

Per Topic and One Early Essay

—

Jerry Van Polen

Copyright 1984-2024 Jerry Van Polen

This work is dedicated to the public domain under the Creative Commons CC0 Public Domain Dedication. To the extent possible under law, Jerry Van Polen has waived all copyright and related or neighboring rights to this work.

For the time being, printed copies of this work could be available from the lulu.com bookstore.

For the time being, pdf file downloads (and additional information) should be available at my <http://main.jvp.mm.st> URL.

Cover image: Frame from *Gizaflower* by Jerry Van Polen.

This source file version date: 2024-07-03

CONTENTS

1. Introduction . . . 1
2. "No more than your conclusions" . . . 2
3. Time Integrated . . . 4
4. Some Free-Standing Sentences . . . 5
5. Truth . . . 8
6. Faith (Poetry) . . . 9
7. Faith (Definitions) . . . 11
8. Spirituality . . . 12
9. Balanced Development and Grounding . . . 13
10. Empathy . . . 14
11. Poets . . . 15
12. Equanimity . . . 16
13. Presence . . . 18
14. Integrity . . . 19
15. Boldness . . . 20
16. Genius . . . 21
17. Age . . . 23
18. Duty . . . 24
19. Evidence and Joy . . . 25
20. Brevity . . . 26
21. Lyrical Flight . . . 27
22. Happiness . . . 29
23. Heart and Home . . . 30
24. Grace and Beauty . . . 32
25. Books . . . 34
26. Study . . . 35
27. Science . . . 36
28. Politics . . . 37
29. Trade . . . 38
30. Inversion of Value . . . 39
31. Will . . . 40
32. Reason . . . 42
33. Historical Action . . . 43
34. Ideology . . . 44
35. The Buddhist, Taoic, and Hindic . . . 46
36. Comforting and Style . . . 50
37. Reflective Community . . . 55

38. God-Talk	58
39. Psychology	60
40. Advice 2012	64
41. Some Parts of a Continuum?	66
42. Framing Some Adages	68
43. Politics	70
44. Miscellaneous	73
45. Love as an Overflowing Heart	79
46. List of Sevagusta Opposites	81
47. On The Pedagogy of Ethics And Virtue	83
47.1 Virtue is a craft	83
47.2 Sixty characteristics of ethical suasion	85
47.3 That its true base is coin	92

1.

Introduction

My toolkit for writing entries and essays here was, for the most part, one pen and one-or-more pockets holding 3"x5" cards.

I had attached a sense of a calling to writing in general, having heard: "Your calling is the most important work you can do which no one else can do."

One element to that sense of calling included the notion: single sentences can change lives.

Up to a time when I posted work online, I had held things so close and shared so few printed copies collecting all of my work, it resulted in this passage:

There are as many reasons for this collection as there have been reasons in my life. I could write a new introduction each day and never finish. But my best work is sure; sure or silent I must be. ... Allow me to introduce, then, a long-time private companion. Like a lover, she has been a close hold. Like a romance, her facets still intrigue and delight and remind me, reading after reading after reading, year after year. Ingenuer, ever-promise is her appeal, and must be in valor that she succeed. By parts she is of the friend kind, if ye but know her.

In the last several years, I have benefitted from reading *Stoicism for Inner Peace* authored by Einzelganger.

2.

“No more than your conclusions”

I ask for no more than your conclusions on the great matters of human life and destiny. Let me know them, and I shall not trouble you to set out the arguments. I can myself supply them.

__ W. Macneile Dixon __

Look back to the opinions universally held in Europe in 1435. ... Ours will amuse our successors a few hundred years hence, and theirs, no doubt, be recalled with amazement a millennium later. Our business is not to solve problems beyond mortal powers, but to see to it that our thoughts are not unworthy of the great theme.

__ W. Macneile Dixon, The Human Situation __

The following two might be applied either for or against my approach (and are probably best kept in mind both ways):

Many a reformer perishes in his removal of rubbish; and that makes the offensiveness of the class. They are partial; they are not equal to the work they pretend. They lose their way; in the assault on the kingdom of darkness they expend all their energy on some accidental evil, and lose their sanity and power of benefit. It is of little moment that one or two or twenty errors of our social system be corrected, but of much that the man be in his senses.

__ R.W. Emerson, New England Reformers __

It does not matter what this attitude may be—wise or unlearned, positive or negative. What does matter is that each man should in each case think what he actually thinks. At best the humblest peasant is so clear about his actual convictions, so well coordinated within himself, so sure of what he thinks about the reduced catalogue of things which makes up his environment, that he has hardly any

problems. And the deep repose of his life amazes us, the dignified serenity with which he lets his fate flow on. There are very few of these countrymen left now; culture has reached them, and so has the topical, and that which we called socialization; and they are beginning to live on ideas received from the outside and to believe things they do not believe. Farewell to deep quietude, farewell to life enmeshed with itself, farewell to serenity, farewell to the genuine.

__ Jose Ortega y Gasset __

3.

Time Integrated

One way to proceed is to accept and stipulate that there *are* enough hours in the day, adjusting expectations to match.

Nina Atwood, in Chapter 7 of her book *Urgency Addiction*, suggested of “time integrated people” that they:

- never seem to be in a hurry
- experience the present moment to the fullest
- believe they deserve time for themselves
- make time to get what they want
- welcome the future with confidence
- create a rich, usable past
- spend time on relationships that matter.

The preceding assume access to particular qualities of experience, including particular calm, quietness, and so-called presence to the moment. Beyond open awareness, testimony is also given through the faith and focused attention of *one thing at a time*.

4.

Some Free-Standing Sentences (as-of-2012)

(Warning: many of these are repeated later.)

Every one at once a sage: What once we called precocious, we now do credit age.

If we carry in mind a thought which can be taken to the very end of life, then the same thought can carry us through.

As luck would have it, a life limited to high-class problems is not a high-class life.

If you stop fighting for something it soon won't be worth saving.

To say "I believe" can be an admission of failure, for, in one sense, to-believe is to-live-as-if.

Those who are of influence are not mere recipients of process; they jostle to contest premises of cause and effect.

Who carries too much passion in one endeavor will soon look for enemies.

Those who do not go to the source of quotations are condemned to repeat them.

There are no moral prodigies; as with soldiers and live bullets, our mettle is tested only within a line of fire.

The one-hundred most truthful, angry, hypocritical, kind, or humble words you say or hear might determine, to surprising degree, the course of your life.

Given the choice a drop of rain would still fall — thinking it natural.

Santa must have the most frightful backstory — for out of what we have lost can we give to others.

What would be falsely said can be seen together.

The mere moralist resists an examination of premises; moralisms are political, psychological, rhetorical, diabolical.

One way we can nurture is with tiny proverbs and prophecies — auspiciating futures either within grasp or worth reaching for.

Every species has a moral logic and it is seldom sex-neutral.

To give sudden and authoritative praise is a sacred obligation.

The book cannot be written which will teach us to say it with a single touch.

No one looks at old family pictures and worries about the timeliness of the decor.

Celebrity: questionably and/or profanely that one should matter a little to many than much to a few.

Less is more only if each person's less can be different.

In the end, the only thing you can own is the way you own choices which were not entirely your own.

5.

Truth

To seek truth can be to seek that which, once found, remains true forever. Thus our lives are not true; but the patterns of life are true — find we them in a microscope or a market, one library or a loved one, the closest acre, or a familiar congregation.

Not by head alone but heart and motion. Unless we are also feeling the truth we aren't knowing the truth. The gentler passions tell us clear stories; they are reasons of their own to declare.

Not all things demanding are true and beautiful—be though admirable the passion they inspire.

Dependent Arising alludes to patterns as reproducible and yet as ephemeral as the results of a mathematical function call upon the results of a mathematical function call. Does a whirlpool exist? Thus, “ground truth” (or “assumable truth”) represents a selectable dividing line. Arisings necessarily unroll; they are “popped from the stack”. Confidently, however, while each life must pass, once there is some ostensible ground there are patterns at work in no danger of becoming irreproducible.

6.

Faith (Poetry)

By some who dream it is said we are separated only by sleep.

A religion can be a river or a swamp, and placid the land or on fire,
but faith glides freely on any of them.

The word 'faith' is admirable, but less so the possessive forms "my
faith" or "your lack of it".

Faith is a moment-to-moment blessing, not a possession. It is least
fleeting when we are individually least grasping.

Faith is courage. Faith is equanimity. Faith is a relationship to
change; and change being constant, faith can be constant.

If you would testify to perfect value, accept the world as it mostly
is; act on what it could be. If there is a light beyond light it will have
its way. Only in world we claim too much credit for is there a dark
beyond dark.

If we carry in mind a thought which can be taken to the very end of
life, the same thought can carry us through.

It requires a still faith to take silence as an option.

7.

Faith (Definitions)

“Faith in” can correspond to “trust in” a person, “trust in” a knowledge process, or “trust in” an institution.

‘Faith’ can refer to a substantial set of cultural and religious practices.

The word ‘faith’ can also serve as a stand-in for other words naming one or more useful and/or sustaining personal states or qualities. Thus we have the form of sentence: Her X got her through.

One sometimes-sustaining personal state can be the state of holding strong opinion. In this role, holding strong opinion can serve as a means, not an end in itself.

‘Faith’ can characterize a relationship to change. ‘Faith’ can characterize a relationship to a specific foreseen future. ‘Faith’ can characterize a relationship to an open future.

8.

Spirituality

The self is like that magician's box where any two opposing sides can simultaneously open. Try too many pairs at once and the structure collapses. But be flexible in opening any single pair and no gale can threaten it. That we can call strength is not breaking in the wind.

The self is like a house where windows can be opened letting light and fresh breezes through. "Light" and "breeze" provide metaphors for things infinitely divisible, responsive to openings and invitation, evanescent, and from an everflowing source. They are metaphors for indestructible and unstoppable being. When we open ourselves up, "being" can flow.

Anything which has helped alter the perceived boundaries of the self has been called by someone "spiritual". To alter a spatial sense; to alter boundaries of body or identity or attention; to alter boundaries of belief or conception or culture; or to alter a mood which has been persistent enough to be taken for granted; — each defines a part to so-called spiritual experience.

Plausibly, the spiritual side of belief, contrasted to the religious, posits that Reality or Truth is by some measure "less" than meets the eye and simple, not "more" than meets the eye and ornate. On the "less than" side there are seen books in a single breeze, and suspicious that eye toward words and writing.

9.

Balanced Development and Grounding

When we relax into one group or another we can begin to lose social muscle or intimacy muscle. That is, when we start to gravitate towards people who ostensibly think just like us, an atrophy begins. First the sect, then the sub-sect, then the sub-sub-sect, as the need for ease increases. The muscle for intimacy is the muscle to be closer and love — though difference exists. Our rapport might be a thing of love, but so is the thou of difference.

A person who feels well-connected socially can perhaps more lovingly contemplate, as such, *everything beyond human influence*. Many describe that loving contemplation as the more-or-less “sweet remembrance of God”. However, for most, trying to be spiritually grounded without being socially grounded can become a contradiction in terms. It can be forced and too far test the requirements of self.

It might be best to combine significant spiritual or emotional work with significant physical or intellectual work, as one means of staying grounded.

Consider? Strive and measure yourself toward the fully human, not anything other than human. When you work to improve, improve in at least two areas at once. Always be striving in some area which is unforgiving in terms of cause and effect.

10.

Empathy

Empathy cannot be continuous. But a moment of empathy can spark recognition, recognition can spark a change of values, and a change of values can bring lasting change in behavior. The child who once hurts an insect and *knows* it, stands to be the different child.

Empathy for an individual goes to heartstrings and generosity. Empathy for an entire class of people wronged goes to *rage or indignity at injustice*. A sure indication of power is the ability to artfully deflect all criticism.

To want for comforting can be to want for help to a middle. That middle can be one of neither under-identifying nor over-identifying with a feeling or situation. Under-identifying can mean not hearing one's own or another's problem. Over-identifying can result from an excess of empathy.

11.

Poets

Poets, prophets, artists, moralists, statesmen, others. Through society and habit what once arose true becomes false. They — the sometimes “true legislators” — plow. They plow. A turn of voice true is a product of toil and soil.

12.

Equanimity

There are some states which seem to have “simplicity” written on them. If every person has access to such states — and if finding “simplicity” correlates to genius — it follows that every person possesses some particular genius for living.

In a state of equanimity, it becomes immediate that the longest term and most subtle of projects are certain in both effect and value. At such moments no choice is right but is made right through the patience, love, and indomitable spirit which will see it through.

Projecting backwards from times of more completion, we become infinitesimals. Projecting forward, we remain delicate and soon to break — but butterflies' wings (setting winds in motion).

Tasks for a lifetime: Know yourself alone; calm yourself alone. Know yourself with others; calm yourself with others. Be true with yourself; be true with others. Move towards your fears; converse with your emotions. Finally, love people by seeing them apart from their assigned status.

Reflection gives action direction; direction gives our pauses meaning. Equanimity gives meaning to an in-between.

It stands at the blend of the freedom to act and the freedom not to act. Likewise, it is always in relation to a whole. Not only speaking,

but listening. Not only moving, but seeing ahead. It can stop when others would but start, and start when others stop. In it, an opposite is always an option.

13.

Presence

In the young it must, but with age our particular life does not need to matter.

There is nothing you can take away which could so harm me, save what I need to grow. There is nothing you can take away which could so make me, save what I need to grow.

Strength of character: the part of oneself made from will after giving up on relation, chance, and fortune.

The most visible and present persons are also the most invisible —the person is quickly forgotten but the effect is not. Fearing nothing inside which others might react to, “present” persons can see out, having ceased to watch themselves with fear of what others could see. ... Opening our eyes without fear we meet these people and we meet ourselves.

Present in a passing gaze the briefest is the truest.

14.

Integrity

Blessed those who convey this blessing: “May you be whole.”

There is more than one approach to integrity. One is: no one has anything *on me* of any significance—a stance of relative innocence. This is a limitation. Another is: as bad as I can be known to be I am worse—a stance of relative humility. The latter is a path of certitude; we can be certain of making the latter case.

The mind demands that we invent justifications for what we do. Integrity calls for a standard to be applied in the process. If we will not deceive ourselves in this moment, we might not as easily deceive others later.

We are not single but we can be whole. The whole person is not merely one of convictions; as well they stand the first ready to convict themselves. Were my motives to help or hurt? My reasons best? My admissions to myself true? Are they at this moment? ... Who can later judge can judge now. Who can be powerful later can be powerful now. Who can be compassionate later can be compassionate now. ... For those with conviction there are not moments *of* time, there are moments *in* time. As I shall own myself I am am I now.

15.

Boldness

In general our unrelated survivors find our deaths a forgivable offense. The living do not blame the dead for their bold living.

Every prohibition has been advisable for *someone*. But for all? The sum of all negative advice, like the mixing of all paint, holds no light or color. Thus:

I heeded all the warnings, heard them all, I never crossed the line. If you don't make your own mistakes, you'll be making mine.

The logic of avoiding "near occasions of sin" can be carried all the way to an impoverished life.

In passion we forsake awareness of distracting alternatives.

Just as soldiers are tested with live bullets, there are no moral prodigies. Only within the line of fire can our mettle be found.

Cold front on the mountain: no time to get timid. The once-brave also perish who cannot cut the last rope behind them. Past a certain point, unless we are being the men and women we can be, we will not become the men and women we could be. Thus from strength to strength our truest path lay — no short or easy one.

16.

Genius

My third essay on genius: Genius can consist in the courage to seek, see, and say something simple.

“Any X which appears sufficiently advanced will be indistinguishable from Y”; repeat with X = parsimony; Y = genius.

Nature lends her genius freely.

Every true statement about the role of genius can also be phrased as a statement about the role of a true friend. The true friend proves the extraordinary in the ordinary. The true friend takes our half-thoughts and deprecated impulses and makes them grander, infinite, shareable, true. The true friend gives us a new hold on our destiny. The true friend states simply and sublimely a truth we could sense—did sense—but could not other-than-for-them embrace. The true friend does not need first of all to be loved, but to be True.

In citing a human “genius” we associate an individual with some truth or demonstration otherwise eternal.

Of these Originals we might say they were fishermen and anglers: having sweeps of territory at their command; able to wait—long long wait—while remaining sharply aware; trained by many a fish thrown back to recognize worthy, worthier, worthiest from first flash of fin; precisely able to set the hook (again having practiced on

many small fish); and then so true to their method and also patient, landing the smallest and largest of their life with the same grace and sureness of a master.

17.

Age

Every one at once a sage. What once we called precocious, we now do credit age.

Oh, to know now what we do not now know about the source of our actions.

A man who knows and appreciates himself will find many things beautiful in women his own age.

18.

Duty

Beautifully firm souls effect poetry in motion. The beautifully infirm effect prayer in motion. As with the perfect poem or prayer, 'Dharma' suggests a sense of duty so natural we can return to it a million times.

A drop of rain given the choice would still fall, thinking it natural.

In ethics, even proponents of duty must come back to consequences. Theirs is simply to weight consequences for our senses of meaning: "What would I become?" "What would we become?" "What would life become?" Thus in consequences is duty grounded.

19.

Evidence and Joy

If we constantly seek evidence that wonders exist, then life is wonderful. If we constantly seek evidence that small coincidences make for bigger openings, then luck smiles on us. If we are open to evidence of someone liking, laughing, listening and lingering with us, then love can be found. If we are prepared to speak the truth, then truth and honesty exist. By those trusting, warmth and assurance can be found.

Joy is not a neutral disposition. Our joyful moods depend on possessing the *persistent intent* to find evidence of good, as our sorrows, in part, from habit or intent to find evidence of pain.

There can be no perfect freedom. However, there can be perfect refusal to look for answers in the wrong place.

Your life is written in the kind of evidence you seek, and where.

It is not what you find which defines you, but where you continue to seek.

There is no interpreting everything, and we can certainly over-interpret. Yet, one can be too timid in interpretation and, as a result, miss signs, signposts, sayings and soothings. Don't expect less from the universe than you would expect from a consistently thoughtful friend.

20.

Brevity

Ancient sages: copywriters with eternity as a client.

To say much, it is necessary but not sufficient to say little.

It is always useful to say less than one knows.

I am confident that the less I write, the more certain I am to realize my gift.

No one's thoughts by their silence are lost.

21.

Lyrical Flight

There are sentences one can be sure are true without being able to parse or to translate them.

There are convictions we can approach but cannot touch. Essential that ambiguity for us to circle.

We must speak with the greatest precision when it essential to be understood. We must speak with less precision to attempt greater understanding.

A high aphorism might present muzzled madness, and thus not straight of aim.

First making them true, write the sentences no one else could have written.

Believe that single sentences can change lives.

Decisively, one day in my twenties I was re-reading essays I had recently attempted, and found I liked only one sentence or two in total. I resolved to write only those sentences. Later I would also find pleasure in going two or three steps past cliché.

The *value* of a meditation can be understood in part as follows:

The dictionary definition of 'formulations' has three meanings all of which apply:

- A formulation is a *construct*. ... Some logic or sequence-of-reference should inform it;
- A formulation is a *cleansing agent*. ... it can remove dust and cast new light on meaning;
- A formulation is a *phrasing*. ... meanwhile expression makes its particular value.

A formulation: Some logic or sequence-of-reference should inform it; it can remove dust and cast new light on meaning; meanwhile expression makes its particular value.

22.

Happiness

As luck would have it, a life consumed with high-class problems is not a high-class life.

Based upon biased reports, the world has been one giant mistake.

Happiness is not the direct goal. To be comforting — alone — calls for experience from within many fires. But to be both comforting and joyful — now the comforter too must be comforted.

A paradox not upon which to falter: the recipe view of happiness ("do X, Y, and Z") contains the tragic view ("do not aim directly"), and the tragic view contains the recipe view.

Santa must have the most frightful backstory, for out of what we have lost can we give to others.

23.

Heart and Home

Brain surgeons are expected to do examinations after surgeries to see if any essential functions have been lost. Practitioners of popular therapies should be expected to do “heart” exams in the same sense. Popular therapies can be like any other shallow happiness religion in that they can teach us to un-think things which might challenge us and leave us uneasy, but are essential to keeping, savoring and at some times acting on convictions in our heart.

Each person at some point realizes that they have opinions which: (a) appear to be true; yet (b) are such that no one else ever need believe or say the same thing. Call these intuitions, instincts, and insights “personal convictions”. Some of these personal convictions remain with us longer than others. The set of our longest-held personal convictions comes to define, in part, what is “held in our heart”. Thus, what we hold in our hearts eventually defies explanation. Those things become given of who we are. They must be re-examined, but only at great cost may they be forgotten.

Toward those we have held in our heart the longest, what other disposition but love?

A truism: wherever you travel you remain the same person. A corollary: don’t stay where you will have to change your heart to feel at home. You have a heart. There is a place you can call home.

Even the follies at home are ultimately more important than the successes at work.

No one looks at old family pictures and worries about the timeliness of the decor.

Is it mass error to commonly lack immediate safe access to soil and trees, yet still call or make that a home?

24.

Grace and Beauty

Social power is like a small miracle in that it can be created freely out of nothing. However, it has the property that it can only be freely created or increased by acts of sharing with those who have less (or no more) of it. Not much can be given, let alone forced upon, those whose wealth exceeds our own. Good the stew, but that twig bends brought to stir too large a pot.

Teachers, lovers, parents, those who would lead, and those who would speak the truth: one's next remark can change a lifetime, as can one's apology.

For those who can to give sudden and authoritative praise is a sacred obligation.

Connection either short or long term: towards listening, comforting, pleasure, daring truth, and gifts of attention.

Subtlety, gift, nuance, honor, humor, wit, and beauty can speak to some boundaries in art.

Meditation is not a thing; it is more of a category name, like 'sport'. Happy they for whom their sport is their dance, although many the sad meditators left injured.

That book has not been written which would teach you to say it with a single touch.

25.

Books

We mortgage ourselves to mass in a thousand forms. Just as most tools should be kept in a shed or shop, most books we own should perhaps be hidden. Of books, as of society, keep those close to whom you owe the allegiance of a friend or neighbor. Only they know their souls who select the company they keep.

Books are — compared to infinitely available electronic content — what intimate friends are compared to general society. When was the last time you gave a good book a call?

If you cannot commit to reading a book, soon you might be unable to commit to any project large or small.

26.

Study

We are matter with meaning. Sciences speak to choices as adaptive or not in a world of matter. Humanities speak to choices as adaptive or not in a world of meanings.

The way of all knowledge is the way of all flesh: living, real, sturdy, but infirm.

Those who do not go to the source of quotations are condemned to repeat them.

Those who are deep in knowledge are not deep enough if they do not love.

27.

Science

If you can get there by rail science is the fastest train going.

It is essential in our humanity to take hold of imaginative truth. It is essential in science to know when to let go.

28.

Politics

To call an act “political” can be to imply an act combining calculation and concealment. This is not necessarily an insult. A feint is also part of nature.

Who spends too much of their life in one mad endeavor will soon look for enemies.

29.

Trade

Some make height the measure of value; some breadth. Some seek to raise the highest peaks; some might broaden the base. But by some law of similarities, height and breadth are never far out of relation. Who serves one might serve both and serve all. Absent barriers which cannot long stand an honest light, wealth, knowledge, and understanding tend to spread with a predictable slope. Gradualness in inequality is itself one measure of justice.

The ambitiously smart person sees in evidence of relative ignorance the opportunity to appear smart. The ambitious tradesperson or businessperson, by contrast, sees in examples of relative ignorance the opportunity to make a product or make a sale. Trade and invention can remedy ignorance without the overt presumption to teach.

A person of the cloth, surveying human toil with equanimity and professional detachment, reifies to the extent of declaring, "There are souls." A person of the law, surveying human toil with equal equanimity and detachment, can reify to the extent of declaring, "There is legal product; — constitutions, laws, articles and bylaws, contracts and resolutions ... a chain of legal coinage and authority." The person of the cloth can declare: "Owing to souls, people can make more complex decisions than if there were only matter." The person of the law can declare: "Owing to words coined on paper, people can make more complex decisions than if there were only souls." Not to be left out, the money-lender declares: "Owing to money and interest, people can make more complex decisions than if there were only goods."

30.

Inversion of Value

The desire for celebrity: presuming it could matter more to matter a tiny bit to many, than much to a few. Taken to its conclusion, this is a formula for almost everyone to matter to no one.

Do Hollywood writers understand what philosophers have not? As I surmise in common with movies, 'evil' implies: (a) a harmful mechanism; and (b) a sentience (human or not) which could reasonably anticipate the mechanism's effects; but (c) chose not to prevent or forestall that mechanism. Exhibit: We have the monster which cannot not now be pleaded with, yet a responsible act of prevention was at one time possible.

The evil person is always lazy in some way, expanding the range of congenital disdain for duty.

31.

Will

It was suspected before the appearance of quanta that there is not only continuity in the universe but also discontinuity ... The notion of qualitative change has always implied certain actions 'impossible to represent within our usual spatio-temporal frame.' It is only a physicist who can speak of 'the apparent determinism of the macroscopic scale'; on the scale of our senses there is no appearance of determinism except in the laboratory. Ask a meteorologist or a peasant if they see much determinism in storms or rain; look at the sea, and say if the shapes of the waves appear to reveal a very rigorous necessity! The truth is that nineteenth-century physicists believed there were no more things in heaven and earth than in their laboratory—and indeed in their laboratory only at the moment when an experiment succeeded. Their excuse was their professional obsession but those who shared their belief without that excuse were fools.

___ Simone Weil ___

Will rests on intent and its effects. Lose the intent, lose the will. Lose the possibility of effect, lose the will. Effective will follows from the habit of effect. Without act there is a limit to agency.

We converse to discover the world and those around us. Actions too are words or phrases in a conversation.

In a self-persuasive social-physical determinism there will be a deft 100% explanation at hand for any behavior. Naively perhaps, it seems a problem that there will be such deft 100% explanation at hand five, six, or ten times over. What does that then make of explanation, and how can anyone do anything at all, rather than

nothing due to overconstraint? In physics, inertia is not the only principle.

One cogito could be: I am ignorant of my full self and my full circumstances, therefor *my experience* is of blindness to full cause and that I have some freedom. If I am externally *determined* to remain ignorant of all cause, then I am externally *determined* to feel somewhat free (as are others). And for the same reason I must speak to others in appeal to their experience of feeling free; I cannot resist!

In the sense that there are no strictly separate individuals, we might say: "There is no strictly individual choice, but there is choice." For example, will could belong to some group, and influence fundamentally directed toward a group.

Tractable: There are five main causes of any action or behavior and there are five main consequences of any action or behavior. It is reasonable to ascribe at least one cause to choice.

Inhibition could be the water and *will* be the fish in the water.

32.

Reason

What we call our reason is forever attentive to scenarios of persuasion. If in a dream we saw a convincing association, a moon of cheese seems for a moment logical.

In philosophy and rhetoric, there are two aspects of progress. One is to advance the state of approachable understanding. The other is to advance the state of best argument. Towards these ends some arguments are “squishy” and some are precise.

When “reason” becomes worn and familiar and unable to reconstruct itself, appeal to reason easily becomes appeal to emotion based in comfort.

When reason becomes exceedingly deft and dismissive, it may similarly be stuck.

33.

Historical Action

The movement of history clings not wholly to justice. It cannot. If there were perfect justice to the past and present, there could not be enough justice to the future, to the unknown, and to the what-could-be-brought-to-be.

Moderate justice for me please. The sophistication needed for extreme justice—if such exists—cannot live in the wild. In the wild, extreme justice marches the same tune as extreme injustice.

34.

Ideology

For some, there is some *this-is-it* which can justify all means to its presumed end. If it is further assumed that the *this-is-it* cannot be adequately articulated in the “historical present”, but only after, then *destruction* might be romanticized as a necessary goal. Observe and beware then the powerful yet inarticulate movement or ruler, sure of goodness and saying, “you wait and see”.

If the most cosmopolitan people around you routinely lament *this world of X*, or frequently toss the comment *That's the way it is in this world of X*, you will easily be induced to assume there is a place of not-X.

Someone will always come along to give a name to that supposed not-X place. Occasionally with *marching orders* to get there.

Be wary of any movement which is stopping more thought than Buddhist Meditation.

Ideology: a form of romantic love. The fool takes it as possible only once in a lifetime.

The utopian wants to bite that looks-like-an-apple on the next tree over.

Others add: Let's cut off the branch we are on and catch a better one on the way down.

Some would inject the roots of a tree with dye, awaiting a spectacle.

Saving trees is a value, along with Let's plant some new ones.

In that place which might never exist but we can live as-if; in that fair, harmonious, and sustainable State of limited scale; in fitting that hole in our heart for Shangri-La; — if it were a *productive* near-paradise with not all simply given, then we might expect to find coordination by a handful of absolutes in no particular order, exceptions taken to deal with those who take extreme exception, tit-for-tat with outsiders, and internally a mutually-supportive set of *roles* each with their means, goals, constraints or necessities, and corresponding excellences or virtues.

Life-in-motion requires meta-meta-ethics; this can be say: ordinary ethics.

35.

The Buddhic, Taoic, and Hindic

If the goal is to be quiet you can take your sweet time getting there.

Suppose the The Everything is *all* forms plus *all* perspectives plus none-of-the-above. Shall we need a set-theorist to unpack this? Is the group of all groups a group which can be named?

Most religions have a creation myth; Buddhism has a cessation myth.

Pie-in-the-mind or Pie-in-the-sky?

Confucius said to the Continental Philosophers: "Sons, you have too many desires in your heart to remain effective."

I do not know about a vow. But there can be worldly and psychological moments when one's life feels realized enough to make it possible to imagine it never happened. Then a choice seems to exist. We can think of those in misery and say, "Our lives have to be real. Our efforts real." If that for others, also for ourselves.

A person runs up a hill and—before reaching the top—slows down and stops at the top. This person will need to descend at

some point, yet before that they may look and wait and choose a particular path down. This person rightly expects to limit momentum while descending. ... Contrast a second person. The second person runs up the hill and is over-tired when reaching the top. Rather than think and slow to a stop, this other person pushes through and over. Tired as this other person is, they are barely able to regulate momentum in descent. ... Deliberateness. Equanimity. Timing if not control.

To a degree, received wisdom counts less and less compared to the practice of frequently viewing or interpreting one's experience to make better or simpler of it.

Calm energy. High meaning. Low inference. Ours is to choose what we let in and make well of our canvas of meaning.

Is your mind occasionally clear and in equipoise, and not detectably in search of answers or solutions? Blessed the realization and trust, "there is only so much work which needs to be done". Blessed be momentary retirement. But momentary retirement is still only one healthy frame among others.

I sense "non-dualistic awareness" as a frequently puffed-up term. Yes there are apparently default networks and phonological loops which can vary and yield "silence". But what is one doing with that silence?

In a silence one might become philosophically non-dualistic.

Yet how about a little code switching? There is and there is not an I. If others see a *me*, might it be solipsistic and/or obstinate of me to deny their views?

There is always a decorum to recognize and assess before rejecting.

And aren't contrasting and surprising perceptions part of the fun?
Re-member?

One practice defined in Buddhism is “choiceless awareness”. Imagine more forgivingly speaking of “relatively choiceless awareness”. Most people know the experience of listening to a favorite recorded song they have heard many times and whose nuances they appreciate. At times we listen to such a recording and let it flow through our full attention. Call this relatively choiceless and very appreciative listening. Worry not; as you knew until you were told otherwise, your same brain is capable of relatively choiceless and very appreciative seeing, hearing,— indeed five senses — all together.

Cultivated ignominy is like practice for death. Your name dies but you do not.

The notion and practice of *people-watching* speaks to the degree to which one's mind is another sense organ; thus, without a *sense* for people our mental pictures are incomplete. In so-called dharma terms, this suggests an analogy worthy of essay. For example, just as one can rest on a bench and watch people, one can rest on the breath and body awareness and watch dwellings in the mind. One extreme taught by both mind-watching and people-watching is idleness.

At the root of watching the mind and images, there are still the echoes of three-dimensional experience in time. It would be interesting to see a folk “brain-layers” mythology compete for

mindshare with the existing commercial/folk “brain-chemistry” mythology. Indeed, suppose drugs and practices could selectively change weights, thresholds, or parameters at particular brain network layers. Could introspectionists learn to taste-test drugs and comment on the apparent weighting effects for brain layers?

Somewhere in Buddhism there is room for an analogy between the mind and clean glassware. A strict Buddhist might assert that most people are distilling moonshine, and that good values are not to be titrated in as an afterthought.

Newton: a mathematical time-present, everywhere. By contrast Relativity, Buddhism, Stoicism, and Process: subjective thicker presents, not everywhere.

Given the Calm-and-You-Describe-It; — continue and abide. Given Tao; — continue and abide. Given guide ... ; given Earth ... ; given God, given Mother ... ; given forgiveness ... ; given humanity ... ; given friendliness ... ; given grit ... ; given courage ... ; — continue and abide.

The heart-sense subtends more solid angle than only desire. Awareness in a wider cone.

Sand mandalas. Okay for art. Meant for art.

One way to meditate is to count upward, or count to 100 repeatedly. “Counting meditation” adds some advantages including built-in attention testing and built-in timing.

36.

Comforting and Style

You can settle in; you can rebel; you can escape; you can renegotiate.

In the end, the only thing you can own is the way you own choices which were not entirely your own.

The bold might die faster but the living do not fault the dead for their bold living. Were they reckless? Either reckless, useless, a hero, or a half-assed saint.

Absent carefulness, assertiveness expands to fill the space left by un-assertiveness. The best-hearted are not immune to bluster.

The one-hundred most truthful, angry, hypocritical, or humble words you say — together with the one-hundred most truthful, angry, hypocritical, or humble words you hear spoken to you — will most likely determine the entire course of your life.

Perhaps comics are small saints. Simone Weil, not known for her sense of humor, might approve. For who but a comic must provide and enjoy pleasure without in any way letting or wanting a distance between persons to decrease. For Simone Weil, constant distance was essential in the grace-filled appreciation of any person and all beauty. If a comic starts to need us or need approval at least half the funny won't be.

One kind of thanatos leads to rejecting earthly life. A different kind of thanatos leads to rejecting some life-beyond-death. With a gesture some flip the finger at the gods or the god-given.

In her book *The Art of Comforting*, Val Walker lists these as qualities of those who are comforting: Being-present-and-listening; Empathic; Genuine; Respectful; Patient; Caring; Reliable; Clear; Warm; Accepting; Calm; Hopeful; Humble; Supportive-and-validating; Appreciative; Generous; Gentle/tender; Adaptable; Wise/experienced; and Strong. Comforting is a use of character as healing. Comforting can be spread by practice and example.

Be comforting. Granted, a number of paths—psychology, normative ethics, good stories, and common sense and socialization—deal in arguments for having a particular kind of life; more power to them. But proponents must also be silent, for in being present, refraining, and lacking objective we find an end in someone else.

Perhaps there is no noun which can be called forgiveness. However, there are forgiving attitudes and closely-related practical forgetting. For example: Nature forgives us and forgets us.

Assuming that some truth or Truth exists within our belief or point-of-view, many of us then presume that there is truth in our particular way of defending or articulating it. The resulting behavior has been described as “logical rudeness”. Logical rudeness can occur when we assume that talking *about* truth and rightness gives rightness to our way of talking.

When one can easily do something quite bad it is a great time to do something quite good.

We need a wiser world to have a more caring world. Unwise, each of us can easily become a greater sink than source of care. We all know of the givers who go empty. Many of the saints we need will also be saints of self-care.

Degrees of modesty are universal, but do you believe the human body is a scandal?

May I count and solicit the trees to reacquaint my faith.

We have no self without circumstances, but to be self-assured can be to be more clear and certain of our self than our circumstances.

There are things you will never know about yourself while you are busy with what you say about yourself.

Why do I think it will be an advantage to not know what I am doing?

Those with clean hearts can truly arrive to a place once there.

Imagine or invoke a witnesser. Trust in the truth of things. Create value.

There are multiple half-truths about relationships. Two half-truths can be greater than one supposed truth. One half-truth is that your actions of being in relationship help create your habits, including habits of thoughtfulness and generosity.

Behavior with a “named practice” in mind can be of more consequence than the same behavior seen as an isolated action. Additionally considering a “duty”, as part of additionally naming a practice, can result in more consequence than mere action, and help determine what life will become. Caring, as part of naming practice, can be of more consequence than mere action, and help determine what life will become. As within ritual, action around emptiness can at times be consequential.

Notes on Stoicism There can be intent of God. There can be continuing flow around gods. There can be auxiliary necessities of divine origin. ... Always high-mindedness: “If it is random, don’t be random.” In Marcus Aurelius, as if there exists both an inner Tao and an outer Tao. Live in accordance with each—both personal nature and Universal Nature—the first as impulse and will, the second as Destiny. Higher stoicism. The identity between “nature” and “reason”, together in process and growth. To remain coherent both within and outside oneself. Within the *present* a process of coherence. Stoicism in Marcus has a “process” character? Imagine a larger cloth. There are individual strands—themselves parts of individual threads. Within the cloth the strand becomes well placed.

The freedom of the religious dilettante: to practice at any moment as if any particular religion did not exist, yet not as if none of them existed.

Breaths are fleeting and so might grace be, like a breath.

37.

Reflective Community

From given circumstances we may move to thought of a rule, a principle-at-stake, or a practice-with-consequences. Different schools teach different methods to quickness, and quick decisions are often better than none. However, most framings can be re-framed, given more time and broader reflection. So-called reflective individuals and reflective communities will subject their thought-processes and rationalizations to re-examination and to continued scrutiny. To be part of a reflective community is to accept the joy and the burden of infinite explication.

Religious involvement helps sharpen these transferable skills: constrained sociability; numinous insight; and credulity.

We may ask: "What will it mean for me as a person to do this?" "What will it mean for us as a people to do this?" "What will I become?" "What will we become?" "Will there be nearly-incalculable consequences for me (and following from me) as a person?" "Will there be nearly-incalculable consequences for us (and following from us) as a people?" From this level of concern there follow answers powerfully referencing individual and collective duty.

If ecumenism is more of a social than a theological strategy, then *big-tent consequentialism* is potentially more of a social than a philosophical strategy. The price of admission to the tent: bare your premises about cause-and-effect meaningful to a life. All will be found wanting, but all welcome.

To anyone I have harmed I ask to be forgiven. I ask to be forgiven my debts as well. Where I have apologized I have done so imperfectly. Where I have learned I have learned imperfectly. I try to learn lessons where I can. For all that is good—trust, and be trusted.

One way of seeing connectedness is through fear; another is seeing associations and memories in positive ways. If you search your life for good advice you will find good advice. Just as there is a distribution of wealth following from positive exchange, there is a distribution of wisdom. When we give thought to whether some advice could be good for us—and how we could apply it—we contribute to a positive sum of moral wealth.

One could coin a cheesy word: faithidence. Faith qua confidence. Faith qua self-fulfilling prophesy. Faithidence: That, acting with which, we make it possible for a would-be truth to live; That which acting with we make it possible for action with faith to succeed. Better and commonly known as confidence in the future and confidence in self-fulfilling prophecy. There are quantities in the world which are increased by confidence and practice.

We have names. Notice that your parents and others say “Hi” or “Hello” to you by name. Notice them saying “Hi <your name>”. Notice that you use names in speaking to others. We have names.

Those who have lost the touch for connection to random strangers will not improve through strength in numbers.

You might be with good people if it feels better saying or hearing “no” amongst them than “yes” elsewhere.

Meaningfulness is objective. Some manner or mode of thinking surely affects you. The meaningfulness of a way of seeing can survive scientific argument that it is mere opinion or fancy.

I half-understand that there is a Quaker practice of stating a personal truth into a silent response. Not with agenda, but for the dignity and pleasure and intentionality of it.

Privacy is to a degree a recent invention for human beings. Thus a situation of being observed and commented upon, rather than being an unnatural imposition on a human being, might instead be a removal of artificial absence. ... Likewise, there are human cultures where feedback is generally indirect. As with most feedback, comments can be made in a nice way or in a less-than-nice way. Comments can also create either more or less distraction.

To be disciplined and loving, with good character and awareness — to have a “basic life” in order — offers a good container for added experiences, goals, and responsibilities. ... All in good match to the well-known weave of love.

Insisting on the value of one half-truth — if it means not listening to other half-truths — is one means by which the truth is lost.

38.

God-Talk

Simone Weil wrote: “We are only geometricians of matter; the Greeks were, first of all, geometricians in the apprenticeship to virtue.” If we move from particular numbers to the concept of number-in-general (as in algebra), and in turn to that concept extended far from solution with any particular number, we get not a number but a symbol — the mathematical ‘Infinity’. If we move from particular goods or excellences to the concept of goods-in-general (as in ethical calculus), and again extend far from solution with any particular goods, now we need an infinity symbol for the Good.

God be with you. God bless you for doing X. Go with God. God willing. God is at work. God only knows. ... Yet beyond the use of the word ‘God’ in a few kinds of sentences, pretty soon it can sound like “God wills this” and “God wills that” — and there is no end to this.

Poetically speaking: ... If human hearts are sacred, then human needs are God’s needs. ... If human hearts are sacred, then a man’s needs are God’s needs. ... If human hearts are sacred, then a woman’s needs are God’s needs. ... If human hearts are sacred, then a child’s needs are God’s needs. ... Human Needs: what they include; how they are met; and how they are not being met.

Human courtesies are beautiful and bountiful. Human inspiration is beautiful and bountiful. Human thankfulness is beautiful and bountiful. Even polytheists tend to recognize a unity principle. To a Buddhist there is still the skin of an onion.

There is a half-truth that meditation is what one does while losing focus upon friends, interests, and attachments. Mysticism can be experience of the the asymptotic behavior of the the mind, the brain, the body. As in mathematics, to explore all asymptotes one need not define, find, or reach any so-called point at infinity.

The limit of zero remains special. It speaks to humility, but also to nihilism and to an empty head, which should be a warning.

The laws of physics could be like that goddess or spirit which can visit the Earth while God cannot.

39.

Psychology

Pain, *if minor*, can involve a drag on the attention to which we cannot surrender due to a competing orientation. (Also with *minor* pain: one can sometimes surrender, witness, relax, and dissolve.)

Seduction can do for us (or promise to do) what we cannot or refuse to do ourselves: command and concentrate our attention.

Many adolescent terms of character (formerly geek, nerd, etc.) serve as sharp reports and predictors regarding individual social development, individual awareness of social development, or lack in either.

In viewing performance art, one's core attention and relaxation of ego become parcel to the performance. You must be able to get high already to be transported.

The association "evil is done by psychopaths" allows ordinary people to avoid taking responsibility for creating evils with single acts. Placing a thumb-tack pin-upwards on a chair is creating an evil. To create an evil is to create a mechanism in the world with a primary telos or end of doing harm. We can also make ourselves into mechanisms—into monsters—by cultivating sufficiently bad character. Many evils have been and always will be created with joy.

In your secrets are the making of your heart.

There are two kinds of people: those for whom disorganization affects their mental health concerns; and those for whom disorganization affects their spiritual concerns.

There are psychological energies in the world which are not merely conserved quantities. To the degree it implies otherwise, the concept of sublimation is an error of first rank.

To some, the possibility of action is a coincidence or miracle to be explained. To others, the possibility of inaction is a coincidence or miracle to be explained.

The question "What ought my oughts be?" invites vicious circularity. This accords with some experiences of clinical depression.

We all have a biological imperative to not feel apart from others. One downside of this imperative is the possibility of profound loneliness. Profound loneliness follows belief in a permanent apartness. One response to loneliness is to tackle it square-on in more social behavior. Another perhaps is to move closer to such work, understanding, and questions where "we are all more alike than different". Here rubrics include "soul work" and "spiritual work". If you the lucky one do not believe such work is real and has results, dare say loneliness is not real. Dare if you will to say: we are not more alike than different.

There is a pride in detachment and indifference, and consequence, making of them no private matter.

Such is delinquency—invalidation can sometimes be felt as validation.

Fear affects memory, as one remembers more reasons to fear.

To the extent of a diversion, having a long-term therapist can be fractional infidelity. Ironic that this is often encouraged.

To be rooted can be to recognize familiar choices of actions in accessible environments—the actions then having some desired effects. One can be too rooted—to the extent of taking everything for granted and having no vision of what one is doing.

If you forcefully isolate yourself from life, then the parts and possibilities you have isolated from will take up too large a scope in your imagination.

Many marriages can be in need of a coach more than in need of a therapist; for example, whenever there is no single part of the game to be working on.

Marriage is at one level a moral good; it is worthy of connivance to save a marriage; it is worthy to take a half-dozen or dozen approaches to preserve a marriage, even if no individual approach is beyond reproach. Thus, while couples sometimes get divorced

for no great reason; neither do they need a *single* great reason to stay together.

Of marriage, but also of religion and relationships, ask: in what sense ethical?; in what sense aesthetic?; in what sense love-based?; in what sense duty-based?; in what sense tautological?; in what sense normative?; in what sense self-contradictory?; in what sense faith-based?; in what sense care-based?; in what sense dependency-based?; in what sense event-creating?; in what sense event-defined?; in what sense comedic?; in what sense pleading?; in what sense existential?

There are at least a dozen significant or hard-earned character qualities associated with those who are comforting to others. One may attempt to find these for a life with a partner, not merely for an hour with a therapist.

40.

Advice 2012

Ah, to see in each new acquaintance one or more of: something to recognize in yourself and to correct; something to emulate; something to be nurtured; something to identify with; and/or something to be admired.

If the manual is larger than the device consider a different model.

If left to guess: love or play or both—love, play, and loving kindness. Move into the hearts and thoughts of others.

Bring the best you can to every world.

There could be little more beautiful or delightful than adults dancing, children playing, or animals at play.

They who are too wild, love them, but keep your reserve and follow not their way.

Within ergonomics it is now said, “The best posture is the next posture.” Psychologically, often the best frame is the next frame.

Just as a compass is not a compass without pointing North or South, a person will not appear to be a full person without showing

direction.

Heed in particular the voices of those who love you, your sweet angels, but not without exception — remain yourself.

Amongst the most rejuvenating company there is always some voice to anarchy.

Where there be power there be taboo. Lead not astray the vulnerable or innocent.

41.

Some Parts of a Continuum? (2012)

No single level or consideration need prevail. In a cross-acting continuum *everything modulates everything else*.

Duties can be characterized as following from consideration of larger-scale consequences of our actions. For example, wherever our own action or that of a group will set or help change a broader precedent, the category of duty can come into play.

Morals tend to invoke absolutes—particularly by implying an “absolute” meaning to particular words. (Single words can also make ontological or idealistic claims. Thus, words like ‘souls’ or ‘life’ or ‘marriage’ can claim to name distinct entities.)

Ethics can be associated with the role of steady or clear reason applied to choices. In particular, while several avenues of consequence can be described for any action, the approach of ethics presumes that some avenues of consequence will be more important than other. The term “ethical implications” helps partition these.

Prudential choices involve consequences but without the overtone of strong moral, duty-oriented, or ethical implications. As such, more freedom is celebrated with respect to individual preferences and play.

Learned Instincts involve behaviors we can effect without conscious thought—for example, dancing without thought about the steps involved. Skillful play in sports draws upon learned instincts. Reading aloud draws upon learned instincts. Solving math problems calls for learned instincts. ... One characteristic of learned instincts is that in general we were once conscious of learning-by-parts. Our efforts at learning and practice compound and multiply; we can do so much more having done work which came before.

Inherited Instincts include such things as wanting to be part of a group, wanting to feel connected, and wanting special relationships. They include instincts around appetite, around shelter, around sexuality, around pleasing environments, around social perceptions and status, and so on. One reason to focus upon human universals and needs is that reason itself can wall out recognition of inherited instincts.

Reflexes pertain to behaviors ingrained at the level of sensations and muscles and nerves.

42.

Framing Some Adages

You hear social comments as if they were mirrors, while still caring whether they seem distorted or not. *Ponder the perspectives [and agendas] of those around you.*

The closest kin get the first pie tin. *Charity begins at home.*

Animals tend by instinct. *When you give ask nothing in return.*

Bees find the flower in bloom. *Dwell on the good not the bad.*

Bees bring pollen to the hive. *Remember your intentions.*

You have seen the sad look on a child's face. *Remember your promises.*

One elephant takes a fall to the lions. *Sometimes, put other interests before your own.*

In a herd, those in the middle can only lead those who follow. *Pay it forward.*

The loudest hatchling does not get the best worm. *Don't act entitled.*

A butler never shouts from another room. *Show courtesy and await recognition before demanding attention.*

The female fawn becomes a doe by watching. *Teach by example. Learn by good example.*

You see an acorn hidden by a squirrel. *Don't take what clearly belongs to someone else.*

Geese honk as they fly. *Roll up your sleeves and don't be afraid to ask for help.*

Dogs come together and apart for companion and play. *Be friendly and social.*

Parents chat, gossip, and trade stories at the playground. *Like tending shop or tending young, be open to a life of fulfilling service.*

43.

Politics

Less is more only if each person's less can be different.

In a so-called civilized society it takes more paperwork to mistreat a laboratory mouse than to mistreat a human being.

Leadership begins with what you ask for before you ask for money.

Someday, after asking, "What is a mile?", people will ask, "They burned how many cubic miles of oil?"

Contrary to their assumptions, the first rock-and-roll generations will not be writing their own history.

Tribunals have not been held at which to hear, "We were only waiting for retirement."

Exporting jobs is also exporting marriages.

It often seems "ideologically sound" to make decisions whose consequences you don't have to live with.

The future is not a comic book series to be subscribed to.

If fairy tales tell of dark sides to life, the dark side of our wage sometimes amounts to scrubbing floors for the wicked stepmother.

Descriptive of one “scene” (social dancing) I experienced: An inner-circle, protective against incursion by a larger circle of the relatively distressed “wanna-be” crowd. Outside of those—all those who enjoyed, independent of such aspiration.

If some person or electronic communication goads you to mess with someone, you never know how that person has been messed with in other parts of their life.

Useful and available mechanical and electrical power/energy is like a drug which accustoms human beings to ease. Much like slaveholders of old, we assume we have a “right” to the work done by fossil energy slaves.

“Acceptable behavior” is an interesting term. According to whom? By whom? Where? When? ... How are restrictions made consequential or enforced?

A habit of being snarky can be halfway to religion-forming in defining some “unclean”.

Do popular depictions of ribald “ye olde times” suggest that merriment is to be found in the embrace of hypocrisy?

Most persons carry their strengths silently well enough; commonly, then, their indignation carried in silence as well.

44.

Miscellaneous

Those who do not go to the source of quotations are condemned to repeat them.

You must admire some great work from a different age to be the human being you were meant to be.

“Toward, away, through, along”; boot or sandal, shoe or thong. (Quoted phrase from *Philosophy in the Flesh*.)

The greatest crimes are all unreportable and happen in marriage and other lethal partnerships.

This quotation is a translation of something I probably never said.

Rationalism ascends and then makes peace with other ways.

People turn to history as guide only when their own is about to be written: First they read history. Then they read no history. Then they do.

Sufficient to teach, in five words: Alert! Do this! Look there!

Allowing for eight words, add: Hear this story.

When in the late 1980's I first heard of the moral actor of the Categorical Imperative, immediately thought in terms of four kinds of self along two axes (the Kantian actor apparently falling in one quadrant)] First, "Self" can be a whole or a part—a classic distinction. Based upon electron statistics in Physics, my second axis was: "Self" can be interchangeable or not. The view interchangeable-and-a-part can serve meditation in humility. Not-interchangeable-and-a-part suggests a key team player. Whole-and-not-interchangeable suggests, in part, a meaningful innovator. Whole-and-interchangeable suggested, to me, an interpretation of the Kantian actor.

(Compare, loosely, with the "four peoples" Tony went to meet.)

We are always choosing. Perceived through the filters of our salient choices, the world becomes a symphony for us to hear, a poem to be read in appearances.

Famously, Socrates was said to have "corrupted the youth". It has also been said, "Truth is a castration." Can youth be corrupted by talk about Virtue? By talk about Truth? To an adult who has modularized their senses of needs and beliefs, neither Virtue nor Truth is some One Bag to safely sit inside and judge oneself, "ourselves", and others by. A youngster taught that either Virtue or Truth are in One Bag can be manipulated by talk of what is inside or outside of it. Spiritual abuse exists. There is first-order spiritual abuse in leading someone to harm. There is also second-order spiritual abuse in leading someone away from reflection upon opportunity costs; in pursuing something "good" harm can come from too much of life devoted to one focus of activity, at cost to other personal development.

Much of the work on bounded rationality assumes that heuristics or other techniques still lead to single approaches to things. (For example, use of a heuristic can result in a single-path approach.) But what if the solution space is not one of any final solutions? Or not one of time-bounded action? What if bounded rationality (sharing the weakness of putative perfect rationality) is the wrong model for the *continuing* reasonableness and adaptability required in a circumstance or a predicament?

Reasonable? You *can* reason about it, but not perfectly. *We won't be able to reason about this perfectly, but try we must.*

Directionally correct. Good medicine. Faith, in part, is not closing out a problem list, but dropping a sense of boundaries and looking to a relatively boundaryless future. "Faith or lack of it" can emerge from one or another relationship to the future.

Half a thought can be an incantation; hope can be its issue.

When we meet an old acquaintance part of the skill is in making some small-talk and catching up on new events. Just as important: skill, good feeling, and care are called for in taking leave of the conversation—that it might continue at another time. The same applies to how we engage philosophical questions. Solve them we will not. Yet we can exercise skill and love in how we part from them. We can exercise skill and grace in how we move or wave recognition to a question, end on a particular note, and walk away. This too is aphorism.

A riddle. An ordinary place. Where are you? It flows. Cannot say from whence it comes and whence it goes. Life within clings for its own duration. Outside it, eternal stand watching what must be. Splash they could, but would? From where you have been sitting you may be as if eternal. Where are you?

Time is like a river.

Still night,
Friend familiar,
Colleague in waiting.

We are all the time doing grammar, doing meaning, doing poetry, doing feeling, doing philosophy; we are doing loving, and living with some promise of future events. We all have our private understandings.

Attributes found in others, pertain.
Springs go to rivers.
Those days are not counted which matter most.

While some memories of the most focused and fateful turns are quite accurate, in general over a span of five minutes or five hours we have almost no way to recall and unpack a full set of thoughts, feelings, and motives. A decision can be an act of summary over those hours.

If you have reduced it to a single question you have already done it injustice.

I imagine language capacity grew with new ability to answer questions of the form: Another person? At another place? At another time? ... Earlier primate communication might be driven in part by more immediate questions of the form: Did you hear that? Did you see that? Did you notice that? (Or that you should.) ... Close to all of these: *Can you tell me a story?*

I believe the more powerful question is not, “What is consciousness?”, but “What is [something like] consciousness first useful for?”

Asking “Consciousness, what is it?” yields no clear answer; asking “Consciousness, what is it good for?” yields a dozen, all potentially relevant.

For example, paying attention to physical practice and immediate results can help in improving a skill. Next, paying attention to paying attention can help in improving the latter skill of paying attention (to improve a skill). This becomes skill at improving skill at improving skill. In this sense, consciousness is good for developing and applying higher-order skill.

[2022: A model of predictive perception, as described by Andy Clark in *Surfing Uncertainty*, might agree with the above. As a general description, in a predictive perception model top-level predictions flow downward, branching into sub-predictions and subsub-predictions, etc. Similarly, raw perceptions flow upward, merging say into micro-perceptions then mini-perceptions then more-whole perceptions. As these tree-like branchings overlap in presumed layers, at each presumed layer there can be disagreement registered, between prediction and perception, by some mechanism. “Attention” is then identified with the *weighting*, aka salience, given to different error signals, to different area of disagreement. ... Again, consciousness-as-attention-management can relate to higher-order skills at correcting errors.]

In other words: We become made to the world, like two blanks ground together toward spherical profile perfection.

45.

Love as an Overflowing Heart (2010)

Love-as-an-overflowing-heart is a metaphor and a metaphor-influenced state to be experienced.

Love is a deep reservoir in the heart, overflowing.

(Love may be a container filled to bursting. If a water main could break and create a stream and carry a person up and hold them six stories in the air — that too is love.)

When we are in our heart on love we are floating safely face up in a very large very calm lake. And the sun is warm.

The substance of love is an ideal substance. We must shout in joy that it cannot be held.

When such love flows out from us we marvel in ourselves.

When such love flows out from us, we marvel in witness of every form of beneficent attention toward a person, persons, or animal:

- interest;
- appreciation;
- gentle awareness;
- selfless intent;
- constant surprise;
- wonder;
- parsing of mystery;
- self-aware patience;
- delight;
- sympathetic joy;
- desire to attend.

Such love needs nothing back.

Such love is a joy and end in itself — an intoxication.

One must remain a little empty to remain overflowing. To be full of

oneself, for just a moment, can be the end of a moment's love.

Thus do we find favorite ends and objects, favorite people and pets, to again take us out from ourselves.

The ground of love is trust, trust, trust.

46.

List of Sevagusta Opposites (2022)

To me, 'seva' implies service or being of service.

To me, 'gusta' implies taking pleasure and finding satisfaction.

Let us define *the basic sevagusta opposites* as a set of sixteen:

You might be of service:

A: with-action-sooner

B: with-action-later

A: with-consequences-sooner

B: with-consequences-longer-term

A: with-service-to-a-few

B: with-service-to-many

A: with-effects-more-tangible

B: with-effects-less-tangible

A: working-with-ease

B: working-against-difficulty

A: under-nature

B: beyond-nature

A: necessarily-as-you

B: as-anyone-could

A: as-individually-whole

B: as-part-of-a-family-or-group

A: as-an-initiator

B: as-a-responder

A: for-human-good
B: for-plant-and-animal-good

A: boldly-as-required
B: carefully-as-required

A: by-softening-perspectives
B: by-clarifying-resolve

A: with-efforts-noticed
B: with-efforts-unnoticed

A: with-constant-efforts
B: with-selective-efforts

A: while-aiming-at-results
B: while-avoiding-failure

A: for-the-world-at-its-current-best
B: for-the-world-as-it-could-be

The opposites can be used to generate stanzas such as this:

You can be of service
boldly as required,
working with ease,
with effects less tangible.

Noteably, the complete opposite production is also a valid stanza:

You can be of service
carefully as required,
working against difficulty,
with effects more tangible.

47.

On The Pedagogy of Ethics And Virtue (1984--1986)

§ Virtue is a craft

In the years since 1945 there has been an enormous intensification of interest in Design. The word is everywhere. But there has been no corresponding interest in workmanship. Indeed there has been a decrease of interest in it. Just as the achievements of modern invention have popularly been attributed to scientists instead of the engineers who have so often been responsible for them, so the qualities and attractions which our environment gets from its workmanship are almost invariably attributed to design.

__ David Pye __

Virtuousness (aka 'virtue') is a craft in the sense that it can be "taught" by example and learned by doing. As in all crafts, often the best instruction emphasizes rediscovery and recreation: integration and fluency, and an attention to detail conducive to independent progress, require as much.

In this craft virtue involves "materials" the nature of which is open to description and investigation. Direct study of these—of human nature—is a natural complement to learning by doing. The craftsperson will find such study useful so far as it helps relate imagination to the possible and intention to effect.

Virtue is an art in the sense that it has an end in view which is beautiful or divine. If "the true painter is he who can paint everything" (Tolstoy), the virtuous can paint eternity in the moment as well. Its canvas: its life; its subject: the glory of Truth or All; its brush: a loving heart; its paint: true words and truer deeds. Virtue in this sense is—as Simone Weil said of science and art—

something “which we practice to keep from deceiving ourselves.” We can deceive ourselves with the untrue and the ephemeral.

One everyday reminder of this virtue is esteem reserved for so-called heroes. Of these it can be a comfort to daydream that “they exist” or “in principle they would stand up for one such as me”. To believe like this is to believe in providence; absent such belief neither civility nor civilization would for long survive. So great is the need, people will countenance any deception or imminentism, including the invitation to die for the glory of war.

Virtue-as-an-art is not a self-conscious, stuffy manner. What could be more dreadful than living in a community of saints! Art, rather, must make us want to recall the experience itself in detail, as a whole; art must play well in the theater of memory. As Austin Warren wrote, “There is an informality which is below formality—which is crudeness and rudeness. And there is an informality above decorum—the harmonics, the easy grace, of a perfectly disciplined nature.” Virtue needs no patches on its elbows, and a saint will not love you to the point of disrespect.

In this way, too, does the noble in us recognize the noble: realizing that nuance can reflect the whole of life, and respecting the mystery of such precision. Art is when a good sample of the world it implies.

That virtue which is its own end—which involves “true knowledge of the good” and is “higher than justice and the virtues”, as Socrates said—is in a sense self-defining. Hence: “Virtue is as virtue does”, or “He who knows the Good, does the Good” (and vice versa). This state is commonly associated with grace; it is seemingly with this state in mind that Socrates (in the *Republic* at least) stressed his “ignorance”, called dialogues about virtue just “popular expositions”, and said that one needs to view the Good directly, with the “mind’s eye” (which requires no assistance from other senses).

§ Sixty characteristics of ethical suasion

Ethical edification or pedagogy is the concern of those of us who as yet require craft—particularly discrimination—as well as grace: we who are not as yet as offspring. It concerns itself with “our nature”: our destiny, what we may know of it; the means by which we may realize it; and the manner in which we divert some of these means to ends other than the Good. It is an accoutrement of love, devotion, and service. It is—at its best—accessible, practical, verifiable, and from the heart.

Ethical pedagogy as “influence” or “edification” can be said to admit of the following attributes:

It can be ineffective—in the sense that bad ideas have a way of assimilating good ones in benign form.

It can be confusing and stifling—to the extent that it subjects us to a mass of indigestible detail (as for example with the dry, means-confused-with-ends calculus of sin).

It can be divisive—to the extent that it serves the inquisitor—reflecting presumptuousness and innuendo. (And, where there is attachment to the person of the inquisitor, crisis can be provoked.)

It can provoke destruction—as by catalyzing internal conflict which is then projected outward and acted upon.

It can be timid—in part to the extent that its certainties are all borrowed from the mortician (or, from the living dead).

It can be demoralizing—to the extent that, in preparation for sowing the good (i.e., “the rightly desirable”), it only plows the bad and destroys faith in the good. Also: to the extent that it portrays Truth as something which can be affirmed or denied—as opinion.

It can be counter-productive—to the extent that it extols the good while demonstrating no real means by which to attain it—provoking rebellion when the spells of guilt, ritual, enthusiasm, and custom wear off.

It can be discouraging—to the extent that it suggests practical steps to take towards the good, but offers not the support required to repeat such steps—failure after failure—and to learn from failure.

It can promote haughtiness—in the sense that, say, dichotomies and labels often encourage us to speak of differences of “quality” and not merely of “degree”.

It can help promote self-respect—even in the face of failures (both past and present). It can also promote complacency—this beginning with a sentimentality concerning failures which displaces resolve “to stop now” or “no more opportunities lost”.

It can help structure a “rite of passage”—legitimizing both “immature” and “mature” views, and justifying the replacement of the former by the latter (perhaps by building a bridge which connects them).

It can, in the form of developmental accounts, assist in *discrimination* (not just concerning situations, but our very hearts). Therein lies the value of such accounts to *individuals*, particularly when these are stated from a pilot’s-eye view. (Also: great lives and great deeds define distinctions.)

It can set boundary conditions—by way of clues (and a vision) sufficiently complete that what does not yet fit them is not a solution.

It can render itself easily dated—largely in proportion to what it leaves out, and what perspectives it fails to include.

It can kill with want of encouragement—as at the hands of those with inspiring but too-cold and rigid temperaments, who would never offer a complement they couldn’t keep.

It can reflect “impatient reform”—in part to the extent that it (or its communicator) blames others for their failure to respond, and fails in sensitivity to the pain and terror which “the message”—understood or misunderstood, if ever even defined—might

provoke. Likewise, it can be romantic, to the extent that it maintains a too-flattering distance between itself and its audience — too forgiving of false hope.

It can promote self-deception—in part to the extent that it promotes controversy at the personal level, nothing creating liars like courtrooms and confrontation. And it can invite presumptuousness — would that its critics be more easily ignored.

It can be scholastic—to the extent that it concentrates on applications at the expense of examining basic assumptions or the means of verifying them. (Also: to the extent that it seeks to resolve essential paradoxes — this with a “foolish consistency”.)

It can overstep its welcome — by persisting in giving unasked for, uninformed, even if principled advice. If to offer advice is sometimes charitable, the laws of human charity demand that none be persisted in without reverential attention to the specific compensations and the balances established in peoples’ lives. (“No vice”, says the motto, “is as bad as advice.”)

It can contribute to the diminution of memory—as with that placard too bold, or that voice too loud, which does not say “I see this issue as might the community”, but “I do not see the community at all”.

It only indirectly the addresses the problems of “moral courage” and “constancy of purpose” (and thus, in part, those of deeds, not words). In part, it gives us principles and examples to appreciate and to copy (in comparison to which we may recognize our failures — both in practice and in essence.)

It can affect conscience and behavioral disposition—in large part by influencing our unconscious beliefs about our motivations and tendencies. In this respect learning by doing is king: we subconsciously believe what *we do*, not what we say; therefore “The voice of conscience fades quickly.”

It is not virtue — to occasionally mistake it as such is something we associate (rightly or wrongly) with sophists and hypocrites (indeed,

anyone who overlooks the roles of courage, grace, truth and true living).

It can betray life — even as it most instructively characterizes it — by creating fictional characters within which people then live, a piety which softens the outside only being as nearly rot as ripening.

It can be comic — to the extent that it tries in championing a single virtue to promote what one hundred unaddressed tendencies contradict.

It can be merely analytical — if it succeeds in identifying all of the categories but none of the motivation.

It can be ungrammatical — in the sense of suggesting corrections referenced only to whim, not potentially articulate rule.

It can be original — in part as it paints *all* life in its own terms; or derivative — in part as it becomes mere criticism or caricature, devoid of humanizing depth. This can mark the difference between the master artist (whose work makes us consider quitting art) and the slipshod artist (who makes us angry enough to pursue it).

It is not easily characterized as being “persuasive” as opposed to “convincing” (or vice versa) — this to the extent that there is no value-free thought or thought divorced from action. In terms of intention, the most telling dichotomy is perhaps that involving “injunctions” vs. “statements”. In terms of effect, the most telling is perhaps that (as described by William James) involving the “strenuous” vs. the “easy-going” moods. In a sense encompassing both, other dichotomies include that involving persuasion to the “examined” vs. the “unexamined” life, and that involving persuasion based upon “informed consent” vs. persuasion exploiting weakness or relatively unconscious expedience. (In Plato’s guardians: a proper rule of wisdom over both enthusiasm and desire, tested by both pleasure and pain. Also, perhaps the defining characteristic of the easy-going mood: “What holds attention determines action.”)

If it can be said ever to work from the social to the individual, one way it might do this is by helping redefine common sense.

It will tend to emphasize theory — largely to the extent that moral choice is taken to be a corporate or collective matter, not one for individuals.

It can prove self-defeating — if it backs into mere apologetics, not qualifying itself as historical and contingent, though ever-renewing.

It can, where fluency has been lost, profitably begin with the resuscitation of vocabulary.

It can be ahead of its time — as if starting a bridge on the unpopulated side of a river and failing to complete it in one lifetime, or discovering a truth but not its cash value.

It is apt to prove offensive — as by painting the universe all in black and white.

It can, despite all precedent, countenance war in the strengthening of institutions — as with those who like jokers speak of “nuclear war” and “moral regeneration” in the same breath.

It can be depersonalizing — if, as through repetition, it succeeds in assuming the absence of any interior life in its audience members (caring only for the behavioral).

It can deceive all parties — particularly to the extent that these revel in being certain in proportion to their ignorance.

It can deceptively portray the price of vanity as martyrdom — as to helpers who are constitutionally dependent upon helpees.

It can perhaps be communicated without hypocrisy only by persons unwilling to let their rhetoric exceed their practice by an amount exceeding their humility and self-naughting.

It can be a cooperative enterprise — partly so far as it involves mutual selective criticism. The true friend can be one who cares

enough to say “yecch” — though always knowing how to err on the forgetful side, for the sake of allaying fear.

On the question of its seriousness, there are no non-combatants — “He who is not for is against” (William James). (This, at least, might be a social/historical truth, if not true for individuals. Also: one can regard truth as both problematic and a matter for serious concern.)

It, proportionally as it fails to relate the individual verifiably to the eternal (immediate truths included), will tend to interest in proportion to its eschatological (or cosmological) content — its concern with ends or grand movement in history.

It can be communicated purposefully yet gratuitously (with detachment). Criticism can be measured and selfless.

It can be lustful and aggressive — where it involves desire to command thought, or to seduce in the realm of belief.

It can be convincing (in part) to the extent that it both tears down the “bad” and builds up the “good”, with equal originality and effectiveness. Or, by proceeding amoebically: pushing an idea in here; teasing it out there; propelling, while leaving the bulk unchanged, unsuspecting.

It can be inspiring — to the extent that it (or its human source) triggers in us a vision of a new possibility; to the extent that it is a call to virtue, a manifestation of righteousness in its fairest sense; to the extent that it demands that we appreciate its nature, and make that a part of our being. (Hence, a picture definition of munificence: *To the man for a slice I say, don't ask my name to thank me, call me brother — then you will always know where to find me.*)

It can render its own content superfluous — if it succeeds in being too competitive in terms of “entertainment” value.

It can resemble romancing — in the sense that never one method but always a variety orchestrated in time is the “advised” practice.

(Two reported dimensions of such practice: caring criticism versus casual humor, and generous attention versus indifference.)

It can be purposefully opportunistic — in the sense that it does well always to match the instruction to the prevailing mood, or to first create a suitable mood.

It is perhaps most effective when it serves to keep eyes on the target and choices in the now — (though with an awareness that we complete the tablet of our life in ink, not pencil.)

It can force the issue of choice — by imposing a rule-governed opposition, first between weaknesses (to assure victories), then between weakness and would-be strength. Similarly, it can replace the shallow with the shallow — finding motive (for alternative behavior) which is just stupid enough to ring true, and granting to laugh at the burden of choice.

It can, in dialogue form, help promote a critical awareness of our “inner parliament” (or mob) — which is an essential component of the examined life.

It can be appropriately authoritative — to the extent that it defends standards outside of which there are only decay and destruction, not creative error. (Or — to the extent it opposes standards inside of which there is loss of life and freedom.)

It is likely to be prized as quotable — to the extent that it demonstrates verbal gestures which promise to be useful in dialogue. Or — it may simply be beautiful, whence our recognition of truth as the beauty which the art was for.

It will tend to invite prolonged, favorable attention (hence belief and trust) — in part to the extent that it offers a key to the ordering and assimilation of experience. (Also — to ask important questions is itself to order experience. And — stories invite attention, and the greatest story is a life.)

It is a practical concern — to be known by its works. Those who can do “teach”, in the sense that “teaching” begins in heart and

deed.

It will tend to be self-correcting — to the extent that it asks: “Was it voluntary?”, “Did I (we) display hypocrisy, lack of integrity or lack of sensitivity?”, “Did I (we) accurately convey ‘the truth’, and that in a manner which was simple, accessible and so-as-to-suggest its necessity and veracity?”, and so on.

It can be gratuitously controversial — in part as it fails to recognize harmony as itself a good, sometimes more valuable than marginal gains in social self-knowledge.

It fulfills its obligations by fulfilling obligations — not by asserting rights. It is in this sense something which holds nations — the world — together.

§ That its true base is coin

This has not happened because the distinction between workmanship and design is a mere matter of terminology or pedantry. The distinction both in the mind of the designer and of the workman is clear. Design is what, for practical purposes, can be conveyed in words and by drawing; workmanship is what, for practical purposes, can not. In practice the designer hopes the workmanship will be good, but the workman decides whether it shall be good or not.

__ David Pye, The Nature and Art of Workmanship __

There is really no such thing as advice, save that which follows the way of God, whose words are few and far between and, if given freely, to be purchased only at the cost of a way of life.

How much is there actually to say? There are people who are sad and could use some gladness, some love; there are people who are happy and could profit from sadness and gain in compassion. Both need to learn how to give — that they might better know how to receive.

How much room? There are people who wait on truth on pain of forgetting (and pain to their friends). And there are those who, finding revelation rare, are more settled to forget than remember.

How much? There are people who will die lonely, having failed to respect their few friends or benefactors. And, there are people who will reach middle age — I do not see how they can get past it — having no more composure in crisis than children, for having done everything to please others (whom they did not understand) and even fancied that they had become little christs, when they failed to become themselves.

Or there are people who did everything according to their nature (and very well, you may guess), but failed that 1/5 against which would have compounded to their glory. And, there are people who have done everything “right”, if all against their nature, occasionally to become saints, but more likely to fray the bow in trying.

If good advice is rare, this is in part because people are seldom ready for it. The good friend might wait — and friends know how to wait — for a polite (if urgent) moment. How much readiness? Perhaps no more than a few words a year are called for. How much room? Advice in the form of currency can be printed in inflationary quantities; but those who know that its true base is coin measure their wealth by the few they carry with them.

