trusted friends than

Americans. This automatically leads to a very peaceful existence as the person is more inclined to express rather than bottle up their feelings.”



Objectivity and Subjectivity

Have you ever been told to be more objective? I believe absolute objectivity is impossible. You would have to be able to not only treat yourself as an object in relation to everything else but anyone and anything else as if it were all inconsequential variables. If you believe in one god, many gods, a sentient universe, or something different entirely, there will always be a subjective being desiring and designing this world and altering it one way or another. Human beings will always be the proof that amazing and unimaginable things are possible even if they are slow to be realized at times. If you believe in nothing else out there then this is all random chance and evolution. We do not live in an objective or neutral universe. Everything be it plant or animal seeks to live and thrive.

Imagine our own brains for a moment. There is too much interdependence of systems, layers upon layers of harmony in the infinite interactions of life, and mystery of how something is all put together to transcend its biology too reinvent ourselves and strive for more. We are ourselves architects and builders of our world and life itself. We know ourselves as knowledgeable people using the tools left for us by the infinite. Human beings yearned to fly and we didn't have wings so we built them. We seek knowledge and we shall discover it.

If we are created in the image of a god we would be bringing honor to that image by making the most out of all we have been given and should seek to discover the most we can realize about ourselves and our world. At this moment in time we have discovered that human beings use 9.3% of their own mind, our body dies of old age, disease, we hurt, have sorrow, joy, and hunger. We can never believe that we are the gods of our imagination. We can realize that we have the potential for terrible and great things. We are only beginning to see ourselves in each other and our world. There is still a great journey to be had for us all.

So how can we be objective, and step back from the position and the perspective we are familiar viewing life from every day? The definition of objectivity is judgment based on observable phenomena and uninfluenced by emotions or personal prejudices.¹ There will always be a problem here because we cannot be entirely sure how to observe, measure feelings, intent, ideas, divorce our associations from our upbringing and culture, or how we might know the mind of another. We are dancing on the edge of philosophy and science and realizing we have the same problems when we take into consideration all the things in our lives that are not testable and immeasurable. Objectivity by itself does not serve us as a whole person. It can be used to test ideas, and gain knowledge by building off what you already know. It also tends to simplify things into multiple variables, and that is not how we experience our lives. Thus it can never be a complete understanding of it.

The definition of subjectivity is a choice or assessment based on individual personal impressions and feelings and opinions rather than external facts.² In a totally objective world attitude would not be a factor in the fate of any person. It is by no far stretch of the imagination that a completely miserable person and a completely optimistic person will have a very different experience and quality of life with all other things being equal. Subjectivity is the result of the mind's ability to organize, and discriminate among many variables to signal the consciousness to what it believes is going on and then focus on what is happening by a personal interpretation of it

¹ **American Psychological Association (APA):**

Objectivity. (n.d.). *WordNet® 3.0*. Retrieved December 13, 2007, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/objectivity>

² **American Psychological Association (APA):**

Subjectivity. (n.d.). *WordNet® 3.0*. Retrieved December 13, 2007, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/subjectivity>

all. Here too we have an oversimplified view of reality and the world is thought of in a more relational sense instead of an illogical parade of labeled variables.

The problem here is when we get too associated into a scene that we feel strongly passionately about every single action may be perceived as hostile. Subjectivity in its simplest form is an attempt to mindfully capture the perceived working law of external universe while experiencing it. We know this is how the universe operates and responds to us as we are internalizing the perceived universal rules as we attempt to see the complete picture. Yet the perceived subjective rules of the universe do not take right, wrong, and what is good for you or other people into account. Subjectivity is also the place where emotional logic seems completely rationale. Emotional logic leans more towards reaction in place of responding to an event. Responding to an event takes direction through conscious examination of circumstances, goals, rewards, punishments, and attention to consequences or results.

It is important to note that being human we are emotional reactive and often act contrary to popular advice. We cannot just switch off from personal issues when we go to work or leave a room. What we can do is instead of ignoring the situation we might acknowledge and accept things as they are. Then from that position of acceptance see what can be accomplished. That way we come from a psychological position of an ally instead of an attacker so we may manage any runaway emotions and contain them. The best way to start using this response is to run through it before your heated and pissed off, because when you're angry there isn't much you want to giggle at. Troubled intimate relationships or physical conditions like cancer or any other form of serious diseases make it difficult to keep smiling while at work or on the frontlines. We need to learn to manage personal problems because it's not possible to switch off our emotions from them.

Let's try a thought experiment here. Pretend I am your social advisor for a moment. If I were to ask you to go outside into the sweltering heat of the desert for only ten minutes and wait a time with patience and see if you enjoy yourself with some people. Once outside I bet you will question my sanity in less than a minute. But if I were to ask you to go outside and play or watch your favorite game, say football or Nascar, the chances are you'll enjoy staying out for the next hour or two. The next day you would probably request to go out and play again.

Why is it that in the first scenario you were questioning my sanity in less than five seconds and in the second scenario you were happy to stay out for more than an hour?

There are two main reasons:

- The first scenario didn't serve any purpose (perspective). You didn't have any reason to tolerate the heat. Your position was that of someone following a request even if it made little sense at the time.
- In the second scenario you were happy to stay out in the harsh weather because you were enjoying the game?(Perspective: This is play!). Being a fan and a spectator (Position: associated) (Perspective: This is what fans do!) is a worthwhile reason for staying out in the blazing heat of a desert or a blizzard.



The reality of the climate did not change, but the subjective reality (position and perspective) created a meaningful reason that made the climate not just tolerable but enjoyable. When we react to something the action is often not well thought out, (unless your actions/reflexes are as practiced as an athlete) at times it is protective in nature, and often our actions has little forethought towards consequences and results. Society has put the most emphasis on the extremes of objectivity and subjectivity. We have all heard the words “Nothing personal it’s just business.” or “No pain no gain.” These sentiments give us an internal script that this is not personal and you should not be associated into personal feeling of pain or sympathy. What is emphasized is the result and the details along the way are not important, because “All the world is a stage.”



To understand the importance placed on what associates you into a particular state of mind (position and perspective) all you have to do is flip on the TV. Commercials work very hard to trigger your hunger, arousal, anxiety, curiousness, and even fear. There is no shortage of sentiments to validate being passionate and involved in any experience. Statements off the top of my head are “The heart wants what the heart wants.” “Can you afford not to look?” Either debate is founded on the idea that you will agree with X or you will disagree with X by agreeing with Y. Is it freedom of choice or a ploy at forcing someone to choose? People talk about being swept up in desire, possessed, driven, overtaken, and hungry. All of these ideas acknowledge the command of desire but never question its logic or motivation.

If you say that X, Y, and Z may be true, it opens up a debate. What happens when you say that A through Z is equally true? Chaos... Debate flies out the window. Without getting into any deep arguments within the field of logic, we have to say that there is a shared reality and truth. That shared reality is influenced by the subjective truth of each person, but the infinite has an awareness of its own. Science has yet to know with absolute certainty why it is we dream, how our bodies know to stop healing us once the job is done, or how it is that we even have consciousness. Subjective truth may not be absolute truth but a close enough approximation of absolute truth that it works well enough to call it true.

We have many theories in our lives and many of those theories seek to prove completely opposite results. Yet pieces of each theory work well enough that we can say that each theory is valid. Take psychology for instance. Should we say Freud’s theory that life is a sexual and dynamic energy system is truth, or should we say that Skinner’s theory of behaviorism where all we think is irrelevant to behavior is truth? Both are seen as valid and contributing to the

discipline. Both have positions contradicting the other, and yet both are strong enough to exist filtering knowledge through different positions and perspectives to benefit a discipline of science.

Subjective truth is not absolute truth but successive approximations of an infinite or absolute truth. Since subjective truth is any truth that man has created, developed, and described, all that we know can be traced back to this context. The doorway of expression in this world is through our bodies. Our bodies express our desires and we reach out for the experience and joy of living a good life. To live a good life we all seek to maximize pleasure and minimize pain from our lives. Even though we all strive for the same things, we go about all this in many different ways. All you have to do is look around and the world provides us with ordinary examples of people who have done amazing things with little or nothing to drive them except themselves.

Sometimes a wrong turn can be unfavourable to our comfort. It can cause trauma and put us in danger of losing ourselves for the foreseeable future. Other times we immediately realize our “yes” has led to an “o-oh” and we decide right then and there to go back to the beginning and start again. You might think I’ll try anything at least three times. I figure I can screw anything up once or twice when I first start doing it. After three times I think to myself “This is it! This is the experience I was after!” To me, life always seemed to be forty percent how we make it and sixty percent how we take it.

By having the courage to explore and express ourselves through our experiences, I find there is the desire to actualize possibilities, personality, and love. We get hungry to know what comes next while exploring experiences through our mind and body. We all are comparing and sharing our perspectives with others to gain new perspective and in the process we’re filling in the picture that is in our mind’s view. As I put this together, I have discovered something curious.

Anytime I had a challenge with an aspect of this foundation, I found that the challenge was something that needed attention within me. This foundation of philosophy is something I have mediated on for many years, and piece by piece put into practice. It is only now that I sit down to put it all down on paper. Having it in front of you there is an advantage that somehow makes it more real and this makes sense to me.

There is an illusory advantage to not changing and not asking more of ourselves, but it is cannot be any easier, better or worse than striving to be more. Deciding not to change means isolating yourself in the past, and that position is still subjectively defined. There is a moment we all must act on what is in front of us. Choosing meanings that empower us in life instead of assuming and carrying on disempowered meanings was in the end the only real choice for me. This path is not so much interested in convenience as it is in the character of the one who walks it. Therefore, I share my thoughts and experience of this path as I make my way between the many perceived polarities of philosophy and belief.

Many people want to know their highest self and not just as a way to escape the sufferings of life. Emotional suffering is not just a perspective, but also a procedure. It is biologically similar to pain but the cause comes from no cut or cancer to the flesh. Emotional suffering comes from a fixed position and perspective. It has to be given a certain amount of energy every single day to be sustained, and nourished. Too seek the highest self to avoid suffering in ourselves and of those to which we love is as noble as any other reason to seek the infinite truth. Suffering is an aspect of the whole, and will represent a slightly different role all our lives. We are more than suffering because we know the beauty of joy, and the joyful sorrow of release. All human life is a model of interdependent relationships. To be is to be related. Even one who withdraws outwardly from action continues to be inwardly related through his thoughts

to the multiplicity of culture and society. Reflecting on the nature of relationships and the values involved in the expression of relationships is culture in the widest sense of the word. This is also the soil where all trends seem to be the outgrowth of today.

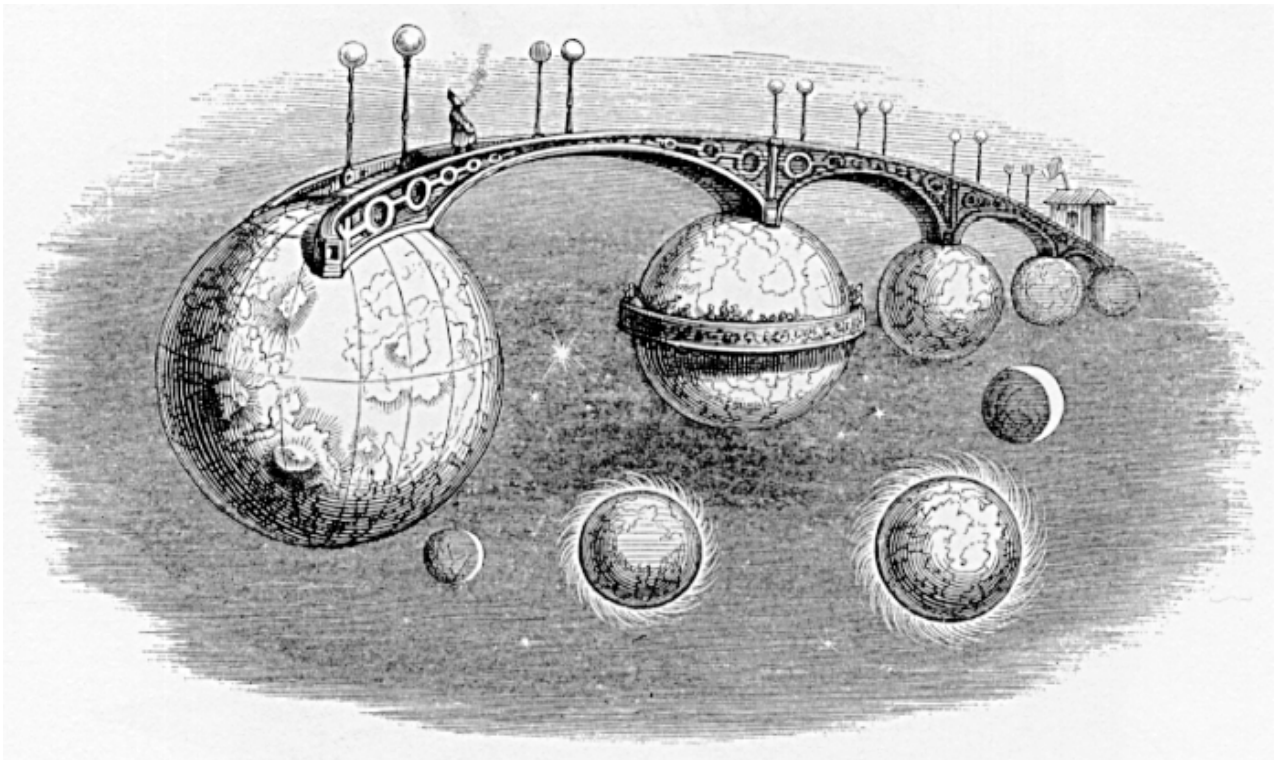
The network of human relationships is complex and subtle. You could only begin to imagine it from what we eat, the air we breathe, the cloths we wear, how we make our money, the customs we carry on, the thoughts we think, how we show love, and how we believe to know what we know. Our relationships embraces not only external contact with other human beings but also the unarticulated attitudes of affection, animosity, fears, ambiguities, and so forth, of the numerous concealed motives which do not always find expression. Our web of relationships being infinitely diverse comprises man's response to the soil, to trees, animals, the flowing waters, the mountain ranges, the earth, sky, stars, everything that the eye can see and imagine is tied into an associational relationship with man.

The significant are man's relationships with his ideas and beliefs, his likes and dislikes - in other words, with the contents of his own mind. From this place the quality of his relationship with all things is started and carried out. The relationship to the self to a great extent conditions all other relationships. Frustration within obviously vitiates his actions in respect of others and what affects one limb of life extends to the whole body. His vision becomes clouded, and his outlook hazy and out of focus. Therefore it is of vital importance that a person should be aware of his own responses and reactions, and seek the balance and harmony within that he seeks outside himself.

When there is an absence of self observation, relationships bind and deaden a person's outlook and understanding. Many problems arise from a mind unaware of itself and its attachments. Empathy and connection, which is essential for cultural and personal development,

is not enhanced by inflexible attachments of perspective or position. When it does happen it seems the individual is reduced to primitive and defensive mentality. This inflexible attachment to a particular position or perspective is what imprisons a person within a narrow and semi-isolated circle of reality. Such a person no longer has the world to choose from, and his thoughts return to the position of scarcity he occupies and now must somehow defend to improve him/herself.

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Your Thoughts, Your Meaning, Your Response, Your Rock, Your Foundation, Your Life

What is it you believe beyond any opinion that someone may give you? While writing this book I have asked many people about what they believe and their own spiritual and personal philosophy towards life. What surprised me was how many blank stares I got. There are so many people that have given little independent thought of their own to their spiritual and personal beliefs I was shocked. When people did have answer I would ask them how they arrived at that conclusion. Often it was someone told them, or they read it in a book. When asked if they believed what they just told me I too often got an answer like “I guess so.”, “I don’t know.”, and even more shocking was “No.”

A few people told me what they felt, or witnessed, that brought them to a particular conclusion. While others simply told me “I learned about this idea/philosophy and it just felt right, so I started putting it into practice. I just got it.” These people all had a spirituality that worked with their life by their own definition, and it showed through by how they held themselves, and what they desired for themselves. How is it that creating an individual path that is in harmony with our world, and our values, is given a back seat to our everyday affairs, or even left for other people to develop for us? I see this as an issue that will challenge the traditional faiths of today.

What is it I believe? Much of what I believe is in these pages, but I haven’t yet mentioned the essence of spirit is life. I believe I am more than my physical body because I am more than the physical matter that makes up my body. For me there is no question whether life has suffering, joy, or beauty that I have yet to imagine. It is a question of am I noticing? Am I participating in it all? Not worrying about thinking when I want to be experiencing, and not just

experiencing when I should be doing so thinking... Our experience of our life is relative to our point of view (perspective) and who/what we believe our identity to be at the moment (position and perspective). In everyday life, most people tend to have relative mixture of emotional logic and balanced logic. All the while going about their day people are carrying with them many positions and perspectives that allows some opportunities to be visible to them and others to be invisible.

Few people take the time to live in a mindful and balanced way and examine why they did something one way and not another. Not enough thought is given to choices before and after they are made even when so many are quick to react instead of respond. To be at peace with the world and ourselves we have to recognize that none of us can truly be objective with the world. Yet it would be wrong to believe we should not attempt to be systematically objective with how we move through the world, and how to bring about the best in ourselves and each other. Everyday there is far more at stake than objects or variables. What we can focus on is our perspectives, positions, and our procedures within any circumstance. What the results and consequences are will always be our own, and so what we must balance daily is our experience of the world.

Just as there are no good or bad cookies until you bite into one, it should be clear that it is the sensations and the experience that we all seek. All we have to do is look at the entertainment industry to understand the power behind stepping into another perspective (I capture criminals) and position (Associated in the perspective that I am the hero). The entertainment industry as a whole today spends more on creating and marketing their films than many countries spend on their government. People very often look to films as if they are packages experiences. They show us how masculinity operates, what is desirable, the role of a woman, the role of a man, the glory

of assertiveness, etc. We fall in love with the characters identity, their experience, and we keep in mind their strengths and weaknesses because they are made so plain to us. We all learn from every experience that we have, but how often have you sat down after a movie to discuss the themes, and what the characters actions, and goals were saying about them? It is rewarding when you enjoy a film as it brings more of the picture forward. Have you ever had the thought that if we cannot have a conversation about a movie we've just seen perhaps we're not sharing our lives in the same manner? Is the problem there are fewer and fewer places we feel we can share ourselves completely and still be accepted? I don't know exactly and I will think about it.

Even our news is taking pride today in giving us a fill of infotainment with a particular slant. The function of these industries is to create ratings, sell advertisements, emphasize values that relate to their products, and opinions that will bring you back to them as the source for more. What is good and right for you does not serve them if it isn't turning into a good market value. Industry emphasis is primarily on profitable entertainment and not on personal development unless it is industry sold with values they have a hand in. Is this always the case? No it isn't. That is a blessing because one size does not fit all, and taking away another's choice is not a solution or a favor.

xv



The Left Hand Path



Chances are your no stranger to the idea of reclaiming words that have been used to oppress or hurt one group or another. These words once hurtful words are used often and because of their use many people have embraced them as labels for themselves and recreated the meaning associated to them by group usage. Words like Brat, Redneck, Pagan, and Gay Pride are some of the most successful terms that have been reappropriated into society with a somewhat positive or at least neutral affect associated to it.^{xvii} I believe it is time to reclaim the idea of The Left Hand Path.

“The terms "right-hand path" and "left-hand path" originate in India with the metaphysical discipline of Tantra, and are used in both the Hindu and Buddhist forms of this practice. Left-hand Tantra (Vamachara in Sanskrit) differs from right-hand Tantra (Dakshinachara) by the use of elemental sacraments in rituals. Left-hand Tantra uses the actual sacraments while right-hand Tantra uses symbolic substitutes. Left-hand Tantra employs tools and practices that are taboo in Hindu Brahmin society. Based on these original concepts of

explicit and implicit worship.^{xviii} What are these sacraments that were considered taboo in India in the 1800's?

Alcohol and coffee as well as anything else that may change your state of consciousness. Animal sacrificing and flesh eating is pretty much the same thing in this case. If you ate cow you were looked down upon by those who didn't enjoy a juicy steak now and then. The last sacrament is awakening the self through sexual Tantra. The practice honors the divinity within all parties as each person seeks to know the infinite through and with each other. This removal of the middle man in religion is often looked down on by those whose very position depends on being that middle man. It should also be noted that the two paths (Vamachara and Dakshinachara) are viewed by Tantrists as equally valid approaches to enlightenment.^{xix} While the definition of a right hand or left hand path is archaic, and not completely agreed upon you can still find derogatory statements of people simply repeating the same hurtful ideas without ever figuring out what is really there.

“The right-hand Tantrics often view the left-hand Tantrics with suspicion, given their violation of social taboos by their sex rites, beef eating, and alcohol drinking. In the West for centuries, things associated with the left and left-handedness has had a social stigma. This is even reflected in the English language with the word "sinister", which is the Latin word for "left". In the late 1800s, H.P. Blavatsky incorporated many aspects of Hinduism and Buddhism in her work. She either misunderstood or deliberately changed the meaning of the term "Vamachara", as the right-hand Tantric's suspicion suited her Theosophical ideas. She mentioned the term "left-hand" throughout her books as being synonymous with "evil" or "black" magick, and "right-hand" as being synonymous with "good" or "white" magick. Madame Blavatsky was highly influential to Western occultism. Today many magick practitioners and adherents to

esoteric doctrine take it for granted that "left-hand path" means "bad" and "right-hand path" means "good", without knowledge of their original context.

In today's occultism, these terms can only be generalizations and simplifications. There are some magical and occult organizations that apply the term "left-hand path" to themselves, with definitions, beliefs, and practices varying from organization to organization. When people who consider themselves "right-hand path" magicians use the term "left-hand path", it often means little more than "we don't like what they do" and is an attempt to demonize or separate themselves from others. Similarly, when self-described "left-hand pathers" call people "right-hand pathers" they often mean they think those people are too conservative in their approach. Interestingly, "left" also means a more liberal approach in Western politics as well.

Magically speaking, the difference between the left-hand path and right-hand path are modes of operation, methods. Generally, the left-hand path is more explicit, direct, and experiential in practice, if not in spiritual objective. The right-hand path is more orderly, passive, and socially conventional, and in the opinion of its practitioners more in tune with a spiritual aspiration. The middle path strives for balance and moderation, partaking of methods and views from both left and right, to form a synthesis. The over-arching goal is improvement of self and/or world; just the imagery and rituals differ. However, it must be pointed out, as in all occult practices, there are exceptions and occasionally extreme views about these matters, and certainly some practitioners have adopted Blavatsky's distorted image of the left-hand path as a fulfillment of a personal aspiration to oppose what others identify as the good.^{xxx}

I believe that today a person can benefit from the studies of spirituality and religion from across the globe. I believe in learning is a spiritual practice that changes people. The Left Hand Path I envision brings together the commonality of the experiences of being human and honors

all faiths, as well as the divinity that is in us all. For me I have found my path as a personal evolution of united beliefs and cultures. I have found our highest self to be expressed out of the collection of constellations of thoughts and mediums we are exposed to throughout our lives. Anyone who has learned another language can recognize in themselves that through speaking this other tongue we begin to think about the world differently.

We begin to question and communicate with each other as we grow through the experience. It is because of this commonality across cultures, the empowerment of the individual, and the connection to more than ourselves that this experience can be very spiritual. It is my opinion that every church should hold language classes for every religion, as well as think tanks that will seek to make a difference in everyone's life. That all starts with the development of the individual who will know him/herself as one of many, and is able to see him/herself as the many of one.



A Perception of Emptiness

Emptiness is a key concept in Buddhist philosophy, or more precisely, in the ontology of Mahayana Buddhism. The phrase "form is emptiness; emptiness is form" is perhaps the most celebrated paradox associated with Buddhist philosophy. "It is the supreme mantra. The expression originates from the Prajna Paramita Hridaya Sutra, commonly known as the Heart Sutra, which contains the philosophical essence of about six hundred scrolls making up the Maha Prajna Paramita. The Heart Sutra is the shortest text in this collection. It belongs to the oldest Mahayana texts and presumably originated in India around the time of Jesus Christ."^{xxii}

"Emptiness is a mode of perception, a way of looking at experience. It adds nothing to and takes nothing away from the raw data of physical and mental events. You look at events in the mind and the senses with no thought of whether there's anything lying behind them. This psychological position is called emptiness because it's empty of the presuppositions we usually add to experience to make sense of it: the stories and world views we fashion to explain who we are and the world we live in. Although these stories and views have their uses, the Buddha found that some of the more abstract questions they raise - of our true identity and the reality of the world outside - pull attention away from a direct experience of how events influence one another in the immediate present. Thus they get in the way with whatever we seek to experience and know by analyzation.

Say for instance, that you're meditating, and a feeling of anger toward your mother appears. Immediately, the mind's reaction is to identify the anger as "my" anger, or to say that "I'm" angry. It then elaborates on the feeling, either working it into the story of your relationship to your mother, or to your general views about when and where anger toward one's mother can be justified. The problem with all this, from the Buddha's perspective, is that these stories and

views entail a lot of suffering. The more you get involved in them, the more you get distracted from seeing the actual cause of the suffering: the labels of "I", "mine", and fooling oneself into indulging in the presenting emotion as if it is the only message. There is more than the conscious mind at work and when the conscious mind slows and quiets the unconscious mind brings forward thoughts that the conscious mind may grab hold of and run with. If you aren't very practiced at holding onto a position of inner quiet your two minds grapple for the chatter it is used to before settling in.

If, however, you can adopt the position of emptiness by not acting on or reacting to the anger, but simply watching it as a series of events, in and of themselves - you can see that the anger is empty of anything worth identifying with or possessing.^{3xxiii} This touches on the idea of objectivity in our world. I have come to believe these are the words of explanation that is truly meant by the remark, "You should be more objective." As you master the position of emptiness consistently, you'll see that this truth holds not only for such unpleasant emotions as anger, but also for even the most subtle and immense events in the realms of experience. This is the sense in which all things are empty. When you see this from spiritual position you realize that labels of "I" and "mine" are inappropriate, unnecessary, and cause stress and pain in an attempt to grasp the infinite by the incomplete logic of the everyday mindset. You can then drop them. When you drop them totally, you discover a mode of experience that lies deeper still, one that's totally free.

All we have to do is look to science to know that Newton and Einstein theorized laws that are both true, and at the same time they are both contradicting the other. Yet one cannot exist without the other. Newton and Einstein both describe different conditions at which the universal laws apply. We just don't have the complete picture yet of why. I believe the spiritual connection

³ Emptiness by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. You may go to <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/index.html> to get this article for free and many others on the topics of Theravada Buddhism.

is at times in contradiction to the man made everyday logic, and in no way does one invalidate the other.

To practice the position of emptiness one's perception requires training in organizing our inner resources and thoughts, concentration, and discrimination of value. Without this training, the mind tends to stay in the idle mode that keeps creating stories, loose perspectives, and world views. And from the perspective of that automatic mode, the teaching of emptiness sounds simply like another story or perspective with a few new ground rules. "In terms of the story of your relationship with your mother, it seems to be saying that it all a dream associated and then connected together. There is really no anger here, no mother, and no you. In terms of your views about the world, it seems to be saying either that the world doesn't really exist, or else that emptiness is the great undifferentiated ground of being from which we all came to which someday we'll all return. There is of yet no bigger picture of emptiness and of us. Yet somehow we all share the same threads that let us know that what we are all sharing is the same reality of emptiness."^{xxiv}

"These interpretations not only miss the meaning of emptiness but also keep the mind from getting into the proper position and perspective to be balanced within it. If the world and the people in the story of your life don't really exist, then all the actions and reactions in that story seem like mathematics of ones and zeros. You might wonder why there's any point in making something of yourself, and leaving your mark at all. If on the other hand you see emptiness as the ground of being to which we're all going to return, then what need is there to train the mind in concentration and discernment, since we're all going to get there anyway? And even if we need training to get back to our ground of being, what's to keep us from coming out of

it and living all over again? What if we are the infinite form and emptiness? What better way would there be for the infinite to know itself?^{xxv}

The Idea of Emptiness

Have you ever imagined the idea of emptiness? Some people see total blackness as if in a starless space. Other people see something all white as if everything is surrounded by a blizzard of snow. Perhaps you have seen both of these as you have thought of emptiness, or maybe you have something slightly different as you bring a picture of emptiness to mind. I would ask you to explore the sensation of your idea of emptiness. Notice what happens to your conscious flow, your breathing, and how you hold your body. We all can relate to this idea of emptiness and we often experience it instinctively as we bring it into our mind. You may have noticed your thoughts began to still, your mind grew a little quieter, as your body smoothed and softened into a state of relaxation. What is important is you notice that as you first immerse yourself into exploring this position you recognize the lack of the self essence in emptiness.

The ego is at first stilled by this position and you have to realize it is a conscious effort to bring yourself once again to mind all things. It is here we balance ourselves in taking on the undifferentiated position of all and nothing. This is the first exercise of positioning. We have no perspective in this position, because to have a perspective is to be able to refer back to our position. Position as I speak of it is location, association, dissection, and form. Emptiness seems to be a place inherent in our thoughts, language and being. It is natural that from within emptiness there is a mindful position of balance for our minds and body to recharge and reorient itself. All things from the infinite are given to us in a semi balanced and neutral state of being. The meanings and use of all things is the meaning we design into them.

At the position of emptiness, you can find the infinite intersection where all points may intersect. If you could see past the cells in your body, and through the molecules, and going further on beyond the atoms you would see what it is we are made up of. We are rising and cresting waves of energy, collectively bound, pulsating and cycling particles of matter, through lots and lots of space. The science of physics will tell us that we are too large and too small in this universe to learn many things easily with our minds and senses.

Even still I say that even these statements are a matter of perspective and position. A person must give a certain amount of energy to anything that he wishes to use by attending to it. To write I must pour my energy into my thoughts, into the ideas, into the experience of those ideas, and then formulate it all into something that makes sense. This says nothing about the energy transferred by my physical body, through the page, and radiating out from where I sit. All of this is constantly happening even before a word is written down, and edited for form and grammar into a sentence. We share our energies with our thought forms in an attempt to communicate and organize the myriad of thoughts held into something that can be shared and passed on. The whole of infinity shares in the energetic pools of life and spirit we breathe in and out everyday. Our lives are a shared experience sustained by the infinite and as part of the infinite. We must all then seek to not give too little and take too much.

The Universe is a creature collection of infinite soup that will always remain larger than our understandings. What we can be sure of is that life nourishes life, and that the universe is in flux at every moment. In the vast infinite, we can find that we share many of the same ingredients as stars and sun. We are gifted with imagination and intelligence that allows us to recreate ourselves in every way just as the infinite would have it. Yet in everyday existence, the very thing that sets us free to be here and now also confines us to a limited existence. The

Infinite will always conspire for us and delays are not denials. We are participating divinities, and what we say no to is something we do not wish as an active part of ourselves. Now if we honestly recognize the infinite spark within ourselves we will be unable to deny it in anything else.

Metaphysical Speculation

“If we are confined to the world of the five senses, and metaphysical truth has been abandoned, we are left to our own devices to salvage what meaning we can. Yet if transcendence has been eliminated, what meaning actually remains? Once, again, the Buddha’s example is instructive. Because he could not personally verify the truths claimed in the Vedic (or Hindu) texts, he rejected outright the authority of orthodox Brahmanical tradition. However, exhibiting supreme self-reliance, he did not therefore conclude that the spiritual world was illusory. Rather, he devised an alternative spiritual path – one whose primary truth-criterion was the individual adherent’s experience. A central feature of his doctrine, or dhamma, in the Pali scriptures is that it ‘invites verification’ (ehipassika) and is ultimately realized ‘without dependence on another’ (apara-paccaya). The Buddha has devised a spiritual method that appeals directly to our modern position of self-reliance. In our personal lives, the dhamma necessarily stands or falls by our experience of its effects.”^{xxvi}

The Buddha: Our Spiritual ‘Contemporary’ Dr Peter Nelson

I believe that the Buddhist philosophy has blossomed through the centuries because it looks at learning, verification of the relational self, and the changing world as a puzzle piece in a relatively complete spiritual picture. That picture must be filled in by each person with knowledge and experience to create a strong spiritual position and foundation. Yet “If genuine knowledge is gained only through the five senses, then concepts such as God, eternal life, or absolute truth, which by definition exceed the scope of the senses, remain unverifiable, and therefore meaningless. Once again, the Buddha also exhibits a deep skepticism toward speculative metaphysics. In the Pali scriptures, he consistently refuses to answer ten questions pertaining to the origin and extent of the universe, the relationship between soul and body, and the existential status of the liberated person (*Tathagata*) after death. However, unlike in its

Western guise, the Buddha's 'silence' regarding metaphysical questions is spiritually prescriptive. Not only does the Buddha refuse to answer the questions because they exceed the scope of human knowledge - more importantly he sets them aside because they are irrelevant to the pursuit of salvation.

This point is cogently demonstrated in the famous 'Parable of the Arrow' (*Majjhima-nikaya* 1:426ff.). Here, the Buddha compares the person who demands to know the answers to the ten questions to a man struck by an arrow smeared with poison, and who, before the arrow is pulled out, wants to know the name of the man who shot it, the type of wood it is made of, and the feather type etc. The Buddha points out that before the man could discover the answers, he would simply die. The same holds true with regard to metaphysical questions. Before one could discover the answers to them, one's lifetime would be over and one would have missed the opportunity to gain liberation through the Buddhist path.^{xxxvii}

I think we can learn much from the questions we ask ourselves and others. If we can come to the agreement that all faith is equally subjective and each faith can show us the imagined potential of our traditional psychological positions and perspectives at the time of their creation. We will be able to know so much more about how each developed and perhaps become more willing to share in the faith of others to gain a more complete picture of all we were born into. When we can see all faiths as teaching tools to live life by, and as myth to share we open up our hearts and minds more than our father's fathers ever could.

We are each a part of the heart and mind of this planet, and however we might envision a god there must always be infinite ways of expressing and honoring the divine and sacred. To deny ourselves of interpretation of what is goodness is to lose what makes us so passionate, and driven to express our spirit as individuals. When no interpretation is allowed for an idea or a

sacred text- that is when we find the most atrocities committed in the name of the control of this dead knowledge. When control is disguised as faith, brother goes against brother and wars are used to strengthen the hold on its own people. I think it is a goodness to talk about our mutual beliefs and faiths. It is refreshing to be able to talk about differences, and find the commonality that exists between all things.

When approaching faith or fantasy a person should be able to express themselves and not feel that what they share is wrong. What is shared shouldn't be pushed on anyone else, and we all can take from it what you are able to at the time. I've heard it said that everyday one newspaper contains more information than our ancestors had available to them over the course of a lifetime up to a few hundred years ago. And with all that knowledge comes an evolution of thought, mental organization, an expanded perception of the identity of the self, and an increased awareness of our world. Take advantage of what many of our forefathers could only wish for and advance with the learning's that they have created the many foundations for.

Ideas of a Universal and Personal God(s)

When I first came to URI I took a class called The Short Story, and I found a brilliant teacher (Robert Leuci) begin to challenge many of the ideas we held personally static as true. He started out with "What is love?" and moved on to "Is there a devil that exists independent of the evils of man? Do you believe in God? How do you imagine him/her to look like? Is he a guy with a white beard that sits on a throne with harp music playing in the background? Is he independent of the common cold, or a urinary track infection?" I have taken several classes with Bob Leuci and he has become a good friend. In his classes I have struggled to articulate my own definitions of these things and heard many other people do so as well.

Now four years after I have first been asked those questions I finally feel I have an answer that feels right and I can confidently share. I believe that everyone and everything is to be recognized as having the divine within them. That all people are God, and as flesh and blood human beings we are coming to realize the infinite through our lives, thoughts, and actions every day. At this time more than ever people all over the world are awakening to this philosophy and discovering this force of wonder within themselves and the responsibility that it carries. Our individual sense of the presence of the infinite can only be a function of our own spiritual awareness and capacity at that moment.

I recently came across a book by Robert A. Heinlein called *Stranger in a Strange Land*. This book perfectly described the idea of the infinite and went on to challenge many of my other preconceived ideas. I was also surprised to find that the ideas I was expressing were not new ideas at all. I set out to find out more about this man along with the background of this book. "In 1947, Heinlein published his first novel, *Rocket Ship Galileo*. It was a simple sci-fi adventure, intended for the lucrative adolescent market; such books were known as "juveniles." Heinlein prolifically produced these juveniles, and a number of short stories throughout the end of the 1940s and through the 1950s. Heinlein enjoyed writing for the juvenile market, but he longed to write a novel that could deal with truly adult, controversial subject matter. Throughout the 1950s he worked on the story that would become *Stranger in a Strange Land*.

Heinlein had several false starts on writing the novel, between other works, but in 1960 was finally able to complete a draft to his own satisfaction. Heinlein was uncertain if he would ever be able to find a publisher for *Stranger*. G. P. Putnam boldly took on the book, which was more complex and brazenly satirical than any mainstream science fiction novel to date. The sales were not immediately impressive, but as the years progressed, the paperback edition of the novel

slowly accumulated word of mouth advertising from a dedicated core group of admirers, and the novel blossomed into a sensation. *Stranger* found a place alongside such books as Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* and Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* as a touchstone of the 1960s counterculture.

Because of its broad themes and ambiguous moral stance, one could easily interpret the novel's philosophies to appease many different viewpoints. *Stranger* appealed to many far flung subcultures: it was a novel equally well-suited to conservative, hardcore science fiction fans and to radical members of the 1960s hippie movement, since the free love and communal living of Valentine Michael Smith's church anticipated many hippie tenets.”^{xxviii4} I'd like to share with you what lit me up as I read it from this book. “One of his parables was the old lady about the earthworm burrowing along through the soil who encounters another earthworm and at once says, ‘Oh, you’re beautiful! You’re lovely! Will you marry me?’ and is answered: Don’t be silly! I’m your other end.”⁵ This is a comical metaphor for what I have just described, and I found it to be brilliantly visual to explain the concept.

Next the main character Mike is having this philosophy he is preaching at his church being discussed by his friends who are very skeptical and coming from an everyday perspective they are seeking to understand it for what it is. “His idea is that whenever you encounter any other grokking thing- he didn’t say ‘grokking’ at this stage- any other living thing, man, woman, or stray cat... you are simply encountering your ‘other end’... and the universe is just a little thing we whipped up among us the other night for our entertainment and then agreed to forget the gag.”⁶ Even before I came into contact with this book I have had many of the same thoughts

⁴ *Stranger in a Strange Land* context information was taken from <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/strangeland/context.html>

⁵ Heinlein, R (1961). *Stranger In A Strange Land*. New York, NY: The Berkley Publishing Group. Page 417

⁶ Heinlein, R (1961). *Stranger In A Strange Land*. New York, NY: The Berkley Publishing Group. Page 417

pop into my mind. Often they have been met with my own skepticism, and finally I asked myself if these ideas were really anymore outlandish than what I was brought up to believe? Could it be any stranger than believing that your group is the only one doing the right thing in God's mind?

As I thought through this paragraph I read it over and over. I saw the reflection of many faiths, myths, and the choice to bring people together with kindness and love instead of war. I looked inside myself and imagined holding onto this perspective. Thou are God. I am God. I imagined the responsibility that we all share and hold for all the terrible things that has been done to anyone across the globe. It was a strange feeling to first think of hurting another "you" hurting yourself, and yet I recalled this idea in so many churches I attended. I have heard this sentiment spoken a many different ways and with slightly different words from holy writings across the globe. We are all the same echoed in my mind. I found I wanted to share this idea with others, because how it seemed to fit even after the cruelty I imagined in the world. This perspective made me feel comfortable and good. It changed the way I wanted to make my way through the world, and what I would want to share.

What would the negative be for taking on this philosophy in everyday life? You would expect people to do and be better than they are doing presently. That is happening everyday already so it is not relevant. It could bring people together across territories and distances but it would be harder to control those people by the old traditional customs, morals, and traditions. I feel this is going on already today and the institutions whose livelihood depends on the traditional systems staying in power are feeling this struggle themselves. I see a transition ahead for these organizations but I don't believe that what they have to offer will ever disappear. If anything this philosophy is fueled by multiple perspectives that come together on a common position. It may even remove the authoritarian stance that some deliver religion to the people on.

The last argument against taking hold of this philosophy of the infinite will be the one taken on by the very institutions that this philosophy of faith would support. It is also taken up in the book *Stranger In a Strange Land*.

“Solipsism and Pantheism. Teamed together they can explain anything. Cancel out any inconvenient fact, reconcile all theories, and include any facts or delusions you care to name. Trouble is, it’s just cotton candy, all taste and no substance- and as unsatisfactory as solving a story by saying: ‘-and then the little boy fell out of bed and woke up; it was just a dream.’”⁷

Well if you are like me the very first thing I did was look up Solipsism and Pantheism. What you will find there I leave up to you to digest, share, and come to a conclusion. My idea of The Left Hand Path is that you and I will share your voice, seek out knowledge, and what we find will change how we move through the world, and think of ourselves. The idea that a faith can ignore an inconvenient truth is nothing new. It is a lot less likely to happen when people are encourage to talk about their differences as well as their commonalities that bring them together. I would also like to say that these two characters in the book seem to represent the everyday person, and by the end of the book they were themselves convinced of this philosophy and religion.

The Left Hand Path would value knowledge and learning. So the idea that simply because a truth would not be convenient for a faith doesn’t mean it shouldn’t be talked about, explored, and even stated. There are many questions out there that at this moment have no answers to satisfactorily be considered a complete and good answer. Those questions should not go away or be ignored. They should not be obsessed over either. Saying that this idea is “all taste and no substance” will be a complaint I envision for those people not used to asking themselves what it is they believe. If all is divine you may choose to stick to learning in which ever faith you believe are comfortable in. The difference is that the one-upmanship that has gone on since faith

⁷ Heinlein, R (1961). *Stranger In A Strange Land*. New York, NY: The Berkley Publishing Group. Page 417

has become organized will not be as rampant as it is today. Today it is much better than it was a hundred years ago. This philosophy is a spiritual event along the natural progression of a world that is not as isolated as it used to be.



xxix

Mystical or Spiritual Experience

Have you ever had a mystical or spiritual experience? I have had many experiences of sharing energy with people, and being so closely attuned to someone we could sense each other's movements. I have been able to ease another's pain with a touch, and shared the experience where we feel as if no time has passed just by talking with to someone. Sharing energy, comfort, warm, and holding another in full attention has always been a natural thing for me. I would like to share one experience that has not manifested itself to me since it happened. It is an experience not as easily classified and labeled as those I have just stated.

I was at my Uncle John's house with my father because my Aunt Mary had fallen and my Uncle needed help getting her back into bed. Mary had cancer and she was not doing too well. She had to use the bathroom and had enough energy to make it there, but her reserves were spent about half way back to the bed. She just dropped onto the floor and could not move. She cried

out for help and my Uncle telephoned us to ask for help. I remember my Aunt explaining to us what happened to her, and she was crying out of frustration. She tried to get up with us there and she could not. Her face was labored and pale and becoming increasingly tired.

We all decided we could lift her up off the floor with just a little bit of help from her. My Uncle explained to her that it was either us helping her back onto the bed or we have to call the ambulance for help. Mary did not want the ambulance and reluctantly agreed again to try getting up with us helping. I put my hands on my aunt wanting to help her and wishing I could do something to make her feel better and something happened. I began to hear music and saw something that looked like colored bubbles out of the corner of my eyes. The music seemed to surround me and I felt a great expansive space connecting me with everything all around me. I was filled by a swelling feeling of a presence that comforted me with emotions of love and peace. The experience felt like minutes had gone by, and when I brought all my attention to it in a moment of shock I was shaken out of it. I saw my father grabbing my Aunt's arm and I felt like I had a scared look on my face.

No one seemed to notice and I could not shake the feelings or the sense that I had been gone sometime. I have never told anyone until now. We got my aunt back into bed and I began to wonder if that was a kind of message that I picked on. A message perhaps saying that she would be taken care of. She died about a month later, and the family was there beside her in the hospital room. The moment she died, I was shocked and expected something to happen. I imagine something as subtle as if sensing vapor against skin. Would I even notice it I thought later? I tried to hear the music of the spheres again. I was cut off by my uncle sending me out to my cousin Randy so we could support and comfort each other. I don't doubt that visions and

messages are possible no matter where you are or what you are doing. At the end I wished for something not just for me but for the family, but all was quite.

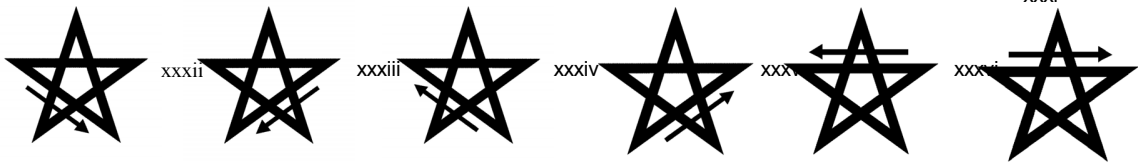
Now someone could say that I made this all up, and that no such thing is possible. I believe for that skeptical person it may not be possible and his opinion will not make it any more or less true. The experience for me was something akin to an initiation. It had to be felt and experienced to truly be known. Therefore, the person that might deny this vision would not be open to it, and sharing it may or may not have any impact on his reality. Here a known truth is a speculative idea to someone else, and it may be different or surprising how another person may think or believe. Yet it should not be wrong or bad because it is said to be strange by another.

There have been religious and philosophical battles littered through history even if the doctrine of the faith preached love, and peace. The subjective truth of the path is all things are equally true and are often representative of the each other. Sometimes it seems an idea maybe different by name only. Truth does not need to be defended, as one position of faith cannot take anything away nor add anything to another. Each of us is a piece of the infinite truth and in bringing humanity together we share in a collective infinite spark.

To seek, to deny, and harm another is to seek to deny and harm oneself. Hostility or inflexible seriousness will not take away an idea nor would you want it to. A conversation about metaphysical and spiritual ideas can easily get heated if not approached by respectful and open people. This sort of heated exchange happens often when one party feels their ideas are threatened. Whenever a person relies on their morality to understand something on an subconscious level a reflexive reaction limits what is perceived to a black and white view fitted to what they already think they know. It is more important to share the certainty that all positions are strong enough to exist side by side.



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A PHILOSOPHY OF USING MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION

“Meditation is the awareness of the flow of reality in space and time. Unlike philosophy, which strives to achieve an order to reality, through mental reasoning alone, meditation looks for a deep acceptance, a knowing that comes from the mind-body. And ethereal, what’s more practical than a process that helps you to think better and more clearly, be healthier, and thrive in life?”

(The complete Idiot’s guide to Meditation by Joan Builovsky and Eve Adamson)⁸

When you wake up in the morning, are your first thoughts about what you will accomplish and what it will mean to you, or are you using a negative in dialogue to get you out of bed? Meditation can help you focus your thoughts, and your priorities of the day that are

⁸ Budilovsky, J, & Adamson, E (1999). *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation*. New York, NY: Alpha Books. Pg 47

important, and also include you in all that consideration! Often our dreams and aspirations take a backseat to the clutter of the everyday world with its looming tasks, deadlines, and expectations. There are very few of us who could just stop working and be fine and ok with that choice. Meditation and mindfulness can appear as very still and that not much is being done. Mindful meditation can focus your concentration, sharpen your skills, calm and balance your emotions, and give you the time to keep the many areas of your life in perspective.

Meditation gives you an opportunity to pull back from the autopilot responses of the rat race in the everyday world by creating a psychological space and position where there is time just for you. In this mindful time, we step out of autopilot of the everyday mindset. Pay attention to our body, and turn our awareness inward too listen with honest attention to the self. When you open yourself up to listen to your body, and mind, leaving judgments, prejudice, and censoring behind you'll feel your body relax. Mindfulness is to be involved in the experience of being present and participating in the moment. Noting your feelings, your body, the environment, and exploring every detail of existence. The idea is not to attempt to control it, shape it, force it, worry about it, or stress over it in any way.

Nothing else but pure awareness comfortably acknowledges what is going on as you recognize what it means to just be. It is from this position you begin to put the everyday forces that compete for our energy and attention back into perspective. All the things that we dream of, our values, aspire to, or can imagine, and feel, are merely a mindful thought away. It is our choice what we think about and investigate within ourselves. A stone dropped into a somewhat still pond will very clearly show the ripples of interaction. Mindfulness and meditation gives us the practice to use the inner learning's and skills we already have while developing these into new learning's to move and think in ways we could not have imagined yet. The practice of

meditation instills skills not only to relax our physical and mental bodies but also to gain a measure of control over the way we live by bringing our focus back to what we value, believe, and strive for.

The very first ideas explored in meditation are often those issues that have to do with self control. We can always find choice and opportunity in everything we do. The mind begins to learn how comfortable it is with its own perceived idea of control. When we have a thought, or an emotion, we all have the choice to pay attention to it, pick it up, attach our awareness to it, set it down, acknowledge it, and move on. If we choose to come back to that thought it should be our own choice to experience, and try it on further. People can get themselves stuck in a frame/perspective of being in control even when they feel that their perspective is out of control. The true exercise of control is a skill that many people can benefit from as the notion of self control is out of control.

Some of the people who explore meditation do so because of its beneficial effects on stress. Stress refers to any or all the various pressures experienced in life. These can stem from work, family, illness, or environment and can contribute to such conditions as anxiety, hypertension, and heart disease. How an individual sees things (perspective) and how he or she handles them (procedure) makes a big difference in terms of how much stress he or she experiences. “Research has shown that hormones and other biochemical compounds in the blood indicative of stress tend to decrease during TM practice. These changes also stabilize over time, so that a person is actually less stressed biochemically during daily activity.”^{xxxvii}

This reduction of stress translates directly into a reduction of anxiety and tension. Literally dozens of studies have shown this. TM meditation is one of the most research meditation practices on a variety of topics that I have come across. Research has found

meditation, to be extremely successful in treating physiological problems. Research on Transcendental Meditation has been conducted at more than 200 universities, hospitals, and research institutions in 27 countries. As a result, more than 500 research and review papers have been written covering a wide variety of physiological, psychological, and sociological effects.

As you begin to practice meditate, you may even find that you identify to your attachments more than you ever realized. Following that ripple of thought, you may conclude that nothing is ultimately ours. We pass through this life finding people to love and those that may love us. We are born believing we are the center of the universe, only to discover we are a growing part of it. We are here discovering the world through our mind and bodies, and at a certain point the idea of inside and outside blur. We learn that much of what we find outside ourselves that make up all of our lives started out as someone's idea. Money, cars, clothing, at one time never existed. Whatever it is we think about it has the possibility of affecting our lives, and we should look at what we are considering for ourselves.

We are all born into the role of responsible stewards because our lives, and our actions, leave a mark on this world and each other. Once we have our needs met, (security, food, water, shelter, etc.) the rest of the materials goods we use, operate, and share is just stuff! You will not find a person who has meditated on owning a material item and felt fulfilled enough to not wish to move on. You will find people envisioning how things operate, on the experience of using an item, or even how to improve an item. Material goods are just goods are just a form that allows you to do, acquire, or do something differently.

Material goods are never a means to an end. Just as we all come from many different geographical locations, we will pick up and put down many different ideas, positions, and perspectives in our life's meditation. What matters is we recognize we sculpt our mind just as we

shape our bodies. When we give something form we should step back now and then to gain perspective, do a reality check, and proudly put the best of ourselves and our passions into this mold. We will never do our best when we are rushed, too close, or have our eyes half closed. Taking time out for ourselves is part of having a good and balanced life.

“However, all forms of meditation are not good for everyone, any more than all foods or herbs are. For this reason both yoga and ayurveda recommends a proper lifestyle and an integral approach to meditation that considers both our different faculties as well as our individual nature.

In Hindu meditative techniques, the object the attention dwells on is often a mantra, usually a Sanskrit word or syllable. Usually the meditator repeats an affirmation to increase positive spiritual energies. Alternately prayers or are often said for calming the mind. Various short rituals are also prescribed before meditation, such as making offerings of fragrant oils (for earth elements), holy water (element of water), lamps (fire), incense (air) and flowers or garlands (ether). These rituals help in cleansing the psychic energy and preparing the mind for meditation.

In Buddhism, the focus of attention is often the meditator's own breathing, a luminous sphere or a translucent Buddha Statue. Some traditional Buddhist meditations follow forty concentration devices or meditation subjects for tranquilizing the mind as prescribed by the Buddha These are the ten recollections (*anussati*), ten meditations on impurities (*asubha*), ten complete objects (*kasina*), four immaterial absorption (*arupajhana*), four divine abiding (*brahmavihara*), one perception (*ahare patikulasanna*) or contemplation of the impurity of material food, and one defining contemplation (*vavatthana*) on the Four Elements (earth, water, fire, and air). Whether one performs mantra meditation or Buddhist breath meditations, they both fulfill all the elements required for meditating for relaxation.”^{xxxviii}



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A Guided Meditation^{x1}

By Thanissaro Bhikkhu⁹

Sit comfortably erect, without leaning forward or backward, left or right. Close your eyes and think thoughts of good will. Thoughts of good will go first to yourself, because if you can't think good will for yourself — if you can't feel a sincere desire for your own happiness — there's no way you can truly wish for the happiness of others. So just tell yourself, "May I find true happiness." Remind yourself that true happiness is something that comes from within, so this is

⁹ You may go to <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/index.html> to get this article for free and many others on the topics of Theravada Buddhism.

not a selfish desire. In fact, if you find and develop the resources for happiness within you, you're able to radiate it out to other people. It's a happiness that doesn't depend on taking anything away from anyone else.

So now spread good will to other people. First, people who are close to your heart — your family, your parents, your very close friends: May they find true happiness, as well. Then spread those thoughts out in ever widening circles: people you know well, people you don't know so well, people you like, people you know and are neutral about, and even people you don't like. Don't let there be any limitations on your good will, for if there are, there will be limitations on your mind. Now spread thoughts of good will to people you don't even know — and not just people; all living beings of all kinds in all directions: east, west, north, south, above, and below, out to infinity. May they find true happiness, too.

Then bring your thoughts back to the present. If you want true happiness, you have to find it in the present, for the past is gone and the future is an uncertainty. So you have to dig down into the present. What do you have right here? You've got the body, sitting here and breathing. And you've got the mind, thinking and aware. So bring all these things together. Think about the breath and then be aware of the breath as it comes in and goes out. Keeping your thoughts directed to the breath: that's mindfulness. Being aware of the breath as it comes in and out: that's alertness. Keep those two aspects of the mind together. If you want, you can use a meditation word to strengthen your mindfulness. Try "Buddho," which means "awake." Think "bud-" with the in-breath, "dho" with the out.

Try to breathe as comfortably as possible. A very concrete way of learning how to provide for your own happiness in the immediate present — and at the same time, strengthening your alertness — is to let yourself breathe in a way that's comfortable. Experiment to see what

kind of breathing feels best for the body right now. It might be long breathing, short breathing; in long, out short; or in short, out long. Heavy or light, fast or slow, shallow or deep. Once you find a rhythm that feels comfortable, stay with it for a while. Learn to savor the sensation of the breathing. Generally speaking, the smoother the texture of the breath, the better. Think of the breath, not simply as the air coming in and out of the lungs, but as the entire energy flow that courses through the body with each in-and-out breath. Be sensitive to the texture of that energy flow. You may find that the body changes after a while. One rhythm or texture may feel right for a while, and then something else will feel more comfortable. Learn how to listen and respond to what the body is telling you right now. What kind of breath energy does it need? How can you best provide for that need? If you feel tired, try to breathe in a way that energizes the body. If you feel tense, try to breathe in a way that's relaxing.

If your mind wanders off, gently bring it right back. If it wanders off ten times, a hundred times, bring it back ten times, a hundred times. Don't give in. This quality is called ardency. In other words, as soon as you realize that the mind has slipped away, you bring it right back. You don't spend time aimlessly sniffing at the flowers, looking at the sky, or listening to the birds. You've got work to do: work in learning how to breathe comfortably, how to let the mind settle down in a good space here in the present moment.

When the breath starts feeling comfortable, you can start exploring it in other areas of the body. If you simply stay with the comfortable breath in a narrow range, you'll tend to doze off. So consciously expand your awareness. A good place to focus first is right around the navel. Locate that part of the body in your awareness: where is it right now? Then notice: how does it feel there as you breathe in? How does it feel when you breathe out? Watch it for a couple of breaths, and notice if there's any sense of tension or tightness in that part of the body, either with

the in-breath or with the out-breath. Is it tensing up as you breathe in? Are you holding onto the tension as you breathe out? Are you putting too much force on the out-breath? If you catch yourself doing any of these things, just relax. Think of that tension dissolving away in the sensation of the in-breath, the sensation of the out-breath. If you want, you can think of the breath energy coming into the body right there at the navel, working through any tension or tightness that you might feel there ...

Then move your awareness to the right — to the lower right-hand corner of your abdomen — and follow the same three steps there: 1) locate that general part of the body in your awareness; 2) notice how it feels as you breathe in, how it feels as you breathe out; and 3) if you sense any tension or tightness in the breath, just let it relax ... Now move your awareness to the left, to the lower left-hand corner of your abdomen, and follow the same three steps there.

Now move your awareness up to the solar plexus ... and then to the right, to the right flank ... to the left flank ... to the middle of the chest ... After a while move up to the base of the throat ... and then to the middle of the head. Be very careful with the breath energy in the head. Think of it very gently coming in, not only through the nose but also through the eyes, the ears, down from the top of the head, in from the back of the neck, very gently working through and loosening up any tension you may feel, say, around your jaws, the back of your neck, around your eyes, or around your face ...

From there you can move your attention gradually down the back, out the legs, to the tips of the toes, the spaces between the toes. As before, focus on a particular part of the body, notice how it feels with the in-breath and out-breath, relax any sensation of tension or tightness you might feel there, so that the breath energy can flow more freely, and then move on until you've

reached the tips of the toes. Then repeat the process, beginning at the back of the neck and going down the shoulders, through the arms, past your wrists, and out through your fingers.

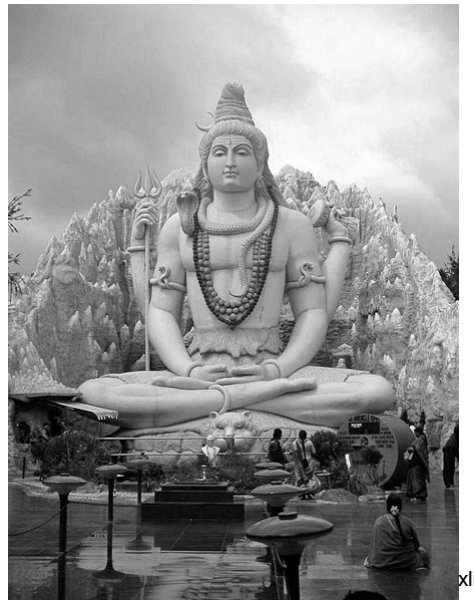
You can repeat this survey of the body as many times as you like until the mind feels ready to settle down.

Then let your attention return to any spot in the body where it feels most naturally settled and centered. Simply let your attention rest there, at one with the breath. At the same time let the range of your awareness spread out so that it fills the entire body, like the light of a candle in the middle of a room: the candle flame is in one spot, but its light fills the entire room. Or like a spider on a web: the spider's in one spot, but it knows the whole web. Be keen on maintaining that broadened sense of awareness. You'll find that it tends to shrink, like a balloon with a small hole in it, so keep broadening its range, thinking "whole body, whole body, breath in the whole body, from the top of the head down into the tips of the toes." Think of the breath energy coming in and out of the body through every pore. Make a point of staying with this centered, broadened awareness as long as you can. There's nothing else you have to think about right now, nowhere else to go, nothing else to do. Just stay with this centered, broadened awareness of the present ...

When the time comes to leave meditation, remind yourself that there's a skill to leaving. In other words, you don't just jump right out. My teacher, Ajaan Fuang, once said that when most people meditate, it's as if they're climbing a ladder up to the second story of a building: step-by-step, rung-by-rung, slowly up the ladder. But as soon as they get to the second story, they jump out the window. Don't let yourself be that way. Think of how much effort went into getting yourself centered. Don't throw it away.

The first step in leaving is to spread thoughts of good will once more to all the people around you. Then, before you open your eyes, remind yourself that even though you're going to

have your eyes open, you want your attention to stay centered in the body, at the breath. Try to maintain that center as long as you can, as you get up, walk around, talk, listen, whatever. In other words, the skill of leaving meditation lies in learning how not to leave it, regardless of whatever else you may be doing. Act from that sense of being centered. If you can keep the mind centered in this way, you'll have a standard against which you can measure its movements, its reactions to the events around it and within it. Only when you have a solid center like this can you gain insight into the movements of the mind.



Basic Breath Meditation Instructions^{xlii}

By Thanissaro Bhikkhu¹⁰

The technique I'll be teaching is breath meditation. It's a good topic no matter what your religious background. As my teacher once said, the breath doesn't belong to Buddhism or Christianity or anyone at all. It's common property that anyone can meditate on. At the same time, of all the meditation topics there are, it's probably the most beneficial to the body, for when

¹⁰ You may go to <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/index.html> to get this article for free and many others on the topics of Theravada Buddhism.

we're dealing with the breath, we're dealing not only with the air coming in and out of the lungs, but also with all the feelings of energy that course throughout the body with each breath. If you can learn to become sensitive to these feelings, and let them flow smoothly and unobstructed, you can help the body function more easily, and give the mind a handle for dealing with pain.

So let's all meditate for a few minutes. Sit comfortably erect, in a balanced position. You don't have to be ramrod straight like a soldier. Just try not to lean forward or back, to the left or the right. Close your eyes and say to yourself, 'May I be truly happy and free from suffering.' This may sound like a strange, even selfish, way to start meditating, but there are good reasons for it. One, if you can't wish for your own happiness, there is no way that you can honestly wish for the happiness of others. Some people need to remind themselves constantly that they deserve happiness — we all deserve it, but if we don't believe it, we will constantly find ways to punish ourselves, and we will end up punishing others in subtle or blatant ways as well.

Two, it's important to reflect on what true happiness is and where it can be found. A moment's reflection will show that you can't find it in the past or the future. The past is gone and your memory of it is undependable. The future is a blank uncertainty. So the only place we can really find happiness is in the present. But even here you have to know where to look. If you try to base your happiness on things that change — sights, sounds, sensations in general, people and things outside — you're setting yourself up for disappointment, like building your house on a cliff where there have been repeated landslides in the past. So true happiness has to be sought within. Meditation is thus like a treasure hunt: to find what has solid and unchanging worth in the mind, something that even death cannot touch.

To find this treasure we need tools. The first tool is to do what we're doing right now: to develop good will for ourselves. The second is to spread that good will to other living beings.

Tell yourself: 'All living beings, no matter who they are, no matter what they have done to you in the past — may they all find true happiness too.' If you don't cultivate this thought, and instead carry grudges into your meditation, that's all you'll be able to see when you look inside.

Only when you have cleared the mind in this way, and set outside matters aside, are you ready to focus on the breath. Bring your attention to the sensation of breathing. Breathe in long and out long for a couple of times, focusing on any spot in the body where the breathing is easy to notice, and your mind feels comfortable focusing. This could be at the nose, at the chest, at the abdomen, or any spot at all. Stay with that spot, noticing how it feels as you breathe in and out. Don't force the breath, or bear down too heavily with your focus. Let the breath flow naturally, and simply keep track of how it feels. Savor it, as if it were an exquisite sensation you wanted to prolong. If your mind wanders off, simply bring it back. Don't get discouraged. If it wanders 100 times, bring it back 100 times. Show it that you mean business, and eventually it will listen to you.

If you want, you can experiment with different kinds of breathing. If long breathing feels comfortable, stick with it. If it doesn't, change it to whatever rhythm feels soothing to the body. You can try short breathing, fast breathing, slow breathing, deep breathing, shallow breathing — whatever feels most comfortable to you right now...

Once you have the breath comfortable at your chosen spot, move your attention to notice how the breathing feels in other parts of the body. Start by focusing on the area just below your navel. Breathe in and out, and notice how that area feels. If you don't feel any motion there, just be aware of the fact that there's no motion. If you do feel motion, notice the quality of the motion, to see if the breathing feels uneven there, or if there's any tension or tightness. If there's tension, think of relaxing it. If the breathing feels jagged or uneven, think of smoothing it out... Now

move your attention over to the right of that spot — to the lower right-hand corner of the abdomen — and repeat the same process... Then over to the lower left-hand corner of the abdomen... Then up to the navel... right... left... to the solar plexus... right... left... the middle of the chest... right... left... to the base of the throat... right... left... to the middle of the head...[take several minutes for each spot]

If you were meditating at home, you could continue this process through your entire body — over the head, down the back, out the arms & legs to the tips of your finger & toes — but since our time is limited, I'll ask you to return your focus now to any one of the spots we've already covered. Let your attention settle comfortably there, and then let your conscious awareness spread to fill the entire body, from the head down to the toes, so that you're like a spider sitting in the middle of a web: It's sitting in one spot, but it's sensitive to the entire web. Keep your awareness expanded like this — you have to work at this, for its tendency will be to shrink to a single spot — and think of the breath coming in & out your entire body, through every pore. Let your awareness simply stay right there for a while — there's no where else you have to go, nothing else you have to think about... And then gently come out of meditation.

Knowing the Void

Since mindfulness and mediation combines all aspects of the constellation of the self you will find what you are doing is in no way alien to how you may have used your then awareness in the past. Because we actively use the blend of internal and external elements through the focus of our meditations we are able to add in our own stories/scripts to what I call creative meditation. Creative mediation allows us to use every part of our experiences, and lives, by taking stock in how our lives right now and recognizing what must be done to get where we want to be. And by taking stock in our lives we affirm its value as well as it becomes the baseline at which we can track our progress.

What is different for many people is that we are taking the extra step to explore the results of our thoughts, actions, feelings, goals and explore what they mean to us. Using a deliberate philosophy, we manage our own internal impression we have within ourselves and those we share with other people. Each person is not an isolated island and neither are our sources of inspiration and learning. Everyone is encouraged to learn the shared philosophy of the The Left Hand Path and share new information in comparison to what is known. In this way, our foundation is strengthened and renewed by each other.

For the first time you do this, I encourage you to find a comfortable spot that's quiet. You should be undisturbed for at least twenty minutes. When you have that quiet spot allow yourself to settle in comfortably, and close your eyes. Start by noticing all the sounds around your body. Notice that any sound in the environment surrounding you has a feeling associated with it in your body. Bring in your awareness to your breathing. Begin to follow your breath in and out. Notice that your own thoughts are unhurried and will increase your relaxation and focus as you attend to

them. Scan your body paying attention to the areas that have the most comfort and relaxed feelings.

You might imagine those feelings as a color as you watch them moving through you feeling wonderful. Stop and take a few moments to follow your breath and deepen your awareness of comfort and open your thoughts to attend to your own inner response. If any thought comes to mind that threatens to take you from your comfortable place, simply acknowledge the thought and return your awareness to your sensations of relaxation, and bliss. You work hard. We all work hard, and we deserve a twenty-minute commitment to ourselves. We are beginning the process of training our minds and thoughts to support us in our choices.

Without judgment of any thought entering awareness, begin to bring even more attention to this open scanning of your body. There is a tendency to bring the bustling noisy world with us into our thoughts, and when the environment begins to soften more our thoughts begin to get louder. There is less competition and pull for internal focus, and like something under pressure, our minds release the last puffs of steam as it again softly simmers settling into itself. Begin now shifting freely from one perception to the next. Send your awareness out to meet the space around you, and bring it back in deepening your quiet position. Hold yourself there for a few moments bringing into awareness each of your senses and relaxing them as you sooth your mind. Meditation is a practice that returns us to the present experience of our lives and allows us to stand up refreshed and ready to reevaluate the way that we live our lives.

Open yourself now to the image of emptiness and void. How does it feel to you? Does it shimmer or move like an ocean? “We could say that form is the wave and emptiness is the ocean. A wave is made of ocean water it does not differ from it, in the same way, form does not differ from emptiness, and emptiness does not differ from form. Therefore, we can understand

that the Void or Emptiness interpenetrates everything in creation.”^{xliii} I have seen something that looks like the blackness of space and I have seen something that made me feel I was looking up through an ocean into the light.

“What is the Void or Emptiness? In Buddhism it means "empty of a separate self". The word Emptiness or Void should not scare us. To be empty does not mean nonexistent. When we try to use symbols to understand and conceptualize the "void", we straight away realize that it is impossible to do so. However, the 'I' tries all the same to understand it, because after all, it is its Source. Explore the experience of the void, and feel the balanced calm here. All things come from this and all will return. You may even notice that as you become a part of the scene it takes a conscious effort of direction to explore another aspect of the void. We are filled by its quiet welcoming essence and must find the direction within ourselves. The void is all things and all perspective directions. To be at peace here is to be at one with this oneness of being.

Consider a circle, for some it will represent a zero, or nothingness and for others it will symbolize wholeness and totality. What is the difference between nothingness, zero and wholeness and totality? The simple difference is that if one image of the circle exists, then the other ones must also exist. The same is true with our feelings, perceptions, mental concepts and consciousness, because these five contain each other. Therefore the notion of the Void, of existence and nonexistence are just created by our minds. Because we know that we are some of the time conscious and some of the time unconscious. Modern science has perceived this truth that not only matter and energy are one, but that matter and space are also one. Therefore Matter, space, MIND or CONSCIOUSNESS are also one, because MIND or CONSCIOUSNESS is in it.”^{xliv}

Use your focus as an anchor as each person may learn this position as his or her balance point of meditation. At this position of balance, we should avoid heady analysis or fantasy regarding the contents and experiences of awareness. Hold this position of balance until you wish to bring yourself through this space. When seeking to return your awareness to the surrounding world you should emulate the opening of a flower that slowly chooses to meet the sun refreshed as if starting a new day.



Emotional and Tonal Focus

You can do this exercise in a group setting or by yourself. Bring yourself into the position of balance or level. From this position, be absolutely silent for about a minute. Listen to your breathing, and the environment surrounding you. Imagine a measurement system that can measure when you are at level. Look to your right and imagine there is a number there letting you know exactly what level you are at. The number will read zero when you are at level. You can feel the scale goes up to a positive value of ten and down to a negative value of 10.

When you are absolute zero, you will feel a noticeable change in your body and mind. Now feel the difference between the number one and zero. Experience the difference between number two and number one. Go up and down between the numbers until you have reached positive ten and negative ten. In doing this exercise you may find when you reach a certain number you encounter some resistance. You may notice that your emotions somehow are pulled back and reined in. This is your emotional range that you operate in everyday.

This exercise will enhance and explore that range. You should spend about twenty minutes exploring what each numerical value means to you now. Then share with someone and compare notes about your perceptions of your body sensations, your emotions, and your thoughts, at each numerical level. In doing the exercise, many people begin to get curious at which level they go about their day to day lives. As you will discover the level does change when interacting with people, in different environments, and in doing a variety of tasks and actions. This is something I jotted down in a notebook and I suggest the same to you as it useful for training.

Do you desire to feel more, to distance yourself a bit from a negative circumstance, to be more present in a pleasure able instance? These are all circumstances to be explored by position in perspective. Begin this exercise from the position of balance, and once there take a moment of

silence to spread your awareness out around you. Notice the sounds of your own breath, and any noise from your environment. I would like you to look to your right and notice again for yourself the level you have come to rest on. Relaxation and mediation is a state of focused relaxation and it takes practice to stay constant within a level, a perspective, or position. As English speakers, you must know the vowels that make up our language by heart. Say the vowels out loud connecting A's sound to the E sound and onto the next drawing them out into each other.

When you finish look at the numerical level again to your upper right. You most likely noticed that your level rose when you started the vowel string chant. Do the vowel string chant again but this time run it together starting a cycle like this.

“AaaaaaEeeeeeiIiiiiiiiOooooUuuuuSommmmeTiiiiimmmmesssYyyyyAaaaaEeeeeeiIiiiiiiiOooooUuuuuSommmmeTiiiiimmmmesssYyyyyAaaaa.”

As you do the vowel string chant, pay attention to the feelings in your body as well as your emotional levels. You will start to notice that our tone can affect our emotional response to a word or a message. You will discover it is not the number of words we say, or how fast we say them that will bring another into a shared and common experience with you. Resonation of the words spoken with mindful attention to the emotion wished to be conveyed by a word gives you the most impact of your message and communication of position (association or disassociation) and emotion that is in your voice can take another person along for the ride!

Our voice comes from what we do inside our bodies as well as how we hold ourselves. Words are energy on many levels of meaning and making changes in our voices requires us to change patterns of relaxation, tension, breathing, and posture. Those changes literally changes the way we feel as we do this exercise. This change in our feelings can trigger the experience of trying out different identities just by changing the way we speak. This maybe an everyday

challenge for people when they hear their own voices on a voice mail, home movies, and recordings. When we hear our own voice on a recording, we cannot help but notice the tone, and the energy there.

This exercise will allow you to be aware of your own tones that you use in everyday life. You can also read aloud poetry speaking each word with the emotion it suggests. Notice how powerfully we respond and connect to that passion in the messages and images being communicated. You can begin to experience each word spoken and feel there is a tangible element that can be touched on by this curious exploration. I enjoy reading Taoist works and letting the poetry of each word tumble around inside me with its varied meanings and its substantial qualities.

圖形現兒嬰



Reflection and Integration

Self-awareness is a personal evolutionary process in which we learn to listen to the voice of our own life speaking with the infinity of life surrounding us as well as inside us. We are all connected to each other through the same energy that animates us. Everything is created and held together by the force that suffuses every single atom, be it rock or animal. Everything returns to the very supple force we swim in through every moment of our lives and beyond. Growing conscious of this connection in our bodies, our world, and each other, can allow us to support, love, and heal each other's pain. Understanding this fact is what is meant by those enlightened souls as they proclaim, "We are all the same."

In this book, you will not always find clear separate breaks between exercises and what is being expressed. In this way, you will find what is being imparted is true to form as how we live our lives. There is little separation except in the artificial environment when you're learning to put this all together. When first learning anything we go about it in steps. The distinctions we make for ourselves depend on the reference states and ideas we use to create and live our ideas. Thus, every person will put together his or her own experience differently. How ideas, identity, belief, and relationships, change within our experience and their expressions are what is most visible to others. While who we are inside these notions may not be consciously considered until someone points it out by pointing to our filtered perspective and actions.

You can see this phenomenon easily with teens as they try on different identities and discover what works best for them. You can also find teens learning to check the construct of their own subjective reality with an actual reality check. It is in the teen years we also begin to develop higher cognitive abilities and thoughts. It is a time in many people's lives where they feel themselves knowledgeable about all that is new and happening. It seemed we could talk and

talk sharing who we were at that moment and creating distinctions and value from our experiences. Then as we get older we begin to talk less and start the process of specializing for the next phase of our lives.

After high school, many of our friends go in separate directions, and we ourselves may stay in our hometown or move across the globe. We may notice the rich association to many friends we had as we were growing up tends to start dwindling at adulthood, and there are times we all feel melancholy for that. Yet as an adults, hopefully you have met and been exposed to many new people, friends, acquaintances, and partners that you can stay up all night talking with and more. People we can talk to, be silly with, listen to us, and support us as we work through our own thoughts and perceptions. As we live our lives there will be many times where we will have to focus in on how we feel about something, someone, and even more important how we take stock in ourselves.

I would like to share with you something I wrote back in 2005 in response to some readings I had to do for a psychology class.

This is going to seem somewhat funny but when I read these questions about a door closing and another door opening it brought me back to a childhood experience. I was maybe 8 or 9 and I was supposed to go roller skating. I was looking forward to going all week. I had just learned to skate and when it was lunchtime on that day, my Mom told me that Tim's mother had called, and Tim was not feeling well so we would not be going tonight. I felt sad only for a second and then my Mom asked me, "So is there something else you want to do tonight?" and I said, "I can't, I'm going skating" my Mom just kind of shook her head and went back to dishes.

I was positive that I was going to go. At that time, my Dad had the car and he would

work late into the night so Tim's Mom was my only ride. I remember being outside waiting for the other shoe to drop so to speak, or the other door to open. I went through my day knowing it would happen. I ate dinner and my Mother asked me again if I wanted to go for a walk with her tonight or go visiting. I just said "I can't I'm going skating." She asked me how I was going to get there. I said, "I don't know, I just know that I'm going." My Mom told me "Ok we will see."

So after dinner, I got ready to go and I am waiting in the living room. My Mom is looking at me funny and getting ready to make plans and do something else. A half hour to go before the skating party with still no sign and I still felt like I was going. I looked at the clock again... Twenty minutes and I wondered if this was a test somehow to see if I would still believe. 15 minutes, now I have the door open and I am watching traffic and my mother said, "We'll do something else." However, I would not give it up. I still felt that somehow, something would happen and I would go. 10 minutes, I remember thinking should I just give up? I asked myself do I still feel this feeling. Yes, I still had it so I figured that if this was a test, I was riding it out.

When it was 6 minutes away from skating, I started to watch the clock change from 6 to 5 minutes. I reminded myself that I would not listen to any doubts I had made up my mind and I was riding that feeling out to the end. When the clock hit five minutes to go, Tim's Mom called. She said Tim was feeling a lot better and he really wanted to go skating, and they were wondering if I wanted to come to. I was filled to the brim with an elated feeling of joy and I was going! That was the best night ever for me. I find it ironic that I barely remember all the things that happened while skating, and yet those moments before when I knew, I was so positive and would not indulge in any negative thinking, locked itself clearly inside my memory.

I really do not think we know all the time or even most of the time that a similar door

may open, or that it will take us to where we want to go before it happens. Often it is somewhere completely different, but in that garden in which I played that day, I thought of the sea. The way the sea moves in and out. I wondered if the sea would ever doubt that it would return into the shore. Since this moment, any time I have a doubt bring back my memory of the sea, and I imagine what it is like to be a patient wave seeking a shore.”

You may have an eccentric relative that will tell you never throw anything away. I do not think it is necessary to clutter and burden our house, our minds, nor our wallets supporting stuff past the point of enjoyment or usefulness. I do believe everyone should have a journal. A journal is not just to write and draw in, but a tool to see the good, worst, and the daydreams of tomorrow in. I have used a journal as a scrapbook, a diary, a drawing pad, and a mediation tool. My journal has helped me to look back on when I tried on new identities, broke off from the basic thoughts, tracked my goals, what I achieved, cost benefit analysis of hard choices that had to be made, and who I wanted to be. My journals are filled with sentences that made me think, feel, and somehow articulated a part of what I yearned for words to voice.

When you use a journal in this way, it becomes less of a record book, and more of a spiritual and mindful tool that is an extension of your mental life. Once we recognize a journal has a place in our lives and our path we come to the arena of privacy. In today’s world where employers and strangers look at what you write online, and companies keep a list of everything that you search for on a computer, what you think about something, how you want to say it, and how you keep it become an issue. I have toyed with the idea of an electronic version of my journal and found that it becomes something that I had to work harder to do. I had to scan the pages and figure out where to save them so they might not be lost. I have settled on a partially shared digital version as well on pen and paper.

Computers crash every day, I have forgotten things places never to be retrieved, and disasters happen. Now I have many journals that span years and they are all in paper. I enjoy writing and drawing with a pen and at times even pick my pen to harmonize with my mood. I enjoy a scratchy pen when I want to express and articulate ideas that are slow coming. I love a smooth pen when I am happy, expressive and in a flow state with writing. The most important thing to me is that I can take my journals anywhere and they will be safe.

This piece may seem a bit out of place but it is not. We visit countries across the globe and often find ourselves in a particular places or circumstances that inspires us. I want you to write it down! Follow your inspiration and discover where it takes you. I want to experience it and reflect back on it for yourself. There are also times when I have been inspired by watching a sunset, or moved to think, and write, while sitting in the sand and even at the roots of a large tree. Everywhere we go in society we are surrounded by opinions, issues of the day, useful and useless information, and it is all being presented in a way to let you know how you should feel as you agree with it. You may see violence on TV and believe that it is everywhere. You may even become so use to violence that you stop thinking about the hurt that it causes until you see it in the eyes of another.

Journal writing can be a meditation that allows you to bring your own ideas and feelings forward on an issue and recognize what you believe for your own reasons. It can certainly seem tempting to just take everything in and figure it out as you go, jotting down some of your thoughts, and conclusions leaves you with a mental trail to follow back later. Imagine if your bank didn't do that with your money. If its usefulness there is apparent to you just wait until you start using a journal in this way. You do not have to recreate the wheel in doing exercises that matter to you, and stimulate your thoughts. You're surrounded by poetry, movies, short stories,

let yourself reflect on the world you are moving through. How about asking yourself questions like, “What am I doing in this area of my life that is working? What doesn’t seem to be working for me? Is there anything I could do that would make the quality of my experience in this area even just a little bit better?”

Keeping in mind that our longings to express ourselves, share who we are with others, rediscover who we are for ourselves, and connect with the infinite within ourselves, is all part of this path that calls to us. We are born into this world and from the very beginning we need touch and to be touched to survive. Without touch, the spark that fills us seems to retreat into itself and the baby dies. At times we will find prayer and meditation may become one thing, and we can come away from the experience feeling touched. The Left Hand Path focuses on manifestations of the divine and the works of the sacred to inspire the highest expressions of a person, and in turn, we discover the infinite arouses the best that is in us. We all seek some kind of relationship with the infinite. How we view ourselves in this life, and our place in it, will determine much on how we live it.



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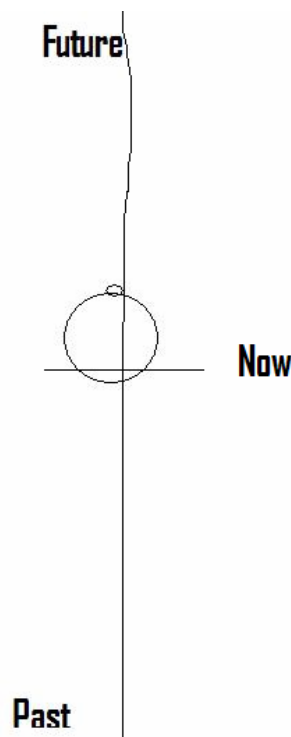


Timeline Meditation

From time to time I find interesting reflections from things I am reading. I have taken the timeline idea from N.L.P. and explored this a bit on my own. I recommend you looking into N.L.P. and go for anything by Richard Bandler on the subject. I have great respect for this man, and he is a man who struggled to follow his bliss to get where he is today. This meditative exercise is not complete, as it is meant for the reader to begin to ask questions of oneself. For this exercise, you will need a journal and a good pen. You can do it, anywhere that you find comfortable and pleasing. For this exercise open up your journal and take your pen and draw a circle in the middle of the page. Now on the top of that circle draw a very small circle. That very small circle will be representing the nose on your face and the big circle your body. This is an

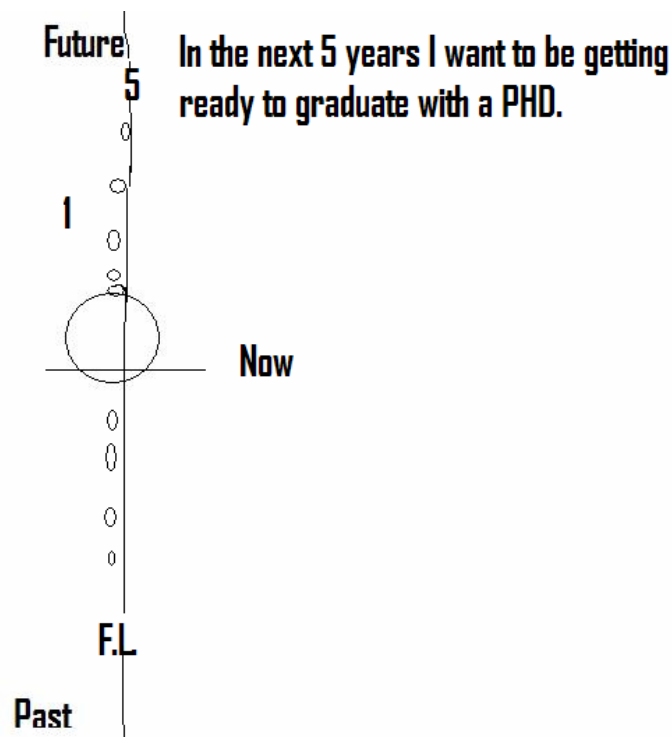
abstract aerial view of your body at this moment. Next, I want you to picture in your mind the same representation that is on the page. Does your time line go through your nose into your past? Does it go from left to right? The first thing to do is write past on one end of the paper and write future on the other end.

Once you have the past and future labeled and it feels right draw a line through the circle and off the paper on both sides. Somewhere on your time line draw a line across it representing this moment and label "Now". Once that feels right to you look at your picture. Is your past in front of you or behind you, and what would it mean if it was? How big did you draw the line intending to represent now? Ask yourself why you draw it so large or so small. I felt that I had drawn mine small because I was focused into what I was doing and that narrow line represented what I was aware of now. Whereas my past and future lines include information from not only myself but from many other people as well.



Think of a task that you will have to do next week, and mark and label its position with the number one somewhere along your timeline map. Somewhere along your map mark and label the position where you had your first love. Play with this yourself, putting in your own variables and discovering where they are positioned. Now think of where you will be in the next five years and label that with a big five. Who is it you want to be in the next five years? How do you want to feel? Look at all the positions you placed your mark along your map. Ask yourself why it felt right to have these things organized and placed in this position. Have you discovered an order to the placement?

If you traced back from your five-year mark in the future all the way back to the moment you were five years old and left little marks along your path, you could think of those marks as opportunity points. Now, make little opportunity points on your map all the back until you hit your five years old and stop.



experience. I believe travel is the best way to break our stereotypes of others and meet the beauty that we are part of in this world.

In America there are many people becoming personally spiritual and they are looking for their own path to express themselves through life. In writing this book, one of the most interesting questions I have asked of others and myself is: what is a spiritual or personal philosophy that has inspired you? In talking with people, I have found out about the functions of different types of books. Scientific books explored human potential. Fictional books created an opportunity for someone to step out of their old mindsets, and try out something new. Religious books painted a splendid and terrible picture of your duty and rituals that you must follow. Spiritual books opened up religious and nonreligious ideas about transcending and being in the now. One of the best gifts from talking to others about what they believe, taught, and inspires and moves them is they begin to ask questions themselves. I learned that forming a good question will change the quality of your answer and how you might receive it. Answers are given to us every day, and we are often not in the right position to understand that we have received it.

I have also been a bit surprised when asking people about their personal philosophy and why they do what they do in accordance to what they believe. I received many blank faces as if to say they didn't have a choice, or I never thought it. A good many people do not take the time to really think about these topics. For some it maybe a stray thought here and there is enough. When I asked people if they believed what they told me completely many people said no. Some people take an active role in search for meaning others seemed to go about life until something or someone presented them with an idea that moved them. I now wonder if the social aspect of church was removed how many of these people would continue to seek out their spiritual service where they were stagnate for so long. I do not think that Americans have become less spiritually

inclined. I think what I have discovered suggests that many people aren't resonating with the doctrine of their faiths as they don't seem to express what is relevant for their life, their world, and the freedom to question and seek answers on their own.

I was asked about the bible by an Indian man. He had bought a copy of it as to familiarize himself with the ideals of Americans. He said he did not understand the Holy Spirit, Jesus divide, and he had read the whole book trying to find the religion in it and could not do so. To talk to someone without judgment, prejudice, or preconceived notions as to what is right for everyone and what is wrong will open opportunity eyes for you to learn from. I had never thought of the bible through another's eyes and I was left to struggle with the concept of explaining generally. I wanted to convey what most western bibles have roughly common. The idea of a holy doctrine or a sacred book is something very common and easily understood but by my explanation was surprising to him. Here it is, and you can decide if it is fair description.

Many faiths that use the western bible bring people together to engage in a relationship with their concept of a divine other by their overseeing doctrine. We are merely creations somewhat apart from God, while all the time God is out there supervising the whole mechanism that is his world. The bible has been rewritten and voted on by counsels and churches throughout the years to shape each faith in the desired direction. Jesus did not write the book that is presented to us and some argue that what is presented is a distorted portrayal of what Jesus taught. While the body of each faith uses a slightly different version of the western bible each separate faith says to its practitioners the divine is out here and in our church. The works of the bible are interpreted to justify the goals of the church, and one's innermost self cannot be said to be divine. Human beings and human souls are only a creation. A saint of these faiths must be voted on to be approved of because man in their eyes is a creature of sin.

Many faiths believe that by being in their own social religious faith they will be God's chosen people. You will find that idea of religious control all over the world and not just in America. These beliefs are the science and the law of several thousand years ago, and that is why the idea you may have about God from the bible is one of a warring child. The bible is built around a fictional history that incorporated myths and parables from many other cultures, as well as many true events. The bible is a mixture of oral and written cultures from many times and places across the globe. It was used to rule over people, educate people, go to war, design how society should unfold, balance the governments power, and tell you how you should worship, as well as be forgiven.

I looked through this man's eyes and into his listening heart to find him struggling with ideas of separation instead of connection in the bible from what he had found and as I described it. It is certainly true that love, charity, kindness, and morality can be taught to lead a good life through this book. What is emphasized by the churches, the writings of a particular faith is this is our own faith, and it is the chosen way. Follow me, get in line, and stay true to the company line. I know this again seems very childish but it is more a matter of economy and control to go to the same church as a ritual of faith instead of a condition of influence for any deity in my opinion.

Philosophy Duty Obligation

“Duty here, therefore, does not mean at all what it means throughout the Orient. It does not mean accepting like a child what has been authoritatively taught. It means thinking evaluating, and developing an ego; a faculty that is to say, of independent observation and rational criticism, capable of interpreting its environment as well as estimating its own powers

in relation to circumstance; and of initiating courses of action, then, that will be relevant not to the ideals of the past, but to possibilities of the present.”

(Joseph Campbell, Myths to Live By, pg 101)^{lv}

To speak of any God as infinite is to recognize that God maybe experienced, known and described in a variety of ways and forms. As we grow and develop as individuals, we undergo a process of self evolution. We will resonate more strongly with some teaching and subjects more than others will. We may try out new philosophies, identities, and become a part of numerous communities while exploring the life of a particular experience. In the process, we will often feel a sense of acceptance for ourselves, our community, the world around us, as well as the world within us. In addition, with a renewed sense of connection to the world and our place in it we begin to explore the presence of a spiritual capacity in our lives through a yearning for a philosophy that enables us to live fully.

Have you ever had the experience where you were completely awake, observing your surroundings, not paying attention to any one direction, mindfully aware, and you had the experience where you were a part of something larger than yourself? There were no real boundaries only perceived boundaries, and everything was connected somehow. You became alert of this mindful position and began to analyze it as you experience it. At that point of alert analysis, you shifted psychological position and perspective, and the momentary experience shifted to everyday consciousness. This in between position is the foundation of the philosophy of The Left Hand Path and where those who walk it feel grounded. As you undertake this path or any other, you might become more conscious of the mark you leave upon the world every day. You might even ask yourself, “What is it you share with the world about yourself and your experience of life as you go about living?”

If you want to make a lasting and meaningful change in the world, it starts with recognizing that change within you, and sharing with others how it is you live by doing it. We should have a philosophy that translates effortlessly across cultures, distance, and religions. Our philosophy shall be one that respectfully honors the light that is in each of us as we share it to speak to the light in others. In communicating to the light in others, we become aware of the person and spend less energy keeping up the subjective walls of perspective lines drawn in the sand. Just as the dreamer and that which is dreamed may appear to be separate, they are actually one.

The differences in our perspectives are a function of altering position, physical form, procedure, and focus. While reading "*Myths to Live By*" by Joseph Campbell I found the very same metaphor I was crafting to express the light we radiate every day as one point of the conscious light in the universe. I have found Campbell's books to honor the light in the reader as well as spreading awareness and information about the mythic dream of our lives. I was inspired to find a little bit of Campbell's ideas in my own as he described ideas of Zen and his attitudes towards a commonality of religion. This next metaphor I woke up dreaming it and wrote it down the morning I awoke. That same day I got to the chapter in "*Myths to Live By*" where Campbell expresses the very same notion in a perspective metaphor on Zen. It seemed to be fated that I find those words on that day. These quotes being so similar to each other and me realizing I am influenced by Campbell after just reading him, the passage goes into quotes. Having read this book, I hope you will pick every one of Campbell's books. The light that this man radiates shines through people all over the world.

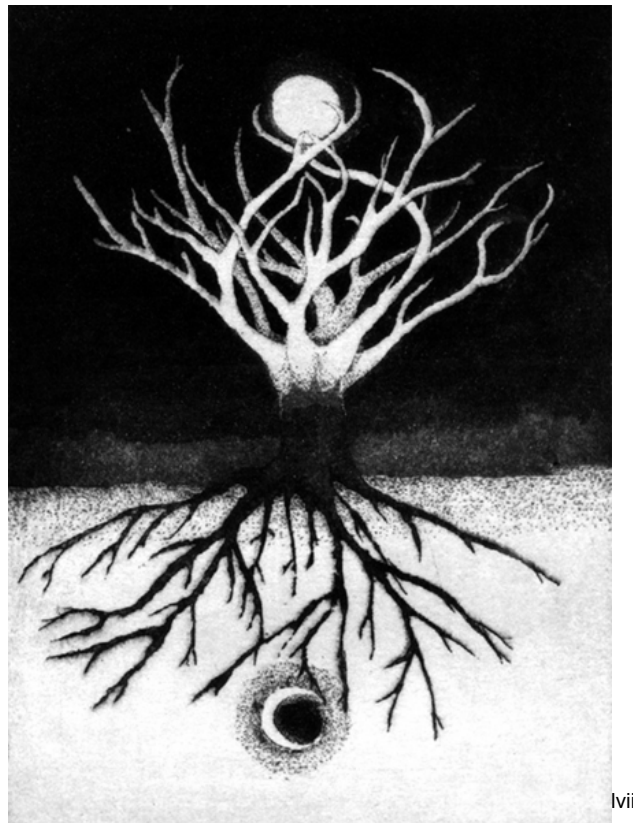
For a moment, imagine that we just sat down to eat at your favorite restaurant. The waiter is pouring coffee and the man across from us just got the special of the day. Your nose takes in

the aroma of coffee and the dish right across from you stirs a growl from your stomach. “You look around to see the many lights in the windows, along the window between the grill and the kitchen, and in the ceiling. There are many different types of bulbs and each is a medium of light. You might also think about all the light radiated from the many bulbs in the restaurant and beyond us sitting in this restaurant is said to be one light. Either this one light that is being radiated by all these bulbs is a property of the many bulbs displaying their connection to a common source of life and light, or it is a property of the connecting force of the light itself.

Yet if any one of these many bulbs were to go out it would be replaced by a similar bulb. The new bulb may have its own unique qualities and yet once that bulb is illuminated we will be bathed in the same light. Even if this new bulb may focus on the identity of himself by his seemingly separate bulb body with all its strengths and weaknesses; it should also be possible to see his bulb-ness as well, as every other bulb as a vehicle of light. The light of many is the light of one. The bulb then is the means of transportation of self-consciousness and light. This consciousness that displays for us the source of light is made manifest through us all. To live life as brightly as possible you should be able shift your conscious position and perspective from the light to the bulb and back again. At the position of the bulb, you can become aware of being one of many, and at the position of the light you are aware of the many as one.

Being at the position of the light, there the bulb is recognized as the many that is one.^{»lvi} You may hear this position referred to in the everyday world as your higher self, the undifferentiated self, point of balance, touching God, relating to God, paralleling the infinite, and more. At the level of everyday world, you will find these words being communicated, described, and recreated by people all over the globe as they identify mainly with the condition of being the bulb. It is not an easy shift to seemly move one’s position from the bulb to the light, and reclaim

with conscious trial and error that knowledge which is beyond our grasp at the position of the bulb.



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Suppose at this point you went the extra mile asked me the meaning of life and I lifted a piece of bacon up to eye level and was silent. Your next thought might be wondering if I just told you to worship a cow, or perhaps if there was an inside joke you were not privy too. I would then have to ask you who is doing the asking? Is it the you in the position and perspective of the bulb or of the light? The conscious light of a bulb creates a meaningful path of infinite variables and divides them all up by position and perspective. The bulb has no more meaning than the star shining bright, no more than the dark of night, no more than a flower or tree, no more than the universe, and no more than the bacon or me. The question suggests a shift in perspective to move

light was formed while peering through the dark and thus was incomplete just as is the ideas that the bulb has of him/her self.

The joyful sorrow and sorrowful joy is to be recognized as the rapture of heaven or hell. It is a bent perception crafted from the murky dark of the bulb's position and perspective. The world that we are in at this very moment while experiencing the joys and pains of consciousness is a place of bliss. All that is required is that we modify the focus of our perceptions and positions, and expand our imagination by striving to be the best we can be. We are the one light and we undertake many positions of multiple focuses too know our self. The unity of one is not only of human beings, but also of the vast oceans, a flower, a bird, the grass in our yards, the cloths we wear, the buildings we build, and the pollution of air, soil, and water. This is all our infinite selves. The past and our future are already here in the present unity. Like an oak in the acorn, we awaken to the light. Every day we live a life of knowledge and experience that must be tempered with passion, learning, and responsibility. Every day we explore ourselves in infinite perspectives, and in infinite forms.

The Left Hand Path is a path of participation and contribution. You can know us from the works of our actions, our listening ear, our supportive shoulder, our shared voices, a concern for one another, and our acknowledgment that we are the expression of our consciousness and light in the world. We seek to be the change we are searching for in the world. It is in following this shared philosophy that we recognize everything we do opens the door for collaboration, mutual learning, and bliss. And just as we attempt to come to terms with pain as a human condition we must take note of the pain of our planet. It manifests as a distortion of the human and environmental systems of our planet to which we affect and share in. To empathize with and support the person sitting next to you may seem more immediate than the environment around

you, but what do you know about what is going on around you? How are the water and the soil where you live? Where does that food you are eating come from and what is in it? The struggles of corporate agendas with people, the environment, and profit are in everyone's back yard.

We all hear about violence and war in our own countries as well as on foreign soil every day. How much do we really know what is going on where we live and in our world? The curiosity of a child still resides in the adult, and with that idea of playful curiosity we should go out and meet the world. Every day on the path we recognize there is a choice to be made as the many of one and the one of many. Each of us makes it easier or more difficult for the inequality in the socially acceptable to hold onto the status quo every day. The status quo maybe how your father's father did business, ate lunch, or encouraged their friends to believe, but we are not born to wear our father's cloths. The question of "Why" is what we first begin to voice as we explore the world as children, and it still is a very important question in all of our lives today.

What can we do that is peacefully effective when dealing with inequality and bigoted speech in everyday life? If we can do nothing else we can frown upon it literally. ^{clix}Stetson Kennedy coined the term "**Frown Power**" when he started a campaign with that name in the 1940s, which simply encouraged people to pointedly frown when they heard bigoted speech." Much too often people will criticize how something is done but they will offer no solution on how to improve on their own personal impact the very next time they meet such a situation again. I believe that silence and an expressive frown will let people know that what they have said is not ok by you. This is not a new idea, but it is an idea that has a place in our lives today.



Mauvaise Herbe croit toujours.

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At the time I write this, my niece is five years old. She can go online and surf the web to get to the games and the cartoons she watches on TV. My Mother who is in her fifties is doing almost the same thing my niece is and having equivalently the same amount of trouble in doing it. The only difference is that my Mother can read and enjoy the content where as my niece is enjoying the experience of the performance. These two extremes are something we all must constantly navigate through in every area of our life. While the problems and solutions are not visibly marked for the expert nor the novice there will be many similar patterns that emerge at every level.

My niece's problems will not be the exactly the same problems I had as a child. Talking to her and participating in her development there is a point that she still teaches me. When I look at her, I recognize that what she loves and holds to be important will be a single point of perspective that contributes to her perceived future. The perspective and position we choose through our lives is very much like a pebble that we carry with us throughout life, and when we

toss it into what appears to be a still pond... In the end those of us still on the shore can only follow the ripples.

Plum Village

“Becoming a Buddha is not difficult because “Buddha means someone who is enlightened , who is capable of loving and forgiving.”

Thich Nhat Hanh

“Thich Nhat Hanh ¹¹(pronounced Tick-Naught-Han) is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk. During the war in Vietnam, he worked tirelessly for reconciliation between North and South Vietnam. His lifelong efforts to generate peace moved Martin Luther King, Jr. to nominate him for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. He lives in exile in a small community in France where he teaches, writes, gardens, and works to help refugees worldwide. He has conducted many mindfulness retreats in Europe and North America helping veterans, children, environmentalists, psychotherapists, artists and many thousands of individuals seeking peace in their hearts, and in their world.

“Every day we do things, we are things that have to do with peace. If we are aware of our life..., our way of looking at things, we will know how to make peace right in the moment, we are alive.”

Thich Nhat Hanh

Thich Nhat Hanh has been living in exile from his native Vietnam since the age of forty. In that year of 1966, he was banned by both the non-Communist and Communist governments for his role in undermining the violence he saw affecting his people. A Buddhist monk since the age of sixteen. Thich Nhat Hanh ("teacher," as he is commonly known to followers) earned a

¹¹ Thich Nhat Hanh bio taken from <http://www.seaox.com/thich.html> Accessed 3/25/08 at 9:45 Pm

reputation as a respected writer, scholar, and leader. He championed a movement known as "engaged Buddhism," which intertwined traditional meditative practices with active nonviolent civil disobedience. This movement lay behind the establishment of the most influential center of Buddhist studies in Saigon, the An Quang Pagoda. He also set up relief organizations to rebuild destroyed villages, instituted the School of Youth for Social Service (a Peace Corps of sorts for Buddhist peace workers), founded a peace magazine, and urged world leaders to use nonviolence as a tool. Although his struggle for cooperation meant he had to relinquish a homeland, it won him accolades around the world.

When Thich Nhat Hanh left Vietnam, he embarked on a mission to spread Buddhist thought around the globe. The government still sees him as a threat-ironic, when one considers the subjects of his teachings: respect for life, generosity, responsible sexual behavior, loving communication, and cultivation of a healthful life style. Thich Nhat Hanh now lives in southwestern France, where he founded a retreat center twelve years ago. At the center, Plum Village, he continues to teach, write, and garden. Plum Village houses only thirty monks, nuns, and laypeople, but thousands from around the globe call it home. Accommodation is readily available for short-term visitors seeking spiritual relief, for refugees in transit, or for activists in need of inspiration." To stay in Plum Village there are fourteen precepts one must abide by.



The 14 Precepts of Tiep Hien Buddhism¹²

by Thich Nhat Hanh^{ixii}

Buddhism is not one. The teaching of Buddhism is many. When Buddhism enters one country, that country always acquires a new form of Buddhism. Buddhism, in order to be Buddhism, must be suitable, appropriate to the psychology and the culture of the society that it serves.

1. Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. All systems of thought are guiding means; they are not absolute truth. If you have a gun, you can shoot one, two, three, five people; but if you have an ideology and stick to it, thinking it is the absolute truth, you can kill millions.
2. Do not think that the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. Learn and practice non-attachment from views in order to be open to receive others' viewpoints. Truth is found in life and not merely in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout your entire life and to observe reality in yourself and in the world at all times.

¹² The 14 Precepts of Tiep Hien Buddhism taken from <http://realmagick.com/articles/13/113.html>

3. Do not force others, including children, by any means whatsoever, to adopt your views, whether by authority, threat, money, propaganda, or even education. However, through compassionate dialogue, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness.
4. Do not avoid contact with suffering or close your eyes before suffering. Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world. Find ways to be with those who are suffering by all means, including personal contact and visits, images, sound. By such means, awaken yourself and others to the reality of suffering in the world.
5. Do not accumulate wealth while millions are hungry. Do not take as the aim of your life fame, profit, wealth or sensual pleasure. Live simply and share time, energy and material resources with those who are in need. In the context of our modern society, simple living also means to remain as free as possible from the destructive social and economic machine, and to avoid stress, depression, high blood pressure and other modern diseases.
6. Do not maintain anger or hatred. As soon as anger and hatred arise, practice meditation on compassion in order to deeply understand the persons who have caused anger and hatred. Learn to look at other beings with the eyes of compassion.
7. Do not lose yourself in dispersion and in your surroundings. Learn to practice breathing in order to regain composure of body and mind, to practice mindfulness, and to develop concentration and understanding. Live in awareness.
8. Do not utter words that can create discord and cause the community to break. Make every effort to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.
9. Do not say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people. Do not utter words that cause division or hatred. Do not spread news that you do not know to be certain. Do not criticize or condemn things that you are not sure of. Always speak

truthfully and constructively. Have the courage to speak out about situations of injustice, even when doing so may threaten your own safety.

10. Do not use your religious community for personal gain or profit, or transform your community into a political party. A religious community should, however, take a clear stand against oppression and injustice, and should strive to change the situation without engaging in partisan conflicts.
11. Do not live with a vocation that is harmful to humans and nature. Do not invest in companies that deprive others of their chance to life. Select a vocation which helps realize your ideal of compassion.
12. Do not kill. Do not let others kill. Find whatever means possible to protect life and to prevent war.
13. Possess nothing that should belong to others. Respect the property of others but prevent others from enriching themselves from human suffering or the suffering of other beings.
14. Do not mistreat your body. Learn to handle it with respect. Do not look on your body as only an instrument. Preserve vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realization of the Way. Sexual expression should not happen without love and commitment. In sexual relationships be aware of future suffering that may be caused. To preserve the happiness of others, respect the rights and commitments of others. Be fully aware of the responsibility of bringing new lives into the world. Meditate on the world into which you are bringing new beings.

I find what Thich Nhat Hanh teaches is the ideals to be imparted are more important than the labeling of the ideal a Buddhist, Christian, or spiritual technique. Thich Nhat Hanh teachings

are easily incorporated into any spiritual belief, and seek to impart upon the individual the responsibility and the consequences for our actions. He shares with us an idea of enlightenment that is attainable and clearly articulated. Thich Nhat Hanh has much to offer for those who might seek the Left Hand Path, and he has a growing influence that is breaking through into the everyday world. I hope to one day meet the man who everyday recognizes himself in others throughout the world.

Throughout This Book

I have tried to present a code of ethics, a religious/philosophical/spiritual perspective in which to experience and serenely engage the world. In organizing your own thoughts by these principles you practice mental and spiritual techniques that support your strivings for the best you can be in all areas of life. I had the idea to collect some of the principles I've shared thus far and wait to see if anyone contacts me with a more complete summary of what I have put in this book. It is my hope that with enough interest and like minded people I'd like to share the everyday experience of these principles through their words and lives. After this short summary I will list my contact information, and I will look forward to hearing from you.

1. Do no harm- Be it by direct or indirect action endeavor to do no harm.
2. Recognize and know your highest self- Seek the greatest good within yourself and others.
3. Enlightenment is personal path- A path we all walk be you priest, Mason, farmer, or writer.
4. Manage perspective, procedure, and position purposefully. Whatever we do we teach who we are. We must manage our impressions we leave on others as well as the conditions and focus of our own lives.

5. There are two kinds of truth infinite, and subjective truth- Infinite truth is the highest truth or absolute truth. Subjective truths are successive approximations of infinite truth at best. Anything we know and have learned is subjective truth. (Even this!)
6. Metaphysical speculation is just that... - All metaphysical speculation is something that cannot be proven and is more of an artistic rendering of truth. It should not be something to go to war over. The universe is a collection of essences and all things are always in flux. Metaphysical speculation has as much meaning as a dream, a good book, or a good role model.
7. Learning is spiritual- What we learn changes our thoughts, our actions, and our opportunities we are aware of. Learning opens us up to what it means for us to live. Choose what you learn as wisely as what you share. The world is watching!
8. It's ok to say no- What we say no to is something we do not want as a defining part of our lives or our thoughts.

End Notes

I encourage you to share your voice and the experience of this book. The following are a few ways to contact me. I will not be able to write back to everyone, but I do my best to read all my email every day. Some of the most interesting and well written messages may have their responses shared in print in my next book. Thank you for your time, your support, and your feedback.

<http://hubpages.com/profile/balanceheart>

<http://balanceheart.spaces.live.com>

balanceheart@hotmail.com

Stay up to date with projects I am working on, my thoughts on life, and things that simply fall out of my head and go "Thunk"... This is my personal blog where I try to keep in touch with people, listen to me ramble, share my reviews, and join me in collaboration in future projects. Listen to my podcast from this link. <http://podcasts.odiogo.com/mr-joe/podcasts-html.php>

Rss feed here... you can keeps track of my blog and check out photos all in one place.

<http://podcasts.odiogo.com/mr-joe/podcasts-xml.php>

ⁱ Ring of love

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:2006-01-21_Ring_of_love.jpg

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ⁱⁱ Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry novembre

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Les_Tr%C3%AAs_Riches_Heures_du_duc_de_Berry_novembre.jpg

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iii <http://www.rutherford.org/Oldspeak/Articles/Art/oldspeak-human2.asp>

iv ChineseVarietyart Fightingmonk

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:ChineseVarietyart_Fightingmonk.jpg

Chinese variety art A fighting monk in Chinese theatre

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v 2006 Pro Bowl tackle

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:2006_Pro_Bowl_tackle.jpg

Photographer: Cpl. Michelle M. Dickson

Photo ID: 2006214151159

Original description: Image submitted to military web site by: MCB Hawaii

Operation/Exercise/Event: 2006 Pro Bowl

Original description: NFC defensive backs Ronde Barber and Roy Williams along with linebacker Jeremiah Trotter gang tackle AFC running back Ladainian Tomlinson during the 2006 Pro Bowl in Hawaii. More than 49,000 fans showed up to cheer on their favorite NFL players.

*This image is in the **public domain** because it contains materials that originally came from the [United States Marine Corps](#). As a work of the [U.S. federal government](#), the image is in the **public domain**.*

vi Fra Angelico 010

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Fra_Angelico_010.jpg

The Yorck Project: *10.000 Meisterwerke der Malerei*. DVD-ROM, 2002. ISBN 3936122202. Distributed by DIRECTMEDIA Publishing GmbH.

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vii Gerson-TZSP-Poezja

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Gerson-TZSP-Poezja.jpg>

Description: Poetry, fresco

A cycle of Allegorical Compositions for the TZSP Exhibition Hall in the Postberardine Building in Warsaw: Poetry, Science, Fine Arts, Art, Eagerness, Balance

Source: [Republic of Poland, Ministry of Culture and National Heritage - Wartime losses #2221](#)

Author: [Wojciech Gerson](#) 1870

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viii Moai Rano raraku

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Moai_Rano_raraku.jpg

Taken during January 2004

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ix The complete gamester

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:The_complete_gamester.gif

Description: Illustration from *The Compleat Gamester: or Instructions - How to play at Billiards, Trucks, Bowls and Chess - together with all manner of usual and most Gentile Games either on Cards or Dice - to which is added the Arts and Mysteries of Riding, Racing, Archery and Cock-Fighting*. Cotton Charles, London, 1674.

Source: http://perso.orange.fr/bckg/english/the_compleat_gamester.htm **Date:** 1674

Author: unknown

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^x Caveman Lion 1

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Caveman_Lion_1.jpg

Source: "The cave boy of the age of stone" **Date:** pre-1923

Author: Margaret A. McIntyre

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For more information go here: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Help:Public_domain

^{xi} Grandville"Une promenade dans le ciel

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Grandville%22Une_promenade_dans_le_ciel%22.gif

Description: Illustration by J. J. Grandville "Une promenade dans le ciel", Le Magasin Pittoresque (1847).

Source: <http://www-histecon.kings.cam.ac.uk/research/hex/index.htm>

Author: Jean Ignace Isidore Gérard

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^{xii} Nascarvegas05

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Nascarvegas05.jpg>

Description: Nascar Las Vegas, Qualifying Day - As the sun moved on, the backdrop of mountains behind the track really stood out (this picture doesn't do it justice) 2005-03-11 17:08:49

Author: [Brian Cantoni](#)

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^{xiii} Reineke Fuchs

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Reineke_Fuchs.jpg

Wolfgang von Goethe: *Reineke Fuchs*. J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag, Stuttgart 1857 S. 142

Zeichnungen von Wilhelm von Kaulbach

auf Holz gezeichnet von Julius Schnorr

gestochen von Allgair & Siegle

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^{xiv} Grandville-large

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Grandville-large.gif>

Description: Illustration by J. J. Grandville from *Un Autre Monde* [Paris: H. Fournier, 1844].

Source: <http://www.library.northwestern.edu/spec/grandville.html>

Author: Jean Ignace Isidore Gérard

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^{xv} Lightning striking the Eiffel Tower – NOAA

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Lightning_striking_the_Eiffel_Tower_-_NOAA.jpg

Description: Lightning striking the Eiffel Tower, June 3, 1902, at 9:20 P.M. This is one of the earliest photographs of lightning in an urban setting In: "Thunder and Lightning", Camille Flammarion, translated by Walter Mostyn Published in 1906.

Caption: THE EIFFEL TOWER AS A COLOSSAL LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR. Photograph taken June 3, 1902, at 9.20 p.m., by M. G. Loppé. Published in the *Bulletin de la Société Astronomique de France* (May, 1905).

Source: <http://www.photolib.noaa.gov/htmls/wea00602.htm>

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^{xvi} Dry stone wall

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Dry_stone_wall.jpg

Description: Dry stone wall in [Kolbnitz](#) with Roman path. August, 5th 2006

Author: [Manuel Egger](#)

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For more information about this license go to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GNU_Free_Documentation_License

^{xvii} <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reclaiming>

I also found this as a place for more information on words that have been reclaimed.

^{xviii} <http://www.asiya.org/bos/rightandlefthandpath.html>

^{xix} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Left-Hand_Path_and_Right-Hand_Path#Usage_in_Tantra

^{xx} <http://www.asiya.org/bos/rightandlefthandpath.html>

^{xxi} Wilhelm von Kaulbach 003

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Wilhelm_von_Kaulbach_003.jpg

Artist: [Kaulbach, Wilhelm von](#)

Title: **Deutsch:** Entwürfe zu Fresken an der Neuen Pinakothek, Szene: Kampf gegen die Chimäre der Perückenzeit

Year: 1850 **Technique:** **Deutsch:** Öl auf Leinwand

Source: The Yorck Project: *10.000 Meisterwerke der Malerei*. DVD-ROM, 2002. [ISBN 3936122202](#). Distributed by DIRECTMEDIA Publishing GmbH.

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^{xxii} <http://www.thebigview.com/buddhism/emptiness.html> Accessed 3/28/08 1:05 PM

^{xxiii} Emptiness

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/emptiness.html>

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^{xxv} DeGraff, G (2008). Noble Strategy. Retrieved March 28, 2008, from Dhamma Talks Web site:

<http://www.dhammadata.org/Archive/Writings/NobleStrategy.pdf>

^{xxvi} Nelson, P (April, 2002). The Buddha: Our Spiritual 'Contemporary'. Retrieved March 19, 2008, from www.buddhanet.net Web site: <http://www.buddhanet.net> Accessed 3/19/08 10pm

^{xxvii} <http://www.buddhanet.net/spiritual-contemporary.htm>

^{xxviii} <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/strangeland/context.html> Accessed 3/20/08 2:33 PM

^{xxix} Spirit houses bangkok

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Spirit_houses_bangkok.jpg

Author: Spirit Houses. (Geisterhäuschen) Bangkok. Hannah Steinacker

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^{xxx} The Labyrinth in Holy Spirit Seminary

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:The_Labyrinth_in_Holy_Spirit_Seminary.JPG

Description: The labyrinth in Holy Spirit Seminary, Hong Kong 28/10/2006 (uploaded on 18/11/2006)

Source: Isaac Wong (惡德神父)

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^{xxxi} Pentagram air banishing

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^{xxxii} Pentagram spirit banishing active

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^{xxxiii} Pentagram spirit banishing passive

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^{xxxiv} Pentagram spirit invoking active

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^{xxxv} Pentagram spirit invoking passive

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^{xxxvii} Health Conditions That Are Benefited By Meditation. Retrieved March 28, 2008, from The Journal of Holisticonline.com Web site:

http://www.lstholistic.com/Meditation/hol_meditation_benefits_health_conditions.htm Accessed 3/28/08 3:05 PM

^{xxxviii} HOW TO MEDITATE. Retrieved March 28, 2008, from <http://www.lifepositive.com/> Web site:

<http://www.lifepositive.com/Spirit/meditation/how-to-meditate.asp#top>

^{xxxix} Buddhist child

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Buddhist_child.jpg

Photo by [User:Tevaprapas](#), 2007

เด็กชาวพุทธกำลังนั่งสมาธิ

Thai Buddhist child is sitting the concentration happily . Thailand, Uttaradit, 2007. Own work

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^{xl} **A Guided Meditation**

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/guided.html>

Source: Transcribed from a file provided by the author.

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^{xli} Sivakempfort

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Sivakempfort.jpg>

Description: Shiva Statue in [Bangalore, India](#) **Date:** 22nd December 2005

Credit: photo taken by [User:Deepak](#)

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^{xlii} Basic Breath Meditation Instructions

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/breathmed.html>

Source: From a talk given to a conference on AIDS, HIV and other Immuno-deficiency Disorders in Long Beach, CA, Nov. 13, 1993. Transcribed from a file provided by the author.

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^{xliii} THE VOID OR EMPTINESS

http://www.plotinus.com/void_copy.htm

Accessed 3/21/08

Author unknown

^{xliv} THE VOID OR EMPTINESS

http://www.plotinus.com/void_copy.htm

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Author unknown

^{xlv} Taiwanese temple (near Taizhong), meditation with statue

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Taiwanese_temple_%28near_Taizhong%29%2C_meditation_with_statue.jpg

Pic take by myself. [Yug talk](#) 14:50, 25 July 2005 (UTC)

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^{xlvi} The Immortal Soul of the Taoist Adept

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:The_Immortal_Soul_of_the_Taoist_Adept.PNG

The Immortal Fetus, from *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. Harvest/HBJ, New York and London, 1962.

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^{xlvii} Escribano

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Escribano.jpg>

Burgundian scribe (portrait of Jean Miélot, from *Miracles de Notre Dame*), 15th century. The picture is greatly detailed in its rendering of the room's furnishings, the writer's materials, equipment, and activity.

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^{xlviii} Aum

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Aum.png>

Sacred hindu syllable Aum (Om) in Devanagari script.

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^{xlix} JainismSymbol

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:JainismSymbol.PNG>

Description: Symbol of Jainism, white and golden version. 2006-07-11

Source: Created by [Tinette](#) user of [Italian Wikipedia](#)

Author: [Tinette](#)

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ⁱ Tamil om

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Tamil_om.png

"Om" sound written in [Tamil](#). [category:Hindu symbols category](#):

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ⁱⁱ TibAum

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:TibAum.png>

Aum in Tibetan

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^{lii} Trishula

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Trishula.PNG>

The Trishula, trident of Shiva and symbol of Shaivism.

Author: [Nyo](#)

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^{liii} Pax Cultura

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Pax_Cultura.svg

Sign of peace; [Pax Cultura](#), (of the Roerich Pact)

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^{liv} Guru Mindmap

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Guru_Mindmap.jpg

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^{lv} Campbell, Joseph (1993). *Myths to Live BY*. New York, NY: Penguin Group. Pg 101

^{lvi} Campbell, Joseph (1993). *Myths to Live BY*. New York, NY: Penguin Group. Pg 129

^{lvii} Yggdrasil axis mundi 3

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Yggdrasil_axis_mundi_3.PNG

Description: The drawing represents the cosmic tree or the axis mundi, the universal divine spirit that pervades all the existing things and worlds. It is readable both as the Heathen concept and the Wiccan one. The Wiccan perspective identifies it with the Dryghten, the ancestral principle of the cosmos, constituted by the interaction of the two forces of the God and the Goddess. 2007

Author: Erkadio

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^{lviii} Cowdivine

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Cowdivine.jpg>

Description: Vidyandasvm, Director, Ngapuragorakshanasabh [Nagpur Cow Protection League]. Mumbai (Bombay). Published by Khemarja Srksrnd, Srvekatevara Chpakhn, Samvat Era 1947 (A.D. 1890).

The image here illustrates the Hindu belief that each part of the cow embodies a particular deity. For example, Brahma (the creator of the Universe in Hinduism) is her back, while Lord [Vishnu](#) is her throat. To the right, a man is seen as protecting the cow from being slaughtered by the demon [Kali](#).

According to a passage about this image from *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India*:

"The figure with drawn sword is clearly labeled in the image as a representation of *kaliyug*, presumably the demon [kali](#). The caption above his head reads *he manusyaho! Kaliyugi Mansahari jivom ko dekho* ('mankind, look at the meat-eating souls of the kaligyug'), and the [man in front of Kali] (labeled as *dharmaraj*) beseeches him with the words *mat maro gay sarv ka jivan hai* ('don't kill the cow, everyone is dependent on it')..."^[1]

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^{lix} Stetson Kennedy- Frown Power

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frown_power

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^{lx} Grandville Cent Proverbes page45

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Grandville_Cent_Proverbes_page45.png

Description: Grandville : *Cent Proverbes*

Source: H. Fournier Éditeur, Paris, 1845.

Author: Granville (Jean-Ignace-Isidore Gérard)

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^{lxi} Grandville Cent Proverbes en-tete

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Grandville_Cent_Proverbes_en-tete.png

Description: Grandville : *Cent Proverbes*

Source: H. Fournier Éditeur, Paris, 1845.

Author: Granville (Jean-Ignace-Isidore Gérard)

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^{lxii} Article by Thich Nhat Hanh

From *Being Peace*

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