

**The Sharp Knife
of Forced Simplicity**

Volume 1:

The Numinous Rebellion

Ronald S. Khare

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The Sharp Knife of Forced Simplicity: An Appreciation

by Angela Mailander, Ph.D.

The third “meditation” of this collection of essays by Ron Khare gives its title to the whole book, “The Sharp Knife of Forced Simplicity.” That essay ends with these words, “My crude efforts at using the Knife led me to write this book, to discover things about myself I never knew. I look forward to cutting away more and more from me, until I stand alone, naked, firm on the Earth and in full sunshine.”

I’ve known Ron since he was in tenth grade (I was his English teacher) and we’ve been friends for the decade since, as I remain in touch with many of his classmates. Knowing him as well as I do, I am 100% certain that Ron did not take his inspiration for this book (and the meditation that gives it its title) from Biblical sources. But the insight in that essay is nevertheless the same as the one found in several places in the New Testament. There is Mathew 18:8 for example: “If

your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life maimed or crippled, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into eternal fire.”

Some teachers would bemoan Ron’s ignorance for not knowing the Biblical texts; I would rather celebrate him for having the same depth of insight for which the New Testament is known. He uses the Sharp Knife of Forced Simplicity as a metaphor for the agency that cuts off the offending hand, and his presentation of that insight is entirely fresh and his own. He does not drag God and religion into the picture, nor does he threaten us with eternal hell. For him, the fact that an offending hand exists is hell enough and, instead, he presents the metaphor in purely psychological and spiritual terms, making its meaning clear and immediate.

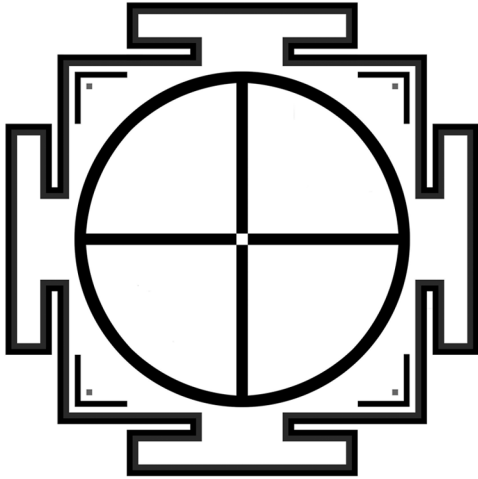
The rest of the collection of meditations is entirely commensurate with the one I’ve cited. It’s not that I always agree with Ron. I don’t, and why would I since I’m old enough to be his grandmother? But the writing is clean and clear, and the insights are informed with the passion and excitement of original discovery. I regret that I won’t be around to read the writer, teacher and philosopher Ron promises to be when he gets to be my age.

Having taught students from pre-school through grad school in five different cultures, I’d had a long teaching career behind me when I first met the group of boys that included Ron. They electrified me, and I’ve never before or since taught a more intelligent, lively, and engaged group of students than those boys at

Maharishi School of the Age of Enlightenment. What made them different from all other students I've taught is that they were the first generation of students who had learned a meditation technique by the time they were four years old. When I became their teacher, most of them had been meditating for twelve years. And those were years in which they had not accumulated the stress most adults must release before their meditation actually gets them somewhere. I felt much in common with these boys because, due to the unusual circumstances of my life, I had learned to meditate when I was six.

Ron is different from the run-of-the-mill New Age philosophers and teachers who have learned to meditate since the early sixties—most since the seventies. For far too many of them, New Age philosophy, whatever their tradition, is merely talk, and a professional analysis of their writing would reveal this. Ron, by contrast, really does function from a different state of consciousness than most (though not all) of those writers do. And so I would say that though Ron Khare is young and though he does not have the formal training and life experience that older New Age writers may have had, this is one young “natural” philosopher that bears watching.

The Khare Family Crest



This symbol belongs to my family.

It is the icon with which we can identify, a flag we
can rally behind.

It contains some of the oldest symbols known to man, but
is meaningless.

The family is what defines it, our actions become its power.

With it we show respect for the past, and hope
for the future.

It is an anchor when we feel unstable.

It is a light when we feel beset by darkness.

It is nothing but a reminder that we are loved.

It shows us that we belong.

Warning and Introduction

This little book of mine represents many things: nearly two years of constant writing, the solid support of all my loved ones, one man's vision of the universe after a scant quarter-century of life, and most of all, the overwhelming desire to help.

What it does not represent, however, are the opinions of anyone other than myself. This is not to say that I've arrived at these conclusions separate from the world, far from it. All of the many, many sources I've drawn upon speak for themselves, while this book speaks only for me.

This is important for me to point out, as I am closely associated with several organizations and religious beliefs and I do not want to confuse the reader. The largest groups (the Transcendental Meditation movement and Taoism) are very much their own. Although I hope that this book sparks interest in both, the readers should be aware that what they find these groups believe might differ from my own ideas.

I also hope no one takes any of the ideas presented in this book seriously enough to get upset about it. These harmless words on a few pages pose no threat to you or your beliefs. I would venture a guess that if you really do get upset then I've managed to hit on some truth you've been erstwhile ignoring. If that is the case, I strongly recommend some self-analysis before direct physical action, and I am strongly opposed to direct physical action against the author.

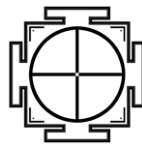
Writing this book changed my life. Ironic, given the original purpose for writing it was to change the world... but I love the result more than I could have imagined. As for changing the world, I humbly submit the following thoughts for consideration. Rejection or acceptance matters very little to me at this point. I'm with us all the way, for the best or the worst.

Ron KL

Ron Khare

8.11.08

Fairfield, Iowa



The How and the Why

There are two things we need to consider while engaged in saving the world: the How and the Why.

The How is a fluid state, constantly in flux and subject to never-ending change.

The Why is Love.

The How is subservient to the Why in every case.

The How will forever find itself in constant debate. How will we do this and that? How will we accomplish all these goals? How can we overcome all this resistance to change, and how can we reach those in need? Every single person here has a different answer, a new and strange approach to the same problem.

Why they are here, the reason they've left their couch, the reason they got up this morning is the same: love. They feel more love than they know what to do with, it spills out all over them, and the only way they can stay sane is by giving it out, the never-ending cup pouring out onto the entire world, a world without borders.

Sometimes, however, the How so completely overshadows the Why that those acting on the How forget the Why. A lapse of memory removes the feeling from the action, so one is left solely with the action... a dedication, a dogmatic approach to the problem, void of personal investment but with the overarching idealism intact. Some of the worst crimes in history have been committed in the name of the How, without the personal feeling of Why (unbounded love) attached.

It is vitally important, then, for every single one of us—before we act—to take one moment to feel it out within ourselves. What is our motivation here: the How, or the Why?



Everything We Have

Everything we have is thanks to those who have come before us. Our fruits are large and tasty, our society is long-lived and powerful, our knowledge of Creation is outstanding. We touch the bottom of the ocean and other worlds. We are the beneficiaries of thousands upon thousands of years of human effort.

All this effort was for us. Perhaps a man took to selectively breeding vegetables so that he may have better food for himself at first... but when he has a family, their well-being moves to the forefront of his mind. Inside this loving desire to provide for one's immediate family comes the knowledge that his efforts will improve the lives of his son's sons... far on down the channels of the future. With every generation thinking like this, humanity rises quickly from lack to overabundance.

It is as if man finds his place in the stream of time. Nestled as he is between generations, he is acutely aware of his actions and their repercussions. He sees the actions of his father and grandfather and their effects in

the world today. He sees how his actions move down the line to his son and his son's son. There is man's true sense of belonging, a member of generations, an improver of life.

In fact, it seems all the problems we have in the world today come from a lack of this generational identity. Who could feel comfortable giving their own children a world poisoned from nuclear waste or obliterated, barren soil? Who hates their own children so much to screw up the world so badly? No one does... they've just been ripped from the stream of time. They don't know their place in the world; their shoulders don't touch who was and who will be.

We stand on the achievements of every person who came before us. If we can only recognize this, we will see that there are many more who stand on our actions today. What shall we tell them when we pass on this world? That we gained for ourselves at their expense? Or that we made it a little better place for them?



The Sharp Knife of Forced Simplicity

A metaphoric construct!

Imagine having the eyes to see the body of man merged with his inner life. Here is his body, and the part of his inner life are associated with his various body parts.

Work, power, and interaction are associated with his limbs and hands. A normal, healthy and good man would appear as a normal man... there is no difference here. But a man who exerts too much control over his world or is apathetic to it all would appear to have disfigured limbs—one too large and heavy, the other shriveled and unused, respectively.

The face of the clean and peaceful man would seem almost blank, touched with a hint of peace and happiness. The face of the man full of rage or sorrow, of lust or greed, would be shocking... the pale imitation of a man's face, crude and serviceable but horrible to look at.

A man in his place and in his life would appear a properly proportioned man, standing upright and easily in the world. The body of man who shoulders burdens not his to carry bends too far, the one who does not take his appointed load is unable to keep still. Some are too large, filled with things that do not belong to them, while others are sticks, unable to enjoy even the basics. Even worse are those alien things, strange phantom limbs and growths that stick out at odd places, the various hang-ups and unresolved stresses, bad habits, and all the rest of it.

The sharp knife is called Forced Simplicity because a man would rather force himself into simplicity than live another day so disfigured. A man may use it on himself, or hand it to another to use on him, but the idea is the same: Cut through me, right to the core of me, and hack away all these useless growths and strange, phantom limbs. A physical pain hurts in a physical manner, but the spiritual and mental disfigurements hurt the mind and spirit... where is the medicine for them?

They have no role to play for us any longer, and must be removed immediately. The Sharp Knife of Forced Simplicity is picked up the moment one is fed up living life in misery and takes the first real step towards change. That's the first carve, and the piece that falls may hurt while being cut. Once it hits the ground, however, we realize that it was never a part of us to begin with; the pain was in letting go of our irrational attachment to it.

After some time, one may become a samurai of sorts, wielding the knife like a sword, slicing through this

body, until nothing is left but the pure, unstained soul—the man as is he and always was under all of it shines brighter than ever.

This knife is *not* a physical knife; it is metaphoric and is meant only for us. Everyone can transform his disfigured body into an impenetrable armor, encasing himself solid in it if he feels personally threatened. You can hack at another all day long to no effect, and may find your blade dulled in the process. Best to show our friends by personal example than enforcement. They will either come around in time, or not.

My crude efforts at using the Knife led me to write this book; to discover things about myself I never knew. I look forward to cutting away more and more from me, until I stand alone, naked, firm on the Earth and in full sunshine.



Victory to You, My Friend

Consider the possibility of wishing all the people you meet complete and total victory for all their desires and in all their undertakings.

A radical new approach to living life!

Imagine granting anyone and everyone the right and power to accomplish what they will, regardless of your personal feelings. Take it to the farthest extreme: Utter self-destruction, murder, revenge, evil, world obliteration, world peace, enlightenment, perfection, true love. Victory, victory, victory to you.

The heart flies open at the merest thought of being so divinely benevolent. Closely following is the idea that this “wishing for victory” doesn’t actually do anything, as the world and the people in it will do as they will regardless. Two sides fight, and we wish them both victory. What do I lose for being so supportive?

Effectively, this is a method for taking oneself out of one’s own trappings. I may fully disagree with this person’s stated goals and feelings and actively believe he

should take a different course. At the same time, I wish him total and complete victory, even if I don't want the action to occur.

How can I not want something to happen and yet want a person to succeed? The trick here is to see the truth: We wish for a *person's* victory, not an action's victory. The person may believe he wishes to do this thing or that, and we wish him victory. So very often we undertake an action that turns out unexpectedly—by all accounts the action failed, and yet we walk away wiser, stronger, in a new place. We feel the victory of the action in the results, not the stated goal.

So tell me what you want. Where do you want to go? What do you want to do? How do you want to feel? What tiniest aspects of your life do you want, what grandest visions do you have?

May success follow your every action—I wish you victory in all your undertakings, my friend.



Human

I believe in full and complete personal freedom and power. There is nothing in this universe that a person cannot accomplish, and there is no force in the universe that can stand in someone's way for long.

Therefore I disregard any philosophy that takes power away from a person. A person is never the victim, not even to the highest natural or supernatural powers, unless he or she accepts that role. Things may happen to this person, circumstances will sprout naturally across the spectrum, but that person has the unlimited ability to interact with the world and thereby holds the wheel, always arriving at the destination he or she determines.

It is easy and immature to shift the bulk of responsibility to an unknown power or an immovable factor. A child may blame his or her parents for everything (not knowing better), but an adult has no excuse. At some point a person has to become an adult and take responsibility for his or her life. If this person chooses to remain a child, then that person will forever be the victim, crying and lashing out at forces he or she blames

for his or her misfortune. In every case, the potential power and unlimited freedom remains unrestricted and fully accessible.

Such an idea does not rule out God. God is rather enhanced by this feeling, an accomplice and friend, the one behind the scenes working in our favor. All we need to do is state where we want to go, and we marvel at how the universe bends, molds itself around the single fixated point. Should we say that man has the power to mold the universe, or that he has the power to ask the Almighty and God do the work for him? I see no distinction between the two; the feeling and result are the same.

"I'm only human." Such a statement is fitting to a world-changing accomplishment. Human beings, as a species, are marked by their habitual achievement of the impossible. There is no force in this world or the next that can stand up to our power of insight and achievement. Why should we see ourselves as anything less than free and powerful humans?



The Way Things Are

I am utterly unconcerned with the way things are.

Now, if a car is coming at me, I'm going to jump out of the way. If I'm low on money and the bills need to be paid, I find a source of reliable income. I'm not an idiot—I live and work in the world like everyone else... but I don't let it get to me.

When I was a baby I couldn't fathom the concept of a marathon. Just walking a short distance took me many tries, and I usually ended up on my butt. After so many failures I should have figured it was impossible. After all, I wasn't like these giant people around me... they were in another world. But I couldn't give it up... and soon enough, I was not only walking safely, I was walking quickly!

It took many years of walking and running to gather up the experience of distance, and many more before I heard this idea of "marathon" and understood it as a concept. As a reality it was unreachable... at that time. With training, pushing myself farther and expanding

the range of ability, I became capable of running in a marathon... something I not only once deemed impossible, but also was so fantastic that I had no ability to conceive of it!

Tiny babies running marathons. You laugh, but that's all we are: babies given time and experience. Our bodies grew, as well as our minds and spirits... so you say there is something you can't do? You might as well tell babies they'll never get out of diapers.

As for myself, improvement comes with age. If a baby grows to run a marathon, imagine what a man could grow to do!



The New Wild West

I am ecstatic, literally wild with possibilities. Now, perhaps for the first real time, we exist on the very edge of the cliff—behind us, the boring dead wastelands of Old America, and in front of us, the unknown abyss of the new life—Old America ends in a grand, dry sputter as we step forward into the full future of human life on Earth.

America today seems rich with science and humanly dead. We have no traditions to speak of, beyond perhaps prom night and turning 18/21. If you have culture in your life it probably came from another country, some rich tradition dating back thousands of years. The rest of us, the average white-bread middle-class Americans, have no culture beyond the hedonism presented in the media... lost children with no one to give us a sense of belonging. Or, at least, until now.

Now we find ourselves in a new light, a re-establishment of important human needs that were dismissed before as primitive and outdated. These things, we see now, may not be “the most economically efficient” or

“modern”—but they *are* human, structured into our very bones.

We look around and see no one has a home, not really. Even if a person owns a house instead of the bank, that person came to entire ownership recently, built by someone else for different people. We move around on the breeze with no roots, from this city to that for this job or that. Where is the stability of ancestral homelands? Where is the pride of tradition, the secure knowledge that your father’s-father’s-father lived here, and as it was, so it will be for your children’s-children?

Where is the pride in craftsmanship? We buy a table, mass produced in another land, thousands exactly like it across the world, cheaply made and designed to break after a set time so you have to buy another. A crafted handmade item, of anything, is extremely rare and hard to come by, but always solid and longer lasting (not to mention more beautiful) than anything you could buy in a store.

Where is the joy in local foods and traditions? We buy food that has traveled thousands of miles to get to the grocery store owned by someone far away, we go to movies made across the nation, we watch televisions designed to sell you stuff made to break. Where are the local gardens? The farmer’s markets that used to be the source of food for a community are now quaint tourist stops. Where are the local events, the town meetings, the summer nights having fun with the entire community?

Where are the family traditions and coming-of-age

ceremonies? Every ancient civilization had a special rite of passage for children to become adults, a welcoming into the adult community with all the rights and responsibilities included. Without this, children get older without ever becoming *adults*, never understanding what it entails and what it means. Where are the strong family ties, the special and unique family traits and traditions, the clans of families banding together in communities and relationships? Where are the family crests and flags, the land and houses, the history and the future?

What makes me jump is not the lack of these things in our modern American life, it is the possibility for them *now*. We exist right here on that edge, and we can literally make up anything, anything we like. Our play becomes the games and holidays of our progeny. Perhaps it changes over time to something we don't recognize, or perhaps it has been done away with it altogether. It is not our place to guess what the future will look like, but we can choose a direction to take.

For myself, I see the land I wish to become my family's ancestral homeland, so I will obtain the money and purchase it. I see in my mind the house I wish to give to those who come after me, so I will build it. I see the fun and the history I wish to give to my great-grandkids, and so I make it. I look around at the world today and pick the best it has to offer, the highest of science and religion and spirituality and sustainable living and arts and literature and all the rest of it. I take these things and put them inside me, inside my home, on and all over my land. I breathe, sleep, and eat it, I see through

it and over it and beyond it, and I bring to me like-minded people. Together we establish the ground floor for the rest of history.

People always say things like “Well, what if your kids decide they don’t want to live there?” I don’t care. The point is, it is there for them or for their kids on down the line, the knowledge that they will always have a place to be, a place where they belong, and this place will grow the food and have the shelter they need to live comfortably. And if, after I’m dead, my family-to-be shakes their heads at my ridiculous vision and sells the lot off, well then... I’ll have moved on to some equally improbable vision.



A More Detailed Look at Power

I suppose I should explain in detail what I refer to as “power,” as this subject is often ignored when it should be clearly taught.

There are two types of power in the world:

1. Physical Power. This is entirely physical, and determines how you interact with the world. A physically powerful person can lift heavier objects, run faster farther, jump higher, hit stronger, and so on. Physical power is the result of dedicated training and lifestyle, and anyone—*anyone*—can become a very physically powerful person if he or she so wishes.

However much physical power allows one to interact with the world, the ability to have power over people with it is strictly limited. A more powerful person could grab the wrists of a weaker person, for example, and move the weaker one’s arms as he sees fit. However, this can only go on for so long, as even the strongest person cannot constantly move another around without getting

tired—eventually, the strong would get so tired that even the weakest person could overpower him.

The other type of physical power is cleverness. A clever man doesn't need muscles to bend the world around him, he only needs information and resources. An example: a powerful man tries to lift a car but fails, whereas the clever man builds a lift and succeeds. A gun is a physically powerful thing (able to physically manipulate the world to an extreme degree), made from relatively harmless things constructed in a clever fashion.

2. Imaginary Power. We are not just lumps of muscle and flesh, however; we are thinking and feeling beings. As such, we desire some things and wish to avoid other things, and the extent that these desires and avoidances sway us is the extent that other people can control us.

Consider the example of the muscle man above. Instead of grabbing someone's arms and making him do something, all the more physically powerful person has to do is *threaten pain* should the weaker not do what he wishes. Instead of exerting all his power making a person move, all he has to do is use a few words and appropriate body language to communicate his intentions. I have to point out that there is no real pain in existence here; rather, there is the intention of harm in the mind of the powerful man and the mental construct of possible future pain in the mind of the weaker. Both parties enter into a contract wherein the weaker agrees to do the bidding of the stronger for the "wage" of avoidance of harm.

The weaker man does everything of his own free will, even under the threat of the harshest of punishments, for there is no physical person controlling his actions; they are forever his and his alone. The wish to avoid pain or death is so strong, however, that a man does not see his own motives for obeying, thinking himself enslaved. A strong man can, using this method, enslave many weaker people at almost no cost to his energy. If he takes the time to carry out a punishment on one of them in view of the rest, the idea of future pain becomes more entrenched in their minds, and submit themselves more to the stronger person's will.

There is another side to this coin, that of the person who controls resources that others desire. If I am lacking money, I begin to naturally desire more and begin to search for a way to obtain it. Should I come across a person who has money, I can ask him to give me some. Usually the person with money asks for my time and labor in exchange for this money, and I, factoring my lack with the type of labor requested, could agree to exchange the two. The terms of this agreement is a type of power that this moneyman has over me, as I have, like the weaker person above, willingly submitted myself to it.

This type of power tends to be less powerful, as there are plenty of people and ways to make money in the world, some vastly more enjoyable than others. When you apply both across a population in the form of work and laws, then you've created a society, a means of keeping men's behavior within certain limitations, ideally for their benefit, at worst for their enslavement.

Society, then, is *entirely optional*. A man's freedom to act is, was, and always will be completely unlimited by anything outside of direct, physical control. One must be willing to accept the results of his actions or inactions, of course, and should one's freedom of action break a law, then the law will come to assert itself regardless of his belief.

Those who wield power do so only by the approval and acceptance of those they exert their power over. Any person who believes he genuinely has power over others is in a state of delusion... the contract between both parties exists so long as both adhere to it. The moment one walks away, the illusion vanishes, leaving the other shaken and confused.

If both parties are aware of this reality, then both are in a position to gain from any contracts they make with each other. If one party is aware and the other is not, it can help the contract (or be used against the other, should that party be evil). If both parties are completely unaware of the realities of their agreements, however, each feels overshadowed by the other, with all manner of bad feelings and hostility likely, even outright violence should things go too far.

To apply it to the oft-used subject of government: There is no such thing as a "government." There is only a contract between certain people in a certain area of the world, stating that so many of us will allow so few others to act on our behalf and make decisions regarding how our society forms itself. The government itself is an unreal mirage, an idea only, with no barring on the reality beyond what we ourselves choose to act on. So long

as I believe in a government it will continue to exist, and it ceases to exist the moment I choose to no longer believe that it is real. It may still be “real” for everyone else, (as long as they themselves believe in it) and if some of those physically more powerful than me choose to enforce the threatened punishments for leaving, then I should certainly be in a great deal of pain. However, why these men should hurt me so would be a mystery to me then, for they act on behalf of something that simply doesn’t exist.

If enough people undertake the individual action of recognizing the unreality and removing it from their minds, there would simply not be enough of those who still believe to enforce the idea. A minority in a location of the world believing in something that everyone around them thinks is laughable would dissolve the idea fully, unless it is a matter of faith.

This, however, is not faith but science. The mass understanding of power and what role we allow it to play in our lives, this... “empowerment” of the people, would transform the world. Each and every person rising up would realize that, as far as power is concerned, every single person on this planet is just as powerful as another and therefore equal.



The Great Letdown of Democracy

For all our genius and accomplishment, you'd think we'd have figured out a better way of organizing ourselves by now. We're so far into the future that going to the moon is nostalgic, but we're running on a two hundred year old document, written back when bathing was considered a bad idea and powdered wigs were all the rage.

Science has science as a backing. That is to say, when science discovers something new, that new thing becomes a platform for future achievement. It, at least in theory, is void of attachments. Because of this, science can grow at a nearly unlimited rate, always flying forward into infinity. So I wonder: What backs government?

The obvious answer is that people back government. The subjectivity of the human experience is the platform for future governmental achievement. So our first problem is that subjectivity is subject... some people like

it one way, others another. The second is that it is full of attachments, habits, and prejudices, which makes it extremely difficult to grow.

Perhaps we would benefit more if we saw government as a science and not as an exclusive club. The desire to belong is one of the strongest feelings a person can have, but so long as people feel they belong to a government they will never allow it to change. How horrible is it that a government would actively promote this sense of belonging? We see its effects across the world: war, genocide, elitism, bigotry, xenophobia, and all the rest.

Democracy was supposed to change all of this, for embedded in the notion of people-rule is the ability to *change*. As we grew as humanity, so to would our understanding of government. With those in charge continually being replaced, the government itself would continually adapt and mirror our increasing understanding of the world around us. This was a radical new direction for government at the time.

The Great Letdown of Democracy is in its stagnation. We have no one or thing to blame apart from ourselves; we became Americans in form but not in substance. The Founding Fathers risked everything on a new idea, a Grand Experiment. They were pioneers on the bleeding edge of innovation. A true American, to me, is someone who embraces the same spirit of adventure and forward-thinking experimentation. To be American should mean to be bold, willing to risk it all on advancing the human condition, freeing humanity not through force of arms but by an increased

understanding of ourselves.

Where are the people always looking for a better way? What have they discovered? And most importantly: When can we start trying something new?



Changing My Tone

I was recently chastised by a girl I know for being too serious. It was an odd view, as I've always believed I'm extremely easygoing and lighthearted. Once she said it, however, I could suddenly see my mannerisms and word choices as coming across as highly dramatic and heavy-handed.

For instance, my embellishments to a story (created from my side to make the story more interesting) could make the listener believe I actually felt as serious as I was portraying. I would even go so far as to express my life goal, which I believe a beautiful and peaceful vision, in terms of the most dire world-destruction scenarios.

Because I really wanted a girlfriend and was desperately trying to dig myself out of the bitterness I felt encasing my heart, I decided that it was time to actually speak and act in closer accord to the good sides of what I felt and believed. Doing so, however, would take some effort to break long-standing habits.

The biggest one was the way I described my life goal.

Usually, I start out by explaining how our entire social structure is based on electricity and gasoline, both of which could easily be stopped. If I'm feeling particularly ramble-y I might also explain how, without the gold standard, our currency is worthless and could, at a moment's notice, become useless. I would then go on about how all of our food we eat here in Iowa is grown in California, which relies on trucks to get it here, and how the average home has a week's worth of food, and the average grocery store has enough for another week (for the population it serves) without re-supply. I conclude that part of the speech by dramatically declaring that we are only three weeks away from mass starvation, and that even here in Iowa, thousands of people would die from hunger.

Because I could not, in good conscious, raise a family on such a flimsy system, my life goal was to buy land in the country, build a solid house off the grid, and grow my own food on the land. This way I could ensure the people I love would always have a home and enough to eat, no matter what.

Now this, to me, makes a lot of sense and it doesn't seem "down" or negative in any way. It is a frank and honest assessment of life in America and the stability of our infrastructure, coupled with a strong desire to protect and support my family, both present and future. But apparently the whole "we could die horribly a mere three weeks from now" comes across as a little too dramatic for some people. As I'm always up for some change, I decided that maybe I would benefit from a fresh perspective on the matter.

One of the first things I noticed about changing speech patterns is that one must change the way he or she thinks. The most obvious reason for this is that speech is based on thought. One cannot fully think X and say Y without also having to mentally acknowledge Y as well. Because thinking one thing and saying another is tiring and comes across as a lie, I found that I first had to change the way I personally saw things. To take the main example, instead of thinking about how our food distribution system is so fragile, I had to come back to personal (positive) reasons that I would want to do the same thing. As I didn't have any experience gardening or growing food yet, I couldn't say "for the love of working the land." But I do know that a life that eats a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables is healthier, so I could say that I want to move to the country and grow food because that food would be delicious and extremely healthy for me and my family. Not to mention it would also be awesome.

This beginning of the mental shift to a new perspective began opening doors and windows of awareness in me. New possibilities began flooding in, things I had never thought about before but suddenly became richly fulfilling to just think about: The ability to create a wonderful land filled with magic and life so that my family, thousands of years from now, can enjoy. Bringing the land back in harmony. Physically creating and entering into the next phase of human civilization and interaction, once lived on the Earth, at once real and spiritual. Being that focal point that can break through all the crap in the world... ah, but we've strayed into the negative again.

Thinking in these terms shed so much light on the idea that it seemed brand new to me, a thing done without regard to the world, just something I would do simply because I would enjoy it and would make life better for me and others.

But what amazed me the most was not what it did to my vision, but, rather, how it expanded it. Before it was just me and family in a house, isolated from the world for the most part, watching as it tore itself apart. Shifting the thoughts, suddenly the house/land/money was all taken for granted, and then I saw myself before the city council, presenting a gift of thousands of solar panels. These panels and wind turbines would cover up to 40% of the city's power needs with minimal maintenance. Along with this ridiculously generous gift, I bring a three-stage plan to make the city eventually energy-and-food independent. This would not be a "we must do this or we will all die horribly!" thing, but rather the simple and obvious next step for society: the people would be happier paying less (or nothing at all!) for their power bills, people could find jobs and better, healthier produce locally (which also would help keep money in the local economy), and a city that was self-sustaining and off the grid would attract a huge amount of tourism and interest in the town, allowing it to grow in affluence and business. Such a model would have no detractors, because for the most part it would be funded by myself and other rich people, for no benefit to ourselves other than we get to live in such an awesome town.

This new proving ground, this exciting new area of

human/societal development, could be just the thing to spark the desire in others. It could be that other towns and cities begin to strive for independence from the grid and truck-based food supply, not out of any sort of fear or negative view of health, but simply because it makes more economic sense. Maybe then local governments will fully realize that their role is to make the lives of their citizens better, and from there, who knows where that could go?

I didn't expect all this ridiculously hopeful day-dreaming to result from trying to modify the way I talked about things—it all spawned and swelled in my head, leaking out into my bones as a sort of vision of hope, an idea so enticing and lucrative and possible I had no choice but to seek it out.

It all seems so wonderful, this new vision of the future, and nowhere in it do things like societal decay, war, third-world enslavement, pollution appear... like dropping an atomic bomb of light and awesomeness, obliterating anything nearby, the fallout drifting on the winds around the world.



World Peace as Instinctual Memory

A very wise man once said something like: “It’s not that we create world peace. No no. All we do is *uncover* the already existent state.” That is to say, the natural state of the world is peace—it requires no effort to maintain and no path to get to.

In fact, it takes quite a bit of effort to maintain a war. Perpetual, world-spanning war should seem so counter to our natural state that it is a wonder we can do it at all. Certainly, for those who want to, all energy and effort can be exerted in any area they so wish. Personally, it all seems so tiring and warping.

Now there are those who say there are a lot of people out there who want to kill me and those I love. I don’t doubt it. I’d be pretty pissed if someone killed my family. I’d start looking for a responsible party and make sure they couldn’t do that to anyone else. As far as I know, however, neither I nor anyone in my family has killed anyone, so we’re in the clear. By association, however, is another topic.

(As for the truly evil people who just want to kill for the hell of it, well... they're so rare, so almost non-existent I'd spend my time better worrying about tornadoes or hurricanes. I also don't live in a big city, so the odds of someone trying to take something of mine by force are as low as they can be.)

So we're not killing anyone and no one is out to kill us. I have the feeling, the suspicion, the rough gut feeling that's the case for most people out there. Not out of some strange lifestyle choice, but simply because it's easier, more human, to be that way.

That alone constitutes enough people for world peace. In fact, world peace seems so tangible, so interwoven in the fabric of the world, that the presence of violence stands out so vividly that we can't help but marvel at it. We, the normal, everyday people, are a peaceful lot. It takes a lot to get us moving.

So why bother? There always seems to be someone out there willing to risk a lot of other people's lives to gain something fully intangible and imaginary. Yet, this person always loses it in the end, or someone else comes and "takes" it. Why, I ask these people, why bother putting all that effort into attaining such destructive and imaginary goals?

The world will go back to the way we vaguely remember it being... a peaceful, happy place. How many of us are around to see it is a question left to those in charge.



Death Musing

One of the great assumptions of our time—perhaps of all time—is that death, while not only inevitable, is *equal*. That is to say, regardless of the person who is experiencing it, it is always the same, the great unifying factor, the common thread to all human beings.

This state is something all men experience, much like all men must eat, sleep, and poop, but perhaps it shares something else with the life of man... that is, what you put into it is what you get out of it.

I'm not saying one should invest oneself in death, far from it. The idea here is that death is so often referred to as the “sleep of life,” that one's lifetime a day, and one's death the night. If death is the sleep of life, then I will point out a very common experience: How one applies oneself during the day dictates how delicious his sleep is.

It has been the experience of every man (who cares to apply himself) that arising early and spending the full day devoted to good, strong activity, finds that when

night has come and he is tired his bed is the warmest, most inviting thing in Creation, and can find no greater happiness than letting himself fall into that deep and restful abyss.

Conversely, a man who arises late, hungover, and spends his day dishonestly and slothfully, when night comes around he is reluctant to face his bed, and when forced to do so finds his sleep unsatisfying and restless, punctuated by frightful dreams.

If one wishes to sleep well, he must spend his day well. And if only one day's activity can dictate the quality of a man's sleep that night, it must stand to reason that the hero's sleep, the rest of a man who did his best regardless of circumstances, must be so overwhelmingly peaceful that we, the still living, cannot fathom it.



The Art of Yielding

“What Do I Lose?”

This question radically transformed my life. What do I lose by being wrong? What do I lose by having this situation over another? What do I lose by going this way instead of that? What do I lose by not being involved?

A younger me always had to be right... so obsessed that I would make up sources to quote, statistics to wave like a magic wand, and all of the research I did was simply seeking out how right I was. As I got older, however, all this “being right” began to lose meaning. Why did I need to be right? What did I lose by being wrong? It took some time, of course, just getting used to the idea of entering into a conversation about politics or religion and then, what? Admit defeat? That I was wrong, or didn’t know enough about the subject? That, shudder, the other person was... *right*? Horrors!

Yet, there was something charming in the idea, and around the edges it seeped in, until I tried it. I began to admit when I was wrong, when I didn’t know, that...

yes, they were right.

The real challenge came soon thereafter. Up until that point, the topics on which I would yield were science-and-research based. Personal ideas, subjective material, how could I possibly say something like “you’re right” when I believed something else?

Well, I didn’t, really... but something unexpected happened: I found myself secure in my beliefs. Supported by this security, I realized I was not trying to convince someone to believe what I did, but rather revered other people and what they believed, how they arrived at these beliefs, and so on. Instead of a debate, our talk would become me asking them, in depth, what they believed and why. In the end, I found that such interest in other people’s beliefs had a more profound impact on my own than any sort of convincing before it.

With the peace and easygoing fun that yielding in conversations brought to the table, it was only a natural extension to apply it to every area of life. Making my schedule, going on dates, driving, what restaurant to go to, trying to get things from people... the more I emptied my boat, the less I had to prove, the more I could yield to the changing circumstances and situations, the more people were willing to help me accomplish my goals.

It is an odd fact of life that the less you try to enforce, the more effective you’ll be at doing. Not trying to force the world to bend and shape to my will, my will took the shape of the world. What did I lose for this? I

sacrifice small things (being right, ego, the way I want it done) to easily accomplish the large, important things (the final goals, what I really want). For a man who yields and is flexible, the world itself will rise up and support him in his endeavors.

It doesn't even hurt to truly be wrong. In fact, it is oddly liberating... and addictive.



Dramatic Action

I'm an unwavering fan of dramatic, epic actions. Life affords us so few true opportunities to do it that if someone sees a chance, I say go for it.

Fortune favors the bold.

It makes no sense to me how people can accept a horrible situation for a large segment of their life simply from the fear of things being different. What makes even less sense to me is how people can be suicidal about how bad their lives are, and instead of taking that desperation and using it to do something far outrageous and groundbreaking, they just hole up inside themselves and end it.

And what makes even less sense to me than that is how people have decided that they can't do something. I've asked people with the money and the time why they don't go to a place they would love to be, and they say they can't. When pressed, no excuse holds any weight other than the fact that they've just decided that action was impossible for them.

Now, I'm not saying a depressed person should go shoot up a shopping mall. Obviously that's idiotic, and won't improve anyone's life. The idea of Fortune favoring the bold is that gain is involved. Gain is best when shared... so if you want the best gain, make sure everyone gains. Yes, even you.

It's so odd how people feel stuck and unable to move, and yet the place they are stuck in has no connection with them. When someone sits in a place they are connected to, moving about is easy... one has their roots. Lacking roots, however, one has nothing... but the bad kind of nothing, the one that promotes insecurity.

Whether you have a secure dramatic action or one born of desperation, the action itself is what matters. Does your life suck? What's the most outlandish thing you desperately want to do, but never believed it possible?

Go out and do it. Maybe you've only got enough money to make it to the airport or the harbor. Maybe you've got to hitchhike and sleep in the streets. Just go and do it. Spin the wheel. Anything is better than a life of suck... and if, in the end you come back to where you started, at least you'll have an interesting story to tell.



Scarcity Thinking

If there were one bad habit I could liberate the world of, it would be scarcity thinking. I believe this outlook has caused more damage (and caused more scarcity!) than any other factor known to humanity.

Once upon a time, there was actual scarcity. The people, lacking in science and understanding, couldn't grow enough food to have overabundance. Soon people banded together to reduce scarcity and protect against those who wished to take their resources. Towns, cities, city-states, and nations arose in time.

For all our advancements over the past few thousand years, people still subconsciously believe that there is simply not enough to go around... but the era of scarcity is over. We grow more food than there are people to eat it all, even *with* our horrible, soil-destroying agricultural practices and livestock consumption. We can grow bananas in the cold mountains, we can turn arid deserts into fields, and we can do it all on half the land we use now. Utilizing the best we have to offer, we could radically shift human understanding from lack to overabundance.

Even more telling is our advancement in societal understanding: Someone wishes to take what we have. Instead of killing them, all we have to do is send our best people over and help them achieve the same things for themselves. By filling the lack with abundance, we achieve peace and prosperity for both parties. True abundance spills out over the sides.

I think it ironic that those who promote scarcity thinking among the population for personal gain do so out of greed—greed being itself a product of scarcity thinking. Why would anyone want more than he could ever use, at the expense of others? Simply—they feel lack and the need to fill it. And if there's only so much to go around, then... I'd better take all I can get.

But there's too much to go around. For those who care to look and apply themselves, there's more in this universe, even this planet, than we could ever need. *Need* being the operative word, of course, for in this world of plenty we're chasing after too much while hardly getting anything at all.

I do wonder what it is we're all after. As far as I can see, food is the single most important resource on the planet. Air is around for free, water falls out of the sky, but food requires effort and skill. A truly rich and powerful man, in my view, is the man who commands not just food but the ability to create it—in short, a farmer.

Yes, that's right. Farmers who grow food for human consumption are the most powerful people on the planet. We have abundance because of them. The only reason you can work your 60-80 hour work weeks for low

pay, or your cushy high-paying no-effort job is because of them. All the advancements we've enjoyed are because of their benevolence.

We're simply lucky that farmers tend to be generous people. They could ask for any price they wished for their products, and a society like ours would have to pay it. They could wield unheard-of power simply by flooding their products in one area and denying them outright to others. They could create and remove scarcity at their mere whim. They could destroy nations.

Thank God that's not the case... yet. The wars we fight today are not about food production but political ideology. The scarcities we're afraid of have to do with oil and power and freedom. Our next meal is taken for granted... and hence, actual scarcity is unknown to us.

How much of your life is ruled by the idea of scarcity?



A Radical New Idea

My revolutionary idealism stems from a radical new idea, one that is perhaps completely unheard of in the long course of human history: the idea that every human life is worth exactly the same.

That is to say that race, color, religion, sexuality, political belief, lifestyle, location, net worth, power, cash on hand, social status, health, fashion sense, tribe, history, leadership, virtues, failings, and every other possible way we can distinguish between people has no bearing on how much their life is worth. Put another way, the president's life is worth no more or less than a prisoner, a sustenance farmer, or you. The law of equality of human life holds true across every spectrum.

I've traveled enough of the world to realize that everyone is just like everyone else. We're all human beings, people, with life and problems and work and family and everyone. There are so few evil men in the world, it is hardly worth noticing. The rest of us are just the rest of us.

“All men are created equal.” We learned that back in elementary school. I wonder how many people in America today actually think about it. Note it does not say “All Americans are created equal,” it is *all men*, and in the English language the male can be used for the third-person neutral gender. Everyone. Equal.

So we consider the question of defense. How many people can you kill in the name of protecting people? What number of people have to die before the scales of equality tip too far? Seems to me that if defense is the aim, saving lives should be the priority, not taking them.

Maybe I’m wrong. Maybe, when God was making people, he deemed some lives in terms of worth: how many others can die for this one. Maybe he grouped them all into certain nations, and put the rest in other nations. Maybe he blessed those worth more to see it, and those not worth anything were made blind to the fact.

Somehow I doubt it. Maybe I’m arrogant and ignorant, thinking that if this is how I and my friends live, maybe it’s how people all over the world love and live. Maybe I’m so high on myself I believe everyone feels entitled to his or her life. Maybe everyone else is deluded like me.



There Are No Rules

Nothing makes me slowly shake my head more than people who tell me they are “breaking the rules.” What rules? How can you “break” them? All I see are some people telling you to not do something, and others doing it.

These are not laws. Laws are a system of punishment for behavior, not guidelines for living. Laws only apply to those who embrace them—those who don’t embrace them may still be punished, but without recognizing the law the punishment seems random and void of meaning to them.

Rules, on the other hand, *are* guidelines for living... but that doesn’t mean they are real. If someone tells me a rule, I thank him or her and weigh it accordingly. If it works for the best to limit my behavior for the sake of others, then so be it. Otherwise, I just act as I feel I should.

It is odd how often a life without rules falls perfectly within them. I’m not out to take from others or disrupt

things, and however people want something done is how I will try to do it. I just do as I please, being the best person I can.

It makes no sense to me, then, how people can get a rush from breaking the rules. I have a teen-aged friend who told me how much fun it was to kick over port-a-potties at the local park. I didn't get it... it takes a lot of effort to get one of those things on its side, and what do I gain for the effort? Smelling it? Making someone else clean it all up? The police after me?

No, she said, it was the rush of breaking the rules.

What rules, I asked?

She told me I needed to stop living inside the box, to go out and do whatever I wanted to.

I told her I already did, but she did not believe me. How could someone be happy following the rules?

What rules? I asked. I do what I please, and everything has turned out nicely so far. I suggested she try it. She said she already does what she pleases, including breaking the rules.

Maybe some people need rules in their lives in order to break them. Whatever makes 'em happy, I guess!



Long Fingernails

Long fingernails freak me out. I don't mean in any sort of alarmist way, rather, just a sort of... hesitancy. I'm afraid I'm going to get scratched.

I mean, look at those things! They're not nails, they're talons! Sharp-edged weapons on the end of every finger... and I'm supposed to let those claws near my soft bits? I don't think so, lady.

Painting them doesn't help. It just draws attention to the tiny biological swords aimed at my vitals, a big old neon warning sign. I understand that long fingernails are considered "pretty" by their owners and perhaps other people with long fingernails so they can all gather around in mutual appreciation and back scratches. The rest of us live under the thin, glossy sheen of finger-related violence.

I don't really get the purpose of them, beyond having some pretty thing to look at. They break seemingly all the time (from the perspective of one who has never had them). They get in the way, effectively preventing you

from typing, punching, and playing the guitar (at least on one hand). And when do you cover them with paint, it just chips off soon thereafter, leaving a strange blotch of color on each one.

In conclusion, long fingernails are the source of misery, pain, and suffering not just for the owner, but all those flayed in the process of interaction.



Joy and Forgetfulness

Addressing the problems is flawed, because it promotes Problem Awareness. “Problem Awareness” is a state of being, in which one is not just aware of the problems but consumed by them. You can see it in certain people; they feel obligated to maintain Problem Awareness at all times.

The problem with Problem Awareness is that people under its influence tend to be very serious, dour, and unhappy. They radiate it, making you feel guilty for having a fun time. No one can stand up to it, because... yeah, there are a lot of problems with the world, and we are the children of fortune. The party-goers become somber in the face of starving children.

This sort of self-flogging won't do at all. The party goes on, evening ruined but money spent and time committed. The next day the problem that ruined the night before is forgotten in the duties of the day. Far better for us to enjoy, and spend our days devoted to better action.

Life is improved in the proximity of life. We should endeavor to be so filled with life that it spills out over our sides into the world. Joy promotes life.

The next time I find myself under Problem Awareness, I'll try to find something to be joyful about, and base my actions on that. What a life, that could only be accused of spreading joy!



The Practical Application of the Knowledge of Power Against Immovable Natural Forces

Now that we understand the two types of power (physical and imaginary) and we understand a person's unlimited power in regards to his own situation, we should consider how this plays into the world at large.

The world is also composed of two elements, the Human and the Natural. The Human element fits quite clearly under the "imaginary" category of power, while the Natural obviously fits into the "physical." Understanding how imaginary power works puts one in a position to act effectively in the Human world. However, our understanding of the physical power doesn't seem to affect our ability to work in the Natural world.

In a way, we already know all there is to know about the physical power and how it works in the natural world. We know how cars work and drive them around,

we know the power that a gun has and avoid being shot, we walk on the solid ground with assurance that each step comes down, and so on in millions of tiny things we take for granted.

Through our own experience we know we can rely on all these natural forces (it's science). It seems, however, that we don't rely on them *enough*. If the natural force is truly immovable and solid, then we can depend on it with absolute faith—this will increase our peace of mind and ability to focus on the Human world more.

For example, I know for a fact that the Earth will always be there for me. Each step I take has this faith, this love, at the core. Should I trip and fall, the Earth will catch me. Should I fall from an airplane, the Earth will embrace me with open arms. And when the last breath of life leaves this body, it will rest gently in the Earth. This immovable force of Earth is an absolute reliance and a source of joy and peace.

In the same way, we can rely on all these Natural forces to work as they should. We strive to understand more and more of these Natural Laws to give ourselves an even greater sense of peace and well-being. Should they appear to fail, it was not their failure but simply a lack of understanding from our side. This will, in turn, inspire us to understand even more about these immovable factors. (This fail-and-understand-more is why children play, and there's no reason it shouldn't be as easy for us as adults.)

Between the immaterial and material we find all strata of the Universe. A person armed with the twin forces

of reliance upon physical power and understanding of the imaginary is a peaceful, unstoppable force. The tiniest bit of understanding is all that is required to radically change the way a person, all of humanity, works in the world. This is the true practicality of the knowledge of power.



Revolution

The United States government is a fraud on every level. Long ago subverted by corporate interests, it now exists as a figurehead and authority-wielder for profits at the expense of human lives. The greed driving the machine has reached epic proportions, to the point where it is safe to call it evil.

More than that! Nearly every aspect of life is tainted by this greed. Rampant, unchecked consumerism. Poisoned food and water. Agricultural practices that destroy soil, water, and entire ecosystems. Money based on nothing. DDT manufactured and shipped to countries that don't have the sense to ban it. Everyone knows at least one horrible thing that continues to happen under the blessings of the United States government.

All of this and more leads us, the young, stupid, and bored, to the inescapable conclusion that the federal government of the United States of America is a blight upon the world, an unholy entity that thrives on death and destruction. It must be removed.

But, as I've said before, the process of removal is unlike anything presented to us before. Shooting guns at something that shoots guns for a living is only going to anger it, and probably make it stronger. The process of removal is in recognizing its unreality. Understanding that it does not in fact exist makes it effortless to dethrone government from the mind... from there, actions take their natural course.

I am completely and entirely in favor of revolution. However, I'm in favor of *effective* revolution, not the violence born of frustration and impotence. As far as I can see, the protesters are as caught up in the illusion as the governmental employees, the senators and the President. There's no fixing this mess, all we'd do is muck it up. Let's just take the step in the direction we need to go, and forget the shadows trying to hold us back!



The Theory of Overabundance

I just watched *Who Killed the Electric Car*, a documentary on the brief and highly successful appearance of the electric car in California, and its sudden and inexplicable destruction. It was a very well-constructed film, evenhanded and fair. I know because I'm not seething right now... although by all rights I should be. In fact, I'm not even angry.

A younger me would be up in arms, and fall asleep planning and thinking out some bizarre revolutionary actions, which, as a theme, would end with me standing on the White House roof, commander-in-chief's head in one hand and a sword in the other, watching as the old world tore itself apart.

But... something happened to me. It grew over the years, little by little, but it suddenly came to full effect soon after Maharishi Mahesh Yogi passed away: I could no longer think about social change in terms of violence. I tried, old habits and all, but my mind would just sort of... slip off it, falling into a feeling that we really could just make things better by making things better.

But it wasn't until I wrote "Changing My Tone" that I saw the way. The path to complete revolutionary social change lies in abundance. Abundance of everything: energy, food, money, space, education, freedom, turnips... you name it, let's have more than we know what to do with.

Let's have so much energy that it is free, so plentiful it becomes too cheap to bother charging for. How can we do this? By finding the best possible method of making energy with the least amount of bother: Solar. Wind. Geothermal. If we put so much of this out around our community, soon the entire community will be powered locally. With just the slightest bit of help for maintenance from the county government, no one in that county would have to pay for something that comes free.

Let's have so much food we give it to other people, 'cause we're stuffed. How? By growing our food locally, converting lawns into gardens, converting those huge tracks of corn/soybeans into food actual people can eat... local organic produce, the best kind of food. Let's make so much that even if something horrible happened there'd still be too much. And while we're at it, with the excess we can ship off to whomever we wish, for no other reason than we're good people happy to share.

Let's have so much money we don't even bother with it anymore. Let's make a local currency based on a real commodity, like gold or rice or gallons of water. Let's make sure it is worth something, and let's make enough so that people can use it properly. With everyone doing

something, there is always something for trade.

Let's have enough space for someone to settle down where he or she feels comfortable. Let's chop up those giant cornfields into small family farms, abandon the mega-cities and let the spaces in between become wilderness again.

Let's have more knowledge than we know what to do with. Let's teach our children like they are real people, not automations that can only be measured by a standard built around no one. Let's have the parents impart knowledge to their kids, let's have experts work in a community, let's have apprenticeships and college for education (not diploma's) sake. Let's be so damn smart it's annoying.

We have total freedom already, but... let us remember it, and act accordingly. Let us not bend down before false masters, worshiping a theory and an experiment from the distant past. Let us live in total freedom today, in the world as we have it, without fear.

Let's have so many turnips you'd go green just thinking about them. We could eat them, give them to friends, feed them to livestock, trade for something else, plant anew, compost for better soil, or hell... even throw out.

In the end, as much as I hate to admit it, I've found thinking about resolving our current national and global ills with violence to be self-indulgent, shortsighted, and counter-productive. The power does not lie in the wholesale slaughter of all the fancy corporate executives and politicians; by cutting off the head of the snake, it

turns into a hydra. Yelling and screaming into the deaf and dumb American ear does jack-all, I think we all know that.

What is left, then? Tapping into the natural flow of human life, bringing what is closest to the truth to the surface. The power in the water comes from the flow. People are human; innately and instinctively, they understand what is right, normal, and natural—and what is not. The vast amount of unrest we see in society today comes from the unspoken feeling that this... it just isn't right. Not for human beings, not for us. But in that desperate search for truth people see none, have no beacons to guide them home, and set their courses instead for whichever shore promises the most happiness, like they saw in that TV commercial.

Therefore, my path is clear: Gain more money than I know what to do with, use it to make my home free. Not by erecting walls and declaring independence, but by erecting solar panels and wind turbines, making it energy independent. Not by renouncing the evils of the federal government, but by doing such a good job in the community that the all the services the federal government provide become irrelevant, outdated, and unnecessary. In effect, we win the revolution by simply being better (modern, normal) than those who wish to hold us back.

And should anyone wish to stop us, I may find a bit of the younger me still willing to put up a fight.



Untold Riches

Technology is truly a God-given gift. No one in his or her right mind can seriously suggest we step backwards in terms of technology; to do so would be shooting ourselves in the foot. Humanity is marked by achievement, advancement, and unfolding of new ideas. A devolution in technology would inevitably be overcome by the newer generations.

Proper use of our technological powers, however, is something everyone should be concerned about. Yes, we know how to split an atom... but *should* we? Maybe splitting an atom is a sin in the eyes of God, and the bad karma for destroying such a beautiful thing comes back to us in the deadly piles of never-ending nuclear wastes. (What will be the repercussions for dividing our genetic material?)

Hand-in-hand with improper technological abuse is the suppression of new and better technology. Everyone in the United States today is being squeezed by high gas prices, as our entire infrastructure and way of life is threatened and abused by a handful of very rich men

half a world away. Any rational group of people would look for a new way of getting around, one that was not dependent on some scarce fuel. Yet no one in the mainstream is even mentioning that possibility.

Seems to me that common sense would be the ruling factor here. Electric (or compressed air) cars nowadays can go as far on a single charge as a gas car can on a tank of gas. All it would take is a small shift in technology to allow the batteries to be replaced like one would fill a tank of gas, and there you go... the same infrastructure, the same way of life, but no dependence on oil, no ruining the atmosphere, and the ability for people to take back some measure of power.

The best part in all of this: If someone were to see this logical shift in technological emphasis before it occurred, that person would be in a position to make a ridiculous amount of money. I understand that our technological advancement is being suppressed in the pursuit of profits, but greed can never win over simple, common sense. It would only be a matter of time and effort before a crack in the suppression field showed, and hitting that spot for all we've got may shatter the entire thing.

And if we can make money doing it, well... our morals and our wallets would both sleep easy at night.



Problems

Problems. Despite what you may think, having problems is fine—everybody’s got ‘em, and they give us something to do. The real problem is *acceptance*. That is, when we start growing used to them, or even comfortable with them. In short, the danger is when it stops being “a problem” and starts being “my problem.”

No problem is life-destroying until it is accepted and expected as part of oneself—it is at that point that it starts to kill the natural you behind it. The reason we recognize them as “problems” in the first place is because they don’t belong, they block our underlying real self—if this were not the case then there would be no distinction within ourselves between “us” and “our problems.”

The process of removing problems isn’t “fixing,” then, but an uncovering of an existent, natural you. Some people, however, get so helplessly attached to their “problems” that they’ll base their whole life and outlook around a misery that isn’t even theirs to begin with! The idea of life without these problems, the notion of

enjoying life naturally becomes something frightful, scary, to be avoided at all costs.

There are, of course, those deeply ingrained problems that mar and scar a person, generally from early childhood. These problems, having latched themselves on from the start, lie very close to one's sense of self. Yet, the simple idea that it is a trauma, a scar, means that you still have the clear ability to see it distinct from yourself—that is to say, it is still obviously not a part of you. The ability to distinguish it as a separate thing means that you have the power to remove that problem. I don't care how severe it is, how horrible it was, how much it rules your life today or how long you've lived with it. So long as you can see both it and you as separate entities, then you have the power, inherently, to remove it. There is no part of a person, no aspect, no part of his or her physical, mental, or spiritual makings that he or she does not have the power to change, if the will be present. Of this I am absolutely convinced.

Then there are those who believe that the pressure that problem-blockages provide can be used for good. Although I'm all a fan of pressures, with a little bit of analysis one can see that all enjoyable pressures (for a few examples: sex, shoulder rub, chewing, doin' stuff) all utilize brief pressure, then release. None of those things would be fun if, instead of pressure-release-repeat, they just kept adding pressure onto pressure with no movement other than a stifling one. Applying that to real life, pressure certainly can keep us moving in the right direction, so long as we find permanent, lasting relief from it. There'll always be a new pressure to get us

going again, life assures us of this.

So I don't want to hear from people who think getting rid of a problem is impossible, because thinking and talking are useless. I don't want to hear from people who tried and failed, because that means you just put in less effort than it takes. And the people who actually did it, well... there's really no reason for us to talk, is there?



Materialism

(or, How To Throw Away All Your Stuff and Enjoy It)

“What do I need to live a wonderful, happy life?”

I never fully considered this question until I came as close as I ever have to completely breaking down. I was in a foreign country where I did not speak the language, out of money, no prospects, no friends or family within thousands of miles, and no life direction. For the first time I was adrift in life.

I decided, shaking and crying, to postpone the worst of it for later. As I was traveling alone, I decided to lighten my load and get rid of some things from my bags. One of the items was a pocket-sized copy of the *Tao Te Ching*.

I had always meant to read it but never found the time. Because I had time now, I sat down and opened it up. Every page was a revelation. I could feel my physical body re-arranging itself in the light of this knowledge. At the end of it I closed the book, leaned back, and closed my eyes.

The horrible things that threatened to destroy me turned around and became my greatest allies. What did I need? All at once the most important things in life came to me. I needed the clothes on my back, enough to eat, and a warm place to sleep at night. That was all. The rest was gravy.

Even to this day I know, deep down inside, that all of it is a blessing, but an unnecessary one. Not naked? Check. Full? Check. Got someplace nice to sleep? Check. Done.

It's not nice to expect someone to have a similar outlook without having undergone similar circumstances. I'm not going to tell you what to do, how to dig yourself out of the pile of stuff you might have buried yourself in. All I can share is something from my own experience: Peace comes from the Self, so the more you remove items of identification ("this is mine") the easier it is to reach yourself, the easier it is to find the peace you're looking for.

It's something to consider, in any event.



Fun

Fun, I think, is the super-mega-bazooka +15 against evil.

If you didn't understand that, allow me to rephrase: Fun, true fun, is a sure sign that we're doing the right thing at the right time. There's no evil in all of Creation that can stand up to fun. As a result, they may try to twist it to their ends, and therein lies our responsibility: making sure we're actually having fun.

All too often we get caught up thinking certain actions are fun and others are not. Although we have an experience to back up this idea, the past is no set pattern for the future. This goes so far as "having fun" being thought of as the only way to have fun.

I have this idea that declaring what you want the result of an action to be is like walking into a club and demanding to enjoy yourself. Sometimes it works! Most of the time, however, people will avoid you and go for the kids who don't make demands of people.

Much better, I think it, to abandon declarations and

expectations. We don't try to have fun, nor do we do anything specifically formulated to create fun. We then find that all manner of things large and tiny become delightful, unexpected sources of our greatest joys.

What better fun is that which arises unexpectedly from an unusual source? By removing the idea that we have to go out of our way to create it, we allow for it to come to us as it will. And because fun loves company, soon enough it will be with us every day.



The World is Perfect

I'm going to say something that might be unexpected, but it is really the only thing I believe in: The world, all of Creation, is completely perfect in every possible way.

It seems strange to write a book about all the world's problems and what we can do about them, when my basic fundamental belief is in utter perfection of everything. To that end, I usually modify the above statement by saying: The world *outside our heads* is perfect in every way.

Immediately images of starvation, disease, war and violence, pollution, and any other issues you associate with “what is wrong with the world” will come to mind to refute this statement. I'm not saying these things aren't horrible problems—I fully agree we need to fix it all as soon as possible.

What I mean by “the world outside our heads” is this: There is Creation, and then there is the meaning we attach to it. An example: my desk. I say “desk” and

you conjure up an image of a desk. I point to it and you can see it, touch it, taste it, move it around the room. We can both agree the desk is real... however, the concept of “desk” only exists within our minds. We can break it down into wood, but “wood” is also a concept, as are the molecules, the atoms and elements. There simply is, but the distinctions we place on it (like “desk” and “the air around it,” for example) is a distinction we place for convenience.

The whole world exists as it does, regardless of how or what we think of it. This thing we do, our mental projection we place on top of the world, allows us to interact with it, and each other, easily. It allows us to walk in the world as a master of it, rather than blind and dumb to what we see. It allows us to help our fellow man, or harm him. It really, for us, is the world.

But it is only the world inside our heads. It has a basis in the senses, but our decisions on the world and how to act therein is based *entirely on our mental construct*. The world outside our heads is a void, empty and free of any distinctions, a simple mass of matter and energy. There is no desk, there is no spoon, but our concept of spoon allows us to eat our cereal. Our concept of “problems” allows us to improve our worlds, but... the world itself has no problems, no situations, no good or evil, no light or dark, no wood or sound. It is just mass and energy interacting with itself without regard.

What we choose to draw from it is entirely up to us.



Friendliness Is Freedom

Friendliness = Freedom.

That is, friendship granted freedoms restricted to strangers and enemies. Consider this from your own personal experience: What things can you get, what places can you go, what professional and amateur services can you receive, simply by being friends with the person who has them? Or by being friends with their friend, just one degree removed? Whole worlds of resources and opportunities are constantly open to you by virtue of the people you are friendly with.

If this is the case with personal–personal interaction, how much more true is it on a societal and political level? Why are we allowed to travel to certain countries without so much as a glance at a passport, while others are simply off limits? The world itself certainly doesn't stop me from walking over imaginary lines; it is solely a human-interaction issue. The answer is: Friendliness.

This nation, for whatever reason, is “friends” with certain other nations, somewhat neutral to others, and

actively hostile to others. We have full access to our national friends in terms of economics, resources, and travel. It would follow, then, that a nation that is friendly with all other nations on Earth would have total, unrestricted access for travel and trade throughout the world... total freedom.

Such a nation could not exist in the current political atmosphere due to the belief of “right and wrong,” birthing the philosophy of “for/against” (either you actively support my actions or you are an enemy to me). Even a nation faultless in itself and working with a so-called “evil nation,” solely for the improvement of human life therein, will damn itself: The status of “friendship” with “evil nations” will throw that nation into the same or similar category.

This is actively restricting freedom. Creating national enemies due to proximity or trade restricts the freedom of the citizens of both nations. Every hostile action, every destructive influence put into the world has the very concrete and noticeable effect of reducing, blocking, and restricting freedoms on every level (national, economic, personal, spiritual, and so on).

I would say any nation that willingly goes to war or creates enemies is actively trying to destroy freedom in the world. It is as if a man refuses to have any friends unless they look, act, and dress like him, and believe the same things he does. Such a man is destined to be alone in the world, for anyone with a friend knows that these things don't matter... it is the friendship itself that counts.

Write What You Know

Ah, but what do I know?

Nothing. No, not a single thing.

Sometimes I think I know something, but then I get proven wrong.

So in all good conscience I can't write. Not a book, not even a sentence.

That's all well and fine, I could go my whole life not knowing.

But... no one else seems to have a clue either!

Some of them make millions promoting that fact!

Why can't I do that? Or at least have a go of it...

If I am doomed to failure, doing or not doing is irrelevant.

If there is the slightest chance of success, then doing is the only clear choice.

I don't walk into a jail cell and close the door behind me,

why should I close myself off from the chance of success?

Yeah, I don't have a friggin' clue.

Does this bother you?

Or does the fact that I acted regardless bother you more?



Decisions and Choices

Decisions and choices are not the same thing. A decision is a mental action that allows one to understand what it is one wishes to do. A choice is a physical action made in the moment of opportunity. I am who I am as the natural result of all of the choices I've made in my life, *not the decisions I've made*.

As an example, I could decide, based on experiences or understanding, that I would, for the rest of my life, only use Door Number Two. This decision is firmly entrenched in my mind, and anyone who asks will get the same answer: "I don't use Door Number One, I only go Two."

However, every time I stand in front of those two doors I must make a choice. Generally, ideally, I would go along with the decision I made and open Two. However, as life is never static and presents to us an ever-changing flow of different circumstances, there is a likelihood of me violating my decision and opening One. Maybe someone told me the prize is behind that door, maybe it was a dream I had, maybe just a hunch,

maybe I'm sick of Two and need something new, the reasons are infinitely possible. The choice of which door to open is a choice made *in the moment of choosing* that action, whereas a decision is simply a guideline is a mental path which we try to follow.

Of course, these words can be used interchangeably, but the effect is the same: It is the action alone that matters, not what you think about it.

This is the reason I don't make New Year's resolutions, why I can't follow any sort of moral law that can be written down in a form other than "there is no law, there just is." I spent most of my life laboring under the impression that one simply had to believe in a code of conduct, that all I had to do was make up my mind to do or not do something, and all of my actions would naturally fall into line, a sort of automatic robot-like state of life wherein all I had to do was upgrade the operational software and all actions would then work without conscious change. I do believe I was wrong.

The "trick," if there is one, is simply to know that your mental decisions are shit, and that it is the actions you undertake, the physical movement of your body, that counts for everything in your life. The two must eventually come to align with themselves, but this trick forces your mind to align with your choices, which are immediate and concrete, instead of trying to make your body align itself to a mental idea of what to do.

This is a much better way to approach life. The mind is unreliable in regards to correct action, as the capacity for imagination and justification is infinite. The heart,

too, can be led astray. However, I believe there is a moment before one makes an action where the entire cosmos splits, a crack forms, and we can peer directly into the Void... insight occurs. Honesty is required to acknowledge it, but it is there... and this insight allows us to know the right action to take. All one has to do then is simply *do* the right action.

This right action may be perfectly in line with our decisions, or they might be on the exact opposite side of the world from them, and our stress about the action is exactly in relation to how it measures up. Abandonment of decisions allows for a stress-free life and the ability to always take the right action, for there are no mental constructs for it to crash against.

Welcome to the Amoral World of Power



Being Lower Than

The ocean is the king of all rivers and streams because it lies lower than they do. The ocean is the most powerful as it is the end of all waterways. All power flows downward to the lowest vessel.

The smallest blade of grass is spared by the mower. While all around it grass reaches high and is cut down, the small blade is free to live its life unnoticed and unmolested.

Being the best at something means you are the mark that all ambitious people will test themselves against. Displaying yourself to the world means people will twist themselves around you, some trying to use you to change themselves and others trying to destroy you.

The difference between improvement and ambition is self-destruction. Achieving the height is achieving your eventual destruction. You wish to stand on the mountaintop? There is only room for one up there, and everyone claws his or her way up. I'd rather stand at the base where there is plenty of room for everyone, and no one makes a fuss of it.

Clarity and the Edge of the Sword

I had a very important realization about violence a few years ago, which radically changed the way I look at the world.

I was in an airport, spacing out to pass the time, and I began to daydream about being the ultimate bad ass, better than the hero of an action movie would be. Explosions, dodging bullets left and right, decapitating my enemies with the sword I've always carried on my back—the usual daydream for ragingly hormonal, undersexed, desensitized young men like myself, I suppose, as this was nothing new to me.

However, this time was different. Every man I killed in my mind had a family, a father, mother, and siblings, loved ones, maybe a wife and kids at home. Each man was a universe unto himself, a person no less real than myself, and carried with him a lifetime of experiences, of love and hate and joy and sorrow and the intense desire to stay alive. And every one who met his fate at

the edge of my sword, well... I wasn't killing some faceless masses in a movie, I was killing real men in my mind, and I suddenly realized that I couldn't kill anyone without knowing they too were men just like me.

I opened my eyes and looked around, unwilling to continue such a perverse fantasy. Yet, there was something to it, I knew, for I still found the idea of that situation appealing. I still felt myself drawn to violent video games and media, still fancied myself a warrior, still dreamed of being there on the battlefield someday. Weighed against what I had just realized, however, I could not bring these two aspects of my life together. I was missing a piece.

I reviewed the film in my mind for clues. Here I was, spinning in mid-air, dodging some bullets while cutting down a sunglasses-and-suit man, and I realized that those circumstances only matter so far as the effect they had on me. More specifically: Ultimate Clarity.

To act and survive under battlefield conditions one must, it seemed to me, experience such a profound state of clarity that it would transform his life forever. I had a small taste of it, not under violent circumstances, but I remember just how delicious it was, how all the complexities and problems in life vanished, and all that was left was where I was, where I needed to go, and what I needed to do. How much more intense those violent circumstances would be, and how amazing the clarity must be! One must reach up and touch the frightful, bowel-emptying *face of God!*

I understood, then, that all my ideas of battle and

violence had nothing to do with the violence itself; it was simply a daydream of the clarity I so desperately desired in my life. It was something I felt I could never achieve in regular, everyday life. My stimulants were not drugs but violence, imagined of course, in movies and games and the like. Sometimes the games were vivid enough to inspire some degree of actual clarity in me, but most often the buzz I got was from imagining myself in those situations, the sheer lucid clarity, the life-or-death goal, how much everything *mattered*.

I thank God I have a path to clarity that does not require violence. If there is a saving grace in my life, it is that the concept of enlightenment was taught to me at birth, and reinforced growing up by both knowledge and experience. Enlightenment—one could say it is the ability to see the world as it is, not as we think it is—both requires and implies that one is completely clear. One would not need violence in his life, for everything that he or she did would be so fulfilling there would be no need to seek out anything.

For if there is one thing I've learned about clarity, it is how so amazingly satisfying it makes everything. Clarity means one is no longer under the sway of external or internal powers, one is aware, and that awareness is real power, the power to act in a situation as you would want to, as you like. Lack of clarity is enslavement to one force or another. Freedom is enlightenment is clarity.

I don't have violent daydreams anymore, and I've lost my taste for violent video games. I still love them, of course, but I know why now, and I know that my time

is better spent gaining clarity for myself. Otherwise, someday I may be in a situation, and the lines will blur, and I, believing that violence would grant me clarity, would act not according to what I wanted, but rather what I *believed* I wanted... only to a tragic end.



The Creeping Plant of Perversion

Perhaps we should live as if the light of day shines
through the dark night,
under our covers or anywhere we care to hide,
and as if all our deeds lay bare
at the feet of passing strangers and loved ones.
The creeping plant of perversion,
this ugly,
twisting thing,
it thrives in darkness and solitude.
We must rip it out at the roots,
tear it bodily from ourselves
and toss it far away,
into the sunlight where it will burst into flames and ash,
and die.

We cannot hope to stand in the presence of ultimate
good ensnared

and weighted down by this creeper plant.

Do the gains of this freedom outweigh the instant grat-
ification

of our darker side?

This is a choice people must make for themselves.



Leaving People Alone

Do to others as you would have them do to you.

—The Golden Rule

The funny thing about the Golden Rule is that it usually makes more sense if you reverse it: If you want people to treat you a certain way, treat them that way.

Now, most people believe something that in their own experience is not true: Meddling in other people's affairs is good for them. That is, gathering information, passing judgment and expecting others to side with you, shunning and actively trying to change another's circumstances to what *they* feel is better, and so on. There is always an altruistic side to it: They just have your best interests in mind.

We certainly can't fault people for wanting others to have better circumstances. We can fault them for how they go about it.

For myself, I find a policy of respect to be the best.

That is, I respect my friends enough to let them make their own choices in life, and will only involve myself if they specifically ask for my help. Maybe this makes me a bad friend, as I've had to stand by and watch friends make bad choice after bad choice. Sometimes after enough bad choices they notice me standing by, willing to help, and call upon me. Or, vastly more often, they simply figure it out for themselves.

I would ask nothing less of my friends. The sheer enjoyment of adulthood comes from the ability to make unrestricted choices in life. Good-meaning friends who heap themselves upon you in an effort to "help" end up entangling and suffocating. Instead, they should be clearing the path, making ever-more options available. Respect should be a foundation of friendship, but far too often it is the first thing tossed aside in the effort to help.

As always, take it to the extreme: Imagine the worst of the choices people can make. What can a real friend do about it? Respect them and make yourself available. Always be around to help them, guide them, and talk to them. Be a shining example of right choices. If they are wise they will see, just by your presence, the right ones for them to take. Or they will spiral down into oblivion. A man saves or damns himself by his own actions.

Remember this: The How always changes, but the Why remains constant. Sometimes respect takes on the form of force, should a person be so far gone he loses the ability to make coherent thought. Without the ability to make a clear choice, a person has lost what makes him an independent adult, and yes, those people need a

friend there to pick them up and take them to the hospital or de-tox clinic or whatever professional service they desperately need.

Anything short of that, however, is not our place. I would no more try to change a friend's life than I would want someone to unjustly imprison me. After all, given the number of mistakes I've made in my own life, how could I believe I knew the best for anyone else?

“Act for the people's benefit. Trust them; leave them alone.” Tao Te Ching, Chapter 75



Being Better Than

All of the various contests of will in life are won simply by being better than the other person is. Sometimes, however, being “better than” is not limited to the field of play.

For instance, if I were to get into a heated situation that could lead to a fight, I don’t win the potential fight by being a better fighter—I win by being a better person, admitting all my mistakes and forgiving the other. If it should come to blows, however, I win by being the better fighter or the fastest runner.

If we should fight darkness and shadows, we don’t win by being the darkest shadow. We win by being the brightest source of light. Light has substance, darkness is void, and hence light always wins: there is nothing inside of darkness that can resist light.

This is how a person of lower skill can beat someone with perfect skill—by simply being a better person than the other is.



Life is About the Acquisition of Stories

One of the various life philosophies I've come across in my lifetime of study has struck me as both the most ridiculous and the most sense-making: Life is about the acquisition of stories.

At first glance, the idea comes across as stupid and as possible justification for damaging behavior. Embedded in the idea is that these stories would be told to a certain audience, and if one's current peers are impressed by, say, overdosing on drugs and living to tell the tale, then it is not only justified, but practically demanded. If the only rule of living is an impressive list of stupid things done and survived, then one has, in theory, fulfilled this life philosophy.

With a little more thought, however, we can clearly see that this is not the case. Also implied in the idea is survival, hopefully to old age, when there will be nothing to do but sit around and tell tales of youthful adventure. This means that one actually has to survive the

story-making adventure, and enough of the brain has to make it through in order to recall and form the words.

Good stories, however, are not tales of being an idiot and survival luck. Good stories—epic tales—are generally *quests*: the setting out to achieve something amazing in defiance of circumstances. The more on the line, the more risked for the gain, the more engaging the story. Seizing the day, seeking out the rare and the beautiful, conquering evil and the like, these things are the stuff and substance of an epic story, and the means to act it out lies ever at our feet. Those of us who dare to try, whether we succeed or fail, we always come away with a great story.

One does not need to be some grand, dramatic storyteller to adhere to this philosophy. I've listened with rapt attention to many people who hold no drama in their voice, no ability to play to an audience. Just the remembering of the events, however, brings light to their eyes, and even a rote recalling of basic events is enough to spin the tale and hold everyone in awe.

Overall, the most important part of this outlook on life is the implication that whatever one does, one must do it grandly and without fear. Telling a story about going to the store, it getting robbed and you hiding in a corner crying the whole time is vastly less impressive than anything, *anything* that you do in defiance of the norm. And if there is one thing in your life that you want, there is no story about how you always wanted it and never did anything about it. The instant you take a step down that road however, you've begun to live out what is guaranteed to be an amazing story to tell your

friends and family, regardless of outcome, for the rest of your life.

How many grand stories do you have to tell? No one who is alive can say “too many,” but nearly everyone can say “not enough.” There will always be things desired and circumstances to get in the way, but from our side, there may not always be the desire to overcome. Knowing that even failure will result in this success may be the deciding factor for action, but regardless... act.



Idealism: The Practical Application of Theoretical Bullshit

I don't like talking to jaded people the same way I don't like talking to any other damaged person: They've limited themselves (and the rest of humanity) so completely it is impossible to hold any discussion of possibilities with them.

At some point everyone has been an idealist. "Growing up" was hijacked as a term by jaded people who experienced some disappointment when they tried to achieve their ideal. They "grew up" when they realized that Life was (1) Unfair, (2) Cruel, (3) Uncaring—effectively, when they realized that life was not what they knew it to be and abandoned their cherished dream.

Jaded people will acknowledge that dreams do come true for some, but place those few outside the realm of life: born lucky or rich, blessed by God, not possible for "us." Any attempt on our part to achieve our vision is

not supported by jaded people. If they do not actively try to prevent us from doing what we want they stand on the sidelines, disappointed in our immaturity, waiting for us to become like them.

If our dreams are so much bullshit, then how can we practically apply them in life and avoid becoming jaded in the process? If for no other reason than to deny these folks the satisfaction of another crushed dreamer joining their bitter ranks, there should be a way to live life without breaking the dreams.

Delusion comes to mind first, but that's jaded talk. It could certainly work; there are plenty of people out there who live a dream world in their minds quite different from the one they actually live in. Such a state is doomed to a reality check or the nut house.

It has been my experience and observation that *action* is the method of application. That is, the idealism remains intact as long as the individual acts upon it, even to the smallest degree, and thereby moves closer to achieving it.

I've been trying to publish a book for as long as I can remember. When I first started writing I was bad at it (maybe I still am!), but dedicated effort moved me in this direction. This book was once a novel, a diary, a travel log, a self-help book, a graphic novel, a drunken rambling, several years' worth of blog posts and emails, poetry, and finally the form it is today. There are mountains of papers with more words than I can count, all pumped out and reviewed and rejected... every single one of them was vitally important: without those words,

these words would not be here, and I would not have my book, my ideal.

The practical application of bullshit lies in dedicated daily action. Yeah, we all know it is bullshit and no one achieves their dreams... but we've got the rest of our lives to do nothing with. What is the harm of doing it anyway?



Passion (Kill Apathy)

I'm not a very passionate person. Or, put another way, I'm very passionate about being chill. Some people get really fire-eyed and full of steam, charging out to change the world. Some are all about one single thing: it saturates them to the core; they drink it when they breathe and see the world as its color.

Myself? No thanks, I'm good.... but *passionately* good.

There is a large difference between being chill and apathetic. An apathetic person may lie in bed all day, wondering if there really is a reason to get up. A chill person may lie in bed all day, knowing full and well the reasons to get up, but enjoying the moment instead.

The apathetic person watches the news and shrugs, dead to the world and believing himself incapable of achieving, so why bother? The chill person watches the news and shrugs, then goes back to changing the world around him. It may just be his room, but the world is better for it. The world gains nothing from apathy.

Philosophies differ on how to obtain passion should one be in the throes of apathy. It has been my experience that apathy is stagnation. Its removal, then, is simply forcing oneself to act. Usually this takes the form of physical action, but it doesn't have to be. All things start moving once one genuinely starts... that is, all one has to do is go a little crazy.

Certainly all truly passionate people are insane, for to sacrifice the known for the unknown flies in the face of logic and reason. Apathetic people stand around miserable, passing judgment on the crazy. The crazy enjoy themselves and life too much to notice.



The End of the World (The Beginning of the World)

People always seem so concerned with the end of the world. Usually that concern is fear and worry, but lately there's been something of a switch, wherein people are looking forward to it with relief. Of the two, I'll side with the latter.

There's a philosophy that has helped me and a lot of people I know through some very troubled times: *All change is for the better*. Simplistic and naive it may be, but it always seems to turn up true, given enough time. As it is for the person, so it is for the world.

At least, the world of men. It is hard to argue that our pollution and ecological destruction has been beneficial to the Earth. But who knows? Perhaps, realizing the damage we did, we set the stage for the rest of human history to account for and support the Earth. This would be far better for the world than simple, perpetual low-grade ignorance.

That's my point: No matter how bad things might

get, in the end we'll see it was for the better. We shouldn't resist change. Only by fully embracing change can we put ourselves in a position to help direct that change.

Let's say the world is going to end—as far as human society goes. There will still be people around. If we close our eyes and wish it won't happen, when it finally does we find ourselves helpless. If we welcome the change and act accordingly, we sit in power.

The end of any one thing is the beginning of another. The end of the world is the beginning of the world, a shiny new one. Although most stumble about trying to find their bearings, those of us who embraced it are in a position to help the most. It might not be the easiest time, but all worthwhile achievements take some effort!



Land Rental

Property taxes and Eminent Domain effectively rule out any possibility of true land ownership. If someone cannot come up with a certain amount of money every year, the government “reclaims” that person’s land and sells it to someone else. Even if the person can pay, should the government decide it can use the land better, it can up and take it after paying “fair market price.”

Owning something that you’ve paid for means you no longer have to pay for it. I own my car, and even if I didn’t pay for insurance I can still own my car, I just can’t drive it. Paying off the mortgage for my house means I don’t have to pay for my house... but I still have to pay property tax.

Compulsory payment without end for the privilege of use is not called ownership, it is called rental. Without the ability for a man to actually own his land, he is shackled to the system. Theoretically, a man could buy enough land to support himself, and then renounce citizenship, living separate from the nation in his own autonomous kingdom. So long as he is forced to pay

taxes on this one thing, however, he can never be free.

If freedom is really that important to Americans, then there must be a way to gather local taxes for the benefit of the community without putting shackles on anyone who wishes to opt out.



Rules Kill

At first, I couldn't figure out why people continue to support our current federal government. With all the advancements that have been made in the last two hundred years, it only stands to reason that we need a change in management. But the worst was seeing people my age or younger, campaigning for this person or that person with all the fervor and feeling expected of the young. What I could not figure out was why these young people were so all-out in support of a horrible system maintained and controlled by old, evil people.

The idea struck me just now, and I could only see it because I have been working with teenagers almost daily for several months now. The idea: *People only work within the rules given to them.* Only children, who don't know any better, habitually try new things outside the realms of rules. Once disciplined enough, however, kids will know better than trying to "break" these "rules." A game of chess that once involved the entire living room and action figures becomes "actual chess."

As it is with a game, so it seems to be with governance.

We all grew up with a strict enforcement of the rules and systems of power—as kids, our parents were the supreme authorities, seconded by teachers and so on. These well-meaning and helpful people told us how to behave so others would like us—and it worked. We learned the rules of nutrition, of rest, and of almost all things under the sun. At some point we got it that there are rules for everything, to the point where most people won't do anything when put into a new situation until someone *explains the guidelines*.

To a large extent this works well for us. Science is a reliable way of interacting with the world: Do this, get this. Do that, get that. The Laws of Nature aren't really up for debate. For science, it is a matter not of rule-breaking but rule-discovery—once we figure out how this works, we can use it as a platform to reach even higher. All of human life today lives on the shoulders of everyone who came before, and everything we have—from the size and edibility of our foods to technology and so on—comes from the people before us, working within the framework of the Laws of Nature.

Laws of Nature, however, are not something we all collectively agreed upon; they are the physical structure of the universe. The Laws of Man arose when people decided they needed some sort of framework, as the complete and total freedom afforded to us by God, for whatever reason, didn't seem to be working.

If there is one thing any student of history can tell you, it is that human civilization has gone through a lot in the very brief time we've been “modern humans” on the planet. This includes just about every type of

structure, management, government, and what-have-you under the sun. Some work really well, others fail outright, some become so powerful they conquer everything in sight. Sooner or later, however, they all come back down to one thing: people just trying to live their lives.

So we find ourselves here today with a system of government that, by all accounts and from the lips of everyone I've ever talked to, should be vastly improved. Which direction that improvement goes, or the means by which we accomplish it varies widely, but almost everyone feels a sense of dissatisfaction with federal-level administration.

Did we just so strictly impose "American Democracy" as the only possible system of government so harshly on the kids that, a scant few years later, they are unwilling to see anything different? I've seen outrage bordering on revolt over this government, but the only solution is to replace the figurehead at the top and hope everything turns out all right. Lame idea, guys. Men and women who believe in the system are of the system, and if the system steadily goes in one direction, it will only continue to do so. Placing a new face in the driver's seat will only get us there at a different speed: the road is straight, the destination set.

Let's get out of the car before it is too late. I don't care what we do or where we go after that. All I know is that I don't trust this car, the driver, or anyone who wants to drive. The destination, looming up ahead, looks ominous to me. This lack of faith I feel in almost every American, either for or against getting there. In

any case, we would be better served by finding a new car.



Ownership vs. Stewardship

I don't own a single thing.

Not my money, not my car, not this book, no, not even the clothes on my body. Hell, not even my body! By all accounts these things are mine, in every legal and common-sense notion I own them.

For some reason the concept of ownership is lost in me. I just see stuff, and my influence over it. If I truly owned my car, then it should be up to me if the rain touches it or not! I should decide how far it goes, what fuel it uses, and the color should shift itself according to my every mood.

Or is ownership something else? Is it just a way of telling other people “Hands off! I claim exclusive rights to this”? It certainly doesn't stop car thieves, and the good-natured people wouldn't touch it in the first place.

The way I see it, ownership is another word for stewardship. It is physically impossible to own something (show me physical ownership—the size, the weight, the shape—and I'll retract all of this). However, it is

physically possible to take care of something, to fix or change or destroy something. I cannot own land, but I can double-dig beds for vegetables. I can't own a car, but I can maintain it and drive it around. I can't own my shirt, but I can wear it and wash it. I don't own my body, but I feed and wash that, too.

Normal people respect another person's area of influence, up until a certain line of abuse. Nobody is going to shove food down your throat, unless you've neglected to do so for so long people see a crisis. No one is going to hose you down, unless damn boy, you stink! In every case, "ownership" is set aside or ignored outright due to a lack of *stewardship*.

I believe most people understand that, on some level, ownership implies stewardship... but far too often people get so caught up on who "owns" what that they fail to see the horrible neglect their bickering has wrought... and they'll shoot anyone who tries to help.



Nothing Happens for a Reason

What if nothing happened for a reason? Most people assume that there is an underlying reason for it all, that all these events are leading up to something, *meaning*. But what if that wasn't the case? No why, no because, no direction, no meaning, no way it should or shouldn't be, and no someone. What if the world was void of meaning?

This idea excites me quite a bit. I can see how a younger me would find such an outlook disgusting and devoid of merit—it rules out “God has a plan for each of us.” But that is the very same reason for my excitement now.

Under the idea that everything happens for a reason is an assumed lack of power. If something good happens, it's all part of the plan. If something bad happens, have faith in the plan. Direct action is ruled out due to some overarching structure that we cannot guess at. What if that plan wasn't where I wanted to go? Where

is my ability to create my life?

I believe that God entrusts to us complete power in our lives. Power to choose, power to act, power to think and decide and all the rest. There is no room for a plan, because that rules out complete freedom. I do believe that God has our best interests in mind, of course, but there is a difference between “this car is yours” and “take this car, I want you to drive over there.” Even worse is the idea that we’ll end up there no matter what we do... such cruelty is not a quality I think God projects to us.

No... man has total freedom in life. Nothing happens for a reason, save the one man chooses to put in it. Such blessed freedom from the pressures of how things *should* be frees up a man to make things how he would *like* them to be, which is really all we’ve been doing anyway.



The Highest Philosophy

It took me my entire life of dedicated searching, meditation, research, and desperation to find the highest, best philosophy of all:

Enjoy Life.

The funny thing was, I heard it almost constantly growing up, and for all those years of searching it was right there, on the surface and around and in between all those words, and all that travel, and all those experiences.

It was only after I had given up my search that I found those two words waiting for me. It was if, having given up the search for the perfect girl, I found her to be the girl next door.

Simple minds hear those two words, nod, and move on. They understand what it means, the full range of it, from the level of their own experience. Complicated people find this philosophy lacking.

It is not a call to hedonism, not an abandonment of one's duties. Life is not bound by circumstances, and

neither should be its enjoyment. To pick one thing over another due to “enjoyment” is to fail enjoying what life brought you. It is what it is, enjoy it, all of it, the shit and the gold.

Nothing changes the circumstances of a life towards the better faster than enjoying the current situation to the utmost.



Identity

A great deal of problems can be bypassed if one recognizes the distinctions between actions and identification with those actions.

For instance, a skydiver is only a skydiver between the airplane and the ground. Both on the ground and in the plane he is many things, but not a skydiver. Should he choose to call himself a “skydiver,” it is because he finds some personal satisfaction in doing so.

By the same token, there are no “gay” or “straight” people. Homosexuality is an action, not a state of being. Although one may call it “expression,” the effect is the same—that is, it is the action alone that counts. Yet many people struggle needlessly and sometimes violently with this identification when no such groupings exist: they are all people, indistinct and undivided until certain actions take place. The time before and after remain utterly unaffected (as far as self-identification goes).

To use a less controversial subject: If someone asks me what I do for a living, I can say that I write. But I

cannot introduce myself as a “writer” unless, at that moment, I happen to be writing something. I may as well introduce myself as a time-traveler or bank robber... I may have done so in the past and might do so in the future, but for right now I’m either a “handshaker” or “beer drinker.” If I introduce myself as a writer it is only because it’s easier to do so—the meaning is given in the context of careers.

Because I understand the difference between actions and identification, however, I’m at no risk of thinking of myself as a “writer.” I know that, at the moment, the writer writes. When the writer stops writing, then the writer ceases to be. I no more identify with being a writer than I do with being an eater or sleeper, or any of the millions of other actions I undertake daily.

The brilliance of this approach is that it prevents one from taking pride in being something one is not. I can’t call myself a rebel unless I’m actively rebelling. I can’t call myself a force of social change unless I’m in the midst of changing society. I can’t call myself anything unless, at the moment, I’m doing it. Take away the ability to identify with something outside of doing it, and you’ll find people get a lot more productive all of a sudden.

And perhaps best of all, all of the problems associated with identity fall away as well.



The Old and the New

I used to be completely against the Metric system. Not as a system of measurement in itself, just against the apparently never-gonna-happen conversion here in the States. The basis for this argument was in an “organic” feeling, that the Imperial system of inches and feet and Fahrenheit *felt* good because they were somehow closer to nature. After all, a “foot” used to be the size of the king’s actual foot; you can’t get more real *and* arbitrary than that!

Lately, however, I’ve been thinking about the stubbornness of our non-acceptance of this “new fad” in light of, well, the rest of the world. Here is, at the time of printing, a complete list of all the nations in the world who do not have the metric as their primary or sole system of measurement:

- Liberia
- Myanmar
- The United States of America

Considering this issue solely from a population density standpoint, Imperial unit-using people are rare, backwards people indeed.

Now, I'm not at all for the philosophy that one should go along with what everyone else is doing just because everyone else is doing it. However, if, say, everyone else is eating a healthy diet, getting a lot of proper sleep and exercising, whereas we are on the couch watching TV and eating junk food, such a direction wouldn't be so bad. On the world stage, we can just as easily see that if all the other nations are doing it, and it works out really well for them, maybe we ought to give it the old college try.

Yet I cannot ignore that stubborn, ignorant American inside me that hates change and immediately believes that something horrible will happen should we attempt to move in any direction. I like things the way they are, damn it! I'm too old to change! Miles are and will forever be. Never mind the fact that we lose billions a year on conversion losses, not to mention yet more world credibility by so steadfastly anchoring ourselves in the things popular two hundred years ago.

Ultimately, our refusal to adopt the new standard system is symptomatic of everything wrong with this country: Denial of societal advancement due to greed and ignorance. Although I'm not exactly sure how not converting to the metric system qualifies as "greed," I'm fairly certain it does.

Society exists for the benefit of the people, and the moment it stops improving the lives of the people is the

moment it starts to decay. This stuck system rots us from the inside: Our teeth rot, our skin sags, our eyes grow weak because we refuse to move, to get up and advance ourselves.

We'll have to move soon, or we'll die. Accepting the metric system may not change much in itself, but it would be a signal that we're ready to cast aside our insular and self-destroying philosophy. Willing to join hands with the rest of the world, we would enter into a new era of cooperation and communication. After all, it is hard to communicate when you don't speak the same language, and a universal system of measurement would mean, for the first time in history, all humans could communicate with each other.



The Power to Resist

A very long time ago, some extremely intelligent and well-meaning people got together and addressed the biggest problems plaguing society at the time. Their solution was to split with the civilized, stable world and embark on a Grand Experiment, a new social order unlike anything seen in the modern world.

Having barely survived being crushed by the most powerful army in the world at the time, the forefathers knew the extent of governmental abuse. This firsthand taste still fresh in them, they knew that any man-made government could just as easily be corrupted and turned against the people. So in the process of creating this new and strange idea they were wise enough to include an “abort” button: the Second Amendment.

Firearms—guns—are still the easiest to use and most deadly weapon available. Should the government have all the guns, then the government does not need to answer to the people. Who will stop them? Should the people have their guns and keep pace with the government, then the ultimate check-and-balance will remain

in place. This was the thinking at the time.

But we know better now. We know that real power is imaginary, that each person who gives it takes it away at his or her will. As there is no physical government (just a collection of people who believe in it), there is nothing to shoot at. All we have to do to destroy government is remove it from our minds.

Realistically, however, that has a mixed effect. On the largest scale it is completely effective, on the smallest scale it has none at all. More than likely the difference is split, with some group revolting and another group steadfastly believing. The believers then try to enforce the idea in the minds of the non-believing through violence, because no other method can get people to believe in something they don't feel is real.

This puts us non-believers in a tricky situation. We look out at people and see just people...no problems there. However, in this mass of people some have grouped together in the name of some imaginary something and are on their way over here to force us into this similar mind-set. If talking and education are not helping, they may try to shoot some of us to enforce the imaginary power over us. Wishing not to die, I agree to do what those who would kill us want.

This enslavement is not our only option. If someone wanted to come over and kill me or my loved ones, I would stop him. The power to resist enslavement is, in physical terms, only possible as long as I am physically able to resist. Should that person overpower us, he can still never enslave us, but... if the terms are "obey or

die,” then he would have to kill every one of us, for we could no more obey the imaginary than we could eat it.

So we find ourselves on the doorstep of change. The personal revolution well underway; our actions naturally begin to free themselves of the confines they once were in. At some point this will be noticed by those who wish to retain their “power.” To what end will the imaginary go to assert itself? Do we have the power to resist?



Simplicity

Simplicity is a state of being, not a set of circumstances. (“A man cannot pave the world with leather. It is better to wear sandals instead.”)

This way, no matter the myriad, vexing circumstances that come, they all land playfully and delightfully on the empty head of the simple man.

The man himself does nothing but observe. In the estuary of his simple attention, complexity untangles itself.

How does one obtain simplicity?

One already has it.

If simplicity is obscured, one may feel the need to try to remove the fog and growths obstructing it. This is not done by strain or effort, as those paths lead in the opposite direction. How can one strain to be himself?

One remembers his simplicity by experiencing it. One re-establishes himself in it by repeated experience. All things flow in harmony with Tao. The closer a man

moves back to it, the simpler and the more powerful he becomes.



My Curse

I have a curse in life, it seems: Everything I am morally against I end up doing.

It is almost as if the “moral abhorring” reaction is in fact a disgusted feeling of excitement and intrigue.

Some things in life are so far removed and disgusting I am not morally against them... they seem unreal, and if confronted the only reaction is to move myself away. The things that have aroused my outrage have been things very close to me, things done by people I know and respect. Things that I, apparently, found appealing but rejected out of hand. They seemed not to be, at least on the surface, close to who I thought I was.

And who am I? The man who would lecture his friends on their misdeeds, the one who placed himself above that sort of behavior, the guy who bragged about being better than you are. God, it seems, makes sure people like myself always hang by the rope of their own making.

Perhaps it's not my curse to do the things I am

against. Maybe my curse is that I must always understand the other side, why someone who appeared like an intelligent, decent person would do such a thing. Two sides to anything, any position or any belief, have two rights and two wrongs... but if I can find out the why for both sides, what remains is not right or wrong: it's people, human beings, living their lives as best they can. Or maybe that's just a justification for my failure.

I warn you about being outraged by another's failure... having understanding and compassion instead may help prevent you from doing it as well.



Time in Regard to Emotional Wounds

Time heals all the wounds we don't stubbornly cling to. If this is the case, then we are in a position to use this natural process to our advantage; we can speed up time.

Not literally, of course. There's no reason why I would want life to travel one second faster (or slower) than it already does. Think of it as a metaphor of first aid for a cut I got. Should I just leave it alone, there's a chance it could heal, and there's a chance it could re-open or get infected. But, in my intelligence I decide to properly dress the wound and in severe cases seek professional help, then not only do the risks of something bad happening decrease, but the time it takes for this wound to heal is decreased significantly.... If I act quickly, it may not even leave a scar.

Emotional wounds, while similar, have an advantage: We get to choose how we feel. The physical aspects of the body are subject to physical laws of nature, but the internal state of being is subject only to our dictates and

whims. If we know that in time our feelings about a subject will slacken, change, or disappear outright, then we can “warp” to that result without waiting for the unattended wound to heal on its own.

A few years from now everything will be different. The action a person did that caused you to feel a certain way will still be in the past. What you’ve gained in that time is not distance from it, but rather a growth of personality. With the expanded perspective that you’ve gained through growth, you can see how that action no longer matters.

Sometimes, perhaps, time is needed for that personal growth to occur. If one truly feels one can never forgive someone of something, then there is no way to jump forward to forgiveness. Time, or living life, is needed... someday, hopefully, that level of sainthood will be obtained, and compassion and forgiveness will flow from him or her.

However, if we can clearly see, even in the moment of the hurt, how we will forgive them in the future, then that power lies with us at that very moment. It waits simply for us to call upon it. Sometimes we might think it feels good to harbor angry thoughts and actions against those who hurt us, sometimes we can utilize the situation to achieve things. But if we really know, deep down inside, that we are going to forgive them, then we can choose to do so at any moment.

I’m not going to tell you how to live your life, nor how you should feel about anything. My intention is to point out that our power lies within ourselves, and no

one, not a single person in the universe, has the power to take that away. Even if you “give” your power to someone else, you still have it, and it becomes yours again the moment you need it. A man should hurt us so bad that he puts us an inch from death, but no man can hurt us so bad that he takes away our power to choose how we feel inside.

We allow ourselves, then, to change slowly over the course of time or in a single moment.

Depending, of course, on how we feel about it.



Hang Loose

If there is one thing we can count on in life, it is change.

Knowing this, we suddenly find the one thing against which we can anchor ourselves in the sometimes stormy sea of life. Nothing else is so reliable and dependable; there is no manifest thing that we can lean against for long. That things change... his we know above all else.

But there's a trick to it. Unlike leaning on actual things, change is immaterial. How can one rely on something so abstract? If, for instance, we rely on a person, then that person is there for us. If we rely on a food or a political party, those things are there for us too, so long as they stay relatively the same. So how can we rely on *change* as a source of comfort and support?

It's a bit like surfing. If water never changed, it would be dead flat, boring, stagnate. Fortunately for us, the ocean is in constant movement. With time, practice, and the right tools, one can learn to ride the patterns of

change. The exhilaration of catching it just right, the speed and rush all become really fun, and soon one becomes adept at seeing the changes coming. With anticipation, the surfer readies himself, hoping that this one is a big one, with which he will go far from where he is.

The surfer doesn't cling to the water, the wave, OR his board. He knows that even on the worst wipeouts he can swim back up, find his board, and try again. Part of the fun of surfing is in the learning, in seeing yourself improve.

Life sends us waves tiny and tidal. So long as we know this—that is to say, so long as we know we are surfers of life—then we are in a position to ride that monster all the way in. Should we turn our eyes blind to this, we will forever be tossed about by the cruel and random fortunes of life.

We are so fortunate to be living a life that is so easy it does all the work for us. All that is required from our side is to acknowledge it with open eyes and a willingness to adapt. The rest is sheer “Whee!”



Shared Human Experience

On the Fourth of July we were out with the crowds, waiting for the fireworks. We sat on the concrete ledge surrounding a grassy area, and when the exact moment of 9 pm hit, the first firework launched from the barge in the water. At the exact same moment, the sprinkler system clicked on, soaking everyone near the grass.

Everyone jumped up with a collective “ah!” and we all turned to face the offending water, looking around and laughing. I felt something ripple through the crowd of strangers: friendship. Suddenly, we all seemed to get along, and like friends, laughing about a shared experience. “We all went through that, together.” The friendship vanished as soon as it arrived, however, as everyone turned back to the fireworks display already in progress.

I heard it said that, in wartime, when you’re getting shot at or bombed, the previously total stranger next to you is now your best friend. You couldn’t ask for a better buddy, and when it came to live or die, you knew you could trust your life to the man next to you, even if

you had never met before.

There is something about shared human experience.



To Be Me

“You don’t know what it’s like to be me.”

What a strange statement.

A world in which I knew what it was like to be other people would easily be the most boring world ever. We’re mysteries to each other. How can the two of us read the same words and come away with such radically different ideas? How can the two of us walk side-by-side through the same situation and have completely different reactions?

Don’t use my ignorance to turn me away, my friend. Use the sentence, say it as an opening instead of an ending. Reach out to the common threads of humanity and pull us it. Give us a taste of what it is like to see through your eyes. I promise, as a tourist to your land, that I won’t try to change a single thing.

But hold your spirit close to yourself. Show us the land but protect your treasures. A man with too many openings soon finds himself empty... we will never really know what it is like to be one another. So long as love

and friendship exist, however, we will still want to know.

Invite your friends over for tea, and you may find yourself invited someday. Tea, like all beverages, tastes best in the company of friends.



Not That Into Me

It is amazing how just a tiny bit of knowledge can radically change the way we see the world.

I had recently taken a girl on a date, and I believe we had a fun time. However, soon after that she became harder and harder to get in contact with, until finally she said she didn't want me to get hurt. I was confused, but moved on. The next two girls I dated ended any sort of budding relationship for equally vague reasons, and I was growing increasingly frustrated.

I was venting my latest frustrations on my friend, quoting the reasons given, when she brilliantly pointed out the obvious: "They're lying to you" and then "What they're really saying is: I'm not all that into you."

My eyes opened at the truth of these words. *Of course!* Every girl I dated who was into me went way out of her way to meet me, interact with me, etc. It only stands to reason that these girls, in the end, just didn't find me interesting enough. Liberation! My gloomy mood vanished in the light of understanding.

The odd thing is, I'm great with that. Who cares if they don't find me interesting? Personality is a matter of personal taste; it's on them whether or not they like me. There are still many people who do! Why should I get upset if someone likes red wine over beer? We can still get along great... even better, knowing the truth.

From my side, I'm the kind of guy who figures things out. If I can't figure something out it'll drive me nuts. I liked these girls, and I wanted to see where a relationship could go. The most frustrating part was the "what if"—if the circumstances these girls used as an excuse didn't get in the way, where could we have gone? The obvious answer now is "nowhere" because they weren't into me... *and now I know!* That's my great relief here.

The lesson for the ladies is this: Tell the dude you aren't into him. Trust me, really, I'm a guy, I know. It'll be much easier for him to understand the actual truth of the situation than a lame excuse that keeps him wondering. If we know the situation, we can deal, but if you don't want to hurt us then don't underestimate us.

The lesson for the men is: Dude... she's just not that into you.



Untitled

Titles! I can see why some artists never use them, and why others use them extensively and gratuitously. Not only are they like little stories, they can also change the entire work of art.

I'll use the example of a painting for you visual people out there. Let's say I paint a painting. My mediums are the ultra-traditional of oil-based paints on a canvas, my subject... anything at all. I paint and I paint, and it dries and is ready to be hung on the wall for people to come and judge... I mean, look at.

But what is it that I have here? Art? Sure. Dried paint on cotton? Absolutely. Meaning? Now we've made things complicated. When I was an art student in college I could not stand people standing around asking what things *meant*. I argued, quite angrily, that my art didn't have meaning or a point; it was a visual stimulant, something that looked nice. If someone wished to draw meaning from the visual, then by all means go ahead. As for *my* desire to communicate something? No thanks.

I rarely used titles for my work, and if forced, would generally describe the scene (“abandoned house with couch” part of my “decay” series). I could not, however, bring myself to simply go with “Untitled.” I’ve found “Untitled” on a card next to a work seems just as much a title as anything else. I’d rather there be nothing there at all.

But that’s just me. It wouldn’t take much for me to bend the other way, to use a paragraph for a title (“Green walls, empty couch, stormy weather and sunny skies among the ruins of the home that once was, the legacy of modern farming—Decay 1.”) Now we’ve got something to look at! Or more specifically, now you’re actually looking *for* something.

It is a lot like “Where’s Waldo?” If you didn’t know who Waldo (or Wally in other nations) was, or what he looked like, or the fact he’s rather shy, you’d take one look at those books and go “ugh, too busy.” Ah, but Waldo’s in there somewhere, and look at all the stuff going on! It’s going to be a real challenge to find him, so there you go, studiously obsessed with finding a tiny man with cap and glasses.

In the same way, a long or obscure title gives us a challenge. A photograph of a woman in a dark alley goes from being “My Girlfriend Sally” to “Urban Hell, A Woman’s Safety in Soulless American Backwater.” We stand transfixed, looking at elements of the image for clues hinting at the meaning given in the title. **Why**, we stand there asking, *why* should this image invoke that response?

In the end, I believe the work itself must be the point, it has to carry its own weight. A title can add or detract from it, but the work exists by itself, unmodified by our perceptions of it.



Beer

Beer and I have been through a lot. By that I mean, I've been through a lot. Beer is unaffected.

When I was younger, taking my cues from every adult source I trusted as a beacon of morality, I harshly condemned beer, going so far as to call it “concentrated evil.” I thought the worst of anyone who would do that to themselves... obviously they didn't care about their bodies, enlightenment, or other people.

When I turned twenty-one I took my first drink of alcohol, and enjoyed it too much. Not the taste, no, but the effect... all the silliness and openhearted goofiness I lost in adolescence seemed to return. Now I knew why people drank it... and compassion flowed from me. This was the first crack in my idea of morality—should everything I am morally against turn out to have a similar effect? Should compassion, not judgment, be my guiding light?

I pushed it too far. The booze came to dominate, rather than spice, my life. My friend and I said we were

“running head-first towards the cliff of self-destruction.” A fully divine hand offered us a last-minute escape, and we took it. We shook off that past as best we could, infinitely grateful for the help.

So I traveled the world seeking enlightenment. I found instead people, all crazy and wonderful manner of people, all just like me and so different. We all drank beer together. Sharing beer in various villages and cities, I found our frustrating language barriers became hilarious, a bond we now shared. I lived tiny romances and became a part of entire families just by being a good person and having fun. The alcohol that clouded our judgment and mistrust of strangers somehow opened our hearts to the good in humanity.

This is the best of it. The worst of it, the sinking despair, the nausea and sickness, the poor and very poor choices... and always the next morning. These effects are as much a part of the drinking as the buzz and good times. To say the romantic things above and not say that it's nearly killed me in many different ways would be half-truth, a lie.

I've learned a lot about this subject in a relatively short amount of time, but only because I've been paying attention. Through all of it, the best and worst, the highs and lows, this is what I can truly say about beer:

Beer is a liquid.

Maybe you were expecting something more profound on the subject. A billion people might have something to say about a glass of water, but the water itself is just plain and simple water, unaware and unaffected by all

the love and rage. All my experiences about beer don't have anything to do with beer; it is all about me and what I know of the world.

Beer, my friends, can be many things to you. To itself, however, it can never be anything but beer.



The Basics

Go to bed early.

Wake up in the morning.

Do some exercise.

Eat a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Meditate.

Laugh.

Interact.

Do what needs to be done.

If there are problems in life, it stems from not doing one of the above.

The basics are so easily accomplished, but who among us can do them?



Life After the Safety Net

A safety net is there to prevent us from falling to our deaths, by all accounts a good thing. People, in all rationality, demanded more and more net, to cover not only the bottom but also the sides and top. Soon we found ourselves encased in safety netting, a tangled mess of it, so convoluted it at times stops us in our tracks, and other times filled with gaping holes.

So what happens when the supports give way and the mass falls to the ground, leaving us exposed and naked at the top? Will the sheer fear make us fall, or will we have our skills so refined that we hardly notice?

Life after the safety net is a thrilling and exhilarating experience. Those who deliberately forgo the net always hold us in awe, not just for their bold skill but also for their willingness to accept the full repercussions of their actions. When we join them, when we stare at the full and naked power of life, only then we will know why these forerunners took such risks.

After all, one should put his faith in his ability, not

in net below him. If one doesn't have faith in himself, then he really shouldn't be up there. After some time without the net, I wonder... will we seek to replace it, or we will be so entranced by the full extend of life that we should forget we ever had one?



Life Ain't Hard

“Life is so hard...but not for some. How can I make my life like these people, for whom life is weightless and full of joy?”

There is no way. By this I mean there is no set path, no checklist or Things To Do, no right religion or saintly figure to idolize. For every person's binds and problems are wholly unique to him or her, so too every path out is different.

This is not to say that there are no common themes. Ingesting poison or eating glass, for instance, will probably kill you. Getting enough sleep every night will probably make you more rested, relaxed, and clear. Putting one's attention on high and loving things or people has a purifying effect on the mind, body, and spirit. Love is always a good idea, but what form it takes may be unknown.

Even if every path is different, we are not so different that we cannot see the same landscape, the same landmarks. We're all headed in the same general direction,

even if at times it looks like one of us is going backwards. Advice should always be welcome, even if it is ridiculous (like mine). If nothing else, it can provide a good laugh.

As far as I can give advice, I will say the sign that one is on his or her personal way is simply joy. The suffering one experiences is only the attachments giving way when one drops his or her weights. Immediately upon dropping them one realizes what they were—useless weights—and any attachments felt prior to release vanishes. Soon one becomes so talented in identifying and dropping useless weights that one begins to feel weightless. This emptiness, the void within, is so full one feels like they could fly.

When one is no longer crushed under weights, life becomes enjoyable, easy. One realizes the full extent of his power and freedom, and realizes that life ain't hard after all... it never was.



The Importance of Importance

Importance! Important things are very important!

The world almost had me believe it, and I can still be swayed to a particularly good logic, mainly in the form of “This is really important!” My friends can make such a passionate speech, too, and I’ll get caught up in it. It is important, so I will treat it as such.

Certainly, one should place all of one’s energy and effort and attention and dedication to IMPORTANT THINGS. The frivolous and trivial are abandoned on the sidewalk as we charge headfirst into the rush of Importance.

Sometimes, however, when we get there and join in the orgy of self-harm and grief to the God of Importance, we find ourselves looking around wondering what all the fuss is about. And then, the glance over the shoulder, back to the trivial little thing we left behind, torn and trampled by the crowd, waving a sad little wave back as us, remember me? I am the victim of

importance, the one little thing you cherished and held close long before, when things were awesome. Come back, pick me up, and we can play again.

No no no no No! The God of Importance demands dedication! Certainly things aren't good now, because you don't worry enough, you don't do it enough, you don't believe enough! This is serious business! This requires more from you than you are putting in! Are you paying attention? This is the only path, the one true way, the only option for any human being on the planet, money and power and things and salvation and these things and that thing and all over this and that and you really need to sacrifice more to the gray stone god, motionless but staring you right in the eye, all others whispering vague threats as prayers (*"horrible things will happen if you lose sight...we'll all die...horrible things..."*).

Yes, you are right, these things are important. Bad things may (*"will! WILL!"*) happen if I stop paying attention to what needs to be done. Certainly, things happen this way and that, I must do my best to make things good for me and others. That—you are right—that is important.

How I go about doing that, however, is entirely up to me, and in the end the best among us discover something we can only guess about... the important thing was not the gray stone god nor the trivia we left behind, but something in the air...intangible... and far more real and powerful than we could have guessed.



Irresponsibility

If parents should be so poor at planning that their children regularly go hungry, we could call them irresponsible. If the cause for this is that the parents get to make and keep more money by starving their children, we should call them horrible caregivers. If, as the children get older the parents keep them from getting their own food, we should call them enslavers.

Somehow in our national blindness we do not see our children starving, or worse, being fed poison labeled as foodstuff. Society labels people who take these matters into their own hands as simpletons, backwater yokels, living in the poorest conditions of poverty. Our “Wonder” bread is cheap and plentiful—so unlike the unhealthy, limp vegetables they manage to eek out of the hard ground.

As parents’ primary occupation is the well-being of their children, so too a government’s primary (if not only) concern should be the happiness and well-being of its citizens. Society, the natural result of people living together, shows us what we think of things collectively.

Government and society must work together to help the people achieve autonomy. To keep the people dependent is irresponsible.

Reconcile in your mind the image of the dirt-poor and hungry farmer next time you walk into the produce section of the grocery store. Imagine not this small room of fruits and vegetables, but vast fields of it, all belonging to just a few men. These few men have a lot of money, options, and power. You, meanwhile, are forced to come back again and again to this place, and only have access to the whims and selective labors of the privileged few.

We as human beings are growing, and like growing kids we are beginning to see a life free of our parents. The natural process of life demands nothing less... how long could any adult stay under the thumb of his parents? Adults can live together peacefully and without problems if they grant each other respect and freedom. To try and restrain, to keep under shackles and force dependency will only force the teenager in our society to lash out and do something stupid.

But soon we will no longer be teenagers. We will clearly see our place and role in the world. We will be compelled to rise up and start our appointed work, our new role as caregivers to others. By that point we either have our parents blessing or we do not... it matters little. Soon enough the best and the worst of the older generation turn to dust, and we're left holding the reins of the world.

Should we be so irresponsible that we followed the

irresponsible by compulsion or example? Or will we take responsibility for ourselves, even with no experience to back it?

I often wonder how important food is to people.



The Numinous Rebellion

Numinous \NOO-min-us; NYOO-\, *adjective*:

1. of or pertaining to a numen; supernatural.
2. indicating or suggesting the presence of a god; divine; holy.
3. inspiring awe and reverence; spiritual.

Rebellion, *noun*:

1. open, organized, and armed resistance to one's government or ruler.
2. resistance to or defiance of any authority, control, or tradition.
3. the act of rebelling.

—*Dictionary.com*

Effectively, the Numinous Rebellion is spiritual rebellion, one driven by divine light that casts aside the current state. From the micro-revolt against a personal limitation to the global overthrow of ignorance in

government, the numinous rebellion holds personal, awe-inspiring significance.

What this rebellion may look like varies from place to place, person to person. What it does is always the same: lifts the people up to a higher level of life. In the presence of God, all things are made better, and with Him behind us there is no ignorance in the world we could not instantly overthrow.

I'll give you a few examples of what I mean.

Agriculture:

According to the people who practice the “Grow BioIntensive” method of sustainable agricultural, one 120-acre plot of land can grow enough food to completely support 400 people, in addition to having more food that they can sell for profit. Half of this acreage is converted to natural wild lands. And what work! Actively growing the soil, which in turn produces the best, healthiest food possible.

You can read more about Grow BioIntensive in the book “How To Grow More Vegetables” by John Jeavons, and at www.GrowBioIntensive.org.

The point here isn't the numbers (which, if you do the research, are extremely impressive), but rather what this knowledge can do for the world. Here in America there are millions of people stuck in stressful, dead-end jobs, sometimes working two-full time jobs just to “make ends meet.” How would they react to know they could spend significantly less time doing something infinitely more rewarding? Instead of suffering and knowing the food they can afford to buy for their

children isn't the best, they could be spending their day ensuring they got the best possible food on the planet—and have enough for friends and family.

I've talked about the food crisis before in terms of disaster for this nation, but here we see it as an opportunity. No one seems willing to get up and take the reins of this nation, slumping against our own worse sides and hoping we don't get screwed over. No more, I say! I say if your city or suburban life is the pits, do something about it! Embrace life! Move to where the soil still works, dig your hands in deep, and watch nature grow your food for free.

Technology:

The Compressed Air Car. Apparently, this thing is being manufactured in Europe as we speak, and within a few years will be marketed here in the States. Even if it weren't true, the electric car has been the beneficiary of decades of improvement... but where is the demand? Are we so stuck on gas that we're completely unwilling to consider the alternatives? Or will the Numinous Rebellion push aside the suppression and step into the future?

For more information go to www.AirCar.Info and www.WhoKilledTheElectricCar.com.

The Numinous Rebellion isn't limited to agricultural practices or technology, although in those fields alone it is practically limitless. The Numinous Rebellion is the catch-all phrase to point out the rise of humanity from ignorance to wisdom, from suffering to bliss. Whenever

the movement is towards greater freedom and increasing happiness, that is the revolution.

Rise of Humanity:

I have a very short list of books that I recommend to people. These five books, I believe, are the only books a person needs to read from the bottom of ignorance to the very top of enlightenment. Not only that, I believe that these five books contain all the knowledge we need to run government and society!

In no particular order, they are:

As a Man Thinketh, by James Allen

The Science of Being and Art of Living, by His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

Tao Te Ching, specifically the translation by Stephen Mitchell

The Way of Chuang Tzu, by Thomas Merton

Vasistha's Yoga, translation by Swami Venkatesananda

My attempt for this book is, if not to provide specifics on how we can advance as human beings, to at least get us thinking about it. My bungled attempts are not to be taken as a clear path to a brighter future, but as a sign that I'm trying, in all this thrashing about, to get the blood flowing and the breath started.

It can't be all conjecture, of course. Thoughts are worthless unless backed with action. The second book I publish under the title of the Sharp Knife will be stories, not ideas... the stories of my actions, my (hopefully)

bold steps in the direction I know we, or I, must go.

God grant me the strength to carry out my convictions, the wisdom to see the path and the utter fearlessness that comes from seeing Creation as it truly is—nothing more than a delightful play.



A Personal Revolution

If we're to have revolution, it must be personal. If we should have social upset without a deeply personal revolution, then that power of change will be lost and twisted in new abusive hands. The concepts of government, power, and society must undergo a change, a revelation within a person's mind and spirit. Otherwise, we kill the driver but leave the truck intact and all of us on board stalled and waiting for a new driver to take us where he pleases.

Education, then, is the strongest weapon we have. It can utterly obliterate the strongest government in an instant. It can overthrow nations and create new ones in half a day. The ability to see how power actually works is the power to change the world. Anyone who takes up a gun to shoot others in the name of something is still shackled by delusions, still playing a part in the system, still under other people's power.

I am the only one responsible for my actions, for I am the only one who does them. I decide whom I listen to and whom I do not. I decide what I believe, what I

feel is right, and no one else. I am the sole seat of power in the world. Every movement I make echoes through Creation, and they all come back to no one else but me. All the tools rest in my hands, and I construct the future with them.

The personal revolution is the effective one, and it is gained through education and experience. It is the only one we can trust, the only one we can believe in. All other revolutions have form but no substance.

Hold on to the substance.



Ups and Downs

Things can always get worse, but they can never get any better than this.

From this I mean: We sit at the pinnacle of Creation, saturated by infinite Love always, all things in the world bending themselves around our every desire. Things could always be worse, but even in the worst part of worse we haven't moved one inch downwards. Even in the gaping maw of infinite sorrow we sit as kings and queens at the peak, the flowers of love, wielding infinite power.



This Book is Dedicated to
His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi
Your complete devotion to Guru Dev may be the salvation
of the world. It saved me, in any case. Thank you.

And to
My Mom and Dad
Everything I've achieved in life is due to your rock-solid
support and love. Not many can say they had the perfect
childhood.
I can ask for no greater achievement than to be as good of a
parent as you two are... but all in good time!

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who told me my writing was worth reading; everyone who
inspired me to sit down and talk about them in a general
sense; everyone who believed I couldn't finish a book, ha
ha!; to my one good friend whom I completely forgot to
put in this list; and to you.

I don't think about how much love there is in the above
paragraph because I don't want to spend the day crying
from the overabundance of emotion, but...

I love you all more than words can hint at.

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