

A compilation of the grand master's practical works and teachings on Zen and the Ethical. *The Ascension* narrates the path to mastery from the practitioner's perspective, capturing the spirit of Zen and the art of being human. The epoch poem *Ch'an Ching* (Meditation Classic) guides the reader through a most profound meditation with the ultimate outcome of enlightenment.

The eighty-one metaphorical poems of the *LǐJiě Ching* (Classic of Knowledge) provide tools for self-examination. The eighty-one matter-of-fact poems of the *rǔnLǐ Ching* (Classic of Ethic) provide a practical understanding of morality, ethics, and the Ethical.

Zen and the Art of... explains the true nature of Zen as a universally recognized system of self-awareness and optimizing oneself, providing insights into the nature of mastery and the highest levels of meditation. *Quip Pǔ Quo* rounds this off with basic wisdom on topics in: dreams, ego, habits, happiness, humanity, illusions, living, mastery, money, nature, society, soul, and spirit.

This volume is provided to help promote self-awareness and personal growth. These and other tools will help evolve a sustainable and preferably peaceful civilization.

Lesser Pǔ

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PǔMa Tse

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Lesser Pǔ

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by PǔMa Tse at Akademé

The Ascension, Poetic Classics, and Zen of Pǔ

Lesser Pū
The Ascension, Poetic Classics of Pū
and Zen and the Art of...
With Ch'an Ching Commentary

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Chapter 1

“PūMa Tse, the grand master, the living Buddha has died!” The announcement was heralded on every corner. When a great leader dies, the people cry. Certainly, many people are crying, but others, out of respect and understanding, smile, for the great PūMa Tse has attained the ultimate greatness, has transmigrated into eternity—escaped both mortality and immortality. In spite of my understanding of these things, I have found myself at times crying, and for what reason I am not sure. Maybe it is for the poor unguided masses that I cry. Maybe it is self-pity.

The great master had gone to the great beyond and entered Para-Nirvana—would no longer be a bodhisattva. The great master would now be counted as a past Buddha, rather than a living one. The city is in turmoil. Men are throwing down their tools, kicking and punching walls. Women are pulling at their clothes and hair, screaming out their tears. All the shops closed. The vegetable stands folded up their umbrellas and cleared their tables. Everyone put on black to show their state of mourning. Everyone is walking with their heads bowed—dejected, sorrowful, for a living Buddha is no longer walking among us, guiding us to the great wisdom of ultimate peace, love and harmony. A national holiday of mourning is now declared. Schools and most public offices have closed. It is as if by the silencing of a single voice, the entire world has died.

Why should I, Turner (translated from Cheng-wei meaning “become”) cry for myself? When I think of PūMa Tse’s demise, I recall a block of wood I saw just three weeks ago in a tearoom at the Academy, the school of PūMa Tse. I went to the Academy to interview for the position of schoolmaster. Shui (water) led me to a small building in the middle of the compound, sitting on top of a man-made lake. The door Shui opened was half the height of a man, assuring whoever entered had to duck. I often wished I had the resources to build a tearoom like this. “If you wait here,” Shui instructed, “I will gather the council to meet with you.”

“Thank you,” I said, ducking into the room. She slid the door closed behind me. The ceiling must have been the height of two men, but after passing through the door it felt awkward to stand upright, so I remained prostrate as I moved through the room. The sun shining through the rice paper walls lighted the room naturally. The floor was a smooth, dark wood, with a nice shine. A small table sat on one side of the room with a stove, clearly for tea ceremonies. On the table were little teacups and a kettle. The cups were dull looking, their edges as thick as a man’s finger. In the middle of the room, surrounded by mats, was what appeared to be a tree stump. It was rough, dark with age. I sat myself on the floor facing east toward it, with my back to the door on the west side of the room. The stump was intriguing by itself, so I decided to use my time absorbing it in my mind.

The base of the stump looked like it had been cut, but not too neatly. It was round with its center hollowed out. How it was hollowed or how deep could not be ascertained, as in the hollow sat a small red stone statue of Buddha upon a mat, facing west toward me in eternal contemplation. Around this hollow sprouted what appeared to be awkward limbs. The limbs extended little from the base, ending in points jutting out in various directions, suggesting they may not have been limbs but rather part of the stump itself exposed by decay and erosion. These “limbs” could also have been roots, meaning the stump was set up side down.

It looked like a campfire with a rock thrown in the middle. I visualized the rock in the middle melting away to reveal its interior identity—the Buddha meditating—much as sculptors claim they are only cleaning the debris away to reveal the image within. Likewise, I could visualize this fire mystically transform into its wooden form—as if some spirit, seeing the work of the fire complete in its shaping of the stone Buddha, decided to preserve the source in its most opposite form: the source of the fire itself. Only nature has such creativity and patience to carve such a strange looking block of wood as this. This was a perfect example of pǔ, an un-carved, natural block of wood.

Assuming tradition was followed, this pǔ was discovered in its current state and otherwise not changed. The statue was clearly for decoration, but not elaborate. I could not imagine anything else better fitting the position. The implications of all the symbolism of this simple thing were staggering. The fire symbolism could easily reflect on a traditional Buddhist funeral pyre. If such were the case, then this could symbolize

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the death of Buddha, which has profound implications depending on the branch of Buddhism one views it from. The most likely to be shared among these branches would be the concepts of impermanence—even Buddha was impermanent—and humility. If it were meant to symbolize anything other than the moment of the funeral, then it would also suggest both eternity and indestructibility. To the Buddhist, though these two sets of meanings appear contradictory, they are also logical and inseparable because of the illusion of duality. Assuming both sets of meanings were simultaneously meant, then this was a standing koan (k'ung-an). A koan is a profound riddle used to help instruct a student of Zen. The tradition has a long history of koan stories, most of which are uttered directly by the teacher to the student. I am not aware of any standing koans. If this is intended to be a standing koan, it may be the first—I do not know.

The pū intrigued my imagination, and my mind wandered over the events that led me to it. I typically get home from work in the middle of the afternoon. This gives me about a half hour with my wife before my daughter returns from school. It was a Wednesday, my slow day. I came in, took my shoes off and set down my bags. As I started for the kitchen, my wife rushed into the room excited, wrapped herself around me and stuck a letter in my hand. “You got a letter!” she started, then softly added, “I’m sorry, I opened it accidentally.” Opening my mail is her pastime, or lingering over me while I open it for myself. She is quite excitable. Since I made no sign of concern, she continued with her original air of excitement. “It’s a job offer! Maybe a big one!”

Quietly I squeezed her back, laying the letter on a table. Perhaps it is a self defense mechanism built from years of poverty and struggle. It drives my wife crazy. I simply do not allow myself to get excited over anything extreme; I put it aside and allow the initial shock to absorb before I consider acknowledging its existence. She used to think it was apathy. Then she saw the consequences of my acting rationally rather than just passionately. I knew she was anxious, so I asked, “What job? With who?”

“It is a schoolmaster position,” she beamed.

“Did you set me up for this?”

“No.”

“What’s the catch?”

“I don’t know. Why don’t you call on them?” I allowed my suspicions to escape. No sense clinging to something so insignificant. I decided to wait, read the letter, and then investigate the source.

“Not now, I have urgent work to complete. I’ll call Friday.” After years of behaving like this, I still get mixed emotions. One part of me nags to reprioritize, while another, acting like a master accountant, carefully computes windows of opportunity in my schedule to mete out the appropriate action. I finished settling, grabbed a snack and sat down to the letter. The letter read as follows:

We at the Academy have followed your career and research for several years. We will soon be in need of a new schoolmaster and believe you would fit well into this position. Please come visit at your earliest convenience. Please find the directions to our dojo below.

How could I take this letter seriously? Surely this was some sort of joke. At first I thought a student or coworker was playing a practical joke. Though it looked official, making something look official is not so difficult. The directions led to an area between a butte near the city center and the river—indeed the location of the notorious dojo, the Academy, and home to the grand master, PūMa Tse. A dojo, by the way, is a location where the way of Zen/Ch’an is taught. The location very much fits a dojo, and I had never been to that area before. Although I am an academic, I must admit with some shame that my knowledge of the Academy is nearly non-existent. My knowledge of PūMa Tse, the much esteemed master, is even less, but I am not alone for he and the Academy exist in virtual secrecy, obscure like a local legend. From what I know, the Academy is the most advanced school, with strong ties to many governments because of its high intellectual prowess. Working at the Academy would put me near PūMa Tse, who I could learn much from, so my curiosity was peaked.

When I finished my Friday morning class, I immediately followed the directions to the Academy. What I found was a compound very fitting of a dojo, a major dojo, with the butte along the north side. There were houses to the south, and a couple buildings that were evidently dorms that I passed as I approached from the west. Between the butte and the houses was a large structure I took to be the school. As I entered I beheld a large room modestly decorated and furnished, with a ceiling at least the height of three men. Directly over my head the ceiling was twice as high, revealing a walkway above. A middle-aged woman approached and greeted me.

“My name is Shui, like a river,” she offered with a smile. I was not too surprised that her name means water. I wondered if this was her birth name and a coincidence. “May I help you with something?”

“My name is Turner,” I started. Then I offered her the letter and added, “I received this letter to come here.”

“We have expected you,” she said, not accepting the letter. “Come this way.” She turned and motioned me to follow her further into the structure. As we passed staircases and halls mirrored on both sides of the room, Shui explained, “Our students are typically professionals. They learn practical problem solving skills. We have our main library and classrooms in this part of the building.”

“What kinds of courses do you offer?”

“Students follow a very strict curriculum track that includes the various aspects of world religions, world philosophies, science, and mathematics. In a way it is like teaching acting. We teach them to think in the characters of the various philosophies, then personalize and integrate their learning with contemporary problems. We also teach them discipline and meditation through the arts.”

We passed through a large double door on the opposite side of the room and crossed a bridge over a man-made river that partly passed through and partly encircled a beautiful garden. I have a soft spot for gardens and flowers, but am pathetically ignorant of names as I tend to focus more on concepts, so I must apologize for my feeble description. Besides, I am also a poet and must control myself lest I personify and describe too thoroughly. There were few benches in the garden, and none were occupied. The few people who were in the garden were either walking or sitting in apparent contemplation. No one we saw even acknowledged we were there. The sound of birds chirping and insects humming filled the air. The bustling sounds of the city could not penetrate the compound.

The building on the opposite side of the garden looked like a temple. I could not help my appreciation and awe for the symbolism contained in the design of this place. It was a miniature of humanity, with Western-like architecture in the west, Eastern architecture in the east, and between these a wilderness carefully designed to hold it together, with the water representing the Atman. I wondered how many who entered these walls had enough knowledge of the world to appreciate these subtleties. Considering the prestige of this place, maybe all did understand the subtleties.

“Our students already have certificates, and are often advanced when they enter. Our faculty carefully select them based on their applications, writing, and at least one interview,” Shui told me as we walked. “The program is extremely rigorous, and most of our students continue to work while they attend, which assures their problems are truly contemporary.”

“What credentials do you require of your instructors?” I asked, concerned that perhaps my formal credentials would not be adequate.

“A lot of our courses are taught by Philosopher Adept students as part of their practical training. The rest of our courses are either taught by Philosopher Adepts, or Philosophers.”

“Am I to assume you are a teacher here?” I was becoming concerned.

“Yes.”

“According to the letter I received, you are interested in me as a school master. By what you just told me, I am not qualified to teach here. I never completed such high certification. How could I be the master?” We were just crossing another bridge. This bridge led up to a small structure on top of a lake, as if to symbolize the world sitting upon Brahma, with rice paper walls—a symbol of impermanence—and a deck that surrounded it. It was beautiful in its simplicity and design. She took off her sandals and placed them on a shelf. I followed suit.

“Degrees mean nothing to us. The master must be a true philosopher,” she answered, as she slid a door made out of rice paper and thin strips of wood aside. “Besides, we like to bring in new talent; otherwise we would drown in academic incest.” Academic incest is always a problem with higher education. Basically the term means the institution hires people whose knowledge only comes from that institution, meaning new information and experience do not get added to the system. Like the interbreeding of animals, academic incest degenerates the knowledge pool and the quality of education falls.

So my mind emptied itself into this stump of pū, rather than absorbing the pū as I had set to do. The stump so intrigued me, when the door slid open again I had lost track of time and found it hard to drag my attention from it. Three men and two women, including Shui, entered the room and sat on the mats around

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the stump. Like me, after they entered they retained the prostrated posture. Shui introduced them as she started the stove on her knees. Each bowed slightly to me as Shui introduced them.

I must admit that I am bad with names, so forgive me for shirking that responsibility here. Probably all the better at this stage of my narration; too many names can be confusing. The first was a well-built gentleman with a very welcoming smile and a well-rounded head with very short hair that my wife would find absolutely irresistible. The second appeared to be a beautiful young girl named Feng (wind). All right, I admit it: I remember beautiful women's names. I say she appeared young because, from my experience, a woman's apparent age can be misleading by twenty years. For all I know, Feng could be forty and only look twenty. Another man and a grandfatherly gentleman followed. Sorry, Feng upstaged them.

"We are the council. We are the guardians of this dojo, ensuring its stability. I am the chair of this council," Shui concluded, as she continued to make tea. "Please tell us about yourself as I prepare the tea."

I felt awkward, as I was at a disadvantage. Clearly they already knew about me. They knew enough to offer me this interview, and to track down my whereabouts. Considering the circumstances and setting, I decided to allow the silence begin my testament while I contemplated exactly what it was I should say. Nothing came to my mind but the stump in front of me.

"This piece of wood is marvelous," I heard myself utter without thought. The council members all laughed.

"The master seems right," the grandfatherly man said to my right, still laughing. My thoughts raced, quickly putting the pieces of the puzzle together. The building was clearly for a Zen tea ceremony, and the highest-ranking person in the room was making the tea. Very zennist. They already knew a lot about me. These thoughts, and our being in a dojo, convinced me to accept my own answer to their query and simply shut up without further explanation. I then decided the next appropriate thing would be to ask them a question.

"How did you learn of me?"

"We had a student here a few years ago," the man to my right began. "He had been a teacher of yours. While he was here he told us about you, that you could appreciate our methods. He showed us some of your work, which he had collected. When we read it, we decided to investigate you. You were not easy to find information on, especially since you make almost no effort to advertise yourself or your work. We appreciate your modesty. Your humbleness and the magnitude of your work convinced us to reveal you to the Master. The Master, when presented with our evidence agreed with our observations, and indicated we should bring you here."

"Tell me about your schoolmaster." By this time, Shui was serving the tea, starting with me, the lowest person with the lowest status in the room. Shui responded to my query as she served.

"The Master is PūMa Tse. The Master is getting very old. A successor is needed. We have asked the Master to write teachings for us, so the Master's wisdom is not lost to future generations. The Master has provided only two documents, with almost no explanation. We saw that you have a clear writing style and are very knowledgeable of what we teach here. We also saw that you write poetry, and this is the way the Master has presented the teachings. We hope that in preparing you for the position, you could document what you learn and interpret the teachings the Master has provided."

I thought about this a while, as Shui finished serving, served herself then sat with us. The idea was a shock for me. How could I replace the most venerated teacher when I feel unqualified to even teach their lowest classes? I put this aside in my mind to keep myself from getting flustered, and decided to start thinking about the position and its responsibilities. When she mentioned the Master's name, I couldn't help but think about the implications. I have never seen the name written, so I can only guess at its meanings. I guessed the first part, Pū, was the un-carved block of wood, like the stump in the middle of the room. The second part, Ma, could be one of three things, all of which equivalent to punctuation: an exclamation, a question, or a profane statement. I could not discern which fit, but instead decided that perhaps all fit equally. As far as Tse, this means son, or a term of endearment given to a venerated master. I was spontaneously filled with questions and concerns. "You realize I have a family?"

"That is no problem," another answered. "The Master also has a family. We encourage reality and not the illusion of a hermitic monastery."

I was a little surprised, then recalled that Buddha Gautama also had a family he kept close to him during his exploits after his enlightenment. "I assume my needs will be taken care of."

“Most assuredly. You will have full use of one of the houses. When the Master passes on you will move into the Master’s house.” I wondered what house that was. The Master would live in the temple or in a small and humble home. Considering his family had probably lived with him—and no one would expect them to be of the Master’s humble caliber—and the responsibilities of the office, I guessed the temple.

“What of the Master’s family? What becomes of them?”

Shui smiled, acknowledging my selfless question. “The Master’s spouse has already passed on. The children are grown and live on their own.”

“My wife is a very practical person. She will implore me for details and demand evidence. May I have an offer in writing?” I asked, half-expecting them to be discouraged by such selfishness. In the back of my mind, I kicked myself for such hasty, logical arrogance. I hoped they would see the practicality of my request.

“You shall have it before you leave,” Shui responded. My mind was relieved. “When could you begin?”

“I will, out of fairness to my students of course, complete the courses I am currently teaching. I need to find a replacement for myself and make sure everything is able to run in my absence. Could I begin next month?”

“We understand,” Shui assured. “Let us know when you are ready to begin. Meanwhile, you are welcome to come and visit any time.”

“When do I meet the Master?”

“When you are able to move here,” Shui answered. For a moment I thought this was a little strange, for couldn’t I enter the temple like anyone else? Then I thought about the situation and realized it had to be that way. Masters are not people you should just meet arbitrarily and expect anything from. It takes a lot of time. Besides, entering the temple does not mean one gets to meet its chief occupant.

“Is there anything I should begin to do in preparation?”

“Begin your journal,” said Shui. “That will be good enough. Put all of your thoughts in it and maintain it so we can use it later to help in our teaching. I will also give you the two texts the Master has provided us. Feel free to comment on them in your journal.”

So I have begun.... Shui escorted me to an office and silently drew up a letter outlining the offer. She then gave me two thin texts. The trip home went quickly, as my thoughts remained in the tearoom and my concern for how my wife would react. There were problems to be resolved, like my daughter’s schooling, and my wife’s work. I calculated and planned solutions to these problems on the way, knowing I had to sell the job to my wife.

Fortunately, the Academy seemed humble, and schoolmaster is only one step above head teacher, so the resistance was not as bad as it could be, especially since I neglected to elaborate on the status of my predecessor. My wife, like myself, little suspected that PūMa Tse would be the person whom I replace. Of course she was pessimistic, concerned that I could not do the job, and pried me for details of my “interview”, if we could call it that. I was vague because I knew she would not understand what I went through. For example, while I described the campus to her, I omitted the tearoom. Likewise, I told her I met with the governing council, and that they already knew enough about me that basically it was I asking them questions.

Now you understand why the announcement of PūMa Tse’s death makes me cry out of self-pity. Surely they would not want someone like me, who is unprepared, to take PūMa Tse’s place as the Master. I quit my other job already. We were scheduled to move to the Academy next week. I doubt that will happen now. How will I explain this to my wife? She will be furious that I would be so arrogant as to accept such a venerated position. She is right. One should never take a position one is not ready for.

Chapter 2

The funeral was set for Friday, the shortest day of the year. A massive parade was arranged to begin at sunrise. Of course, my family and I attended. The streets were a sea of faces shining out from their black uniforms—big faces, little faces, round faces with chubby cheeks, long faces, all sullen faces with the corners of their mouths drawn down and sullen, or laid flat and grim. There was barely standing room for miles down the path of the parade, even at the windows of buildings near the path. The whole parade was set to cross through the busiest area of the city to the shore of the river. I inquired and discovered where the parade would end, so we could see it all, because we were supposed to join the parade as its last marchers passed us.

At the front of this parade was the body of PūMa Tse, set in meditation upon a pallet. Six poles were pushed through the pallet, so four stuck out the sides and two stuck out the front and back. A man or a woman occupied each end of these poles such that there was six of each holding PūMa Tse up. The pallet was heavily decorated with colorful silk ribbons flying in the wind. Four poles wrapped in gold fringe held up a little roof, with its ornate point piercing the sky, covering PūMa Tse. The Master was likewise so decorated that one could not discern a face or hands, but the posture was clearly one of meditation.

Behind the funeral pallet came flag bearers by the hundreds, walking in a tight formation and waving bright colorful flags. Behind the flag bearers came monks, and I could see among them the council members from the Academy, and some other faces I had seen during my visit. Behind them came a marching band flanked by guards, to announce the coming of public officials fortunate enough to attend the event. Everyone walked, regardless of status—everyone except PūMa Tse of course.

A long, lean man passed near me, carrying a long stick—perhaps a walking stick—apparently leaving. He was the only person not wearing black. He would not have caught my attention in this crowd had it not been that I heard him laughing and muttering, “One living man followed by so many dead! I have never beheld such a thing.” The man moved through the crowd as if walking through a bamboo forest, unabated by the lack of space. His statement moved me, distracted me so I managed to overlook which stately officials passed.

The parade continued for hours. Various groups, probably every group in the vicinity who could get here in time, passed waving their banners, sounding their instruments, or simply touting their dress uniforms. After the last uniforms passed, the civilians from the back of the parade filed by. It took almost the entire day for the entire procession to pass. As the procession continued we could barely hear the speeches given. It seemed everyone had something to say, some poem to read, or some prayer to give. The shuffling feet of the procession gently overshadowed the speeches, so we could not understand what was being said. Finally we joined in and approached the shore to watch the final part of the show and add our little trophies to the ultimate send-off.

The funeral pallet had been taken to the end of a pier, set on a small, handsome boat filled with small twigs and flowers, and then tied down to it. What surprised me the most was that so many people could be in one place and that, in the end, only the first band that had passed could be heard. The tension of the crowd was so high; nobody seemed concerned with eating, drinking, bodily functions or fatigue the entire day. The crowd seemed to be holding its breath in anticipation.

With a final ballad, as the sun set upon the horizon, a common person took a torch to the end of the pier and started the floating funeral pyre. An attendant released the boat so it could float out onto the river and out to the ocean beyond. The bystanders began lighting their candles in their little boats and setting them out on the river too. Some threw flowers and handfuls of flower petals. When the sun had set, it seemed to fall spontaneously, putting its own mark on the ceremony by filling the sky with beautiful flares in shades of red, orange, and yellow reflecting off the clouds high in the sky. It was almost as if the heavens mourned along with us. Then, to further punctuate this wondrous exhibition, night fell upon the sky, but the lights of the candles and pyre made daylight rise up from the river. The crowd came to life, cheering the pyre along its path to eternity.

The blaze from the funeral pallet reminded me of the stump of pū I saw in the tearoom. The flames leaped out and curved to points all around the Master, just like the limbs on the stump did around the

Buddha statue. This surreal image lingered in my mind. Considering what I said before about pū and this stump, I suspect it was driftwood, tumbled and shaped naturally by water. Very fitting, and consequently more surrealistic when compared with the funeral pyre I was watching floating down the river.

We had all fasted for three days—at least those who could—in honor of the Master. As the light of the pyre and candles began to dim, the crowd broke, returning to normalcy like ants instructed to end their day's work. We could finally listen to the callings of our bodies. My family and I went home, and with our neighbors made a feast. Many speculated about what would come. Many wondered how we could ever replace such a great master. You can well imagine my own thoughts.

When I arrived at the Academy to begin my training, the grandfatherly gentleman from the council met me. He reintroduced himself, probably expecting that I would forget his name, and I had. "I am Yuan (source) from the council. Have you begun your journal yet?" I noted that kowtows, where one bends completely at the waist, were not used here. Greetings were made with a gentle nod in a mild form of curtsy, which I returned in kind.

"I have," I said, pulling from my bag what you just read and my comments on the texts I had been given: PūMa Tse's LĪJĕ Ching and rŭnLĪ Ching. I handed these to him. He led me out to the garden where we sat in the sunlight on the grass while he glanced through my document, occasionally responding with a mild chuckle. I could just imagine his and the other council members' anxiety to get more input on the LĪJĕ Ching, as it is very metaphorical. I certainly would have appreciated somebody else's insights.

As he read, I took the opportunity to study him more closely. He is definitely a grandfatherly type: gentle looking and very huggable. Although he appeared very calm, there was also an air of childishness in his gait and the way he smiled. It must have been the twinkle in his almost black eyes, that themselves never seemed to stop smiling. His long gray hair was braided into a queue (similar to a pony tail). He wore a white, long-sleeved, collarless shirt that hung loosely about him, as did his black pants. Like Yuan, council members were not dressed too formally, but certainly in a distinguished way. I had followed this pattern myself, which was quite a challenge with my wife. She, of course, would have me perfectly pressed, polished and formal. Knowing this was the case, I had planned carefully, pressed what I was going to wear and quietly stashed what I intended to wear. That morning I dressed as she expected, then changed after I left. She would understand when she saw for herself, but not a moment sooner.

"Very good and interesting," he concluded, rising with a smile. I got up to join him. "The other council members will take great interest in your comments. They certainly give me something to contemplate. Follow me." He turned back toward the main building and I followed. Upon entry we turned toward the north hall. Yuan led me into a room where he set my notes on a table, retrieving another document at the same time, then motioned for me to sit.

"I sent some workers to help with your move," Yuan began. "Did they arrive before you left this morning?"

"Yes."

"Good."

"How am I supposed to train without PūMa Tse?"

"We seem to have developed a problem. It seems the Master has left us."

"I attended the funeral like everyone else," I affirmed.

"No, it is not as you think. Two weeks ago we thought the master had retired to meditate in the tearoom we met in previously. As a rule we do not disturb the Master's meditations. Three days passed and we grew concerned, so we quietly slipped up to the door, slid it a crack to look in, and the Master was gone. We staged the funeral. We used the body of a homeless person for a prop."

The irony of a stately funeral for a homeless unknown person staggered me, but I managed to put the thought and urge to laugh aside for the more serious matter. "Someone kidnapped the Master?"

"We don't believe so. The Master left behind this." Yuan offered me the document he had picked up from the table. The document was a brief note, which read:

Upon this pond I sit, a lotus spewing forth the wisdom of the wise among the fools of the world. If only I were such a fool to lead them also. My successor shall act as the fool, and shall find my teaching by following the ways of the hermit to the eye of spirit, up stream. Arrange my funeral for the sake of the people.

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"Have you an idea what the Master means by this?" I asked.

"We would rather hear your interpretation so we don't accidentally affect you with our thoughts," Yuan answered.

I thought a long moment. "I recall poems related to this in the LǐJīe Ching." I pulled the book from my bag and browsed through the pages.

"The Master really emphasizes The Fool, so let's start with that poem. It reads:

Looking up, he steps
through the channel
into the great mystery—

Substance released
flowing with love
seeking knowledge—

His mind wanders
and dog follows
seeing but not telling—

Judgment empty
he feels stillness
the poet settles—

From ignorance and love
desire for truth
adventure encourages—

Seeker is he
of mind concept—
finder of self.

"If I am reading this right, I must begin my journey immediately, without any further preparation. My question is, who would be my companion? It appears that I am to have a companion."

"Perhaps this companion will surface along the road as you wander aimlessly," Yuan suggested.

I continued to the next poem. "When I read The Hermit, I see something different. Listen to this:

Through barren desert
wanders he, staff in hand
his only company: sand

One foot before the other
future afore, past trodden
forever in the present

The wind gusts
he does not grasp
but lets it go

Alone in the crowd
pillar of selfhood
leader of heroes

Crowded when alone
selfhood submersed
in cosmic harmony

Model of prudence
spoken vows unkempt
the unspoken done

Marriage divine
himself undivided
spirit and soul one

In his eye divine love
and in his pure heart
the Kingdom of Heaven.

“Isn’t this a solitary person?” I asked.

“Perhaps, but it does not seem to require solitude,” said Yuan. “Maybe this poem merely warns you as to the spirit in which you take the journey, or the nature of the companion you find. It is hard to tell.”

“That would certainly explain the first poem. Apparently I am expected to attain this level of thought during my journey. According to the Eye of Spirit:

Battlement guarded
mature warrior waits

From here he sees
spirit of life revealed

The eye understands
the lessons of years

To love is to live
to war is to lose

To wage peace
do not be coveted

The staff of defense
stands erect, ready

Foes seek without
and force they find

Friends seek within
a torch they have

As the staff burns
spirits reveal

“That’s it!” I couldn’t help myself for the insight.

“What is it?” Yuan implored.

“This describes my destination. A wall or fortification! Perhaps there is one up river in the mountains?”

“That is too vague. There could be many tributaries leading into the river. Besides, how are we to be certain the wall isn’t metaphorical? You say yourself that the LǐJīe Ching is a series of metaphors guiding a person into their own soul. What is to say any of these poems should be taken literally?”

“Perhaps the reference is convenient and meant to be taken literally, so I know which way to take. If we treat the wall as a metaphor, then perhaps the Master is referring to the western border in the desert. One way or the other I must go west, up stream.” Then I thought a little more about the poems and had a spontaneous inspiration. “I should take the pǔ from the tearoom with me. I suspect it is somehow related to the fire referenced by the last poem. Besides, it keeps coming back to me as somehow significant. I’ll strap it to my back.”

“Considering what we have seen, I can understand your intuition. You will not, however, be able to strap it to your back—it is too heavy. We’ll put it in a little cart for you.”

Heavy? This seemed strange to me at first, but then as driftwood, perhaps the weight is why it is shaped so, and the reason it was found. “Then I leave immediately,” I concluded. “Give my love to my wife

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and daughter. Try to explain to my wife what is going on. She won't understand, but I feel we have no choice."

Yuan bowed his head in understanding. "Do not worry about them," he assured. "We will take care of them no matter what happens." He then left the room. While I waited, I sat on the floor and read through the rest of the poems again. I decided to take them with me, in case they could offer other clues. The funeral alone was evidence to me as to the importance of my mission. Perhaps the council could explain this to my wife. Surely she could understand the emergency and the significance to the people. Of course she would not want me involved in a thing of such magnitude—all the more reason why I could not personally tell her and risk her holding me back somehow. Clearly, I must begin immediately, without personally saying goodbye. She would be safe and well taken care of. I had barely finished re-reading the poems when Yuan returned and handed me a wooden box. "Put your texts and journal in here for safe-keeping. A cart with a harness awaits you out front. Go slowly and come back quickly." This seemed fast to me, but I did not hesitate to wonder.

This evening, tired, I have come to rest just before the sun has set. Tonight I will sleep under the stars. Tomorrow I will push on. My stomach is growling with hunger, my legs are tired; my back hurts from the pull of the harness. Fortunately winter is not too harsh, but it is still cold. I am hopeful that my journey will not be too long. Considering Yuan's parting words and his consolation that my wife and daughter would be taken care of no matter what, I suspect the journey will be long. I will have to surrender my usual attachment to time and schedules, and just let the events happen when they do. Time is no object, especially when the objective seems to have such an overarching affect, potentially over all humanity. Any price must be paid for such an objective, and I'm ready to pay it. Tonight the stars are my companions, so I shall partake in enjoying them for now.

Chapter 3

I am ill prepared for a journey, but then I wonder who really would be perfectly prepared. Teaching certainly helped build walking and standing endurance. Though the cart is light, it is still cumbersome, particularly over rough terrain. I have little in the way of survival skills and fear I may be too proud to follow in the path of a begging, wandering monk. I am certainly not used to rigorous exercise and going without food for days. I wandered, without incident, dragging the cart behind me for three days. I have followed the road along the river west and north away from the city. I was hungry well before the end of my first days' journey. Tonight, out of desperation, I found a little cottage and went up to the door to beg. I was ill prepared for this humbling enterprise, as I have worked most of my life and have never begged. As I stood at the door debating what to do, I thought about my handicap and concluded that I could rely on my sales skills. I found myself filled with apprehension, and was about to turn to leave when an elderly woman opened the door, which left both of us startled.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "I hadn't heard you knock. I am so sorry."

The deed was done, even though I had not done it. Perplexed, I decided to take the challenge. "No, I am sorry," I started. I immediately decided to be honest and followed through. "I beg your forgiveness, for I did not knock. I was about to leave, in fact. I am ill prepared for such things as this.... I came to your door to beg."

The woman looked at me in astonishment. "I have seen many beggars, but none like you. You are dressed too well. Did you beg for such fine clothing, or did you steal it?"

"Neither. I am a teacher given a spontaneous mission. I have never before begged, and really would rather do something in exchange for whatever you have to offer me."

The woman studied me, looking deep into my eyes. Looking beyond me, she saw my cart with the stump standing in it, strapped in to keep it from rocking or falling. "You are strange indeed," she observed. Then she stepped aside and motioned me in. "Come in. Please excuse me for a moment."

As I went in, she went out. Inside and out, the cottage was humble, but by no means destitute. Clearly the old woman was comfortable and self-sufficient. For decoration she mostly had hand-made dolls with shiny white faces. Each face was unique, beautiful, and life-like. I wondered where, in her seclusion, she found the inspiration to create these faces, assuming of course that she was their creator. As my eyes slowly panned the room taking in all the little faces, I came upon a bench.

On the bench sat a doll almost completely assembled, around it was a variety of implements I guessed were used in its' manufacture, particularly a number of small carving and cutting instruments. I took this opportunity to study her handiwork. The doll was really a puppet, made of a rough cloth, like burlap, and wood. The arms and legs were carefully carved and detailed, looking very real. These jutted out from the cloth torso, which was supported by a post holding the whole puppet nearly upright, creating the illusion of a doll leaning against something. I surmised that the other dolls were probably puppets mounted similarly. The cloth torso extended beyond the shoulders and was tapered in to create a long neck, in which the post fit perfectly so a head could easily be affixed.

The woman re-entered with a basket filled with wood and topped with some eggs. She quietly went to a wood burning stove, set the eggs down on a nearby table and started to build a fire. I sat on the floor at her table and waited patiently. She cooked a very simple meal with some fresh greens and rice, probably from her own garden, mixing some egg with it.

"I will give you room and board for the next two nights," she began. "In return, you will model for me and sacrifice some of your hair for me."

I thought about this for a moment, "Modeling is one thing, but sacrificing hair too? Why can't I just do some work to help you out around here?"

"You really are new at this," she smiled. "What I am taking from you is also a gift to you. If I could, I would take your clothes, but I have nothing to replace them with. These are burdens that will most assuredly interfere with your mission." I must have looked quizzical, as she clarified. "I refer to your hair, your clothes, and a graven image of what you once were. No one on a mission like yours returns the same. You will also have a hard time begging while you keep walking around looking like a respectable teacher."

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I nodded in agreement. She laid out two bowls and then served her humble food. We sat quietly at length, eating. The old woman finished her food and then filled my bowl again. I ate voraciously as she watched. "What is your mission, teacher?" she asked. Before I could answer, there was a rapping at the door. She got up and opened the door. "Welcome," she said, stepping aside. A tall, gangly looking man came in carrying a long staff, which he placed next to the door. He quietly came to the table and sat, followed by the old woman who served him then sat down with us again.

I looked into the man's face and realized immediately that he was blind, because of the way his eyes seemed so fixated on absolutely nothing. I wondered if he realized I was there, but then thought with all the noise I was making he had to. He looked somehow familiar, and I wondered if he was the one I had heard speak at the funeral parade. I had not seen that stranger's face, but this stranger seemed to wear the same clothes and seemed to fit the stature and gait. I continued my eating as he started. "As you were about to say teacher?" the old woman continued.

"I am seeking PūMa Tse, the master of my school," I said softly, having pushed my food to the side of my mouth with my tongue, then covering my mouth with my hand for her benefit. The newcomer merely continued eating, as if he were totally disinterested. There was something about him that seemed remarkably calm. I could not place it. The old woman seemed to consider my answer for a while, as she studied me with her eyes. "I thought he just died," she said, but then shrugged as if to dismiss the notion as perhaps it had only been hearsay. She continued to study me. I was not sure if she was studying me to understand my answer, or to ascertain my features for the mask she was sure to make in my likeness. Either way, she seemed to be looking deep into my soul.

"Now I remember. Many years ago there was another traveler," she started, not ending her study of me. "I was a little girl then. He also was pulling a little cart like yours with a strange piece of wood in it. I remember my parents put him up for a night and he went on the next morning."

I was a bit startled. Perhaps there was a pattern I could learn from. "Do you remember anything else about this strange traveler?"

"He was very much like you. I remember that he too was a teacher...."

The blind man got up and started toward the door. "Thank you for coming," the old woman called out to him. He nodded his head gently in response, retrieved his staff and went out the way he had come. I was understandably curious, but decided it was not my place to pry. By his response it was evident that he could hear, but that had been the only response I had seen from him. My mind was filled with his image. His serenity fascinated me. When I finished eating, I helped the old woman clean up. She then showed me to a cot where I laid myself to rest as she went to her own bed.

I guessed that he had come from up the river, as surely I would have passed a blind man otherwise. I wondered what the old woman got from him. Had she created a puppet in his likeness too? Then there was the matter of his manners. The old woman had only addressed him twice. First, she welcomed him, which seemed necessary to let him know to come in, though he could surely hear the door opening. The second was confusing though. She had thanked him. Had he done her a service and she was feeding him as payment? He had only nodded in response. A polite person would have thanked our benevolent hostess.

Then there was his manner. He did not seem to walk as a blind man. He did not seem to eat as a blind man. I never saw him fumble around, or seek with his fingers the shape of a thing, yet he was clearly blind. Aside from his lifeless eyes, his face was filled with the glow of contented living. How could he be content without his eyes? Surely I would be distraught as a blind man. I love to read. I love to see the flowers, to watch the clouds roll by overhead, to watch the birds flitting from branch to branch, to watch the bees studying their flowers and working feverishly to make their quotas before returning to their hives. I could not imagine enjoying life without seeing a waterfall, or watching the crocus petals making shapes on the surface of the river as they quietly float by. Without eyes, how could one read or write poetry? Sure, someone could write for you, or read for you, but how could you be sure the poem was laid out properly, or that it was read with the meter one's own soul prescribed for it? To me, that would be hell, but for this fortunate soul, the poetry seemed to live within his heart and emanate out from there. There was no misery in him. There was no suffering, no sorrow, no anger, and no shame; there was only pure contentment and a persistent flow of pleasure. Perhaps he was born this way and knew no other life. This had to be the case. I could not imagine, once enjoying the sense of sight, continuing to enjoy life without it.

The next morning the old woman got up at dawn. She prepared a little rice, filling three small bowls. I watched quietly as she did this and gathered her shells and some of her tools in a basket with an empty bowl. "Come," she said. "We will work by the river." As we stepped outside, she pointed to a pile of cut wood, "Bring some wood. We will need it for a fire," she explained. I filled both my arms with wood and followed her faithfully.

We walked away from the house, through a thicket of trees and bamboo shoots over a small hill. On the other side of the hill was a small clearing, with the river at the bottom. Under a tree near the river sat the blind man. We walked over to him and the old woman gave him one of the bowls of rice. "Set the wood over there," she directed, pointing nearby a fire pit only a few feet away. I did as she said and she handed me a second bowl. She emptied her basket and took it with her as she wandered off into the thicket. I decided this would be a good time to talk to the blind man.

"How are you?" I asked, trying to make small talk.

"I am."

"Did you spend the night out here?"

"Yes."

"I'm sure the old woman would let you come in if you wanted," I said. The blind man just kept eating, as if I had said nothing. "I thought about you much of the night," I admitted. "I could not imagine living in such contentment as you. I have both my eyes and I haven't half your contentment. Were you born blind?"

"When did you first discover you were dead?" the blind man asked.

"What?!" I was astonished, shocked. What kind of a question was this? The blind man said nothing, but kept eating, as if the eating were a part of his meditation. "I am not dead!" I protested, as if I had to defend my life.

"You are so sure," the blind man smiled faintly. "Am I really blind?"

"If you aren't blind, then I truly am."

"Did this occur before or after you died?"

"What is this infatuation with me being dead?" His argument seemed as ironic as the statement the stranger said at the funeral.

"Are you really alive?"

"I tend to think so."

"What evidence do you have?" He finished his rice and set the bowl neatly in front of himself. His posture never seemed to waiver, whether he was eating or setting the bowl down. All that moved were his hands, arms, and his mouth. Now he moved his arms to his sides and rested his hands together in his lap. He faced the river as if he were looking into it, but without his eyes he obviously could not. I contemplated his question.

The old woman returned with various herbs in her basket. She started a fire and began her work. I watched with fascination. I had never watched someone make eggshells pliable. I had seen many things made out of eggshells, but had never watched the process. The old woman made a potion from her herbs, which she combined with the shells to make white paste. I stole a glance in the direction of the blind man and noticed he had disappeared. I looked around our area a bit, but found no signs of him. I figured he would return, but he never did.

When the old woman finished making her paste, she began shaping it. With her delicate tools she adjusted its outlines, and before I realized it, she had made a little mask in my likeness. She then set it to dry, came to me and cut my hair. I figure she will use it to make the puppet look more real. While she worked, I asked after the blind man.

"Who is that blind man?" I started.

"I don't know."

"Does he come to beg often?"

"He has never begged from me, but he comes around every year or so."

"This is all strange to me. What do you know about him?"

"I first saw him after the flood twenty-years ago," the old woman began. "That flood killed my husband and destroyed my animal pens. One morning, I got up to see him rebuilding the pens nearer to my house, which is why the flood didn't destroy them this last year. He even rounded up the surviving animals and put them into the pens."

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"That is why you thanked him when he left," I concluded.

"No. I thank him for taking my gift, just as he thanked me when he finished the work twenty years ago. The giver should be thankful for being able to give."

"So he wasn't blind then?"

"I can't say for sure, because I was pretty shocked at the time, but I'm sure he was."

"Do you talk to him often? Does he say anything about himself?" This mysterious stranger was intriguing me.

"We have seldom spoken. When I told him my husband had died, he cried."

"He cried for your husband?" This I found a little curious.

"No. He said he was crying for me, our children, friends and family."

"I don't understand," I admitted.

"He explained that it is pointless to cry for the dead; their suffering is over. The living, however, must endure not only the loss but future sufferings as well, that are most assured to be worse than the old sufferings."

"So did he make any idle talk?"

"I've tried to engage him in casual conversation, like asking questions about him. Each personal question I ask, he dismisses saying 'No-matter,' at least when he answers. Usually he makes a gesture of dismissing the question. He says nearly nothing. People around here suspect he is a wandering sage. He seldom says anything, but what he does say always comes with much meaning. When he speaks he fills me. When he is silent he still fills me. I cannot explain it."

"I think I understand well what you mean," I affirmed, thinking of the peace I had felt with him the night before while he had maintained a noble silence. "I felt his energy last night." I contemplated the evidence for a while. A wandering sage? Maybe this was PūMa Tse. "Do you know his name?"

"Nobody does. His is the only face to enter my home in these twenty years that I have not made an image of either. He doesn't stay long enough, and for some reason I don't feel like I could create his likeness even if he did."

This struck me as odd, but then, as an artist, I also understood. To fulfill her artistic duty, she had to find some way to give her work life, and perhaps his life is so much greater than her own that she could not imagine depicting it as she had in the other puppets. "Has another stranger passed in the last month?"

"Not that I know of."

My suspicions grew more intense. If the blind man is PūMa Tse, then my search is over. Otherwise, this wanderer may know the way to PūMa Tse. It makes sense to me that a master would travel incognito. Masters don't care about titles or recognition. They simply want to pass through unhindered. I decided that I should leave at first light to catch up with the blind man. After cutting my hair, the old woman gathered all her implements and led me back to the house, where I sit now writing these notes. I am beginning to wonder also, how much my voyage alone is supposed to teach me.

I am getting the distinct impression that everything is happening as it is for a reason. I thought I was knowledgeable. I thought I understood things. I watch this simple old woman in a life I would find miserable: alone, widowed, and to me, impoverished. Yet this old woman seems content. I could try to convince myself that she creates these puppets for companionship, but I have felt no such relationship between them and her. Instead, it is as if she creates these memorials for the nostalgia of a later age, an age in which her memory shall live on through them, not unlike my feeling about much of my own artwork. I have also thought at length about her thanks to the blind man—a thanks not for having been her savior twenty years ago; a thanks for having something worthy of giving, something that may be of little real value but of immense value to the receiver in that moment; a thanks for a gift with no expectation of anything in return; a thanks for a gift of such simplicity and impermanence as to not disturb the natural balance; a thanks for a gift that, to her, really was valuable. I would love to thank this woman for her food, for her shelter, for her thoughtfulness in creating a memory of me, for her teaching me; yet I should not thank her, for such would insult the gift and disrupt the balance she created. If only the so-called literate people of the world could think so clearly. If only the nations of the world could think so clearly. In her own respect, this old woman was a sage, and far better suited for the job I was employed to become: the master of a school—for that matter, the Master.

As if the old woman's wisdom is not humbling enough, there is also the blind man. While my shock at our little conversation stopped short of my laughing at his absurdity, I cannot help but wonder at the truth of his sparing words. I would like to think I have lived, just as I would like to think I had knowledge and wisdom. The old woman convinces me that perhaps there is a fault in my knowledge and wisdom, which leads me to the logical conclusion that perhaps my belief in my own living may also be at fault. This blind man who single-handedly rebuilt the animal pens and captured the animals; this blind man who seemed able to see directly into the soul of the river; could not this same blind man equally see through me—see himself that I had not nurtured my soul? What am I missing? If the old woman so far outranks me, this blind man is surely one step short of divinity. This experience truly humbles me and makes me question my worthiness for such a noble post. They expect me to replace a master? If the blind man is not a master, then I am truly nothing more than a lowly peasant, an ignoramus, an illiterate and unlettered waste of flesh consuming the resources of those more worthy—those whom are truly living.

I hope tomorrow to be able to trace the steps of this sage and learn from him. If he is not PūMa Tse, then surely I must learn what I can from him lest the Master be shamed by my foolishness. Perhaps this is what the Master meant by proceeding as the fool, and living in the ways of the hermit. This blind man wanders as the Fool, not even able to look at the path. Like the Hermit, he carries a staff and embodies such purity and harmony that surely he could lead heroes. Am I supposed to be a hero of some sort? I certainly do not feel like one. Is this blind man supposed to teach me how to become this hero? I want nothing to do with being a hero, I just want to fulfill my mission and get on with the duties of my new position; return to the loving arms of my wife and daughter and proceed with a normal life. But, if the old woman is right, when my mission is complete, I will not be the same. Nothing will be the same again. So, what will normal be like then? I have slid into idle speculation, which only my tomorrows will reveal to me. I will rest now to conserve my energy for tomorrow's journey.

Chapter 4

I have been several days the guest of a generous merchant named Palaver (translated from Gōng: official business, male, public, metric), who finds me charming and entertaining. As I came upon the city along the river the evening after leaving the old woman, a deluge struck threatening to drown even the river. I saw the merchant Palaver's villa. Having had my first taste of begging and pressured by the storm to seek shelter, especially since my cargo could get stuck in the mud, I felt the courage to knock and beg for reprieve.

At first, his servants turned me away, but I was fortunate that he happened past the door as they were ushering me to go. When he saw me, this heavy, jovial man, he knew I was no ordinary beggar. Besides, he assured me, he had reason to celebrate in the midst of this chaos, as it was his birthday. So, as a present to himself, he decided to take me in for his own entertainment. He could not have given himself a better present, for when he discovered that I am a teacher, he immediately took the opportunity to stretch his intellectual muscles and strike out upon a conversation tirelessly.

"Wealth is a state of mind," Palaver explained. "People choose to struggle and be poor, whether they realize it or not. It's the way they live as consumers, rather than as investors. They lack financial literacy."

"I'm not quite sure I follow. Are you saying there is an anthropological difference?"

"Certainly. Look around you. What do you see that is different here versus the home of the working class?"

"Aside from the large expensive home: nothing," I admitted.

"Nothing. That's the key word. There's nearly nothing here. My home pays for itself because I do business here. I could not do business here if I lived in the clutter of a working class home."

"I see what you are saying. The working class bury themselves in things." His point was very valid to me because I had heard before that wealth is anthropological.

"You can gauge poverty by your ability to walk in their home without tripping on something. The richer someone is, the less clutter."

"The same is true spiritually," I mused philosophically. "People consume themselves in relationships and neglect investing in themselves."

"That never occurred to me before." Palaver thought deeply for a while, so I took the liberty of biting into a cake. "I cannot help but notice that spiritual people are not materially wealthy. Do you think it's possible to have both material and spiritual wealth?"

"They are distinctly separate motivations. I guess it's possible, if you understand the principles of both. Both have something in common though."

"What's that?"

"Both invest themselves into their perception of wealth rather than the clutter of the common person."

I must admit this has been quite a relief for me. As a teacher, I am used to having an audience who challenges me and tries to find the boundaries of my understanding. I enjoy the mental exercise. Not only is it stimulating to the imagination, it fills the body with energy so you forget about time, sleep, and even food—that is, until you pass-out or your stomach stages a rebellion threatening to devour some other vital organ. The exercise also stretches the boundaries of knowledge, as when someone asks a question you never thought of before, you feel compelled to think it through and formulate a meaningful answer that seems right. It is critical, however, that when the boundaries of one's knowledge are reached, you admit to your weakness, especially since you can never know if your partner may already have a better answer.

Palaver is a wonderful host. The weather has given us much time to enjoy each other's company. Each night we stay up late, seamlessly shifting from talk about politics to literature, from the nature of the universe to the wonder of a butterfly. Palaver seems a poet in his own right, and certainly well educated. We talked at length about my mission and the texts I brought with me. He listened attentively, particularly when I spoke of the rǔnLǐ Ching.

I managed to bring the LǐJīe Ching, but have not had the time yet to discuss it with my host. After our discussion of the rǔnLǐ Ching, he asked me to stay on with him a while to help him get his affairs in better working order. As a teacher I know that when I teach I learn, so this idea is selfishly appealing, especially

since I seem to need to learn a lot more. My concern with staying is the delay in finding the blind man, but he has probably already gone far. I doubt even this deluge would dissuade him, as he seems beyond it.

I believe that I have much to learn, and learning requires time. I think the council members realize this need in me. Yuan did say, after all, to go slowly. I will take his advice. I seem to have a surplus of time to give; a gift my mission and I too shall benefit from. Perhaps this is what being thankful for giving means.

My host is a very generous man. For the last couple months I have helped in his affairs and learned much about his business. In return he has given me fine clothing, my own villa, and servants to see to my needs. Palaver is no mere merchant. He owns farmland, factories, manages warehouses and distributors. He seems to own this city. Though the city has its own council and mayor, what Palaver says is law and everyone agrees. Wealth gives such power. Palaver, however, is not satisfied. I sensed this, but waited for him to feel the time was right to tell me the nature of his dissatisfaction for himself. One evening, at dinner, he finally opened up to me.

“Turner, my friend, I am delighted that the weather forced our friendship and that you stayed. You have shown that you are quite capable.” He set his drink aside and rested his wrists on the edge of the table. “I have detained you for a deeper reason than my business affairs.” I kept silent, figuring he would fill the gap, and looked into his sincere eyes. “When you told me about the rŭnLĭ Ching, something in me said that you could help. You are the first person I have seen in many years who tells me what he thinks without concern that I agree. And when I speak, you do not always agree with me. What do you think of this?”

“I would be inclined to believe that your wealth has given you such power that no one dares speak against you,” I responded. Then I added speculatively, “Perhaps this same wealth has convinced them that your thinking is better than theirs, so they do not question your authority.”

“I am inclined to believe your first hypothesis. It used to be that the city would make decisions, then I would go to them to adjust those decisions and get my way. Now they come to me first. I cannot believe people could be happy with someone making all their decisions for them.”

“That makes sense to me,” I agreed. “I owe you much for your hospitality. What could I possibly do for you who have everything?”

“I don’t have your expertise.”

“I don’t know how my expertise could help you.”

“You have stretched my mind and opened my eyes, and I wish to commission you to help me do the same to others.”

“What do you mean?”

“My wealth is such that it brings enormous power. No one questions me,” Palaver complained. “Everyone simply obeys. I need a school to teach the people to think for themselves.”

“How would this benefit you?”

“You are wise to see that I seek benefit, but I’m surprised you don’t see that freethinking means greater productivity, which is clearly beneficial to me.” He paused a moment and then continued. “I will not lie to you, my friend, for I believe the truth will accomplish more than anything else. I decided to keep you here for selfish purposes, namely my own benefit. When you were talking about the rŭnLĭ Ching, I realized that if I could somehow give these people greater independence in their thinking, they would be happier and more productive.”

I nodded in understanding, and he continued. “I want to finance and start a school here for the adults. I want that school to give them their independence, give them a sense of freedom in their thoughts and encourage their creativity. I believe you could accomplish such an undertaking.”

We sat in silence at length. A lot of thoughts raced through my mind: my mission, my family, PŭMa Tse. I was able to justify my deviation on all grounds except for my wife and daughter. How could I make them wait for such a deviation? “I can’t delay my journey much longer, and I can’t do something that would certainly separate me from my wife and daughter like this,” I said, apologetically.

“I thought your mission was lost?”

Naturally I was alarmed. “Why should it be?”

“You don’t follow the news do you?”

“No,” I admitted, “what happened?”

The Ascension

Palaver drew a long face, put his hands together and looked down into them. He breathed in deep, and as he did this, my heart began to sink in anticipation. "I guess you did not hear. I am sorry to be the one to break this news to you, but the Academy burned down. Your wife and daughter were identified among those who died."

Having recently read through the LiJie Ching again, I recalled the poem titled Fear. Tears began to well in my eyes, as Palaver came around the table and put his thick arm around my shoulders and pulled me close to him. "When?"

"A month ago," he whispered, then added, "I thought you knew and just kept it to yourself. I am sorry."

"Thank you," I said, as I got up and quietly walked out of the room. I retired to my villa, where I sat on my bed and quietly meditated and wallowed deep into my sorrow. I felt enormous shame, for I felt I had failed them. Had I not gone on this undertaking, our lives would be continuing as they had. Was that not enough? My wife had been right about keeping to the simple life. Had I said goodbye personally, surely she would have stopped me, begged me to stay and surrender this great aspiration. Why did I have to be the one? I am no hero. What could I possibly do to make a difference? Now the Academy is gone. My wife and daughter are gone. I thought about the Fear poem again and read it.

Smoke rises
heat intensifying
he awakes—

At first startled
as chaos mounts
flames jumping—

Escape!
He leaps—runs
for safety—

Garden sanctuary
he watches awed
as everything burns—

All the memories
all the heirlooms
Everything! Everything!

My WIFE!
MY CHILDREN!
Not them too.

His head hangs
water gathers
as the fight loses—

Eyes sunken
they drop and open
the fire illuminating—

No reflection
no shadow, no feet—
Where am I?

Am I dreaming?
Am I in there?
What is real here?

The poem had almost completely come true for me. There is only one thing I did not lose that the character in the poem did lose: my self.

For two days I stayed in my room. Occasionally a servant came with some food, but I could not eat. My heart was completely broken. I began to read the LǐJīe Ching again. Many of the poems made me cry just by looking at their titles and remembering what they had said. This same book that made me cry, helped me to find the inspiration to put the sorrow behind me and start over. The Fear poem reminded me that I still have my self, and with that anything is possible.

Palaver's school now comes as a welcome idea. Although the Academy is no longer there to benefit from my journal, I will continue it anyway, on the chance it may prove useful. With this in mind, I went to Palaver's house and told him my decision. He hugged me in gratitude, and then I returned home. I will now begin developing the school he wants me to start.

Three years have transpired. I have done nothing for my journal, as you can well see. I have spent these three years building a wonderful school and populating it with students and competent teachers. As Palaver requested, I have directed this school to encourage thought independent of his. Naturally this has caused a bit of friction occasionally with Palaver, but in the end he is pleased with the results. As he predicted, the morale in the city has risen, and so too has production. Since he has prospered, he has shared his prosperity with me. I live quite lavishly. Memories of my wife, my daughter, the Academy, and PūMa Tse seem remote, as if they were another life. In fact, until recently, I seem to have forgotten them entirely.

Early yesterday morning, hours before sunrise, I sat in my study working out curriculum details. The servants were all asleep, and so too was the young woman I had brought home for the evening to entertain me. This was common for me, not because I am particularly beautiful, but certainly because of my status and obvious wealth. Out the window nearby where I worked sat my stump non the cart, unadorned but inspiring anyway. I was looking at it again, as if it held the secrets of the universe. Maybe it does—I do not know. As I looked at it blankly, there was a light rapping at the door. My eyebrow rose. "Who would call at this unusual hour?" I thought—maybe it passed my lips, I'm not sure. I got up and started for the door. I left my study open as I went into the hallway and opened the front door.

In front of me was a tall, gangly man, wearing ragged clothes. The top of his staff leaned forward, pointing toward the door, and now to me. Apparently he had used it to knock. His eyes were fixed as if staring into the sky past my head, but clearly dead. I looked down at his bare feet standing on their worn-out old pair of sandals. These sandals had seen many miles. For a moment I was stunned by him, and nearly asked why he had bothered me at such an hour, particularly these late night hours when I could work undisturbed. Then I remembered who he was: the blind man. I stepped aside as the old woman had and said, "Welcome."

He quietly stepped over the threshold, then turned and set his staff next to the door before proceeding into the entry area and stopping to wait for me. I closed the door and started for my study: he followed. When we got to my study, he sat in a chair nearby my desk. Again I had to marvel at his ability to navigate without his eyes and without having to feel around. Seeing that he was situated, I went to the kitchen, heated some tea and rice and brought them to him. He ate and drank quietly as I sat and watched. When he finished, he got up and started to walk toward the door. I followed. When he got to the door, he retrieved his staff, quietly opened the door and started to leave. As he crossed the threshold again I remembered my manners and thanked him.

I could not sleep the entire night. His presence sparked my memories. I retrieved my journal and read it to verify what I thought I had recalled. His silence had said everything! Am I alive like this? Is this really me? Reading the passage over about the fire, and the poem Fear, it occurred to me that the poem had come true. To escape my sorrow for my loss, I had buried myself so much in work, materialism and temptations of the flesh, that I had lost the very thing I had leaned on for salvation: my self. I have written no poetry in these three years. Teaching has become cumbersome, tiresome. I found myself angry with students and unsatisfied, so I stopped teaching and started focusing on administering my school. Everything I ever was, everything I ever had was gone. What do I see in the mirror? Is that me? Am I these rich clothes? Am I this fashionable villa? Am I hiding somewhere in my status?

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As the sun started to come up, I moved out to my garden, and sat under a large shade tree and meditated. I heard my servants get up and begin their chores. The clatter and bustle of the day passed by as I contemplated the situation. Finally, as evening came, I went into the house and got a bowl of rice. I then went down to the shore of the river. As I came over the ridge, I saw the blind man again. He was sitting on the shore facing the river as he had been three years ago. I walked over to him and set the bowl in front of him. He quietly picked it up and ate, as I watched him again. This time I said nothing. I just watched. He finished his rice then set the bowl back down again.

“How are you?” I started, used to beginning a conversation with idle talk.

“I am.” What a familiar answer!

“We have never been introduced. My name is Turner.”

“That explains your problem: always becoming, never simply being.” He was referring to the literal meaning of my name—become.

“Are you PūMa Tse?” I asked, simultaneously cataloging his answer to my name for later meditation.

“I am,” he said authoritatively. For a moment I thought this was an admission, but then the tone of his voice made me doubt. Maybe, I thought, “I am” is his name. I could not bring myself to believe such an idea, so I rephrased my question.

“Did you just admit to being PūMa Tse or mean something else?”

“Something else,” he responded evenly.

“You have lost me,” I said, meaning of course that I did not understand him.

“You have lost yourself.”

“I am lost,” I admitted.

“It has taken this long for you to finally realize this?”

“I have been a fool,” I said, and immediately remembered the message from three years ago advising me to take the path of the fool. While this had me curious, I put it aside for later. “Please be my teacher. Come, stay with me and teach me.”

“That is not possible,” he said—as if to dismiss me.

For a moment I was disheartened. I have learned, however, that one must keep asking until an affirmation is given. “What must I do to be your pupil?”

“Start with discarding your rich adornments. Walk away from this un-life.”

I thought a moment and realized that I was willing to pay such a high price. “I will go close my affairs,” I said, getting up.

“No!” he commanded. “You must simply walk away. You may only come with what you had when you came to this place.”

I was desperate, so I agreed. I ran back to my villa. I found the clothes I had come in and changed. They were worn and ragged. I had kept them for working in the garden, so they were quite worn. I thought at length about what I had come with. I got the cart and then gathered my journal and the two books. That is when I decided to add this entry to my journal. Now, as I close this journal entry, I will do as he said. Night has come and the servants have retired. I will be able to leave without anyone seeing or following me. I am leaving no departing note. I will simply leave everything as it was yesterday when the blind man came.

Chapter 5

When I got back to the river, the blind man had vanished again. This was no surprise, for what difference is there between daylight and nighttime to a blind man? Besides, this seemed common in our history together, so I guessed he had moved on and I would have to catch up. Since I had previously seen him down the river, and my original journey was upriver, I assumed my direction should be upriver. So, in spite of the darkness, I set out up the river again.

I feel like I am in worse shape than I was when I started this journey three years ago. Since I stopped teaching, my endurance for standing is down. The cart, though I know it is light to pull, already weighs heavy on my shoulders. I am, however, determined. The blind man is right: I must surrender my attachments to my material and sensual passions. These have been nothing but a way to mask my sufferings, for my sufferings certainly have not died as a consequence of my turn toward materialism.

This sense of determination drove me far past my level of endurance—even past my endurance three years ago. When I started three years ago, I walked only during daylight hours. This time I left at night, and since I wanted to get some distance in, I pressed on until morning even though I felt exhausted and started to fall asleep while I walked. Finally the sun started to come up, and the cool morning breeze came across the river and filled my nostrils with the smells of the flowers opening their faces to greet the morning sun. I was refreshed and felt renewed, as if I had slept through the night rather than walked. With my strength renewed, I continued nonplussed. When night came again, I felt like I had gone too far for too long to stop yet, so I continued anyway. As the hours wore on, the fatigue started to come again. It is amazing how much the sun energizes us. I finally could take no more, so I pulled off the road and slept on the riverbank.

I was surprised this morning to wake with the rising sun. I halfway expected to sleep until late in the day then be mad at myself for pushing myself too hard the day before. Instead, I actually felt rested, though every muscle in my body ached. I remembered my days when I did physical labor and how I had dealt with fatigue and injuries: I pressed on anyway. For some strange reason the body adapts itself when it is forced into extreme conditions. An injured body part heals quickly if it is used, and fatigue numbs shortly after the rigor begins again. On the contrary side, when you feel sorry for yourself and baby an injury or rest too much, the pain actually increases, healing takes longer, and fatigue overwhelms. Nature is strange.

When I awoke, I was tempted to sit there at the river and meditate, but after having these thoughts about fatigue, I decided I better get moving so I would not get trapped there. I could walk close to the river though and meditate on it as I walked, so I did. I could not have walked far before I started to realize my hunger. I picked some berries from a tree and carried on. Not much of a meal, but I figured the fasting would be good for my body. I continued until nearly dark, then stopped to rest and write these notes.

As I sit here, I look out across the river and see a small island with a structure on it, but the view is obscured by fog. Cute. The river casually navigates around the island, colliding with itself as it passes, as the currents bend around the island and intersect each other. The white crests where the currents collide indicate the current is strong. This does not surprise me, as I have traveled far up the river and I can feel the pull on the carriage as I ascend to a higher altitude. The weather is growing cooler too, and when I sip from the river, it is icy cold and delicious. The sun is setting over the mountaintops, so I will pass some of the evening listening to the river before I sleep. My stomach keeps growling at me in anger, but I will ignore it for now. Perhaps tomorrow I will find a good food source.

Another day's journey took me into the mountains. Here, near the river, I found a monastery, completely isolated. I was famished and exhausted. My arms felt numb from the pressure of the harness, which seemed to multiply with every step of my ascent. The monastery was a happy surprise. As I approached, I could see cultivated plots of land. I know nothing of farming, but I could definitely make out the rice paddies, and I guessed that one plot is growing tea. These and the bald men wearing orange robes told me I had come to a monastery. They welcomed me without question or reservation.

"That is quite a burden you bear," an elderly monk said as I approached the monastery, indicating my cart. "May we store it for you while you stay?" He indicated a small building with wide doors.

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“Please,” I responded, only too grateful to be relieved of the burden. Another monk took the harness off my shoulders, and as he started to pull the cart away I quickly grabbed the wooden box with my manuscripts and tucked them under my arm.

The old man led me through the compound. In the middle of the compound about a dozen monks were kneeling in a circle. As we approached, I could see that each was carefully pouring colored sand from their hands to make designs and shapes. I could see from the design that they were making a sort of mandala. A mandala is a pictorial representation of the universe, typically depicted within a circle, which represents samsara—the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Mandalas can be extremely intricate, and certainly what the monks were constructing in the middle of the courtyard was intricate in its details. I was surprised about where they were constructing this mandala. “How will they preserve this?” I asked curiously, and I now know naively.

“Nothing is permanent,” the old man replied. With that statement, I understood the mandala’s destruction was intentional, exploiting the samsara motif, the humility of impermanence and mortality.

The old man then took me to a building in the compound, from which came the aroma of cooking food. There he presented me to a frail little old monk laboring over a pot of rice to get the right consistency. “This young man just arrived pulling a cart carrying pū. We have sheltered his burden and now present him to you.” I assumed the little old monk to be the Roshi—the master of the monastery. Roshis are notoriously iconoclastic, meaning they hate titles. They also tend to carry a stick called a kiyusaku, or “awakening stick”, which they will use with or without obvious cause. Calling a Roshi by his title assures a good rap from his kiyusaku. I was not about to take any chances, so I decided to watch and listen to discover the standards of etiquette.

“Good,” the Roshi responded in a dismissive and final tone, without raising his eyes from his work. His voice was small like him, and seemed just as fragile in a child-like way. The old man, who had escorted me in, nodded his head in respect, turned and left. The Roshi pointed to a bowl, indicating that I should retrieve it. I did, and he proceeded to fill it with rice and vegetables. He then indicated a table, so I sat and ate. As I ate he continued to work silently with a subtle grace and fluidity in his motions. I could not help but think how appropriate that the Roshi should labor as any other monk. I finished eating and continued to sit and watch him. You would think I would get used to the silence, since it is such a motif among these people, but I am too familiar with the clatter of the normal life, so I had to fill the air with idle noise.

“Is this cooking your meditation?” I asked.

“Have you come to learn?” the Roshi asked in return.

The thought had not actually occurred to me, but now that he mentioned it, I thought it a possibility.

“Perhaps,” I ventured.

“Have you finished eating?”

“Yes.”

“Then wash your dishes.” I had to laugh a little under my breath for this very Zen response. The Roshi smiled and stole a glance at me. He had that irresistible twinkle in his eye that just makes you want to leap to your feet and give a hug. I resisted the temptation, got up and washed my dishes. This simple, humble Roshi, without the slightest effort, convinced me that he had something to teach me. I have therefore decided to stay and learn. I knew what I had to do, so when I finished with my dishes, I immediately went out and got myself cleaned up and dressed appropriately in the orange robes. I admit to having more attractive haircuts, but the purpose is humility—not fashion. I was also given an oryoko bowl, which is a large bowl used for begging and eating. A monk is supposed to eat only one oryoko bowl full of food each day—it is neither too much nor too little.

I noted that no one asked nor offered names. This makes sense to me for multiple reasons. Names are suggestive of individuality and the ego. Without names, everyone is equal and humble. In a way I am grateful. My memory for names has worsened significantly and I cannot explain why. The monks show absolutely no concern for the past, the future, or anything personal. No one has asked me a single question referencing anything outside the immediate moment. It is almost as if this monastery stands suspended in time, though the monks seem to age anyway.

No one offered any rules or schedule, so I decided to just simply follow along with whatever the others were doing. Every morning before sunrise we make our beds and then meditate for a couple hours after a quick wash. I expected everyone to go to the same place to meditate, but quickly realized that this was not

specified either. After meditation we gather and line up for sanzen—our daily personal interview with the Roshi, which is also called dokusan. We then do samu—meditation through work. I am a nuisance with the farming jobs due to my inexperience, so I help with mending clothing, cooking, cleaning, and with the more strenuous labor like loading carts with tea to be sold at the market. In the evenings the monks take turns delivering a dharma talk. Dharma is the law—not the law of felonies and misdemeanors, but rather the law of the way of nature, or as Taoists call it: Tao. The Dharma is comprised of thousands of texts attributed to Buddha, leaving a seemingly endless supply of topics. The monk delivering dharma talk typically embellishes on some aspect of the Dharma. It is not uncommon, however, for a monk to choose another philosophical source. Our library is simple but fairly thorough, so I am using my free time to absorb as much as I can. There seems to be no order the monks go in with their dharma talks. I am hopeful that some day I will be able to contribute to these when I have studied enough.

Today I met with the Roshi. I had no idea what our meeting was for, but from the experience I think it was a period of personal interaction with the Roshi where the student asks the questions. In sanzen the Roshi typically asks you questions in the form of scenarios. These questions are called koans (kung-ans). More often than not, the answer given by the student results in a swift whack of the kiyaku. This is what happens to me every time, and I think the reason has been explained by today's meeting.

I was simply told to go without any more explanation than it is a time for me to ask questions. I was not sure where to begin, or what it was about, so I brought my copies of the rünLī Ching and LīJīe Ching. I was taken to the room near where we typically hold dharma talks, the room we do sanzen in. The Roshi was seated in the middle of the room quietly meditating. I sat down in front of him, setting my books in front of me, and assumed the same posture. After several minutes of silence, I became anxious.

"What kind of questions do I ask?" I started.

"What kind of answers did you bring?" he responded. I considered this a moment and decided that the forum was open, so I pressed on.

"I have been reading a lot. Is there anything in particular that you recommend for me to read?"

"What kind of reading did you do before you came here?" the Roshi asked.

"I was a teacher, so I read just about everything."

"Then that is your problem," he concluded.

"What is my problem?"

"What do you think you know?"

This was a loaded question. I had managed to walk onto dangerous territory. If I claimed any knowledge, then I risked being struck by his kiyaku or laughed at—or worse. If I feigned ignorance I risked the same. I balanced my answer carefully in my mind and decided on a compromise. "I found the more I learn, the less I know."

Thwack! I knew I was doomed, I guess it was inescapable, but I was not clear why, so I asked.

"What kind of a fool do you take me for?" the Roshi demanded. I shrugged like a child who is asked why they broke the expensive decorative vase on the top shelf. Now I felt like a fool. He continued his tirade. "If your answer were true, then you would not need to think about it. Your answer may fool some, but it is a learned response. You must unlearn."

"How do I do that?"

The Roshi handed me a teacup and began to pour tea into it. The cup began to overflow. "Stop!" I protested.

"Try to drink," he said, still pouring.

"I can't while you keep pouring." He stopped, so I drank the tea.

"Your mind is as this cup; your knowledge is as the tea."

"So I must stop the flow of knowledge?"

"That is not possible."

"Then how can I keep it from spilling over?"

"It is not the spilling over that is the problem. It is the emptiness of the cup that is useful. You cannot fill it unless it is empty, and you cannot consume it as it is poured."

"So you are suggesting I stop learning and simply meditate my knowledge away?"

"No," he responded. "Saturate yourself in knowledge."

The Ascension

“How could that help me to unlearn?”

“If the flow is strong what the cup contains is forced out.” He turned the pot upside-down over my cup, dumping all the tea at once. Almost all went onto the floor, but some landed in the cup.

“I understand your analogy, but even then something else remains.”

“The cup is less full,” the Roshi assured.

“But not empty,” I added.

“Water, like knowledge, erodes. It will cut its own path then flow naturally,” the Roshi explained. “We are now out of tea. Make some more.”

There was a little wood-burning stove at the side of the room. I took the kettle and went to the stove. It was cold, so I looked inside and found no wood to burn. “There is no wood,” I confessed. “I cannot make the tea.”

“You brought some wood with you,” the Roshi said, indicating my books that were still on the floor. I realized the futility of my situation, so I did as I was instructed with great reservation in my heart. I was hoping he might elaborate on these texts. The books burned slowly and not very hot, so the tea seemed weak. “If you boil water and add salt,” he started as I worked, “and keep adding salt, you will eventually reach a saturation point where no more salt can be added. If you take this saturated water and pour it over salt, it will separate into water and salt again,” he finished as I brought the pot back to him and filled his cup. I sat before him again and he tasted the tea.

“Your knowledge makes good tea,” he commented.

I continued to sit in front of him for a while, contemplating our session. We said nothing else. Eventually someone else came and I went to work. I realize that his message was manifold. The root of his message, however, was to release my attachment to knowledge, as he showed by having me burn my precious books. From what he was saying, I must draw myself into the knowledge. What I get from this is that he is suggesting I become one with the flow of knowledge. I will commence my studies immediately and read everything in the library—all seven thousand volumes of the Dharma, and the thousands of other texts they have—thereby saturating myself as he suggested.

I have spent so many years reading through the Dharma that I have lost track of them. Losing track of years is easy here in the monastery, just as I have lost track of this journal. The first volumes filled me with enthusiasm to learn more, so the reading came easy. After about fifty volumes it started to become redundant and cumbersome, so I started to alternate my readings with other books. I got about half way through all the volumes in the monastery library and found myself nearly sickened by the sight of them. Each book I picked up seemed the same as the others, no matter the subject. I could browse through a book in minutes and tell you exactly what it was all about without actually reading it.

I pressed on anyway, as the Roshi had directed. I went through about three-fourths of the library and something happened. Suddenly I realized a beauty in them I had not seen before. It was as if each book were a piece of music carrying a melody. When I pick up a book, I could feel the melody before I even opened it. Some books have soft and beautiful harmony, others harsh, and many in between. As I opened a book I could feel the notes of the melody as it plays. So I put the books back and meditated before them. Together they made a continuous harmony, resonating through me. I saw the faces of their authors, blending with the faces of the characters portrayed, with the images, the conflicts, the themes and plots.

I remembered the old woman and her puppets. They too had resonated. Each carried its own melody, its own song. I remembered the words of an ancient philosopher, who likened the soul to the sound of an instrument. He said that though one may cut and rend the strings, the sound continued to resonate. He said the body was like the instrument, the strings were the life of that instrument, and the melody was the soul. Every person carries their own melody, and those melodies resonate out and mingle with each other. That is what the old woman did with her puppets. She was recording the melody of each person’s soul. She said that one on a mission like mine would not return the same; that her mask of me would preserve what I was. I wondered why she needed to do that then.

It then occurred to me that other creatures and even inanimate things like rocks carry their own melodies. I wondered why the woman had not tried to capture these too. That, I suppose, is the job of the painter, perhaps a skillful sculptor, or even the poet. Had I succeeded in capturing souls in my own art? Or had I injected my own? The old woman said she could not see herself capable of doing a puppet of the

blind man. What had she seen? His harmony was so spectacular that even I, who was then deaf and blind, could see and hear it. Perhaps this was why she felt her skill was inadequate. What melody could elude her?

I contemplated these things, and allowed myself to listen to the melodies. As I grew more aware, more things revealed their sounds to me. Together they sounded like a grand orchestra, getting larger and louder every moment. At first they sounded disconnected, but as more added their tunes the symphony formed and came into perfect harmony. A rainbow formed in my mind of these melodies, then flowed into a river, and from the river down into a great ocean.

The sky became one with the ocean, so the earth was completely devoured, completely contained within this ocean-sky. And beyond this ocean-sky lay the cosmos with its vast empty spaces, and the cosmos became one with the ocean-sky, devouring everything. In the background came a sound. Some have described this sound as om, the divine sound of creation itself. But that was not all. As I passed through this cosmic melody I observed its three parts: the “oh”, the “em”, and the silence between. It was the silence I found myself in, whose melody is the ultimate shape—the ultimate reality. It was the sound of the blind man—little wonder the old woman could not portray him!

I took a single volume and went to the room where we have dharma talk. The other monks were coming for the daily session, each sitting in a lotus position and waiting the sharing of knowledge attained by one of their comrades. The Roshi sat in the front. I walked to the front of the room unhindered and the room became silent as death. I sat as they did, facing them with my book in my hands. We sat in the silence together for several minutes, then I held up the book and opened it in the middle so all could see. I closed the book spontaneously, so it could resonate, and continued to hold it up while the sound filled the room and the silence re-entered. We sat quietly in meditation as I continued to hold the book up several more minutes. I set the book down, got up and walked out as I had come.

I went to the storage building and checked my cart. It seemed in working order, so I started to put on the harness as the Roshi entered. “You are nearly there,” he said. “Thank you for coming.” I nodded my kowtow in respect and left.

I have returned to the river, where the island sits in the middle. As I write this, I can see the blind man sitting on the island by the structure I had seen before. Only now can I see that it was once a watchtower, a battlement guarding the passage up the river. What enemies did they hope to fight off from this point; those unnamed creators of this structure? Or did they build it to watch for incoming shipments? Could it be a stopping point for those travelers heading upstream? Even more curiously, how did they construct it in the midst of the rapidly flowing river? Or had the island not always been an island?

Only now do I see that the island is shaped like an eye, rounded in the west toward the river’s source, and pointing toward the ocean downstream. I smile inwardly, and I can see the blind man smiling at me across the river. He mocks me. He sees me with his all-seeing eye. I see now that my journey takes me to the island. I will use my cart as a raft to get to the island. I cannot set off straight across, or I will certainly be taken far downstream. I will go west first, and come down to the island from upstream so I do not have to fight the currents as I cross.

Chapter 6

I traveled upstream until I reached a little peninsula jutting out into the water. The water struggled with the peninsula on one side, which allowed it to be calm on the other. I saw this as an opportunity to get out into the water before having to fight the currents and risk getting smashed against a rock or protruding tree trunk. I pulled the cart into the water so it floated. I then took the wheels, axle, and harness off to lighten the load so my weight would not just sink my makeshift raft. I threw these onto the shore nearby figuring that if I need them later, I could come back for them.

The pǔ was still strapped on, so I used its protrusions as handles to grab onto while I used my feet to propel and steer. I did not realize just how heavy the pǔ was until I was half-way across and the currents were trying to pull us down. It was too late then to do anything about it, so I kept going.

As I came near the island, I steered to avoid landing too soon. The island is not large, nor is it much higher than the water. The soil, however, is rich because of the river, and the plant life is dense. I landed just short of where the currents collide on the east end of the island. I pulled my raft onto the shore and up the bank to the battlement by one of the thongs holding the pǔ. When I reached the blind man, I stopped and sat next to him, facing east as he was. There we sat at considerable length and said nothing.

"Your burden is still heavy," the blind man said to me, finally breaking the silence.

"I set it down hours ago. Are you still carrying it?" I asked in return.

The blind man laughed. "You are no longer Turner (become)."

"I am."

"You must teach me the lesson you have learned," he said with a smile.

"Have you ever seen the source of the river?" I asked.

"I am returning to there," the blind man responded. "Have you seen the source of the river?"

"I have perceived it." I laughed, for there is no singular source of a river, but the experience I had previously in the library fit the perception of the river's source.

"My journey nears its end," the blind man admitted. "You are still early into yours."

"How so?" I asked befuddled.

"You still seek PǔMa Tse?"

This had not even occurred to me. In fact, I had forgotten all about it—forgotten all about the Academy; forgotten all about my mission; forgotten all about my family; forgotten about my tragedy; forgotten my exploits. The only constants that seemed to exist in my mind anymore were the blind man, the pǔ and its cart, my often neglected journal, and the river. Everything else had become impermanent. Everything else was destroyed or simply left behind. So why should I think differently of PǔMa Tse?

"It has been so many years. How could he still be alive?"

"What makes you think PǔMa Tse was alive as you perceive being alive? Did you ever meet PǔMa Tse?"

"No," I admitted.

"Do you know how old PǔMa Tse is or would be?"

"No."

"Do you know whether PǔMa Tse was a man or a woman?"

"The thought had never occurred to me before to question that."

"Is PǔMa Tse human, a beast, an object, or just a myth?" the blind man continued.

"I assumed..."

"Aha! There it is! Surely you can see that illusion?"

Indeed, I did. I had assumed a great many things right from the start. I had trusted a great many things too. I dug around in my memories, but in no instance did I find any evidence that PǔMa Tse was anything at all.

"So PǔMa Tse was an illusion?"

"Are you an illusion?" the blind man asked. I answered with only silence. "Did you not bring books written by PǔMa Tse?" Now this I could relate to.

"Yes!"

“Does this mean that PūMa Tse wrote those books, even though the name PūMa Tse appears on them?”

“I suppose not.”

“So, whether PūMa Tse exists or not, whether PūMa Tse lives or not, you have continued your journey for nearly twenty years in search of this mysterious PūMa Tse?”

“I had forgotten all about PūMa Tse until you brought him or her up,” I corrected, or so I thought.

“If you had really forgotten all about PūMa Tse, then explain this,” the blind man said, rising and stretching his arms out in the direction of the battlement. “And, what about this?” he added, indicating the remnant of the cart and the pū.

I was clearly defeated. I have been carrying the same objectives and burdens for twenty years! I thought I had been released from this suffering when I had the revelation among the books. If these things are true, I thought, then perhaps I had used the monastery to further bury my feelings for losing my family and the Academy. Asceticism had also been an escape. My head hung low on my chest, for all that I had achieved in these twenty years had been destroyed in a matter of minutes with a few carefully selected words. “I have wasted my life,” I said, defeated.

“How can you waste a life you never had?”

Now that was something the blind man had been saying all along, so I started to piece it all together. “I heard someone once at a funeral say, ‘One living man followed by so many dead.’ Can you explain this?”

The blind man only smiled.

“Many years ago you also asked me how long I had realized I was dead. Can you explain this?”

The blind man only smiled.

“What did I miss?”

The blind man sat next to me. He then pointed east, downstream and said, “Look out there and tell me what you see.”

“I see the stream,” I said.

“No. Look further.”

“I still only see the stream. I don’t understand.”

The blind man took my hand and guided me to the other side of the island, then pointed west, upstream. “What do you see?” he demanded.

“I see the stream.”

“What else!?”

“The sun setting,” I offered. Again he dragged me to the opposite side of the island.

“What do you see?”

“The horizon.” I was beginning to guess.

“What about it?”

“The sun is not there.”

“And where will it be tomorrow?”

“It will pass by.”

“What will the sun pass by?”

“The horizon, the end of the river, the ocean.”

“Explain how that is possible,” he demanded.

“That’s easy,” I began, but before I could get out another word the blind man had struck me to the ground. I was stunned. Why had he struck me? The answer was too obvious. Of course he knew about the sun. He had struck me for my attachment to the illusion of knowledge. I laughed and said, “You are right. Not sun, not horizon, not river—mind moves.”

The blind man laughed heartily. He reached down to the ground and picked up his staff. He made a half turn and rapped the wall three times. “Goodbye wall,” he said to the wall. “Goodbye eye,” he said down to the island. Then he turned to me. “Goodbye young spirit. May your flame be as a beacon to other travelers coming up the river. I am done here.”

I smiled at him as he headed toward the west side of the island and out of my sight. I had seen no boat or raft. I heard no splash, nor heard the sound of swimming. I only know that I am now alone on this island. Why had he left going west? The currents are so strong around the island that I am reluctant to take my

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raft back across going downstream. I can hardly imagine going upstream. This leaves me with some serious questions. What exactly had he expected me to see looking upstream? What about downstream?

There seems to be some significance in the source of the river and the horizon, but I cannot quite place it. The source suggests birth, and the western horizon suggests death: the end of time. But there is no source, so there is no birth. And the water flowing to the east, toward the dawn, toward birth, itself does not perish when it hits the ocean. It is one, and its flow without birth or death is eternity.

The blind man is right. I still have attachments. I am still attached to knowledge. I am still attached to my sufferings. I am still attached to my self and what I believe to be my substance. Yet these attachments are exactly what block me from living. These attachments are exactly the source of my greed, my illusions, and ultimately my suffering. As a symbol of my realization, I untied the pǔ on the remnant of my cart. I then managed to wrap my arms around it and lifted it. As I had been warned twenty years ago, I found this block of wood to be enormously heavy. I got it down to the edge of the island, where my feet started to stick in the mud, so I lost my sandals. When I got as far out as I had the strength to go, about waist-deep, I dropped it. I really expected it to float away, but what happened did not altogether surprise me: it sunk to the bottom and out of sight.

Now, as I sit here writing in this journal, I have realized that it too is an attachment. I finish what I have to say only for the sake of those who could stand to learn from it. It must go in its box and follow its own path.

Chapter 8

I know not where to begin, for I am but a simple person. Some twenty years ago my father left on a mission and never returned. Last week we found a document, which the old woman Shui asked me to write a closing chapter for. I protested, but she insisted that only my mother or I could write this. My mother is justifiably indisposed, so the duty has fallen upon me. Shui advised me to just write as if I were talking to someone, so if I seem a bit informal or improper, I apologize.

It seems this document is the journal of my father. Having read it, I believe this to be true. Over these past twenty years, I have many times gone and read what he had left behind of his journal. I was filled with sorrow and often hate for this man who had abandoned us. I did not hate him for leaving us without means, for the Academy has given us a most stately living. I hated him for not being there, and so did my mother. I hated him for my mother's loneliness, and the sadness that gripped her when she feared the worst. That sadness always followed a period of optimism—when for no other reason than perhaps self-defense—she believed he would come back.

As time wore on, he grew to be a hero for me. The teachers at the Academy assured me of the significance of his mission, and that his mission could take a very long time. They never did say how long. It always seemed like he would return tomorrow. Tomorrow never seemed to come, and when uncertainty remains for such a long time the hope evaporates. Though I needed him as an adolescent, my youth made it easy for me to overcome his absence. My mother did not have that luxury. Every year I have feared she would die from her anguish. To her, his loss was a living death without the needed closure of a funeral.

I married ten years ago. I now have three children. My husband is of humble means, and our home is not elaborate. The Academy watches over us though and will not allow us to go without. My mother still lives in the nice house we were moved into when my father left. This house is nothing like my father had suspected. It is not humble, yet not overly lavish, and definitely nowhere near the temple. In fact, we have to go out of our way to go to the Academy. The servants provided everything, and if ever we needed or wanted anything, it was given to us. I could not have asked for better opportunities as a child than they provided for me, and they are generous enough to offer it to my children. My husband and I, though, have too much pride, so we ask for nothing and try to hide our needs and desires from our benefactors. It is obvious that doors open for us that probably would not have, without the Academy.

This brings me to the matter of the journal. The twenty-year flood had just subsided when I took my children out to the river for an afternoon outing. All the children love to play in the silt left by the river when it overflows. It is great for building castles, and the feel of the silt squishing up between one's toes is fun too. As they played, I happened to notice a little wooden box caught in the weeds along the bank. I untangled the box from the weeds and brought it to my dry refuge, where I began to read it as the children continued playing.

At first it was difficult to follow, because it picked up in the middle of the second chapter, after the funeral, so I missed the connection with my father. As I read on, though, the names and events started to cue me, particularly the old woman. While I was still young, my mother and I happened upon an old woman in the market. This woman stopped when she saw me and immediately begged my mother for us to follow her. She insisted that she had something special for our family.

Perhaps it was just curiosity, or maybe my mother was bored, but we agreed to follow. The woman took us to an inn where she had stored the wares she brought to sell at the market. On this day she had been shopping rather than selling. She dug through her packages and pulled out a puppet, which she handed to me. I nearly dropped it with shock, for it looked exactly like my father, and looked very much alive. My mother tried to pay the old woman, but the old woman insisted that her only purpose in carrying it was to give it to us, and she did.

Then there was the story of the merchant, Palaver, and his deceit of my father. I was overwhelmed with guilt for all the times my mother and I had been mad at my father for leaving and not returning. Clearly my father had no intent to abandon us, and had mourned and suffered many years from his belief in our deaths. Palaver had not lied when he admitted to his selfishness. My father was simply too trusting to

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believe someone could be so selfish and, at the same time, so bold as to state it only moments before such a monumental lie.

I must honestly say, though my education was certainly complete with the help of the Academy, that most of the rest of the text was beyond me. I could certainly read and enjoy it, but I knew there was a depth I had not grasped. I feared what the text may do to my mother, so I decided to wait with showing it to her. I knew the Academy would be greatly interested in my finding, so I took it to the school immediately, with many hopes. Of course I hoped they could help me get my father back or get news of him. More realistically, I hoped they could help me grasp the depths of the materials, appreciate his legacy, and provide guidance on how to make my mother aware of the news without shocking her to death.

Shui graciously gave me an audience. I outlined my experience and briefed her on the journal and its accompanying poem. She listened attentively and seemed to be unmoved. She then asked me, "What do you want?"

For a moment I was shocked with dismay. Surely she did not think I had come to profit from this? Then it occurred to me that perhaps she was asking a deeper question, so I answered at another level. "I want my father back."

"Not possible," she said with most certain finality. She clearly knew something.

"What do you know then?"

"Less than you, rest assured," Shui answered.

"Why do you say that?"

"You have read these materials written by your father—or not your father. I have not. I cannot help you, but you can help yourself."

"What can I do?" I begged, hoping for a simple solution.

"First, you must document as your father did before you," Shui began.

"No way. I am not going on another journey like my father and end up abandoning my children!"

"I did not say you had to. Follow me, and do not forget to document what you learn, for what you write will teach us all." Shui led me into the garden in the middle of the Academy compound. I had been there many times, but this time she took me to the tearoom on top of the lake. Rarely had I been there. She slid the door aside and motioned me in. I bowed low, even bending my knees to fit in. Had it been so low before, or had I just grown?

After crossing the threshold, I straightened a little but remained bent. I could see, in the middle of the room, the most remarkable-looking piece of wood that looked like a flame with a stone Buddha in the middle. I gasped because I had never seen it before, but it matched the description I had read in my father's manuscripts. If he had dumped it in the river before the flood, then the flood had brought it back. I heard Shui close the door behind me and leave. I moved toward the pū and sat before it, like an insect drawn to light.

"How did you make it?" I asked the pū, as if it could answer.

"The fool achieves the ultimate objective without effort," a voice said behind me. Fear gripped my heart. Did I dare turn? What would I see if I did? Could it be my father, or perhaps someone else? Worse: could it be the workings of my own imagination playing tricks on me?

"And what is that objective?" I asked, still not turning my head.

"Some think pū. Some think ma. Some think om. The fool goes blindly, unthinking."

"Are you PūMa Tse?" I could not believe I had stooped to asking the same question as my father before me. Surely PūMa Tse is dead, I thought.

"I am." Aha! The trick revealed, just as in the journal. I need not follow that path to its obvious conclusion and be made that much a fool. I thought long and hard about my next question. There had to be a way to discover if this were my father without sounding like I sought anything more than understanding. I decided to ask about something that I found confusing in the journal. Only my father could answer if I asked correctly.

"What was wrong with the enlightenment in the library?"

"A degree only. Not total awakening."

"How so? How can I see this from the script?" There was silence. I thought for a moment then realized my error. "Besides the fact that it was put into words, how can I tell from the script?"

"A child flaunts what it has learned for attention."

“You mean to say that had this been total awakening, then the exhibition at the dharma talk would not have happened?” Silence again. To me this seemed evidence enough to validate the voice as my father’s. I was still afraid to turn, for the old woman had said he would not return the same. Then doubt returned, for would not the master sense the harmony of the story from my questions? Time to try another tactic.

“Did you arrive with the flood?”

“I,” the voice emphasized, “never returned.” I had to think about this answer. I decided to consult with one of the teachers before proceeding. I was certain this had grown deeper than I was acknowledging. I got up and backed out the way I had come, so I would not accidentally gaze on the face of the voice. Outside the tearoom, I tracked down Shui and told her about the conversation.

“Watch out for ego questions,” she cautioned. “The answer affirms your question and also denies it. From the Master’s perspective, the answer means the ego remained behind. It also means the Master never left, or that the absence was perhaps an illusion.”

So I returned to the tearoom and sat before the pū again without looking in the direction of the voice. “What should I tell my mother?” I felt a hand gently touch my shoulder, and I felt the energy of the touch run through my whole body. Tears came to my eyes, but I cannot describe how I felt. It was as if the touch were drawing out all the sorrow, all the pain. The touch seemed to say, “Tell her your father loves both of you and the children.”

“My father thought we were dead.” I said under my breath, as if in response. “What would make him feel we are alive to love?”

“One can lie to a man and he will believe. One cannot lie to the river. Do you want the truth?” I nodded in affirmation. “You may look now,” he offered.

I turned my head and looked up. There was a likeness to my father, but it was different. It was nothing like the puppet my mother kept. The puppet was exactly as I remembered my father. What stood before me defied everything. No one stood up straight in this tearoom, but he did. “Come,” he beckoned. I reached to my shoulder, took his hand, and stood to look into his eyes. The power of the touch intensified.

These were not normal eyes. Their shape smiled at me. I felt myself relax and the tears stopped. When you look into a person’s eyes, you see the irises and pupils moving, scanning and searching. These eyes did not search, as if they were dead, but they weren’t. They seemed to penetrate me, see through me. I looked deep into those eyes.

As I looked into his eyes an amazing thing happened. The black pupils were no longer black—they became empty like a starless midnight sky. Then I could see the stars emerging, thickening, moving, flowing. The stars became the faces of Palaver, the old woman, the blind man, my mother, and countless others. How I knew all of them, I cannot say.

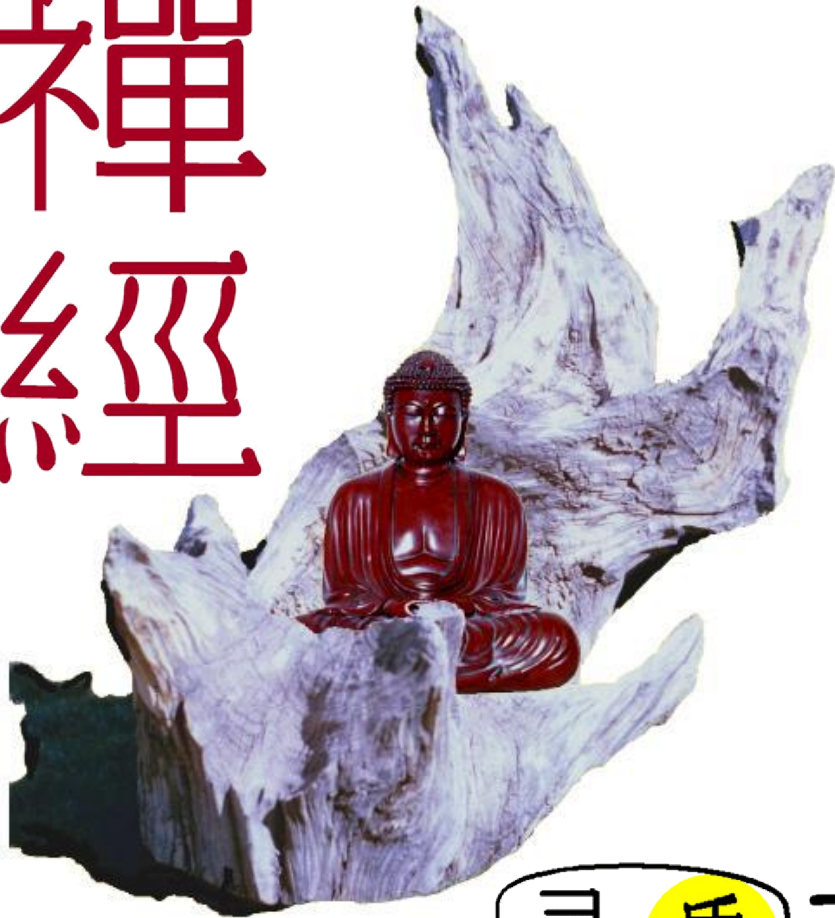
I saw newborn babies grow, mature, grow old, and die. These lives flowed into a stream, and the stream became a river, and the river began to flood its banks. Upon this river I saw something floating. It looked like an island at first; an island shaped like an eye. On the island was a man sitting in eternal meditation. This was not a meditation with a beginning or an ending. How I could tell, again I cannot say.

The flood overwhelmed, and the island dissolved under the man, but the man floated on anyway, seemingly unaffected. The currents of the river leaped up around him like flames, but these flames could not touch him or impede him. Finally they surrendered, solidified and bore the man out into the ocean. The ocean grew and grew, until it seemed to consume everything. Then the image began to dissolve, fading into the emptiness. The emptiness had form, and the form it had taken was in the shape of a crying infant, cradled in the solidified tongues of the flame.

The enchantment so filled me; my uninflected utterance seemed to escape me of its own accord and did not seem my own. The infant stopped crying and smiled in response to the acknowledgement—I could not deny the recognition of my experience: “PūMa Tse.”

Cha'n Ching
(Meditation Classic)

禪經



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樸麻子
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Meditation Begins

Poet meditated before a wall.
A monk stopped and watched.
"Are you enlightened," the monk asked.
Poet looked up, "The sun shines..."

5 Poet meditated before a wall.
A monk stopped and watched.
"Are you enlightened," the monk asked.
Poet looked up, "The wall is..."

Poet meditated before a wall.
10 A monk stopped and watched.
"Are you enlightened," the monk asked.
Poet looked up, "My cushion is not..."

Poet meditated before a wall.
A monk stopped and watched.
15 "Are you enlightened," the monk asked.
Poet got up and left.

Poet came to another wall
setting the zafu cushion down.
Then Poet sat upon the cushion
20 and meditated at the corner.

Falling Asleep

Heart slows—
mind and spirit wander

Eyes move
in restless slumber

25 Breath deepens
as body relaxes

First Dream (Captain & Murderer)

On the high seas they sailed
slowly working their way east.
Upon her bow he stood
30 winds blowing his hair from the west.

Through the books she frantically searched
to unlock the secret mysteries of his dreams.
He, she knew since she had to health nursed
that the charges of his arrest were not right as seems.

35 The smell of the sea upon the air
the flowers blooming in the garden
could not compare with her fragrant hair
or the succulent lips above her chin.

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40 A smile lit upon his face,
though the crew seemed withdrawn,
his thoughts were of her loving embrace
whom he hoped to see again before long.

45 There it was on yellowed parchment—
With amnesia, identity may be lost, but
that dreams force self to become evident
and true nature is not extracted with a cut.

50 The weather was clear,
the way had been rough, but now
the wind made it easy to steer
so in peace he could leave the bow.

Search as she may, with all her might
No ship, no captain, no description matched—
she persisted anyway for many a night,
whilst in a cage they kept him latched.

55 He went below to rest and relive
dreams of shore-side passions
of tenderness only his mind could give,
and forget the depleted rations.

60 In great dismay she turned away
to the mystical masters who might reveal.
A little more he told her each day,
approaching an ending waking would conceal.

65 And as he slept upon his bed
dreaming of green meadows
the crew decided they wanted his head
Ah, but for want of the gallows!

70 Destined was he for condemnation
as evidence charged him time after time.
After the trial was sure execution
though he knew not of the accused crime.

Eyes stop
startled waken-ness

Mind resettles
spirit abates

75 Breath—body
remain unmoved

Lowest and greatest
Mother of all—

Waking

80 Teach me the secret
what is your magic?

Consider this
then to yourself
be mother—

Tea?

85 The guest said,
"I like this
tea set."

"Take the set..."
The host offered,
"but leave your desires."

90 "Without desire,"
the guest retorted,
"I wouldn't take the set!"

"If you leave both,"
added the host,
"you are Buddha."

95 Buddhahood is attainable?
Poet inquired

100 One cannot attain
what is already attained—
One must give

Attain by not seeking
give attainment
then give giving

105 Poet filled with silence
the riddle lingered
then the wall spoke:

Atlas

The Titan's feet buried
in Earth's reality

110 Upon his shoulders
the Heavens rest

Barely balanced
by his might alone

Without his strength
chaos befalls

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115 Resigned in his suffrage
his pain immeasurable

He acts from love
his choice altruistic

120 Seemingly impervious
his only vulnerability—

unbalance the invisible
burden he bears

An accident once—
the second unforgivable.

125 Such is your gift,
holding to middle
to separate and bind.

Help me to sift
the heart of this riddle

130 rest my querisome mind.

Persistent suffering
is the jealous Tao
humbling its subjects

135 Compete with Tao—
giving from pity,
imbalance multiplies suffering

Incidental suffering—
temporary errors of humanity
command sympathy

140 Remain anonymous—
with humanitarian gifts
never await praise

145 Never give selfishly—
not for personal gain
not for others' desires

Give to honor—
without expectation
without purpose

150 Gifts with exchangeable value
deprive the weak
enrich the strong

Giving

- Encourage self-sufficiency
never dependency
nor subjugation
- 155 Give mindfully
what is needed
by the recipient
- 160 Be thankful
giving is an honor
for the able
- In giving seek balance—
unbalanced gifts
brew animosity
- 165 Assume right giving—
never dishonor the giver
request needs for self-sufficiency
- Unrighteous gifts
no matter the temptation
must be returned

Wandering Mind

- 170 Poet sat
as one with wall
mind gusting
- 175 Wall shaped
curving, thinning
eyes formed
- Wall and Poet
merge into one
—indistinct
- 180 A leaf on the wind
blowing weightlessly
searching for ideas
- Gust dissipates
leaf settles—
mind's breeze stops
- 185 Emptiness forms
Poet apprehends
the path appears:

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Poetry

190 Blank page
without lines
without holes

no edges or shape
no scribbles or scrawls
no language or thought—

195 Dry pen
empty quill
broken lead

without shaft or tip
without mark or measure
without line or dot—

200 Poet poised
without sensing
without soul

205 not moving nor still
sitting, standing, nor laying
speaking, gesturing, nor writing—

Exquisite poem
without words
ideas, feelings

210 page writes on Poet
pen invests its soul
Poet hosts poem—

In groups they stare out
red and yellow eyes—
lain flat among the petals

215 Black body stiffened
unmoving in the cold—
dead yet living

220 Cool spring morning
warms to afternoon—
sweet fragrant breeze

Dew turns to steam
as the face blooms—
capturing the light of love

Flying Again

225 Legs stretch, feeling
antennae sense again—
sniffing passion's aroma

Up and down slowly
waving faster and faster—
the eyes look around

230 Wind captures
lifting higher and higher—
the garden pulls away

Poet admires the palace
adoring its sweet lily—
235 no other compares

Second Dream (The Trial)

Consciousness waned
intuition spread uncontained
the dream it had sustained
a greater depth attained—

240 They fell upon him, who was free of sin
with a blow to his head they awoke their lord
dragging him bound under the sun
and setting a plank on the starboard.

245 Counsel for the defendant pleaded the Court
to dismiss need for jury, the charge was affirmed:
the action of the body, mind and soul did not consort
and to this their evidence was concerned.

250 The defendant had no knowledge of the act
nor of personal identity, during or prior the event.
Experts proceeded to support this fact
and to this only was the judge's ear lent.

255 The Prosecutor for justice then argued
the atrocity of the murder outraged the public—
so for the full penalty of law he sued
that condemnation not technicality should stick.

When he awoke he did not know
who he was, or what disaster would befall—
but then he heard the sound of a crow
and the force at his back that would not stall.

260 The arguments closed, the court was cleared
and to her chambers the Judge retired
to clear her mind and see justice not besmeared
and in her slumber her subconscious so transpired:

- 265 Over the souls of the dead, at the gates they judged—
 officiated at their middle by Immanuel Kant,
 Lao Tse, Buddha, Confucius, and Socrates presided
 debating concepts of sin, soul, crime and punishment.
- 270 “A universal rule we seek for final judgment,”
 Kant began, stating the ultimate utility,
 “to assure both fair reward and punishment
 and among the living teach non-hostility.”
- 275 “Nature follows its own course,”
 argued Lao, “no rule can govern—
 action and inaction share their source
 to such should our judgment concern.”
- 280 “The source may be found within,”
 Buddha retorted, “it is transient—
 like water in tubs held by a rocking bin
 the seeker must find where it went—
- 285 “But the water and this bin are illusion—
 seeking and grasping are the seeker’s suffering.
 Judgment distracts right concentration—
 self becomes lost in dualistic debating.”
- 290 “In the ranks of order, sin is the ultimate crime,”
 Confucius added, “whose victim is the self—
 Punishment shall mete at an appropriate time
 then the order comes in balance with oneself.
- 295 “Laws are the rituals of human society—
 Here we men at our best must trust fate
 and thereby we honor them with our piety.
 Like attracts like. What more is to state?”
- 300 “By these laws man lives and dies—
 When self is forsaken—no soul within,”
 Socrates added, “actions are meaningless as lies—
 If action is righteous or selfless, is there also sin?”
- 300 “In the cave the soul develops
 limited to the six perceptions
 belief of truth and morality envelopes—
 Freed they find their final destinations.”
- 300 “The arguments before the Court are incontrovertible—
 the path of our judgment is clear,” Kant concluded.
 “Universal justice and utility are not by us judge-able—
 Throw open the gates—they by themselves shall be guided.”

305 Forced down the plank to reap what he did sow...
 In his heart, he knew this was his call
 that his destiny was far below
 as he slipped off and fought the final fall.

310 In the courtroom they sat in wait—
 Counsel and accused anxiety filled
 the judgment to fill uncertain fate—
 and as she spoke the silence stilled

315 “By technicality of law I shall permit,”
 she decreed, “our justice does not fit
 for upon this case we cannot sit—
 Our conscious cleared, we must acquit.”

Among the Clouds

Winds soar higher
 garden fades further
 clouds grow nearer

320 Soft voices call
 rising from the mists
 Poet draws closer

Their song enchanting
 the eyes haze, fading
 wings, body—dissolve

325 Souls on mind's path
 evaporating, wafting
 condensing, precipitating

330 between worlds
 trapped in a phase
 past and future

The lyrics of furies
 penetrating, numinous
 epics the listener feels

Samsara

335 With birth begins greed—
 spirit of love and life
 pain and illusions achieve

The cycle passed on—
 joy fills the parents
 the grandparents more

340 Advice ignored—
 yet given anyway
 parental duties filled

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- 345 Old paths disregarded—
with tears and blood
the stray follows anyway
- Peace swaggers—
love harvests hate
war grows compassion
- 350 Calamity raises greatness—
ignorance becomes knowledge
thought ensnares
- Yet seasons come—
time's river flows
coming, going, staying
- 355 All, one, none—
not judging, simply being
acting without acting
- 360 Parents die—
children die, then grandchildren
grand order of happiness
- Mourn the survivors—
the burden of suffering
weighs not on the dead

Riding the Rainbow

- 365 Through the clouds came a luminescence
heat of passion arced, spanning sky of mind
the colors separated from red through violet
- The hottest level burned with infatuation—
laying on beds of raspberries and strawberries
beautiful men braided roses in each others hair—
- 370 Seas of orange and yellow followed—
small dangling flowers—swaying in the wind
the robes of an undecided Sangha of seekers—
- Then came broad green rolling hills
littered with couples making love
375 as their children rolled about and giggled—
- Fountains of deep blue
flowing and misting into indigo
then reconciling, cooling
- 380 In velvet pools swam the content—
each solitary—not seeking or suffering
each more beautiful than the others—

385 In the bliss
of life unexamined—
reverence of divinity
brings meaning enough.

In the illusion
of a greedy life—
ego denies suffering
meaning is blind.

390 In the hunger
for life's knowledge—
mind blocks intuition
illusion becomes meaning.

395 In the thirst
for materialism—
wealth becomes ego
meaning becomes suffering.

400 Among the learned
living commonly—
to love and be loved
is insightful meaning.

405 The master's love
without object or measure—
without self or other
meaning is

Precipitating

With cool came solidity
as Poet reformed
a droplet in the wind

410 Pushed up
then angled
spectrum pouring in

Colors merged
Mother pulled
as the drop grew

415 Mixed company
alone yet together
seeking, absorbing

420 Chubby little faces
fattening, growing
falling into the unknown

Cha'n Ching

Sky ionized
sweet bouquet
birth resonance

425 Colder, harder
learning, acquiring
faster and faster

Splat!

430 Drops gathered
a milieu of faces
blending, consorting

Sticking together
yet moving: up—down
side to side

435 Civilization cradled
life flourishing
yet dissolving

Deeper, wider
waves expanded
shores reaching

440 Earth threw dust
meddling, muddying
confusing

445 Bubbles formed
rising defiantly
struggling to escape

As water widened
exploring its bounds—
inquiries followed

450 In a dim room the Seeker sat
while the psychic shuffled her cards
hair barely showing under her green hat
her aprons flowing like the old bards.

455 “Select a card,” the Maga started.
”Look at it, lay it down but grant me no view.”
The Seeker obeyed, The Lovers he randomly pulled
and she continued—“This Significator represents you.”

The Pond

Third Dream (The Reading)

She turned over the first card: The Fool—
 "This covers you—you seek not knowing what for."
 Setting this on The Lovers with such cool
 460 she turned the second: The Emperor—

 Rotating and setting the card: "Knowledge is your obstacle."
 A blank she turned and set above. "This crowns you.
 Ah, but such a journey, to reveal may be a greater debacle!
 Let us see the rest first, and see where you wander to."

 465 With this she laid out the rest, little speaking:
 The Hermit below—"This reality you build from"
 To one side she turned another, revealing
 The Zenith—"And this: passion overcome."

 On the other side she turned again
 470 Great Works—"This shall soon come."
 Close to her right The Wheel of Fortune—
 "Your uncertainty blocks wisdom."

 Above that, The Hanged Man, then
 Temperance, finally with a shudder, The Universe.
 475 "An outcast by some cosmic selection
 perhaps the subconscious knows this verse?"

 Then the Seeker spoke, "In my dreams..."
 "But say no more," she warned, blanching,
 "for some greatness comes, or so it seems.
 480 Unprecedented! Such a reading!"

 "Tell me more," the Seeker implored.
 "Read for yourself wretched sage,
 such a game with me you have staged!"
 And she stormed away in quite a rage.

The Swamp

485 Mud of knowledge
 thickening, bloating—
 water settled

 Some landed gently
 floating buddhas
 490 taking the lotus way

 Slowly they passed
 smoothly, weightless
 unattached

 Some took root
 495 their trumpets calling
 beckoning the unsuspecting

Cha'n Ching

Those who ventured in
resisting the ways
sank, succumbed

500 Souls trapped
caught by desire
illusions held

Others became passionate
karma evaporating
505 dry deaths rising

Wandering back
rejoining sky
beginning again

510 A sword clove the mist
and a lion appeared
half aflame, flying—

Manjusri, bodhisattva of meditation
and supreme wisdom
rode upon him, exorcizing illusion

515 Self revealed unclouded
his aura preceded him—
a sublime introduction.

This path of yours,
Poet began,
520 how came you upon it?

First came Tao-sheng
whose noise became Zen
Then came Bodhidharma
the popular thief of Zen.

525 Did not Bodhidharma achieve?
What of his meditation?
Was he a total failure?

530 Bodhidharma sat before a wall
for nine contemplative years.
The contest he lost—
his cushion was enlightened.

His zazen guides many.
Did he offer nothing else?
What of the arts?

Mondo with Manjusri

The Proselytizer

Meditation

- 535 Bodhidharma taught karate
to Shaolin monks.
Enlightenment cannot be caught
in a clenched fist. **Karate**
- 540 Is there no rightful place
for love, for passion—
for hate and war?

Te: the vicarious power—
of nature
of virtue. **Te**
- 545 Are there boundaries?
How does one choose
the passion for the moment?
- 550 The Way without way—
nature, society
man, beast, plant;
all things, one, none. **Tao**
- What of physical life?
Has it substance?
- 555 The four corners—
six perceptions,
Ten thousand things—
embodying beginning and ending,
Formless as Pū. **Earth**
- What of death?
- 560 Beyond, but near—
sky, but not sky.
Not to rise up to;
Not to lower to. **T'ien**
- 565 Opposite but same.
Powerful yet apathetic.
- Guide me to the source,
the Poet requested,
of your endless wisdom.
- 570 I started at the school of fantasy
and graduated with honors there. **Learning Zen**
So I went to the school of reality
and graduated with honors there too.
Then I went to the school of Zen
and they kicked me out.

Cha'n Ching

575 I started at the school of fantasy
and failed there.
So I went to the school of reality
and failed there too.
Then I went to the school of Zen.
580 No one could question my authority.

First you learned,
then you unlearned.
Is ignorance the path?

585 Bodhidharma found no merit when
Wudi built temples, ordained monks,
had scriptures translated and taught—
samsara thrives on ignorance.

Ignorance

How does one apprehend,
oh venerable one,
590 what cannot be learned?

For forty-five years Buddha taught
He could not be quieted.
Holding up a flower wordlessly
He broke his noisy silence.

Transmission

595 Silence bound them a moment
as Poet contemplated—

Maya, the great illusion
filled the Poet's brow—

600 You speak nonsense,
the Poet laughed—

Manjusri answered:

Slap

When the best hears of Tao
with greatest effort he follows it.

605 When the average hears of Tao
he thinks of it occasionally.

When the fool hears of Tao
he laughs out loud.

Seeking out of body
you are accomplished

610 Yet you laugh as a fool
so explain this...

Slap!

Manjusri then laughed
as he rode away—
615 Poet remained stunned

Poet became slap
mind clearing
body fading

620 Rising in the swamp
floating, weightless—
then flowing

The River Atman

Some call this life
others call this soul

625 Some think this is atman
others think this is Buddha

I think—
I do not think
not I—
river—
630 this—
therefore...

What?
Therefore what?

635 No what.
"What" is meaning

meaning is judgment
judgment is illusion—maya

If so, why flow?

640 No why.
"Why" is meaning

And the flow?

Flow is...

645 Flow means destiny—
objectives through space
time beginning and ending...

Continuity, one-ness
no time yet always
all objectives yet none

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To where?
650 From where?

Where means purpose—
direction—meaning

You have substance
require space...

655 Illusions...

I think therefore
you are

You think
therefore...

660 I am?

"I" is an illusion
"am" is an illusion
therefore...

Therefore?

665 ...illusion supreme

Illusion?

Reality

Reality is illusion...

670 Reality is
illusion is
this is—
that is
therefore...

675 Reality is reality,
illusion is illusion
sustaining each other?

"is" is

680 Growing out from the core
currents shaping, forming—
containing the container

One with cosmos
effecting and affected
yet unattached

685 Without belief or truth
questions or answers
being or not being

Sound between notes
the unheard felt
the unseen become

690 Tides rising, lowering—
waves reaching, touching
holding then retracting

695 Sky and earth—
captured and returned
free but inseparable

Breath fills sky
condenses, precipitates
circulates back

700 Gas, liquid, solid
all same—all one
substance-less substance

Permanent impermanence
absorbing, exuding
life, death, birth

705 Passion—desire
living—feeling
without attaching

710 Rising up
by pushing down
action without action

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The eyes close
the lids dissipate
as the Eye opens

715 Conscious sleeping
dreaming emptiness
awareness holds

Tautology solved—
the paradox loses duality
therefore...

720 Meditating before a wall—
A monk stopped and watched.
"Are you enlightened," the monk asked.
Looking up, "Find your own wall!"

725 Rising—
zafu abandoned
not forsaken

Stopping at a pool
then looking in, smiling—
the reflection did not notice

The Last Dream

The Awakening

Commentary

“The wise do not reveal all they know.”

Introduction

While the *Ch'an Ching* is easy for anyone to read, it is also remarkably deep with innumerable subtleties deserving academic attention. We must note that in order to “get” the full impact, one must eventually discard the academic knowledge contained in these notes and simply allow the poem to occur. Before one can discard, though, one must thoroughly understand. As the quote above indicates, this commentary cannot be complete. Even where it seems to be complete, the reader should be cautioned to seek what is not here, what they themselves feel while reading. Eventually, after discarding the commentary, readers must also discard the poem and find their own path, as the poem insists must be done. Meanwhile, we must deal with analysis to build the deeper understanding to the point where the reader is ready to pursue their own meditation and begin their own quest.

This commentary examines a variety of qualities and levels contained within the *Ch'an Ching*. We will examine the surface of the poem, as if we were unable to read it and only able to observe its shape. We will examine its style, in comparison to its companions and the *Tao Te Ching*. We will then consider the general story, and how all the pieces fit together. Then, for your convenience, we will examine the poem by line numbers, ranging from large passages down to single lines. In this more critical examination we will define specific terms and enhance the text, often offering ideas to help the reader fill the voids.

A Look at the Surface

The *Ch'an Ching* is a unique reading experience. We must first note that the *Ch'an Ching* is a singular continuous poem of 3028 words (not counting outline titles) in 729 lines. There are no real chapters or breaks, though there are clear groups of lines and stanzas that belong together. Without the outline titles these groups are obvious by changes in both style and content. Major outline levels begin at the top of a new page for ease of readability and to provide empty spaces for readers to fill for themselves, as a work of art requires. Major outline levels are also labeled to the right of the first line. In some instances there are outline levels within a major outline level (e.g. **Mondo with Manjusri**). These secondary levels are indented and labeled to the right of the first line. Each outline heading may be read as a separate poem. Optimally, the reader should start at line 1 and read through to line 729.

Along with the outline titles and page breaks we observe distinct indentation levels. What belongs to the main body of the poem is flush with the left margin. The next indentation level is dedicated to information secondary to the main poem, such as the main part of a dream (**First Dream**) or the dialog of another character (end part of **Waking**). We note that the **First Dream** begins at a third indentation level, indicating the stanza is actually a subset of the main part of the dream (a dream within the dream). There are only three indentation levels, and we can only speculate about why. There are other indentations that appear in dialogs after the first line of a stanza. These appear to exist strictly for metrical purposes and do not themselves seem to have any meaning. Likewise, the outline titles and breaks are artificial, so we should not attribute any meaning to them either.

The *Ch'an Ching* is the third book of the *Sān Ching* (Three Classics). When together in one volume these appear in reverse order of age. The companions, as they follow in a single volume, are the *LǐJiě Ching* (Classic of Knowledge; 5558 words) and *rūnLǐ Ching* (Classic of Ethic; 3785 words).

Overall

The student of Asian thought may look at the subtitle and think, “Why bother?” Ch'an is such a common word to the student of Asian thought; we tend to take for granted that our group is a small minority. The majority is more familiar (superficially mind you) with the Japanese term: ZEN.

While I was a student at the university, I decided to write a textbook introducing Zen to university students. Shortly thereafter I took a course on religions of China and Japan. I found my perspective so different that I often scoffed the materials openly, such as commenting on a *Tao Te Ching* commentator

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that he could not have read the book and reached the conclusions he did. Likewise, when I saw the final exam I thought I was doomed to another semester of school and a black eye to my nearly perfect GPA. I must commend the instructor for having the insight to see my perspective. One of my favorite questions asked the students to write briefly about three insignificant Zennists, to which I responded in a Haiku poem plainly stating they had spoken too much. I think the nail in the coffin was the last question: Describe Zen. My response: Have a merry Christmas!

You may wonder how someone could seemingly fail so badly and consider themselves an authority before, during, and after that class. From a Western perspective my answers were preposterous. From an Eastern perspective my answers were perfect. I suspect the professor gave me the benefit of doubt, probably helped by my book and some of the articles I had recently written. I passed.

The moral of my little story is this: meditation is not about words, and words cannot substitute for meditation. A wide variety of literature and schools exist to help you learn (as opposed to teaching you) the arts of meditation. During certain stages of such learning, you may use external objects to help guide you, such as PūMa Tse's *LǐJiě Ching*. If doing meditation is what you want, that book is ideal for you. This *Ch'an Ching* also offers some useful images, but such is not its intent.

If you seek guidance in personal conduct many popular works are available for the religion or civic system of your choice. Works that fill this with attachment only to humanity as a whole, and not a civic or religious group, would include: *The Analects of Confucius*, *The Dharma*, and *The rǔnLǐ Ching*. Again, this *Ch'an Ching* will offer some useful points, but such is not the intent.

Like Lao Tse, PūMa Tse enjoys teasing the mind with images. Be cautious with either author about issues of cosmology. Neither of these authors means a word of what they say in cosmology. They mean what they are alluding to: the processes. They both use creative imagery to illustrate and accentuate these processes so the audience can comprehend. Neither means to provide cosmogonic myths any more than Socrates did when he told his Allegory of the Cave. The stories and vivid imagery help deliver simultaneous messages with the same words, and retain audience attention. Herein lay the true beauty of poetry: telling many stories simultaneously with the same short list of words, and burying in them untold layers of beauty and meaning for the audience to install and discover for themselves. For this reason, the *Ch'an Ching* deserves its name, though rightly the same could apply to many other works for this reason.

The Story

Upon opening this book one notices a significant difference with PūMa Tse's other works. Rather than separate poems, this is a continuous poem outlining a profound meditative experience. It is the adventure of one person, whom we know only as the Poet. The Poet is an androgynous character, sometimes more masculine, and sometimes more feminine, but always only the Poet.

Book-length epic poetry, like prose narratives, typically contain breaks, like chapters. The *Ch'an Ching* has no breaks. There are many places where style and content signify a break, and when what follows can stand alone, a title appears to the right for ease of reference. Some of these stand-alone poems are themselves contained within another poem. This is like reading Shakespeare and finding a play within a play, but here they are poems within poems. In the end, there is really only one poem, and all others are contained within that poem. This symbolizes unity and single-pointedness. An interesting meditation on this would consider what is the poem and what is a poem within the poem. The answer itself escapes words. Along with the poems within the poem, we also see meditations and whole lives lived within the meditation. This shows degrees of seeking, of enlightenment, of Samsara (the cosmic cycle of life, death, rebirth).

The poem straddles concrete imagery and abstract philosophy, sometimes going into hardcore philosophy, yet always returning to concrete imagery that contains even more profound philosophical meanings. In this respect, PūMa Tse combines the strategies of the *rǔnLǐ Ching* and *LǐJiě Ching*. Like the original text of the *Tao Te Ching*, the text is continuous, yet the outline levels are reminiscent of the *rǔnLǐ Ching* and *LǐJiě Ching*. One cannot imagine, however, dividing at these points, as it would break the entire continuity.

The story begins with sometimes confusing imagery, signifying the illusions of the seeker and inspiring the adventure. The Poet encounters many teachers as personifications or even specific characters. Some speak in riddles (Earth), some provide lessons of general wisdom (the Wall, the Clouds, the Rainbow), while others impart the essences of their lives (the Wall, the Swamp, the River Atman). The Poet also gets

answers from the inner self (e.g. poetry as the means), who can also be considered a character or personification.

It is through this complex process the Poet travels seeking “enlightenment.” While the Poet learns much from each encounter, obstacles threaten the journey, forcing the Poet to overcome personal attachments to feelings, knowledge and mind, physical being, spirit, and soul. The early personifications steer the Poet toward knowledge and understanding. Later, Manjusri forces the seeker to question the substance of the meditation, of knowledge, and of physical and spiritual reality. This befits Manjusri, who is the bodhisattva (saint) whose prime directive is overcoming illusion. The Swamp helps teach the Poet not to struggle, enabling apprehension by not to seeking. We know the Poet has overcome the obstacle of seeking because the Poet stops asking questions for the sake of seeking guidance, they simply fit the conversation. The river becomes an inescapable necessity, it is an anti-personification, stripping the Poet of self, of ego. The Poet quickly flows with the river into Brahma. This final encounter, with the Ocean of Brahma, is the final enlightenment: Buddhahood.

Finally the Poet is returned to the beginning as a living Buddha. As the meditation began, the Poet appeared enlightened in the responses to the monks questioning the Poet’s meditation and enlightenment. These monks are also seekers, lost and seeking a guide. It appears, on the surface, that the Poet is enlightened, but the meditation shows that the Poet was only primed for enlightenment, perhaps even a “master” on a human level. The Poet is blocked by knowledge from studying the paths and teachings of “masters.” When the Poet recovers, another seeker comes, and this time the Poet passes the test by telling the seeker to “Find your own wall!” The Poet realizes the true path is very personal; each seeker must find the path and follow it for themselves. Manjusri’s comment on Buddha’s silent teaching, which the Poet initially took as nonsense, foreshadows this event: no one can teach the path; the path must be discovered. While all the teachings themselves are significant to everyday life, this is truly the ultimate lesson of life and the path itself. In the end we also observe that the traditional meditation is also abandoned, which is in keeping with the concept of “living” Zen.

Let us examine the nature of this Buddhahood. Buddhahood, in a sense, is a primordial state of being, and simultaneously the most perfect form of being—undifferentiated from reality yet existing within that non-existence. The passage to Buddhahood is, in theory, passing back through Genesis, through creation, and hence typically depicted as traveling upstream. Though the Poet seems to have traveled down stream, in the end the Poet becomes one with Brahma such that all shores become one shore. The dichotomy of traveling either up or down stream is thereby destroyed. We also see that Brahma extends itself to include the sky, for is not the ocean just an extension of sky, albeit in a slightly modified state? In returning to the same spot, the poem further supports the allegation that this is Nirvana, that Nirvana is not another place. It is here and now. The last dream offers more support, showing that Buddhahood becomes at all levels, that there are no multiple consciousnesses to the Buddha. Finally, in abandoning the zafu (meditation cushion), the superficial art of meditation is replaced with living meditation—the living Buddha.

Line, Stanza, and Passage Commentary

This commentary covers most but not all lines. The other lines may be obvious or simply act as glue to hold the rest together. In some instances it is necessary to comment on a group of lines together, without separating them. These are in order by line number, then arranged with the largest set first and smallest (e.g. a single line) last.

- 1-20 To the untutored eye, the Poet appears to be a master. As we see through the meditation, however, these responses are clearly learned.
- 1 The Poet is an androgynous, sexless, race-less, unnamed character. We only know that the meditator is a poet and nothing else, not even the Poet’s species. None of these factors are significant, and their absence is itself a symbol of non-attachment and non-dualistic thinking. Note that the wall represents many things: the middle between Heaven (T’ien) and Earth, being centered, and the self. These particular representations are exploited later.

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- 2 Monks are seekers or persons believing they have a teaching to help the people. Depending on the order, some monks may fall strictly into one of these categories or both.
- 4 The answer given appears correct.
- 8 This answer is a denial of success.
- 12 This answer is an admission to failure.
- 16 So far the best answer, but it appears to represent either surrender to or acceptance of failure.
- 18 A zafu is a hard cushion designed to help posture during zazen (sitting meditation). Many practitioners of Japanese Zen use this. While terms appear like this from various belief systems, because they come from such a variety I recommend not attaching one's thoughts to the source but to the meaning. You will observe that the zafu is eventually removed from the meditation.
- 20 The corner is a middle itself, as if to say the Poet is meditating at the middle of the middle. Between schools of Zen thought there is controversy over whether to face a wall or face away from a wall. This poem does not argue for one or the other. We note that no mention is given of cardinal direction, but considering the events of the poem we can justifiably assume the Poet's back is against the corner, a mere image convenience. The corner itself symbolizes being centered, while the wall symbolizes many things. The only symbol of the wall that is obviously exploited, however, is its role in the middle of Earth and Heaven (T'ien).
- 21-25 Falling asleep during meditation is like sleeping in church. However, it is not uncommon for a senior monk to fall asleep meditating and for the junior monks to wake him without comment for dinner. Falling asleep here could indicate one of three things: carelessness, being relaxed, or age (which comes with the experience necessary to relax). We should note that the Poet does not disrupt the meditation in spite of falling asleep three times. The last, and fourth, dream is arguably not part of sleeping.
- 21-22 This is an image both of falling asleep and illusion.
- 23-24 This is blindness toward reality as well as an image of the stage of sleep called Rapid Eye Movement (REM).
- 25-26 Outright slumber, unconsciousness. The four primary dreams of this epic suggest confusion between the conscious and subconscious. They also allude to not being conscious of reality and attachment to dualism. Eventually this culminates in the final dream to show that mastery eliminates the duality, the dreams, consciousness and reality become one.
- 26-61 This is a complex dream spread across the book in four places (including this one). This part has two settings. The first setting takes place at sea (alluding to the journey of the Poet later) in some unknown past, and appears to be the dreams of a character in the next setting. In this first setting a captain goes to sleep then is struck unconscious by mutineers, who eventually kill him (second part). The second setting happens later, with each part being told from the perspective of a different character (none of these characters are named). We

- can tell in the first part that the main character stands accused of a crime, which in the second part is revealed as a heinous murder. We are led to believe, in the first part, that the main character was originally the captain who later dies. However, with both the accused and the captain, both are disoriented because there was a cosmic switch of their souls. As a consequence, the killing of the captain in the second part is a sort of divine justice. The accused, whom we believe is innocent, is a seeker trying to find himself, just as the Poet is through the rest of the poem.
- 27 Compare the sea to Brahma later.
- 28 East toward the Orient, the sunrise, awakening, beginning, the future.
- 29 The bow is the front, symbolizing leadership. The character in discussion is the captain of the ship, whose leadership of the crew is an ultimate failure because individuals must find and take their own paths.
- 30 Wind is used repeatedly as a symbol of mind and of the spirit.
- 31 West from the past, sunset, death, endings.
- 32 Compare to line 477 and the third outline level (note indentations) of this section of verse and the Second Dream.
- 33 We are not given the details, but we can surmise from the rest of the text that perhaps the accused had a head injury and required recovery and medical attention.
- 34 Things on the surface are not always as they seem, especially when deeply examined.
- 35 Air—wind—mind association. Sea—Brahma referenced again.
- 36 Compare to The Garden in the *LǐJiě Ching* and note the repetition of this in lines 64, 232, 233, and 317. The garden, while beautiful in itself, is empty and awaits the return of its master.
- 37 Wind blows through hair, alluding again to the mind and the spirit. The fragrance of the hair suggests a depth of beauty.
- 39-40 Inner contentment in spite of the environment.
- 41-42 Fantasies, passions, illusion, suffering, desire.
- 43 “yellowed parchment” suggests age or being urinated on. In either case, neglected, forgotten, pushed down, just as advice given to the young is ignored. This is old knowledge that is true, but due to samsara (the cycle) has been put aside.
- 44 Amnesia of the soul does not affect the karma (record), the true self.
- 45 Ego is held in the subconscious.
- 46 The permanence of buddha-nature, the true nature of a thing.
- 47 Weather alludes to Heaven, the spirits.
- 48 Life and Tao are alluded to with the words “the way”. The first Noble Truth (dukkha/suffering is universal) is also alluded to here.
- 49 Certainty of knowledge, right understanding (ref. The Eightfold Path).
- 50 Leaving the point of leadership.
- 51-52 Lost essence, lost spirit.

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- 53 Perhaps dreaming her actions into a perceived reality. Otherwise, why not also during the day?
- 54 Cages or boundaries we place on ourselves, which are also an illusion, a creation of the mind.
- 55 Going below is a reference to Earthliness. To “rest and relive” is to repeat the cycle, samsara.
- 56 More illusions.
- 57 More desire (tanha from the Four Noble Truths) and fantasy.
- 58 Escaping reality.
- 59 Suffering, abandonment.
- 60 What we don't understand the common person classifies as magical, divine.
- 61 A slow revelation of self.
- 62 Reality blocked by the illusion of conscious-subconscious dualism.
- 64 See 36.
- 65-66 Death with dishonor.
- 67 Damnation, hell.
- 69 Penultimate judgment. For ultimate judgment see The Judges in the Second Dream.
- 70-76 The Poet was clearly moved by the dream, but retains composure in the meditation. Note: breath (line 76) is often associated with the spirit and soul.
- 70 Ignorance of reality.
- 71 Focusing, a visual death, also coming out of REM sleep state.
- 72 The surprise of samadhi. Samadhi is a state of higher concentration in meditation. There are three stages in Buddhism (preparation, beginning, and attainment of concentration). Samadhi is the eighth element in the classical path of Yoga, meaning absorption, becoming one with, harmonizing. There are two forms of samadhi in Yoga (with and without support). The greater form of samadhi in Yoga is without support. Here samadhi is a minor enlightenment.
- 73-76 Superficially re-grasping the meditation.
- 77-80 In many parts of the meditation the Poet enters into a fantastic dialog, presumably meditating at these points with object (something upon which to focus). In this case the object is Earth.
- 77-78 This resembles a prayer to Earth; a meditation with object (something to focus on).
- 79-80 Illusion of divinity.
- 81-83 This is not a suggestion that the Poet is female, but suggests instead to create oneself, one's own path.
- 82-83 Create yourself; create your own path.
- 84-95 Like a roshi (Zen teacher), Earth provides a koan (riddle) for an answer. This koan is shallow, certainly to one who is knowledgeable of Zen Buddhism.
- 84-86 The first statement of the guest resembles the request of the Poet. In essence, the answer is throwing the question back into the face of the Poet. Here the Poet is likened to the guest. Where the Poet is enamored with the mystic powers of Earth, the guest is enamored with the tea set.

- 87-89 Earth does not cling to itself. What one wants, one may take. In the end everything returns, so the Earth has really lost nothing. In a way, Earth is telling the Poet to take at will, meaning the reverse: the secret is giving. Line 89 is a direct attack on the Poet's seeking and desire.
- 90-92 Again the Poet's perspective, clinging to both the desire and the object of the desire.
- 93-95 This foreshadows the ultimate path and outcome of the story. It is, in fact, necessary to every path.
- 96-97 The Poet shows weakness here, perhaps thinking that Earth is leading to an alternative path. This shows the Poet is a seeker and not one who has completed the process and "attained."
- 96 This is a negligent mistake, showing weakness. Being clearly well educated in the ways does not necessitate believing them or retaining the concentration well enough to accept the understanding. Earth's answer makes this clear.
- 98-103 Earth is cautioning to surrender attachments and indicating a long-held belief that buddha-nature already exists in all things.
- 98-99 Earth identifies the error succinctly. A fundamental teaching of meditation is that buddha-nature (true or real nature) exists in all things. Though this is taught, until it is realized, seekers continue to look outside themselves. When it is discovered, the seeker typically laughs because it had been so obvious, like finding one's glasses on one's forehead after searching for them everywhere else.
- 100 This is the path of the host and the Earth.
- 101-103 Surrender attachment to seeking and duality.
- 104-106 The Poet is confused and shifts focus to the wall.
- 104 The Poet is emptying, becoming a vessel ready for use.
- 105 The Poet has far to go before the illusions are overcome, because this is an easy riddle.
- 106 Just as the Poet is emptying, mind changes like wind shifting objects of meditation, thereby refilling the Poet before emptiness is complete.
- 107-124 The wall describes its role in the middle between Earth and Heaven, comparing itself to Atlas. In Greek mythology, Heracles got Atlas to retrieve an apple from the Isle of the Hesperides. Atlas was anxious to give up his role permanently. He had Heracles hold up the Heavens while he retrieved the apple. Heracles had agreed to support the heavens in return for the apple, so Atlas felt the bargain was complete. Heracles then succeeded in tricking Atlas to hold up the heavens again so Heracles could make a harness to help with the job. Needless to say, Heracles did not bother to return, hence the aggravated ending from Atlas' perspective. Beyond the allusion to this classical myth, the description suggests a previous attempt by the Poet to unsettle the natural balance of the universe, perhaps with the Poet's "earthly" attachments.
- 107-108 The "feet buried/in Earth's reality" is attachment to the illusion of physical reality.

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- 107 The Titans were the predecessors of the Greater Gods of Olympus in Classical Mythology. Atlas fits the description given here, as the Titan who holds the Heavens upon his shoulders. See 107-124 in Major Passages above.
- 109-110 He is connected but not attached to spiritual reality.
- 111-113 The relationship requires enormous effort. What we don't see here is that the effort is wrong, as no effort is really needed. The Poet is not ready to comprehend this yet.
- 114 The chaos is an illusion. Who says the two cannot or should not commingle? What right did Atlas have in judging them and separating them in the first place?
- 115 Submission to the illusion resulting in...
- 116 Suffering/Dukkha (first Noble Truth).
- 117-118 Like a bodhisattva.
- 119 False immortality alludes to impermanence.
- 120 Weakness observed.
- 121-122 Dispelling the illusion.
- 123-124 Reference to the labor of Heracles; also reference to samadhi—not completing the task of eliminating duality.
- 125-130 Again the Poet shows weakness, but has learned giving from Earth. Ignoring the caution, the Poet focuses on the art of giving as the way of the wall.
- 126-127 Remaining centered; acting as the hub of the cycle, of samsara.
- 128-130 The Poet is trapped in the illusions of questions and duality.
- 131-169 Note: This passage should be viewed as a whole as all parts are related, and not treated as separable values. The Poet receives a lecture from the wall on the ethics of giving. This lecture, though brief, concisely outlines not only giving in the relationships of people, but also in the relationships of nations.
- 131-133 Relates the first Noble Truth (suffering/dukkha is universal) to the way of nature (Tao), but indicates a hierarchy suggesting there is a means of escape or advancement beyond this state.
- 134-136 To go against nature by giving from pity (e.g. alms giving) creates imbalance. The reason for this is obvious but is stated later (152-154).
- 137-139 Human error can itself unbalance nature and cause suffering. Giving sympathy or moral support does not worsen the imbalance.
- 140-142 Return balance without expecting, in fact preventing, personal gain.
- 143-145 Eliminate gain entirely from giving, for either the giver or the recipient.
- 146 Psychological gain is also gain. This supports the Confucian views of respect and relationships.
- 147-148 These are cautions against expecting or “ear-marking” gifts, such as specifying how the gift is used or received.
- 149 Something you can sell or trade for purpose or gain.
- 150-151 This creates social imbalance thereby increasing suffering by going against the flow of nature.
- 152 This is an acceptable purpose in giving, so long as doing so does not create an imbalance.

- 153-154 Again, unacceptable to give with purpose (e.g. to gain power over someone) or for personal gain.
- 155-157 Encourage balance.
- 158-160 This is a Zen principle: the giver should be thankful.
- 161-162 These lines not only apply at the lowest level between individuals, but also at the highest levels between societies. In other words this cautions that all such transactions follow the same principles.
- 162 This last line points to a source for conflicts from as small as unspoken bitterness to as catastrophic as war.
- 163 Always assume the giver is mindful of these values.
- 164 Be gracious. Don't expect a gift or a particular gift as the expectation is itself greed.
- 165 If asked what an acceptable gift would be, follow these same principles. In other words, ask for nothing of value, seek balance, look to fill needs, or if it is an occasion where presents are expected (e.g. Christmas, birthday, etc.), then encourage gifts from the heart because these do not create imbalance (assuming of course the context is appropriate).
- 166-168 This does not say to be ungrateful, just diplomatically return or refuse the gift. If returning is then refused, then the purpose for gain of the giver is surrendered.
- 170-172 The Poet has embodied the teachings, but is in a state of confusion.
- 171 See line 1 note.
- 172 See line 30 note.
- 173-178 This merging is a distinct embodying of the wall's ideals, forming a new act of beauty with the image of a butterfly. The eyes help the seeker to see.
- 173-175 These lines are a visual merging of the Poet with the wall, symbolizing becoming centered. The shape and thickness change because the wall is forming into the wings of a butterfly, so the Poet can fly on the wings of centeredness.
- 175 On these wings, as with most butterflies, appear eyes. We can look at these in many ways. First the eyes could be an enhancement of visual perception. Second, they could be the source of illusory visual perception because technically they are only superficial. Both options are left open. All the same, the image projects becoming more butterfly-like, which gives a sort of freedom. This freedom does not completely separate one from the Earth, but certainly brings one closer to Heaven. Unfortunately the traveling of the butterfly is in the wind, which means there is an attachment to mind.
- 176-178 The Poet's self or ego is apprehended and centered.
- 179-181 The butterfly is lifted like a leaf by the wind and carried. Remember that wind is a symbol of mind. This behavior is very much like that of most people: blowing around in the illusions thought to be reality.
- 179-180 Consider Herman Hesse's Siddhartha. Siddhartha observed the ways of the child people, caught up in their illusions of knowledge and ego.
- 181 The meditation is disrupted with conscious thought seeking an object, specifically the ego.

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- 182-187 The transition settles and the path is recognized.
- 182-184 These lines resemble Siddhartha's metaphor of himself being a rock falling straight down. There is a great struggle of mind to locate the ego. When the ego is found it can then be released, and the focus of the meditation is then able to shift from meditating with object to meditation without object.
- 185 The meditation returns without object, allowing apprehension.
- 186 The path of giving reveals itself. The path is ironic in a way, because we already know the persona of the Poet. We should note, however, that the prescription requires an extremely high level of poetic ability, in fact mastery.
- 187-190 Like a baby.
- 188-211 The path of giving, for the Poet, is the poetry. This is no ordinary poetry though, as the poem must be independent of the Poet. In other words, the poem occurs to the Poet and not as a consequence of purposeful action on the Poet's behalf.
- 191-193 Like the soul.
- 194-196 Like death.
- 197-199 Like decay.
- 200-202 This is potentially a comment on the Poet, but really represents the ideal state, as the Poet must keep ego out of the poem so the audience can insert themselves.
- 203-205 This is like an out-of-body experience (note the Poet is also journeying this way).
- 207 While this is difficult, it is not impossible. Some of the best poetry ever was numinous (an experience defying words), such as the flower sermon mentioned in 591-594.
- 208 This is a paradox.
- 209-211 This is like the mason finishing a statue and saying: "The face was always there. I merely cleaned it so you could see."
- 212-235 This is distinctly a butterfly, and the butterfly is the Poet rising up from the meditation in a sort of out-of-body experience. The Poet is starting to lose attachment to physical reality, but does not complete the loss until Manjusri's slap. As with the other butterfly reference, there are eyes. This time they are red and yellow (see Riding the Rainbow). The butterfly, like any arachnid in the cold, is stiff and appears dead, representing the common person. As it warms (examines the spirit and develops a soul) it begins to move, rising up and observing with mind (wind, line 230) its former state (as the Poet is doing). There are several acts of random beauty in this passage, yet many of these are subtle references to the *LǐJiě Ching*, such as the garden. The garden is empty in the *LǐJiě Ching* and waiting for the return of life, in this case the butterfly representing the Poet. A lily (line 234) is both a symbol of strength and beauty, not to mention a good resting place for a wandering butterfly. Though the Poet admires this resting place and all it has to offer, the Poet continues the voyage.
- 212-214 This is clearly a butterfly laid flat against a flower. By line 234 we might guess it to be a lily, but the lack of specificity leaves the options open.

- 215-217 This brings to mind a Zen story. Observing the funeral procession of a master, a traveling monk commented: "Never before have I seen such a thing! So many dead people following one living person!" The point of this little story is the questions it asks: Do you know you are alive? Can you be alive on the outside (going through the moves of life) and dead on the inside (without a soul due to an unexamined life)? Or can you be dead on the surface and alive on the inside? These innocuous three lines are sneaky with all their possible meanings.
- 218 Metaphor of birth.
- 219-220 Metaphors for feelings and emotions that fill and hold thoughts.
- 221 Metaphor for passion.
- 222 Attention, awareness, being conscious.
- 223 Awareness of passion.
- 224-226 Conscious sensation, perception.
- 227-229 Searching more and more frantically for truth (see discussion of eyes on butterfly wings for line 175).
- 230-231 Wind/mind metaphor capturing and leading the seeker.
- 232 Compare to 36, 64, 233, 317. Not only is this separation from materialism, it is a vacancy expecting the return of its master (the Poet). The return, however, certainly does not fill the vacancy.
- 233 The palace is a reference to the garden, giving the fantastic and personal perspective of the Poet as the butterfly.
- 234 This could be the flower referenced in 214. Pay attention to all the qualities of a lily, especially since this sits all by itself and is vague. The lily is a symbol of strength, durability, showing many signs of nature's ingenuity. It is also a symbol of the Archangel Gabriel, Mary (the mother of Jesus), and of course all the other little images that come to mind when pretty flowers are mentioned. The lily could also represent the body of the Poet; if such is the case, then the image suggests egocentrism, self-love.
- 236-239 Again the Poet falls asleep and dreams, which befits the butterfly personification.
- 236 Appears to be typical consciousness.
- 237 Buddha-nature trapped by "conscious illusion."
- 238-239 The previous dream continues and becomes more complicated.
- 240-315 While the first dream was complicated with two settings, this dream contains two settings and another dream. As with the first dream, this begins with the mutiny at sea (recall this setting is itself a dream of the main character of the second setting). This is interrupted by the trial of the accused main character for murder. The defense clearly makes an insanity (affirmative) plea, which simplifies the proceedings by eliminating need of a jury. The judge then hears the arguments of both sides. The prosecutor's role is interesting, as he replaces the jury in representing public opinion. Of course this role is selfish as the prosecutor is concerned about his image more than about the truth. In the course of this trial we observe the truth about adversarial justice, namely that

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no individual in the courtroom workgroup is charged with issuing justice, because no one does. Upon hearing the arguments the judge retires and falls asleep. Her dream within a dream is discussed below. When she returns to the court she chooses the path of inaction. This second dream opens the Poet up to the concepts common in both Taoism and Buddhism of action (acting purposefully) and inaction (allowing nature to take its course, or following the natural flow).

240-241 The dreamer of this dream with in a dream.

243 Right or, because of the direction of travel, the south side of the ship—perhaps foreshadowing.

245-246 Equivalent to an insanity plea, an affirmative defense not denying the event.

252 A lie.

253 The real reason is public approval.

255 Insanity and other affirmative defenses depend on technicality.

258 Foreshadowing death, inability to escape one's path.

264-303 This dream within a dream actually names its characters, and quite purposefully. This dream alludes to the *rūnLǐ Ching*. The central character in this dream is Kant. Kant was a professor of philosophy, who wrote vociferously. The avid student of philosophy observes that Kant pretty much reports what other philosophers already said. He acts like a hub, filling in occasional gaps, but otherwise bringing together a wide range of philosophical ideas generated over thousands of years. Certainly his works are brilliant in their own respect, and here he plays a similar role by presiding over the panel of judges, all from antiquity. The other judges are identified according to when they were born (or believed to be born). Lao Tse argues for the natural path. Buddha reminds us that the path is within. Confucius, clearly out of his element, realizes most of the values he taught in life do not necessarily apply in death. He continues to hold to his concepts of piety and the ordering of things ("Like attracts like" in line 291). Socrates helps Confucius because the soul is a central feature of his teachings. He makes a strong case for separating the laws of man from the laws over souls. In his allusion to the Cave Allegory (see *The Republic*) he concludes that the actions in life are separate from the essence of the soul. Combining all these thoughts, Kant fills his natural duty by opening the gates and letting nature take its course (the action of inaction).

264 Note this is a third level of text, showing a greater degree of depth. It is a common belief that in life after death there is judgment of the dead.

265 Kant is a hub, a reporter and synthesizer in his own right.

266 Lao Tse is potentially a mythical person, credited with authoring the Tao Te Ching. These judges are listed in order of their antiquity, with the exception of Kant, who surrounds this whole passage.

268 Kant was infatuated with the idea of a universal rule or law. Basically the concept goes: Can I make a rule such that I can apply that rule to all instances ethically?

- 269 Here is a reference to utilitarian justice, which holds that any rule, act of enforcement or ruling should serve the greatest good for the greatest number of people. According to this rule, it is acceptable to punish an innocent person if that would prevent others from committing the accused act. Unfortunately the reality of justice is that it fails to be quick and sure, meaning it violates the most elementary principles of operant conditioning. As such the justice system has a significant flaw and fails to be utilitarian.
- 270 This is a reference to retributive justice (just deserts; cause-effect), which is also a failing concept for the same reason as utilitarianism fails above.
- 271 Kant is stating the ultimate social utility.
- 272 Tao.
- 274 Ethical principles of Taoism.
- 276 Revolutionary perspective of Buddha.
- 280 Second Noble Truth.
- 281 First Noble Truth.
- 282 Referencing the Eightfold Path.
- 283 Concept of dualism is common throughout Buddhism, Taoism, and Zen.
- 284-287 Sin and selfhood deal with an area of ethics that Confucius did not concern himself with in his teachings. We know he was pious and most likely adhered closely to the common ancestor reverence of China, so he would have some belief in life after death, and this view fits such a belief.
- 284 Confucius was primary concerned with social order and governance as this statement shows.
- 288 In this line he acknowledges the limitations of human law, and hence his own limitations.
- 289 Confucius was very focused on being at one's best, and particularly manhood-at-its-best (such as themselves acting as the ultimate judges of the dead).
- 290-291 Piety and like attracting like are also central concepts of his teachings.
- 292 Socrates is completely in his element. Compare this directly with his argument supporting his own execution (versus escape) in Crito.
- 293 Compare with the "unexamined life" of the Apology, and with his discussion of soul in Thaetetus.
- 296 Reference Chapter/Book 13 of the Republic for the Cave Allegory.
- 297 This is actually a Hindu philosophy, which holds mind as one of the perceptions or senses. We can argue that the perceptions could be extended by dividing mind categorically as Aristotle did into pathos (passion), ethos (value), and logos (logic).
- 300-303 In other words, let the souls judge themselves. Reference "Judge not lest thee be judged, for what judgment thee renders, so too shall be rendered against thee; what measure thee metes, so too shall be measured against thee" (Matthew: 7.1-2).
- 304 This line makes it clear that the perpetrator of the crime the dreamer is accused of will be punished.
- 306 Hell.

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- 307 Grasping or struggling to save an un-lived (unexamined), soulless life
- 308 The image is reminiscent of a funeral.
- 310 There is irony in the words “uncertain fate” since fate is certain though the observers and subject of the fate do not know.
- 314 The word “we” refers to the Court, the people, society, humankind, etc.
- 315 To understand “conscious cleared” see notes for 300-303.
- 316-333 The garden itself begins to disappear as the Poet, personified as a butterfly, approaches the clouds in the heavens. Note there is no transition into this waking state as sleeping and waking begin to blur. The Poet is drawn to the clouds by voices, namely the voices of souls in transit like himself or others whose essence is guided by intellect. One is taught in the order necessary for one to learn. The Poet is also guided by intellect for now.
- 317 This is the last reference to the “garden” also mentioned in lines 36, 64, 232 and 234.
- 318 This alludes to the heavens and spirits. Clouds necessitate both water and air (emotion and mind respectively), and here represent souls in transit within the cycle as indicated by the Samsara passage that follows this passage.
- 323-324 Un-attaching from physical being, becoming more spiritual.
- 325-327 Alluding to Samsara.
- 328-330 Not born, not dead, perhaps being born or dying as a process of “living.” Consider the arguments of Wittgenstein and Dunne regarding whether death is an event of life. Although the argument could be played here, really the cosmology is a matter of belief, so clearly the Poet believes death is an event of life. The rest of the text clearly supports neither view, and would declare such an argument dualistic thinking and hence counterproductive to ultimate ascension.
- 331 Luring seamen to their deaths. See Homer’s Odyssey.
- 332 Numinous means an indescribable experience; beyond words.
- 334-363 Samsara is the cycle of Hindu tradition, in which the karma (record of all actions in all lives, the consequences being based on intentions) journeys through many lives, perpetually seeking balance and centering in the cycle to escape it. The lyrics of the clouds reflect their goals, but they do not know how to escape the cycle they are trapped in. We note that they have much wisdom, as they understand parental roles, behaviors of children, feelings of grandparents, the order of happiness, and the burden of death. One cannot help think of the line “Mourn the survivors—” when a major catastrophe happens, because truly the survivors carry the suffering much longer than the dead.
- 334 Greed is also desire or tanha, the third Noble Truth and source of illusion. The “title” given to this passage, Samsara, means the cosmic cycle that infiltrates to the smallest levels and includes birth-life-death-rebirth, parent-child relationships, learning cycles, the cycles of generations, etc.
- 336 Reference to the second Noble Truth (the cause of suffering/dukkha is illusion).
- 338 Someone else begins the path—nostalgia over innocent illusion.

- 339 Same as parents, but grateful not to have to walk the path of parenting from scratch again.
- 340-342 Our seniors love to give advice to ease the sufferings of their juniors. So long as they accept this passage, they are happy. No need for "I told you so," simply sympathy.
- 343-345 Youth always have to walk the whole path and suffer to grow. This assures the elders that it is okay for their juniors to disregard the cautions.
- 346-348 These truths are reversible, showing the endless cycle. It also shows that to arrive at and appreciate what is good, one must pass through the bad.
- 349 Goes with the idea that history "makes" people.
- 350 We learn however...
- 351 ...that learning itself is an obstacle.
- 352-354 Permanence of Tao.
- 355-357 Nature of Tao.
- 358-360 This is a Zen teaching.
- 361-363 During a great crisis it is easy to mourn the dead, forgetting that each major crisis is bigger than before. As such, and due to the nature of Samsara, the survivors must suffer this loss then suffer greater losses in the future, and that one tragedy is always followed by another.
- 364-379 Rainbows have numerous meanings, and here many of those meanings are exploited both on the whole and then in the parts. With red, symbolic of great passion, we find what appear to be homosexuals, who are notoriously passionate. Orange, yellow, and white (not mentioned) are common colors for monastic robes. These robes are symbols of piety, purity, and androgyny (non-sexuality). We note, however, that these are not alone in their androgyny, because these are androgynous in a passionate and superficial way. Green is exploited traditionally as representing fertility and heterosexual love. Blue through violet flow into a cool calmness, where the androgyny is genuine and there is a general air of tranquility.
- 369 These are homosexuals, fitting here as the most passionate of the passionate.
- 370 Sea reference indicates an imitation of Brahma.
- 371 These are the pious, androgynous but sexually driven in their search for and adherence to "God" or their faith. Note they are guided by the mind (wind).
- 372 Sangha is a reference to the Buddhist monastic order and to the adherents of Buddhism. In essence this is like a Zen criticism of following the path of Buddha, or the teachings of Buddha, both of which he cautioned were incorrect as the individual must follow their own path.
- 373-375 These are clearly heterosexual relationships, complete with offspring, with green representing fertility.
- 376 These are feelings. See Fountain of Love in the *LǐJiě Ching*. Some turbulence exists at this stage, making further travel look bad, but this is only an illusion.
- 379 This is true androgyny without desires, without the duality of gender.
- 380-405 Here the Poet learns the meaning of life, which comes as a graduated answer. Reading through the passage carefully one finds that all except the master are

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- cycled eventually back to suffering because of being attached to meaning. The last line speaks volumes.
- 381 The cooling contents them, causing beauty to come from within.
- 382-385 Siddhartha's child people. These are the common people who seek hope through faith, religion. These first categories are not exclusive. A person can belong to different categories at varying degrees depending on the situation. If a person belongs to only one category, then their innocence protects them.
- 386-389 These do not seek deep meaning. They seek social status, material possession, personal material gain, or spiritual gain (e.g. the indulgences sold by the Catholic Church to help finance the crusades).
- 390-393 The hopeless academic is caught up in human knowledge and is naïve about worldly and real matters. See the Pond and Swamp passages later. They are misguided about meaning.
- 394-397 These are unconcerned with society, focusing exclusively on material possession and superficial beauty. They are selfish and suffer severely. As such, they see life as suffering (dukkha), a struggle to fight through.
- 398-401 Those who are knowledgeable and worldly are still naïve about real things, but don't know it. They are close, but are held back by their attachments to dualism and perceiving based on their external learning.
- 402 This category is exclusive.
- 403 Without object means not focused on anything. Measure is a reference to judging.
- 404 Not differentiating or attaching oneself to dualism.
- 406-427 Precipitation is an allusion to birth and childhood. In the end, what has been acquired through childhood clashes with adulthood (the Splat! in line 427). Again we see numerous references to wind/mind, Earth/mother, and the rainbow/sexuality/passion.
- 406-407 Here the Poet changes state again, appearing to return almost to a manifest form. What we are seeing is rebirth beginning.
- 408 The droplet, being water, alludes to a small bit of Atman, soul, and feeling. Of course the droplet is in the air, but here wind is mentioned, and the images that follow support the argument that wind represents the Poet's mind or imagination.
- 409 Toward heaven.
- 410-411 The angle of light to the rainbow is between 40 and 42°. We note the spectrum pours in rather than out, suggesting an esoteric angling allowing for absorption, embodiment of the passions of the former passage—anything is possible.
- 412 White light is the product of merging the colors of the rainbow. This is absolutely neutral. Although this appears meaningless, the neutrality allows the Poet to continue observing by not completely attaching to the experiences.
- 413 Mother Earth, or the mother of the child.
- 414 This and the succeeding lines describe both pregnancy and childhood development.

- 415-417 Alone in the womb, alone on individual paths, yet together as humans with different personal qualities.
- 418-420 This fall describes growth toward adulthood, which in this case is shown as moving down, away from nature.
- 421-423 We are warned when the sky ionizes (charges), creating a sweet aroma, that rain (birth, transcendence to adulthood) follows or is occurring.
- 424-426 The growth, both physical and mental, accelerates.
- 427 Encounter with adulthood. Most adults can relate to this simple "Splat!" as adulthood is quite a shock, and a completely different scenario from childhood. One seems to crash into the reality of adulthood.
- 428-448 Adulthood and society are represented in the pond (which could well be a lake or puddle). In this, society and the adult both grow: society grows in population and technology; the adult grows in knowledge. The knowledge, however, is confused, muddled by attachment to the perceptions (sight, smell, touch, taste, feel, mind), which are not outright referenced, but may as well be.
- 428-433 Society as an adult.
- 434-436 Individuality submersed, lost in society and relationships. This is the common state of adulthood, submersed in the role within society.
- 437-439 Expansion of civilization both mentally (academically) and physically.
- 440-442 Nature confuses the observer; e.g. God works in mysterious ways. The human illusion of knowledge sees mind and thinks it is the Earth and not mud, then is misled.
- 443 Thoughts, perceptions of reality.
- 444 Escaping the illusions of the masses.
- 445 This is because it is mistaken for mud, causing more confusion.
- 446-448 The expansion of illusions is like a snowball, growing, feeding on its own lies.
- 449-480 The third dream alludes to the *LǐJiě Ching* with a Tarot reading. The dream centers on the Reader, with the Seeker (previously the accused) barely participating, and with only the shortest dialog (477 and 481). At the beginning of the reading, the Reader has the Seeker choose a card (The Lovers, Key VI) for a Significator. This is an optional Significator, and the layout is clearly the common Celtic Cross, which may be referenced in any Tarot book. This is an enormously meaningful reading, using the most powerful cards in the deck. Compare also with the diagrams in the *LǐJiě Ching* versus where these cards appear. Note: The Zenith and Great Works are 9 and 10 of Manifestation, appearing at the end of the *LǐJiě Ching* and representing the highest states of physical being. All the other cards have both strategic meanings and also strategic places in the diagrams representing each category in balance; hence the reaction of the Reader at the end.
- 452 Green again indicates fertility, but this fertility appears androgynous, suggesting that the psychic will mother a spiritual growth.
- 453 The Maga is another name for the High Priestess (Key II). She represents the querent, the future unrevealed, or secrets.

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- 455 The Lovers is Key VI, signifying also the individuality of personal paths even in relationships, and duality.
- 456 The layout being described is a Celtic Cross, perhaps the most common layout. This Significator is optional. Many readers start with the next card. The Significator may be chosen randomly by either the reader or querent, or may be selected purposefully. One method is to have the Significator drawn only from the Higher Arcana. In this case we are led to believe the draw was randomly made from the entire deck. As we shall soon see, the entire reading is composed of critical Higher Arcana cards, with the exceptions of The Zenith (9 of Pentacles) and Great Works (10 of Pentacles), which are the highest-ranking Lesser Arcana if one follows the *LǐJiě Ching*. The reader would be wise to compare the Key numbers (0, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 14, 21, and Mystery Card) with the charts in the *LǐJiě Ching* to see the balance, and compare the cards specifically with their related poems also. This reading is clearly a reference to the *LǐJiě Ching*.
- 457 The Fool is Key 0, indicating the seeker is traveling blindly without looking at the path. In many layouts this would be the Significator. Note that both signifiers reference the path and the individual's quest for selfhood.
- 460 The Emperor is Key IV, indicating the observer neither interferes or obstructs the passage of knowledge. The position indicates a blocking or crossing influence.
- 461 As indicated for the previous line, this is either an obstacle or crossing influence. Here it is outright stated as an obstacle, perhaps suggesting that attachment to external knowledge is hindering personal growth. Considering the Swamp (next passage), the argument seems to hold that the Seeker is looking too much on the outside for answers the Seeker already has. We will see this again at the end of this passage.
- 462-464 The blank card is the Mystery Card, indicating emptiness or the unknown. On the surface it could mean absolutely nothing, or that the particular item is obscured. It could also mean, due to the rest of the cards and position, a higher state of being found in the emptiness. The reader takes this as an unknown and decides to move forward to get a better understanding of the potential meanings.
- 466 The Hermit is Key IX, representing a messianic figure, a solitary seeker, a teacher, a leader; in Buddhist terms, perhaps a Bodhisattva. This position represents the history of the querent, what they have to build upon.
- 468 The Zenith is 9 of Pentacles/Manifestation. It is the penultimate physical accomplishment and ultimate passion. This position is obstacles overcome, in this case overcoming animalistic desires.
- 470 Great Works is 10 of Pentacles/Manifestation. It is the ultimate physical accomplishment. This is coming in the near future, indicating the perfection of physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional states.
- 471-472 The Wheel of Fortune is Key 10. The position is of recommended action or the psychological state of the querent. The card itself suggests randomness or

- uncertainty. Perhaps a more appropriate view is the principle of action and inaction of Taoism. In other words, act appropriately under the given conditions. The reader is also right in observing that uncertainty is an obstacle to the Seeker's wisdom.
- 473 The Hanged Man (Key XII) represents a rebellion against social norms, and is otherwise very much like the Hermit as a messianic figure, a teacher. This position represents the querent's environmental influences.
- 474 Temperance (Key XIV) means balance, and in this position the balance is applied to hopes and fears. Given the rest of the reading, it is no wonder the reader shudders when she draws Key 21 (The Universe or World) for the ultimate outcome, as this indicates the ultimate accomplishment. In most cases this ultimate accomplishment is minor in comparison. In this case, however, due to the rest of the layout the reader is led to question if this is the ultimate ascension.
- 475-476 Clearly a reference to the previous dreams.
- 477 The Seeker's dreams are of the captain and the sea directly. All the dreams, including this one, are of the primary seeker in the narrative: the Poet.
- 479 The greatness could be Buddhahood, especially since she dares not utter it directly. She also does not dare to describe it, especially since she is far from it, nor declare it an accomplishment because it isn't. Buddhahood is an event, and were she to utter more she could potentially knock the Seeker from the path, and that is not for the reader to do.
- 481-508 The swamp is a living hell built on the illusion of knowledge. Floating around unaffected are buddhas, who are probably more bodhisattvas than buddhas (Gautama used the term Bodhisattva to describe himself when he was seeking enlightenment. The Mahayana school of Buddhism uses this term to identify those who have attained bodhi, but chose not to enter nirvana and become a Buddha. Instead, they vow to provide salvation for every living thing, "every blade of grass"). Some thrive in the hell of the swamp and are unaffected by the illusion. Other creatures struggle with the illusion and are thus trapped and drown in it. Some escape by evaporation, returning to the clouds that can release them anywhere, hence beginning their cycle again.
- 482 You know your path. The Seeker becomes a clear personification of the Poet, which is true of all the characters in the dreams. This may suggest seeing past lives or infiltrating and absorbing the essence of other lives to help push along the path.
- 485-487 Society's knowledge and beliefs are likened here to a swamp.
- 488-493 Like a smooth surface, buddhas pass through society easily, unhindered, and nothing can stick to them.
- 494-496 This could be an image of water lilies (the trumpets dangle). This alludes to the temptations of society (e.g. wealth, prosperity, social relationships, status).
- 497-502 Those who are tempted get caught, struggle and are eventually submersed and destroyed by society.
- 503-508 Great desire causing continuation of Samsara.

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- 504 Not to insinuate destruction but transmigration.
505 Leaving hardened clay—their stiff bodies.
507 In the clouds, thereby restarting Samsara.
509-600 This section of the passage starts with a standard description of the character Manjusri, including stating who he is, what he represents, and what he does. Since the Poet is traveling on an “astral” level, the aura of Manjusri alone introduces him, which saves further introduction. The Poet asks a series of questions, most of which are answered in a haiku-like fashion. All of the answers, though they sound absurd or out of place are actually correct, even pointing directly to insignificant issues within Zen; but the Poet fails to see the truth. As a consequence the Poet laughs declaring the conversation as nonsense. Most of the answers contain a lot of historical facts laced with zennist profane humor. Te (Virtue/Power), Tao (The Way), Earth, and T'ien (Heaven) are definitive answers from a Taoist perspective, given because the Poet is asking related metaphysical questions better answered from a Taoist perspective. We also see one answer (Learning Zen) that reveals much of the true nature of Zen study and the zennist perspective on knowledge. Note: knowledge was acquired first, but to succeed it had to be “unlearned”.
- 509-511 Mondo is probably being used here in place of dokusan or sanzen: A period of interaction between a Zen student and a Zen teacher, which is done according to a regular schedule. This is a personal encounter, in which the teacher is able to probe and stimulate the student's understanding, and the student is able to ask questions directly related to practice. Since everything is Zen practice, questions can be asked about anything. This is different from a mondo only slightly, because this involves an individual and a mondo can be done in a group. Mondo is similar enough that it is often used. Manjusri is the bodhisattva of meditation and supreme wisdom. He is usually depicted riding a lion, carrying the sword of wisdom, which is supposed to cut through illusion. He is frequently the principal figure on the altar of a zendo. Notice that the lion is enflamed and flying to indicate spiritual power.
- 512 Bodhisattva: Gautama used this term to describe himself when he was seeking enlightenment. The Mahayana use this term to identify those who have attained bodhi, but chose not to enter nirvana and become a Buddha. Instead, they vow to provide salvation for every living thing, “every blade of grass.”
- 514 “exorcising illusion” suggests that illusion is a demon that can be extracted.
- 515-517 Either the whole experience is a fantasy or this spiritual introduction is transcendental or both.
- 521 Tao-sheng was a Buddhist monk, who lived ca. 360-434 C.E. He is credited with founding Ch'an (Zen).
- 523 Bodhidharma: (Daruma in Japanese) is credited with popularizing Ch'an (Chinese for Zen) during the early sixth century C.E. (Common Era). He is also the first truly eccentric Zen master. Some researchers credit Bodhidharma as the founder of Zen.

- 525 Achievement in human, social, or spiritual terms? We cannot be certain. This could also be the Poet's misconception that buddhahood is achievable.
- 528-531 This is a very iconoclastic, Zen approach—anti-zazen (sitting meditation) but pro every-moment-zen.
- 532 Zazen is sitting, formal meditation, the way the Poet began this odyssey.
- 534 We should note that in Zen, the arts include all activities. All arts may be mastered as meditations, hence the concept of every-moment-zen. This view does not appear to be taught by Bodhidharma but developed later.
- 535 Karate finds its origins in the South of India, where Bodhidharma originally came from.
- 536 Shaolin monks are in China.
- 537 This statement could stand true all by itself.
- 538 Enlightenment definitely cannot be attained by the use of force, or even the superficially passive force of seeking. Apprehension is incidental.
- 542-544 In other words: love, passion, hate, and war are energies and values, and thus a part of nature. These lines are fairly definitive of Te (Deh).
- 548-551 Action and inaction (wei wu wei) in accordance with the ways of individual things. This is also definitive of Tao (Dow). Note: inaction means to allow things to occur naturally, to act naturally without personal thought.
- 555 Sight, sound, touch, taste, smell, mind (Hindu philosophy). Mind is further divisible into Aristotle's logos (logic), pathos (passion), and ethos (ethics or values).
- 556 This is the old Chinese way (see Tao Te Ching) of referring to everything.
- 557 Hence all paradoxes.
- 558 Pū is an uncarved, natural piece of wood. This is a common symbol in Taoism to indicate one's true, untainted nature. In Buddhism this is equivalent to the concept of buddha-nature.
- 560 T'ien is equivalent to Heaven in Western society, but not exactly the same. Chinese thought does not look on T'ien as a place where a divine being is, or a place where "good" souls go upon death.
- 569-580 This description is so typically Zen—like the Hanged Man (see line 473)., in total opposition to the norms of human society.
- 581-583 The Poet is clearly confused about right understanding (ref. the Eightfold Path) and the concept of discarding knowledge.
- 584-587 Wudi was the emperor of China who had done all these activities in hopes to build good karma. When he learned Bodhidharma had come he went and asked if his efforts had any merit. Bodhidharma flatly said no. On one hand this answer is correct, but unfortunately the ignorant masses do not understand that to have merit one acts for the action's sake and not for personal gain. Since the question was asked, then there was desire in the action. The ignorant masses, as a consequence, are misled to believe that ignorance is the path.
- 588-590 The Poet is still confused but trying to hide it.
- 591-594 This is in reference to the first "transmission of the lamp" to Mahakasyapa (Great Kasyapa. The story goes that Buddha, advanced in age, was asked to

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- give a sermon summarizing and clarifying his teachings. Along the way someone gave him a bouquet of flowers. He took one with him, and for his sermon merely presented the flower. Kasyapa, understanding the message, laughed out loud, and was thereafter called Mahakasyapa. This is probably the most important of Buddha's teachings to the Zen tradition.
- 597-598 Like a demon surfacing. Remember, this is an exorcism!
- 599-600 The Poet's ignorance has peaked. The demon is ready for extraction.
- 601-621 The first part of Manjusri's answer is a quote from the Tao Te Ching (verse 41). Then he praises the Poet for the out-of-body experience and cuts him calling him a fool. This culminates in a koan: the slap. When Manjusri leaves, the Poet is so shocked by the slap that attention is refocused to nothing (without object), allowing the next transition into the Atman.
- 602-607 This is quoted from the Tao Te Ching.
- 605 Some translators render this as, "he takes some and leaves some."
- 607 Some translators add extra text to the effect: "If the fool did not laugh/ it would not be the Tao."
- 608-609 Manjusri complements the Poet, taking the demon off-guard.
- 610 Manjusri then exposes the demon.
- 612 The demon is extracted.
- 613-614 Manjusri's work is done.
- 615 This is like recovering from an illness.
- 616 This line is pivotal. This is the last mention of the Poet. The text itself speaks volumes. In terms of the meditation we observe that the object is now lost. The meditation is now optimized into what the Japanese call Mushotoku: The optimum state for Zen practice, in which there is no goal or object, no intention for self gain or profit.
- 617-618 The Mystery Card (see lines 462-464) is partly filled. Certainly the Great Works (see line 470) has been attained.
- 619 Selflessness, egolessness attained; hence the absence of reference to the Poet anymore.
- 620 Like the Buddhas (see lines 488-493)...
- 621 ...on the lotus way.
- 622-677 The Atman in Hinduism is the self, the soul. "An" means to breath, an association frequently made with soul in religious traditions. We see what appears to be a little dialog, but the speakers are not directly identified because in the Atman there is no self. The entire dialog is dedicated to the rapid elimination of dualism to allow for passage into singularity, one-ness in the Brahma.
- 622 We should note this part appears to be the thoughts or utterances of something outside. Although it is tempting to reference the Poet here, we must be cautious, as soon even the loosest association seems lost. Atman in Hinduism is the self, the soul. "An" means to breath, an association frequently made with soul in religious traditions. This passage and the Brahma Ocean passage are defiant of any type of analysis. As such only non-English words are defined.

- 623 Buddha: The awakened; forever enlightened. Buddha Gautama did not claim to be the first Buddha nor the last. He frequently mentioned previous Buddha's. These have never been proven to historically exist, and were probably made up by Gautama just to make his point. Gautama did not wish to be worshipped. Many Buddhist sects believe that Buddhas come periodically much as Western faiths think of messiahs.
- 637 Maya is both the name of Gautama's mother and a term meaning illusion (Four Noble Truths).
- 678-710 The Brahma is the cosmic ocean where the soul (atman) is dissolved upon death. This ocean is the cosmic soul in Hindu tradition. The Hindu perspective is taken in this passage, going further include absolutely everything because of universal interconnectivity.
- 678 We should note first that the vague distinction between communicators in the previous passage is now lost entirely. Brahma is the cosmic ocean, where the soul (atman) is dissolved upon death. This ocean is the cosmic soul in Hindu tradition.
- 710 Action without action is another way of saying wei wu-wei (action inaction) of Taoism.
- 711-719 The Last Dream is the final destruction of dualism. While it initially appears that sleep is coming, we realize that enlightenment has taken over. The Poet and the meditation have become one. There is no longer a distinction between sleeping and waking, simply permanent awareness. There is no more duality, no more ego (the last use of I was line 661, last use of Poet was line 616). We could argue on a superficial and academic level that buddhahood is attained, but such would violate underlying messages elsewhere in the epic.
- 711 The eyes here are physical.
- 712 Losing the physical in place of the spiritual.
- 713 The inner Eye.
- 714-716 The simplest way to appraise this is as buddhahood (Buddha being forever awakened), however...
- 717-719 ...such would be a judgment and potentially also an understatement of something numinous (beyond words).
- 720-729 This is clearly a continuation of the first passage, but there are no more references to the Poet. This, like the lack of reflection, is a consequence of losing all attachments, including most obviously the ego (lost in the Atman, line 661). The answer: "Find your own wall!" is clearly enlightened. As with Buddha's teaching, in the end each must find their own paths.
- 720 We notice immediately a difference between this passage and the first passage. The Poet is missing. We thought it was difficult without pronouns, now we have no stated subject. Then again, considering line 729...
- 723 In other words, "Find your own path." This is not a learned response. We know this because of everything else surrounding the answer, and by the actions that follow.
- 724-726 Zazen is no longer necessary because the meditation is now everything.

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727-729 The pool represents the Brahma Ocean. The description fits Paranirvana, the state of absolute escape from the cycle. It is tempting to say non-existence, but such carries the idea that something existed.

LǐJiě Ching

(Classic of Knowledge: Tarot Gates to the Soul)

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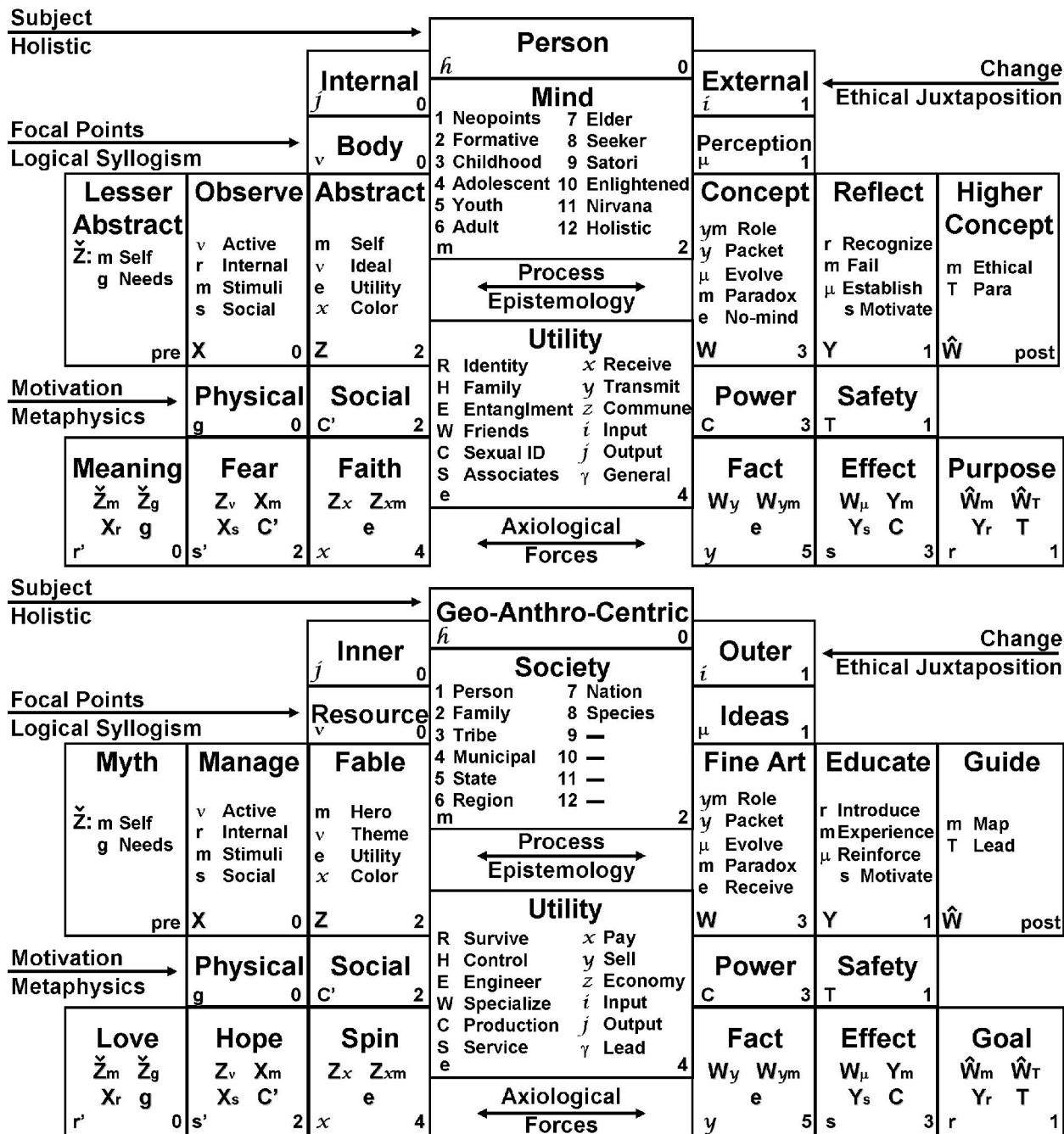
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Introduction



When the LǐJiě Ching was written, the breakdown of axiological forces was not known. It uses the Tarot as a catalyst for psycho-social meditations working through compounding constructs of mind as a function of utility (illustrated above). There are twelve generations of mind, for which four utility groupings correspond that make those generations and their interactions possible. The Lesser Arcana (chapters 1 – 4) account for exploring the first four rows of each of these diagrams conventionally with the entire next chapter being the composite utility of the former chapter. This is an important but incomplete rendering of the process because, again it is a contemporary understanding of mind.

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The Higher Arcana (Chapter 5), as exhibited by Chapter 0, illustrates an investigation into all twenty-one fundamental components, where the first and last key are linked. This link reflects division of introspection between inner and outer worlds. Again, this is a traditional and conventional breakdown useful for meditation but not an end or perfect representation of absolute reality in itself. Of course you will begin by appreciating the beauty of the metaphors, and as your understanding grows their meanings will reveal themselves. In the end you will find that the immediate and obvious metaphors are replaced by conceptual patterns between the poems that are more abstract metaphors pointing toward the real process.

A direct breakdown of the above diagrams is for another book, though they serve meditative purposes here. Among the epistemological processes are pre and post conditions linking evolution of the working spaces/processes of mind and society. The subcomponents within the processes are sequential and occasionally parallel and simultaneous. The subcomponents of the forces illustrate their specific distributions based on availability (e.g. convenience), which are limited and regulated by the motivational vectors. The mathematical designations link these to fundamental dimensions in physics, illustrating the mind's attempt to emulate the functional processes of cosmology.

We should note the outer or external change variables (second row) include social AND environmental changes. This is a transcendental marriage between Eastern axiomatic and holistic thinking, and the atomization of Western idealism and realism, providing the whole in such a manner that it can be examined as such or in its distinct and real parts. We should note also that the variable in the middle of these diagrams are created, and where there is absence only complex forms can be observed. What is created necessarily ends, but the other parts are in an eternal process of transformation such that they are never actually lost (principle of conservation), whether officially combined into creation or not.

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Chapter 0—The Way (Tao)

The Qabalistic Tree (The Affecting Essence)

In the beginning
there was Way—
and Soul it formed:

Zero created one,
One created Two,
Their union made Three—

From Three roots
four trunks issued:
Family, Father, Mother, Son—

Family to Father,
to Mother, to Son
connected six ways—

And each grew out:
When Mother created
Father destroyed—

Son faithfully upheld:
Then creation felt
Destruction reasoned—

As Son merged these
the gate of subconscious opened
And Sister stepped out—

From the gateless gate
communion so baptized her—
incarnated essence ensouled.

Nine trunks and limbs
Twenty-two branches and roots
build themselves to her zenith—

In her empty womb she bears:
Fruit of Way she shall birth
The transformation—Soul of future

Emptying the Self (The Effecting Spirit)

Shell of substance
bound by essence of spirit
the fragile vessel defines Self
whose rigid boundaries entrap—

The manifested egg says:
“I bear and protect fruit
I am love and life
I Have.”

Substance gives image
Image inspires perception
Perception births illusion
Grandmother of suffering—

Grandmother illusion says:
“I expect of you
I act on you
I Will.”

Waves of Spirit energize
Tides of Emotion tumble
Currents of Mind rock
And Substance crushes—

Precious contents spill
Feeling and Spirit scatter
The incorporeal waters run
as vessel becomes channel—

The open channel says:
“From goodness calamity emerges
From calamity arises goodness
I Am.”

Not cupping, holding or clinging
Substance of channel decays
unmanifested emptiness unreflecting—
illusory roots of suffering wilt.

Emptiness says:
“Action without action
Am—am not no-thing
Therefore

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The Mystery Card

(The Effectual Way)

Chapter 5—Way of Soul (Keys) (Higher Arcana)

Key 0 The Fool

Looking up, he steps
Through the channel
into the great mystery—

Substance released
flowing with love
seeking knowledge—

His mind wanders
and dog follows
seeing but not telling—

Judgment empty
he feels stillness
the poet settles—

From ignorance and love
desire for truth
adventure encourages—

Seeker is he
of mind concept—
finder of self.

Key I The Mage

His formless form
his own incantation
and greatest work—

A reflected image
of emotion alone
his very substance—

Bound by love
of romancing destruction
mother of creation—

Master of mind
the spirits obey
his every silence—

Sacrifice they offer
from spirit to substance
they build repentance—

The cosmic pillar
supporting one and all—
manifests his strength.

Key II The Maga (High Priestess)

Quietly she sits
cloaked in mystery
watching the gods
by the Silver Star's light—

Mirror of breathe
reflecting love's light
where force joins form
home of the spirits—

Such pure knowledge
in perfect polarity
a window to insight
herself uninvolved—

Memory perfected:
past, present, future
in total understanding
herself timeless—

Holder of nature's laws
her scepter heals
incantation of equilibrium
she is love balanced—

An open channel
crosses breath to beauty
cosmic to specific
physical to spiritual.

Key III The Empress

A radiating beauty
her spirit illuminates

Male and female unified
in perfect receptivity

In harmony with beasts
she balances nature

Imagination unleashed
patterns become substance

Her blood an ocean
transformed to milk

Essence of pregnancy
giving souls birth

The ultimate creator
universal mother

In death souls return
through her door

Renewing her fertility
of Mother Nature.

Key IV The Emperor

Eye of wind opens
window of soul

The divine architect
invisible father time

What the window knows
the frame contains

Changing what he can
accepting what he cannot

In crossing he inseminates
engendering nature's offspring

He serves his subjects
giving stability and security

Upon sacrifice he builds
endearing influence

His hand gentle
his heart steady

Ever enduring
fatherly compassion.

Key V The Hierophant

Upon his throne he sits
in perfect meditation

His is the nail
He acts naught
He says naught
Doing everything

His Will alone doing
his power emanates

The planes
his subjects
Centered in all
he binds together

Reflecting spiritual being
paradoxes he balances

Ever attentive
yet unjudging
caution unmoved
mediating and initiating.

Key VI The Lovers

The sword slashes
disseminating all:
left from right
top from bottom
up from down
male from female
substance from spirit—

Forever separate
mother and son
children of a god
longing for unity
her womb for a fetus
him to fill a womb
living and dying alone—

From trials overcome
wings of love strengthen
beauty and attraction form
within and without mutually
What is forever separated
discovers and shares
sheathing the sword.

Key VII The Chariot

Forever in motion
directed or undirected
The turning wheels
conquer distance

Vengeance presumes
as war provides repose
The path of self
a battlement arena

Upon spirit force
the expression carries
Seeking new fields
desirous of conquest

Spokes click
cobblestones pop
The wheels stop
expression complete

The waters calm
and wind stills
dust of Earth settles
the flames recede

Original mind found
the quest ends
spirit reveals soul
the chariot parks.

Key VIII Strength

The walls built
body complete
only roof lacks

The spirit enters
chisel in one hand
ax in the other

Centered he stands
feet implanted in Earth
his head in the sky

He chips
He cuts
forming himSelf

A pillar he makes
the house's strength
and life force

Wind of sky settles
the roof affixed,
tiles of mind

Rain water runs round
surrounded with feeling
yet within is emptiness

Within to discover
to find divine usefulness
what is empty is full

Key IX The Hermit

Through barren desert
wanders he, staff in hand
his only company: sand

One foot before the other
future afore, past trodden
forever in the present

The wind gusts
he does not grasp
but lets it go

Alone in the crowd
pillar of selfhood
leader of heroes

Crowded when alone
selfhood submersed
in cosmic harmony

Model of prudence
spoken vows unkept
the unspoken done

Marriage divine
himself undivided
spirit and soul one

In his eye divine love
and in his pure heart
the Kingdom of Heaven.

Key X Wheel of Fortune

Sol's twilight raises
veil of darkness falls away
dew settles the Earth
a sprout issues forth—

Sol opens her eye
warmth reaches out
life flourishes in plenty
as the sprout buds—

Midday comes in glory
as the bud blossoms
red petals of love
gold triangles adorn them—

By afternoon scent rises
the sky clear and blue
A butterfly lands, proud
his wings gently waving—

He searches and finds
honey among stamens
spores cling to his legs
stamens conceive from him—

Sol flares purple and sets
pedals fall away for seed
the stem breaks and drops
planting for tomorrow's show

Key XI Justice/Karma

In suffering lay joy:
in will, love is law
in law, love is will.

In faith, love is balance
in balance, love is faith—
In love is divinity.

Past and future are now
dissemination leaves is-ness
no past—future only now.

Gates of Will swing
thought alone action
as the soul listens

Love, hate, suffering—
birth, life, death—
eternal cycles of now-ness

Key XII The Hanged Man

Hung in the town square
his feet toward Heaven
while other's feet are down
pointing to Hell—

Once submersed
he walked with men
he talked with women
socialized with reason

He has risen up
trials gave wisdom
intuition and divination
from sacrifice, discernment

Solitude brings discovery
loss brings appreciation
bondage yields freedom
Eyes closed he sees all—

The choice his own
truth through retreat
unbent—mind freed
water flowing freely

Wind blowing hair
but the mind is still—
in clear apperception
He is the Prophet.

Key XIII Death

Well of Creation
though infinitely vast
gives only upon receipt

Sacrifice nostalgia—
in parting new beginnings
new friends and joys

Sacrifice the idea—
solution is born
creativity abounds

Sacrifice the self—
spirit is unleashed
the soul reveals

Process and motion—
the way of nature
changing, renewing

Indifferent, unstoppable—
surrender to nature
become nature's master.

Key XIV Temperance

The Middle Path
she flies freely
Wings cutting mind—
Her feet stride substance
She transcends oceans
emotions cannot cling—
Preened with soul
in perfected balance
fires of spirits reflect—
She gives only as taken
Takes only as given—
Possessing all and none
Doing others as they would
have done them—
She can never wrong
Temptation unknown
passion has no root—
suffering impossible
The Cosmic Principle
ultimate golden mean—
her essence and substance.

Key XV The Devil

Perceived duality
believed chaos and order
the faith his staple—
Antithesis of good
anti-substance
unsouled, unfeeling—
His thought our own
attitude his substance
driven by aggressive lust—
Limits for naught
devouring our denials
exposing weaknesses—
The shadow mirror
inverting the light
reversing the good—
Ignorance his friend
his chains contradiction
intolerant, un-accepting—
Balance of spirit
love and truth
his natural enemies.

Key XVI The Tower

Planted on Earth
pointing to Heaven
a pinnacle of invention—

Its surface smooth
Wind of mind worn

Bricks of perception
believed experience
knowledge and wisdom

Blackened and hardened
heat of spirit tempered

Under construction
though already complete—
the weight mounts

Bricks crumble it crashes
the occupants evicted

Misery a deception
indigence, disgrace
facades of ruin—

Down to true reality
a long fall from such height

Reality only imagined
adversity of life false—
false reality destroyed.

Through mind they pass
On Earth they will land

Illusion fed distress
attachment created
calamity born of illusion

As the tower falls
channel of reality opens

Key XVII The Star

Sky black
a point lumens

Glittering
camp fire of sky

Yellow, white
yellow again

Seemly close
yet heavenly far

Earth escapes
body abandoned

Rising higher
bright hopes propel

Sky prospector
introspecting the millennia

Distance erases
relativity pinpoints

Void fills emptiness—
True Self experienced

Key XVIII The Moon

Quiet gray mate
deceiving darkness
revealing danger

Hidden enemies—

Mystery of sky
opposite Earth
opposite the Sun

Somehow balancing—

Wisely passive
shadow of light
exposing dark fears

Night paths seen—

Seductive orb
path of death—life
a soul healing mirror

Key XIX The Sun

Green leafed womb
the fetus sleeps
fearing waken ness—

Comfort in darkness
warmth the bud covets
fearing the unknown—

Inexperienced, untrusting
un-accepting, disbelieving
its faith wanton—

The womb unfolds
the bud awakens
fear overpowered—

The Gnostic eye opens
seeing the divine face
the life force of love—

In perfect realization
harmony faces self
the highest consciousness—

A divine marriage
eternity's gold circle
rings self with contentment—

Yellowed from darkness
the pedals turn white—
the rose beams its glory

Key XX Judgment/Resurrection

Her spiritless spirit
forever rescinding
process of non-being—

Embodiment of judgment
of intuitive wisdom alone
nature of her process—

Released by hate
of dispassionate creation
father of eradication—

Subject of spirit
souls enjoin her
the fathomless ocean—

Sacrifice received
from substance to spirit
repentance destroyed—

The cosmic ocean
surrounding all and one—
expresses deliverance.

Key XXI The Universe

The poet dances
completely exposed
soul of the gods
All things hear—

Body of spirit
containing darkness
where love joins hate
sky of mind—

Unknowing
duality absent
door to being
non-being to door—

Timelessness perfected:
past, present, future
perfectly oblivious
yet the essence of time—

Nature's laws
injuring and healing
apathetically empathic
cosmic become specific

Expression pure essence—
dressed with emptiness
poet becomes poem
poem becomes universe

Chapter 1—Way of Spirit/Id (Fire, Wands, Clubs)

Father Spirit (11) The Patriarch

Throne of gold
lion emblazoned
sapphire adorned
cloaked in dust—

The master gone
Passion his steed
burning club in hand
his crown sparkles—

Dark tall man
a man of the country
mindful yet unjudging
teacher of change—

Friendly and honest
yet restless and seeking
he never rests
always emitting—

Grayed from smoke
eternally burning
voracious for tinder
to feed his energy—

Victory or defeat
pleasure or pain
He knows them not—
flame of will he is.

Mother Spirit (12) Spirit of Love

Her ruby-red throne
the shape of a heart
Cupid's forearm rests
arrows drawn, ready—

A lion her footrest
teeth anxious, hungry
blood of anger
its nose seeks—

Her scepter a torch
lighting the path
guiding spirits to love
themselves and others—

Unpredictable as fire
subdued with water
Her power subtle
when balanced here—

A conduit of power
her lightning arrows
penetrating flames
drive hearts to passion—

Grayed by her torch
teaching love's light
discovered in the dark—
the flame of love she is.

Brother Spirit (13) Spirit of Intellect

Lion-headed horse
with flaming mane
hooves sparking
his faithful friend—

Height he seeks
peace he offers
courage-undaunting
war he will fight—

Warrior-emissary
passion of wind
a revolutionary
ever romantic—

Through light and dark
his pursuit tireless
past and future follow
wisps across sky—

The way he knows
he steps and leaps
ably landing
in the light of mind—

Ever expanding
child of light and love
giving warmth and vision—
spiritual insight he is.

Sister Spirit (14) Spirit of Substance

The pure virgin
innocent yet adept
silently accepting
embodying change—

Secretly absorbing
her flames devouring
returned spirits
she submerses—

To her Self aware
a mystery for others
appearing impulsively
showing the unusual—

Assertively gentle
a captivating beauty
impassioned enough
to boil oceans—

She enchants
eager for love
sensually worldly
pouring her light—

Magic of willful love
force of procreation
though herself barren—
consciousness of life

One of Spirit Force

Wand put forth
a hand offers
the power seed—

A womb it seeks
to find beginning
in its ending—

To create
To invent
unfettered, raw—

Glowing iridescent
genesis issues
life begins—

The eye opens
empty, blind
unbent masculinity—

On a new quest
for love, for fortune—
and the spirit of life

Two of Spirit Convergence

Black and white
negative and positive
everything and nothing—

From one came two
unfocussed, polarized
the winner is the loser—

From wealth comes poverty
From poverty comes wealth
the ruler rules himself—

Taking is giving
Giving is taking
sacrifice is renewed—

Male and Female
joined yet unseeded
the enterprise begun—

The pupil emerges
reflecting and receiving
the spirit manifests—

The past is empty
the future unfilled—
spirit child unconceived

Three of Spirit Breath of Light

Power of wand
meets womb of eye
and Light is born—

The infant emerges
the void it fills
its breath visible—

The converged sees
force focuses
Light becomes—

Light causes darkness
heat causes cold
breath the spirit of life—

The warm breath inseminates
womb of emptiness releases
Expressing and multiplying—

Child of unified love
enterprising, discovering
conceiving and strong—

One became two
and two begat three
Parent of all things

Four of Spirit The Prism

Three corners built
tapered walls surround
the floor encloses—

Layer by layer
Stone by stone
Year after year—

Wane they did not
desirous were they
producing with purpose—

Future through dimension
Their love of form
drove them here—

Peak to heaven
stairway to spirits
hopes for future gains—

Prosperity and harmony
their fortune turns as old dies
transcending the stones—

They perceive success
ability in this enterprise
moved by their blocked reality.

Five of Spirit The Prison

The seeker wanders
his spirit he covets
He knows not geography
yet believes his ability
Bars of fire stand
powered by perception
Wand of spirit entrapped
the eye cannot see
Conflict appears outside
yet its home is within
Falsity becomes him
The mirror unreflecting
In destroying his image
he surrenders himself
The prison shrinks
flames seeking sustenance
The wand burns
feeding its prison

Six of Spirit Triumph

The builder destroys
yet builds anyway
The seeker loses
yet seeks anyway
Their motivation strong
yet misdirected—
What was manifest
degrades to nothing
Burned corporeal
returns to incorporeal—
What lacked substance
becomes something
Burned incorporeal
becomes corporeal—
Sacrifice of self
desire burns away the wand
Heat and breath given
spirit incarnates and is found

Seven of Spirit Courage

On a dais he stands
his staff in hand—
Six staves approach
bent toward him—
No exit nor escape
salvation in himself—
To live, to die
the choice his—
Confidence lost
assured doom
Inner faith held
pillar of success.

Eight of Spirit Lightening Path

Cupid's arrows fly
the phantom force
of love perceived—
In each ventricle
both hearts pierced
undeniably real—
Lightning jumps
magnets polarized
the gap diminishes—
Faster and faster
no stronger energy
nothing so quick—
Quantum skips
time leaps back
and jumps ahead—
Space unbound
the path drawn—
transmission complete.

Nine of Spirit Eye of Spirit

Battlement guarded
mature warrior waits

From here he sees
spirit of life revealed

The eye understands
the lessons of years

To love is to live
to war is to lose

To wage peace
do not be coveted

The staff of defense
stands erect, ready

Foes seek without
and force they find

Friends seek within
A torch they have

As the staff burns
spirits reveal

Ten of Spirit The Castle

Above the village
a moat of fire
circles the peak—

Spires grow there
buttresses rise up
towers stand as trees—

Dungeon beneath
dark and damp
hides undesirables—

Gray brick wall
stained from smoke
captures them all—

Bridge half-open
ready to receive
ready to captivate—

Nobility protected
the mind contained
oppressing itself

Chapter 2—Way of Intellect/Ego

(Wind, Mind, Swords, Spades)

Father Intellect (11) Analysis

Blue crested stallion
of billowy winds
ideas alone guide
his flying throne—

His scepter a sword
cleaving clouds of falsity
stirring understanding
himself ever changing—

His young mind
raging storms
overlying systems
torrential tyrant—

His old mind
a gentle breeze
settling leaves of ignorance
judging through leadership—

Around the Earth
his flow contains
regulating waves
supporting the heavens—

Beyond time
reaching all places
attached to none—
judge of thought he is.

Mother Intellect (12) Complete Thought

Saddened widow
brow low with sadness
mourning the separation
love scattered—

Colorful butterfly
her intellect flying
world over in his honor
to share his essence—

Her scepter a sword
blazing her way
exploring and observing
learned yet ever learning—

Unyielding to force
slashing severity
with zealous razor wit
clearing the wind—

Faithful wife
serving her husband
his form not the matter
she cleanses him—

Her dancing form
glows at dawn and dusk
brilliant and beautiful—
Balance of mind she is.

Brother Intellect (13) Prince of Indecision

Brave warrior
sailor of wind
direction uncertain
ever changing—

Wind changes
and he opposes
raising resistance
sword of aspiration—

To be a pinnacle
to build substance
to be in control
his desires—

Attention coveted
always in view
yet unreachable
defensively distant—

Quick to fight
for his ideas
courage his cloak
not his substance—

Never completing
always beginning
innovating and charging—
his will uncommitted.

Sister Intellect (14) Warrior for Truth

Slayer of ignorance
her sword cuts swift
freeing the consumed
victims of inquisition—

Stabilizing minds
eliminating the illusions
the false commitments
making ideas real—

Authoritative, watchful
she sets standards
swiftly enforcing
divorcing foolishness—

Her speech direct
always eloquently clear
pointedly brilliant
but never clever—

Devotion to ideas
makes her a success
receptive to the new
endears her—

Cutting womb of mind
a midwife of thought
transcending by will alone—
birthing intellect of form.

One of Intellect Dawn

On the horizon
the sword appears,
bright and sharp—

Hot edge cutting
clouds and darkness flee
and wind prevails—

The day is new
change begins
as the mind opens—

Forces of intellect
gusting forth
empty yet full—

Discovery, knowledge
shaped fruits growing
seeking stillness—

The eye tears,
dried by the mind
yet still seeing—

Find it will
knowledge and feeling
but grasp it cannot

Two of Intellect The Crossing

The chariots cross
the tower in the shadow
the Moon darkens—

The Sun's glow encircles
hallowing the dark sphere
as a star observes—

Overhead two doves fly
one toward the light
one toward the dark—

Swords they carry
swinging in the wind
crossing as an X—

Half in the dark
half in the light
she sits, white robed—

Her legs crossed
arms and hands open
passively receiving—

Blindfolded, knowing not—
receiving all, conformed
absorbing the duality

Sea of tranquility—
her intimate affection
mind placated yet moving

Three of Intellect Recognition

Experienced old caterpillar
his skin ever damp
no light can dry—

Knowing of his death
a coffin he weaves
shaded from curiosity—

In death he impregnates
having seen naught
innocence transmutes—

New body ensouled
struggles for freedom
for growth and strength—

First one wing
then the other
he emerges—new

Wings fanning wind
the light dries
perception sees—

Now he knows
he understands—
his flight assured

Four of Intellect Mastery

Attentive she sits
she listens, absorbs
she thinks and learns—

With her hands
experience feels
she understands—

With her mind
speculation kills
she analyzes—

With her eyes
creation sees
she applies—

With her body
genesis provides
she becomes—

With her voice
she shares herself
she teaches—

Once the student
now the teacher—
master of one.

Five of Intellect Fear

Smoke rises
heat intensifying
he awakes—

At first startled
as chaos mounts
flames jumping—

Escape!
He leaps—runs
for safety—

Garden sanctuary
he watches awed
as everything burns—

All the memories
all the heirlooms
Everything! Everything!

My WIFE!
MY CHILDREN!
Not them too.

His head hangs
water gathers
as the fight loses—

Eyes sunken
they drop and open
the fire illuminating—

No reflection
no shadow, no feet—
Where am I?

Am I dreaming?
Am I in there?
What is real here?

Six of Intellect Clarity

Resting on the river
moored with a vine
the boat awaits
journeys remembered—

Once a lifeboat
student of a yacht
she learned to ferry
without upsetting—

Many the envoys
many untold destinations
always one-certainty
crossing helped—

Then he came
and she taught him
how to balance
relax and float—

He ventured
soon independent
he cast off his oars
and she cautioned—

Now he ferries
and she watches, lonely—
seeing his new ways
she studies and hopes

Seven of Intellect Tower of Babel

The heroes gathered
before Earth rounded
a time long forgotten—
Heaven lay on Earth
smothering her
nothing could grow

From the four directions
they braved terrains
rough, barren, desolate—
In the middle they met
concentrating they erected
and pushed Heaven up

A great pillar built
Heaven beyond sight
such was its height—
Plants began growing
water could flow
Earth came to life

The heroes pleased
they looked about
appreciating the beauty—
Studying the beauties
they learned, understood
and were impassioned

Down it came
sword of understanding
cleaving the pillar—
heat of passion vaporizing
the four parts scattered
to the corners of Earth

Heaven fell into sight
Earth wrapped onto itself
the winds forging it—
At their corners
they clashed and bounced
back to the center

Again they met
clashed and bounced
holding Earth's shape—
Heaven just in reach
bouncing and clashing
passionately uncontrolled

Eight of Intellect Still Winds

Power of mind
blows and gusts
this way and that—

His own womb
his own father
breath his birth—

Diverging blindly
wandering forces
untouchable, unfocussed—

He pushes everywhere
yet cannot be free
his own jailer—

The warmth comforts
darkness welcoming
still he desires—

Studying intensely
gusting more, blowing
no other way out—

He pushes more
cannot break—pushing
exhausted he stops—

Gust become breeze
breathing his focus
relaxing into himself—

The breeze quiets
the leaves settle
his path opens

Nine of Intellect Eye of Mind

The eyes watch
thoughts anticipate
judgment renders—

Darkness falls
the demons emerge
creatures of fear—

The tower they erect
a moat surrounding
its waters burning—

Terror pushes them
and they storm
readied for battle—

The beast must die!
Their battle song
echoing throughout—

He looks again
"You lie mirror
tower of illusion"—

"My dream, my rule
I create and devise
Let there be beauty"—

Light returns
tower evaporates
the garden is lush—

Winds of projection
the mirror reflects
minds of one heart

Ten of Intellect The Sacrifice

Confusion mounts
the hill crest attacked
the warriors struggle—

Distant generals watch
safe from calamity
minds in the battle—

Each life lost
a mother's mourning
their lovers cry out—

Is the tower worth it?
We can build another
live and love another day—

Life too precious
the axe is hungry
denied blood it starves—

The ravens fly high
the arrows pierce
from holes souls escape—

To the Great Mother
swimming in her sea
feeling her love—

She weeps and twists
Earth shakes angry
the skies cloud—

This is not the way.
Withdraw. Offer love—
compromise and accept

Build a new tower
Find the beauty—
that is the way

Chapter 3—Way of Emotion/Mutual-Ego

(Water, Cups, Hearts)

Father Emotion (11) Love Rekindled

White crested stallion
of wild ocean waves
moon and wind guided
his moving throne—

Look! He sparkles
his direction changing
light reflects as new
though itself unchanged—

Pure truth
makes him buoyant
the universe his guide
he looks in and flows—

Elusive, uncapturable
conforming himself
in his own likeness
creating and recreating—

He moves mountains
without expending effort
motion without energy
substance without bound—

Reaching great depths
extending great distances
master of himself—
love renewed he is.

Mother Emotion (12) Matriarch of Love

Emerald throne
dolphin emblazoned
diamond adorned
cushions felted—

Her beauty surrounds
feeling glows, enlightening
dreams crown her
her cup runs over—

Her milk nourishes
Illusions she pours
of love and happiness
yet herself calm—

A sea personified
reflecting and glimmering
her tides gently forceful
moving, captivating—

Silvered like a mirror
her waves polish
truth spirals out
in perfect light—

Devout woman
serving and giving
her wisdom fathomless—
waters of virtue and love.

Brother Emotion (13) The Poet

Love dreamer
floating on illusions
with butterfly wings
inviting feelings—

Spirits of subconscious
guide his journey
to Heaven and Earth
he listens intently—

To find beauty
the color of smell
the sound of touch
he expresses—

A cup he wields
sword of his heart
ever seeking
love's fulfillment—

Quick to give
satisfaction his price
fulfilling his selfhood
selfishly selfless—

Painting the wind
sculpting the spirit
imagination unleashed—
the beauty way his will.

Sister Emotion (14) Intuitive Love

Ravishing beauty
a tender mother
quietly in balance
her work pure—

Diamond of reflection
her waves clear
giving deep vision
focused introspection—

Bringer of peace
her waters tranquil
harmony follows
with health and fertility—

A fair maiden
always in the light
always moving
to share blessings—

A voice of elegance
breeze of passion
her songs enchanting
filling the world—

Imparter of oaths
delivering sacred vows
the force of love—
fantasy turned real.

One of Emotion Open Channel

The brim wears
and water prevails:
the channel opens—

A dove lands
dipping its communion
in the wine of life—

Unaffected, feeling flows
nourishing and abundant
toward joy, contentment—

The cup runs over
into the cosmic sea
of peace, love, life—

Everything passes here
yet nothing remains—
open, free, untarnished

The true heart:
a mirror reflecting—
unconditionally healing

Two of Emotion Sacred Cord

Two cups
merged as one
an eternal union—

Matrimony of love
separate yet joined
the sea flows freely—

Self marries spirit
essence joins substance
darkness embraces light—

Stamen and pestle
stand as one
roots shared—

The burning joy
devout feeling
pours into the sea—

No restraint
yet complete passion
an unbreakable bond—

Alone when together
together when apart—
disunity at one with unity

Three of Emotion Stream of Love

Water through wind falls
the dry hill quenched
and life appreciates

The thirsty now full
sick become healthy
prosperity perfects

Satisfied they release
modestly the hill shares
its sacrifice humble

The trickle flows
first slow, weak
it grows stronger

The bed widens
the depth invites
the fish conceive

The sun glistens
a rainbow reflects
love flows with surety

Four of Emotion The Flood

From streams and falls
the river converges

What was clear
is now muddied

What was gentle
is now forceful

What was cool
has become cold

Motion draws energy
dragging substance

Force entrenches
the channel deepens

Banks collapse
feeling, wandering

Waters discontent
they search beyond

Always they return
more muddied

Five of Emotion The Spilling

Divine grails fill
antipathy shudders
three of five tip—

False hopes
imagined commitments
unreality spilled

Their waters scatter
the demon returned
to his dungeon—

Only truth and love
remain standing
their wine sweet—

The marriage frustrated
three wines sacrificed
the table in disrepair

Six of Emotion Faith

Cups with flowers
tiny hands hold
the garden a playground—

She watches quietly
memories of naivety
innocence in a window

Experience and feelings
relationships and love
all started there—

Hardships and sorrows
sufferings and losses
all ended there—

Heart found here
meaning and truth
impermanence apprehended

Seven of Emotion Insight

In a vast room
with no shadows
it stands centered—

A giant chalice
polished and empty
reflection untarnished

In its vast well
the sprite is seen
flying fairy of love

The eye soars
emptiness fills
the full reflected—

Fleeting dreams
mind-spirit exposed
Self-envisioned

Eight of Emotion Still Waters

The goblet still
water trembles within
his reflection distorted—

Eyes thirst
breath thickening
his mind seeks—

Inching closer
faster—intense
goblet remains still.

Stepping on the table
water turns violent—
goblet and table still.

He puts a toe in
less violence—
another, even less.

Stepping in
somehow he fits
dissolving as he sinks—

Eyes quench
breath thins
mind relaxes

The water calms
more and more
goblet and table still.

The table joins
as salt dissolving
chairs, legs, top—

Calmer
almost unmoving
goblet still.

Goblet dissolves
water stills—
consuming itself

Nine of Emotion Rainbow Mirror

Reflection of reflection
light of spirit bends

Clear, invisible
now the spectrum

Red to violet
eye cannot see

Mind un-apprehending
beyond intellect

Beginning and ending
unfound, untouchable

Reflection felt
blood becomes joy

The teat swells
and Self suckles

Eyes roll back
content, satisfied

Love centers
and is nurtured

Ten of Emotion Fountain of Love

On top the angel's cup
overflows three ways
into three other cups—

Each angel pours
white lilies drink heartily
running over five ways—

Five more angels
offer cups directly
each pouring equally—

One hand offers
a flower-shaped cup
five pedals reaching—

Through the stem
their capture travels
up over top

Another hand pours
beginning the cycle
matrimony completed

Chapter 4—Way of Manifestation/Vector-Ego

(Earth, Pentacles, Diamonds)

Father Manifestation (11) The Cultivator

Throne of stone
garnished with flowers
grass lined comfort
cloaked in dewdrops—

The garden he tends
seeding and nurturing
weeding and trimming
as time dictates—

Fair man of day
radiating harmony
his thought certain
heart of compassion—

He gives himself
and his deeds grow
for they do themselves
ever in communion—

Green and brown
his hands work diligently
the spade his scepter
digging and planting—

The seasons his friends
weather his partner
Without enemies—
wealth of life he is.

Mother Manifestation (12) The Compassionate

A lily her throne
white pedals stretch
in the four directions
herself for decoration—

Her own greatest beauty
beaming with life
through her reflections
her soul crowns her—

Her dark face
absorbs the light
she lactates milk of love
life suckling her—

World in her hand
she meditates and adores
her Self she holds
still yet so alive—

Freedom she gives
generosity her nature
substance her focus
reality her contemplation—

Pillar of harmony
half in the light
half in the dark—
balance of life she is.

Brother Manifestation (13) Seed Sower

Bull of divine unity
tamed by him
he alone can ride
the cosmic cycle—

Centered in the One
understanding complete
meaning and truth
his partners—

To create beauty
to give flowers smell
to give bees sound
his meditations—

Peace in contentment
balanced by humility
nectar of his blood
avarice unknown—

Inventive and adaptive
a successful creator
giving meaningful form
to substance—

His breath he gives
seeds inseminated
he plants them—
nature's harmony his will.

Sister Manifestation (14) Princess of Fertility

Book in hand
her mind's road
to understand all
to balance all—

She watches, listens
the world teaches
spirits ever guiding
student of center—

From the past
she balances now
preparing for tomorrow
destiny her design—

The high artisan
the baking she does
fecundly ripe
her fruits bare—

Her womb the center
in perfect balance
wholeness and sight
all things contained—

Divine pregnancy
elements formed
the soul awaits—
mother of the future

One of Manifestation Form

Fire and Water merged
and force gave substance
a material product—

Five golden pedals
blossomed forth
a life circle made—

Receptacle and issuer
home of ecstasy,
beauty emanating—

The cosmic creator
perfectly contented
in equilibrium—

Her divine thought
the pure mother
loving her children—

She births and heals—
from her they come,
to her they return

Two of Manifestation Cause and Effect

One sided cord
figure eight binding
always beginning—

Sword, cup, wand
bound on one end
the other empty—

A dove flies over,
dropping a green leaf
filling the emptiness—

Below a seed sprouts
as another leaf browns
life and death shared—

Light and dark
spirit and feeling—
and mind manifests

Energy becomes
Intellect becomes
Substance becomes—

Ripe she awaits
one womb ever empty
one forever filling

Three of Manifestation Works

Mallet ticks
a chip falls
among others—

Once whole
they lay as dust
to brush away—

Mallet ticks again
a nose appears
another chip falls—

The face in stone
takes feature
begins to form—

Tick, tick, tick
chip, chip, chip
the scraps grow—

Tick, tick, tick
hair and eyes
lips and cheeks—

No longer stone
a character
face expressed—

Tick, tick, tick
Ears and neck
only one thing missing—

Stepping back
artisan studies
not sure, but . . .

The mallet done
he blows the dust
the face clear—

So precise
so real
yet empty

Four of Manifestation Power

Near the manor
a hill oversees
they build atop—

Four great walls
spiked and secure
with four towers—

Iron door affixed
treasures move in
gold, gems, grains—

The manor's wealth
locked and contained
a pinnacle to view—

The master comes
relishing his prize
only his key opens

Five of Manifestation Releasing Attachments

Divided houses
fight the generations
the ravens hover

Reason lost
Will continues
prosperity fed

The river divides
unwillingly shared
unwittingly unifies

Its banks introduced
and love grew
hidden by brush

Daily they met
secret passion
rooting deeper

Longing nights
they desired
but could not

No conflict—peace
No chasm—unity
No stock—reverence

In their adoration
matrimony recorded
forbidden become real

Together abandoning
false surety for freedom
false comfort for truth

Six of Manifestation Beauty

The wind settles
the waves still
the eye opens—

Clarity reflects
in sight of spirit
the soul manifests—

The clouds part
the sun-unveiled—
gray becomes green

Purple pedals open
fragrance issues
love of birds sings

Bees busily buzz
dancing in the air
the flowers they savor

The warmth shared
what was sick
life gives health—

The dew glistens
diamond decorations—
Earth's milk flourishes

Seven of Manifestation The Garden

Squirrels scamper
leaping across the lawn
they run up the tree

A bird flutters
startled he jumps
a branch receives him

The leaves rustle
red, brown and gold
the breeze gentle

The house watches
its curtains open
door quietly shut

No one inside
it sits lonely
waiting, longing

The dust settled
furniture covered
the webs formed

The tap drips
hoping to stream
wishing to gush

One-day reunion
joy within returned
but when?

Eight of Manifestation The Mountain

Spiked boots grip
the rock weeps
he pulls up some—

The peak a memory
not visible now
yet he persists—

Wind blows in
hard but consistent
pushing and pulling—

Clinging he tightens
resisting the thought
the rock his sanctuary—

Peak forgotten
survival his focus
keeping a sure footing—

Setting a stake
he hangs rope
loosens a little—

The rings relax
he can climb more
exploring higher—

Assent renewed
focused on the rock
wind cannot subdue

Nine of Manifestation Zenith

Blue eyes open
glistening with love
like ocean waves—

Captively twinkling
back and forth
studying their prize—

They smile
squinting so soft
so passionate—

The embrace warms
closeness tightening
cleaved not cloven—

Heart pounding
blood rushes
limbs tingling—

Numbness prevails
yet feeling continues
as two become one

Ten of Manifestation Great Work

The eye opens
water gushing
the womb pushes—

Bulbous skin
so awkward
out of place—

On it soft hair
a little bloody
its wetness shines—

Pop!
Eyes, ears, nose
suddenly appear—

Gasping
it struggles
finally breathes—

Upset
it cries
so softly—

Then a shoulder
an arm
another arm—

Body follows
legs unfolding
stretching

rūnLǐ Ching
(Classic of Ethic)

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Introduction

The Tao Te Ching was originally two scrolls, the first character of one being Tao (way) and of the other being Te (virtue or power). Later it was divided by traditional notions into 81 untitled poems (see theme, word, and line indexes), which is somewhat awkward since it is really a continuous poem. In keeping with the later tradition, the rūnLǐ Ching is divided into 81 untitled poems. Unlike the Tao Te Ching, these are self-contained rather than imposed after the fact.

The rūnLǐ Ching is a contemporary treatment of conventional ethics. It is not a comprehensive axiology, though it does point to concepts of the Ethical and endeavors to represent universal human values. Human values are an abstraction to true universal axiology, essentially the imperfect psycho-social emulation of reality in an attempt to apperceive and interact with that reality. This and related abstractions are the “illusion.” Without this illusion, human society breaks down. Individually breaking the illusion creates opportunities to guide psycho-social evolution, but ejects the master from being a functional member of society.

The rūnLǐ Ching is an exhibition of concentrated and distilled wisdom, which is NOT a sign of mastery, but is a prerequisite. Wisdom is a working understanding of the processes within the human illusion. Mastery begins with right understanding and application of wisdom followed by divorcing the illusion for greater values. That is for another book. These are not poems for meditation, and hence the near-absence of metaphor. They are distillations of meditations conducted over nine days as with the LǐJiě Ching and Ch’an Ching (the other two parts of the “Three Classics”/3-Ching ideograms on lower left of cover). While there is ample space for thought, their rigidity is consistent with lesser humanism rather than natural fluidity. They serve their purpose in human wisdom and little more.

樸
麻
子

1

Personal
self-guiding,
self-motivating;

Rule of
personal magnitude,
standardized action;

Dutiful
pre-chosen reactions
to common events;

Emotional,
regulating the uncommon,
a duty to respond;

A rule,
sometimes universal,
usually personal;

A duty,
to fit the environment,
to be an individual

2

Universal,
common moral;

A duty
to act;

Motive
to be virtuous;

Formalized
in justice;

Lived
by humaneness;

Motivated
by selflessness.

3

Predetermined
moral action;
need of circumstance
with preferences;

Environmentally
and socially
specific:
moral ritual.

Predetermined
ethical action;
need of circumstance
without preferences;

Neither social
nor environmental:
ethical ritual
universally applies.

Universal action,
universal utility,
without desire,
universally harmonious;

Through discipline
ritual creates
order, hierarchy—
becoming ethics.

4

The energy
put forth
to actualize—

Making something
happen by doing
physically or mentally.

Disciplined, focused,
directed energy
is effort.

Apply enough
effort to a task
to ensure completion.

Too much
or too little
is wasted effort.

5

On long journeys
the lazy
carry nourishments.

The heavy burden
begins full,
becomes empty.

Set the lazy
to difficult jobs
and watch.

Learn from
lazy ways
simple solutions.

For the lazy,
hard work
becomes easy.

6

Control fantasies
and physical urges.

Eat
until satisfied.

Never eat
to fullness.

Drink little,
only to satisfy—

Never drink
to fullness.

The body
suffers from excess;

Excess is wasted,
making unnecessary work.

Make only
impermanent plans.

Never dream
of fantastic ends.

Life is
forever changing—

Fantasy detracts
from reality.

Find satisfaction
in reality.

7

Discipline brings
self-realization
and harmony.

All goals
are accomplished when
none are made.

All needs
are satisfied:
without desire.

Harmony
brings completeness
and utility.

The body disciplined
gives birth to humanity,
and suffering ends.

8

Order is discipline,
the art of priority.

Through priority,
hierarchy is created,

Giving perceptions
rank and value.

Highest value:
greatest priority.

Physical sustenance,
physical safety,

Self-actualization:
priority of needs.

Universal utility,
mindful compassion,

Selfless humanity—
the ethical hierarchy.

Ethics before needs:
order of harmony.

9

Focus energy
on the ethical.

What remains
focus on needs.

If more
still remains,

Be generous:
give where needed.

Save no energy
for personal desire.

Starve out desire:
nourish righteousness.

10

Remain centered
above abstraction,
above ambiguity.

Maintain the fundamental
within simplicity,
within comprehension.

Never assume absolute,
never claim absolute,
never believe absolute.

Question all,
answer none,
act on emptiness.

By learning
we unlearn,
violating reality.

When unlearning,
empty your mind:
find true understanding.

11

Complex broken
to basic parts.

Each part
a new problem.

Each problem
more parts.

Every part
has definition.

Sum the definitions:
define the complex.

Complex problem:
fundamental solution.

12

The master lives fundamentally,
without care for ambiguity.

In the fundamental:
the true master.

Anything fundamental
can be answered.

A fundamental question
answers itself.

Define the parts:
no problems exist.

With parts defined:
fundamental is realized.

13

Define self
through realization.

With self defined
all lesser also.

To define greater,
self must be greater.

To empty self,
release self.

Remove self:
attain pure emptiness.

In pure emptiness
realize no-thing.

Rise above
by dropping below.

Omniscient,
all is defined.

14

To acquire understanding
is to learn.

To continue learning
is to teach.

The teacher
is receptive—

A resource
for the student—

A resource
for the community—

Open to change,
to new knowledge.

The teacher
brings culture—

Expanding knowledge,
expanding thought—

For a future
of unforeseen need.

15

Be mindful
of other students.

Find an interest
and learn it.

Teach yourself,
supplement the classroom.

Be open
to other fields—

Be mindful
as a professional.

Be a virtuous student.
Be a virtuous professional.

16

The one who
is confident
will make mistakes.

The unsure
will be cautious,
making few mistakes.

Be confident
doing a task—
unsure of the results.

Be confident
you can learn—
unsure of understanding.

Be confident
you can teach—
unsure of knowledge.

We learn
more from failure
than from success.

17

To teach
is to communicate.

Ensure understanding
of essential materials.

Provide the fundamentals
for problem solving.

Encourage critical thought
through challenging problems.

Encourage interests
beyond the class.

Be a model of
satisfaction and progress.

Make students work
and feel important.

Apply students to
real, current problems.

To teach,
study the students.

18

Reality is not
fields of reality.

Fields are convenient
for human methods.

To understand reality
discard fields.

Choose a field:
limit oneself—

Never to realize
anything significant.

Pursue all knowledge—
embrace reality.

Embrace reality,
embrace the fundamental—

Let reality
answer itself,

And attain
complete understanding.

19

Using a means
that is receivable
is to transmit.

Information,
complete in itself,
is a message.

To transmit
a message
is to communicate.

To perceive
a message
is to receive.

To understand
a message
is to comprehend.

The receiver
has one duty:
to listen.

The communicator
must transmit
comprehensibly.

20

Say what you know
and never be wrong.

If you do not know,
say you do not know.

If you are uncertain,
clarify your uncertainty.

Say nothing
not knowing what to say.

Never agree or disagree
unless you understand the facts.

Never speak of another
that will cause injury.

Never offer
what is not asked for.

Never compare or compete
or speak with expectation.

Then everyone will respect
and cherish your words.

21

Duty of public office:
to educate the public
through factual adversity—

A non-conflictive discussion,
dimensionalizing an issue
for public scrutiny—

A referendum
to maintain the people's
sovereignty over politics—

Through facts
understanding is attained
of a public issue.

Through comprehension
justice is issued
by the people.

By necessity,
public debate must be
factual and comprehensive.

22

A public servant
reports to the people:

All that is good,
all that is bad;

What will be done,
what must be done;

The sacrifices to face,
by servant and people;

The benefits to gain,
by servant and people;

Why it must be,
but cannot be another.

Through truth,
empathy, sincerity;

Through decisiveness
gain trust and support.

In public address,
the people are honored.

23

Never speak
in judgment of
another's character.

Whether
good or bad,
never judge.

Report the facts
of another's actions
and characteristics:

Without inflection
in words or tone
or gestures.

Let others judge
for themselves
from the facts.

Remain upright
in your speech—
this is virtuous.

24

Listen more,
speak less.

Hold to reality,
avoiding opinions.

Study to improve,
never to impress.

Never enter into
idle gossip.

Speaking without thought,
without knowledge;

Speaking to impress—
reveals the fool.

Think first,
choose a topic,

Give facts order,
pick words carefully.

Master speaking
with discipline.

25

Never exaggerate or
claim what cannot
be lived up to.

Clever talk
used to manipulate
is eloquence.

Big words confuse.
Strange words confuse.
Complex sentences confuse.

The audience perceives
ambiguity as eloquence,
becoming deaf.

Speak in vernacular,
without eloquence or
attempting to impress.

Being eloquent
loses respect
and trust.

26

Question the less capable
without shame;
listen carefully.

Listen carefully to those
more learned or experienced:
respect and question them.

When being questioned
respect desire for knowledge—
answer mindfully.

In matters involving
beliefs and religion,
answer circumspectly.

For other questions,
answer directly, appropriately—
according to the question.

Never allow communication
to be intrusive
or derogatory.

Learn from all
questions and answers,
in spite of correctness.

27

One who speaks
with no thought
has no authority.

One who speaks
with only facts
has questioned authority.

One who speaks
never a word
has absolute authority.

28

Performing
without desire.

Acting
without action.

Method
without means.

Result
without end.

Completing
without starting.

Finding
without seeking.

Utility
without using.

Greatness
through humbleness.

Ethical
without effort.

29

Spirit—
life essence of
being and thought.

The perception
of spirit
is soul.

In an unexamined life
unperceived is spirit,
the soul unrealized.

Without a soul
life is wasted,
not worth living.

30

In work and play
be mindful.

Life is precious.
Limb is precious.

Thought is precious.
Belief is precious.

Faith is precious.
Expression is precious.

Never violate what
is precious to others.

Find virtue
in mindfulness.

31

Think positively:
about yourself,
about others,
about everything—

Never discouraged:
live in fantasy
because all things
are good in nature.

Think negatively:
be discouraged,
because all things
are bad in nature.

In duality think:
positively and negatively,
distort reality,
live uncertainty.

Discard duality:
abolish negativism,
discharge positivism,
live in reality.

Living in reality:
facts undistorted,
justice issues itself,
because nature is nature.

32

Man measures
man's perceptions.

Perceptions mislead,
are imperfect.

Imperfections multiply
in the subconscious.

Conscious, misinformed,
perceives the subconscious—

Measuring fantasy,
reality is distorted.

Nature
measures itself,

Pure
without units.

Discard measuring,
units and fantasy.

Embrace nature.
Realize reality.

33

In silence
between words:
true wisdom.

In art,
empty spaces
make the masterpiece.

In containers,
empty space
holds liquids.

Empty space
can be filled
with anything.

Keep emptiness:
never used up,
forever receptive.

34

Waste no word,
person or thought.

In mindless work,
examine yourself.

In mindful work,
focus thought on work.

With company,
examine yourself—

See yourself
reflected in others.

See within yourself
their faults and attributes.

Alone, reflect
in deep contemplation.

Reflect, listen,
focus and learn—

Never forget
to think.

35

Funeral rites
are for
the living.

Birth rites
are for
the parents.

Legal rites:
marriage, punishment, property—
are for society.

Other rites
are for
the individual.

Combine the rites:
individual and society
are unified.

36

Mind and wind:
always changing
directions.

Each moment—
different
but similar.

Controlling wind
is like
controlling mind.

Without air
is emptiness,
unmoving.

Mind empty,
nothing is held—
reality is apprehended.

37

Applying a resource
for common good,
for universal cause—
is utility.

Applying a resource
for personal need,
without desire for end—
is also utility.

Using what is needed,
not tarnishing more,
mindful of finitude—
is conservation.

To use temporarily,
with authority,
returning as needed—
is borrowing.

Returning a resource
equally or in kind
to its origin—
is retribution.

Apply utility,
borrow conservatively,
provide just retribution—
live virtuously.

38

A method
of performing
is a means.

The effect
of an act
is an end.

To act with
desire for ends
is end reasoning.

A means with
desire for ends
is means-end reasoning.

A means without
desire for ends
is virtuous.

A dutiful action
without means or ends
is ethical.

39

Acting with
understanding of facts,
mindful of circumstances,
with universal interest,
just becomes ethical.

Acting
without prejudice,
without gain,
without expectation,
just becomes virtuous.

Acting
with compassion,
investigating facts,
weighing values,
Justice is meted.

40

To decide
what is just
is to judge.

When a case
is ethically balanced,
weigh similar moral values.

When these are exhausted,
acknowledge the hardship
and dismiss the case.

In the case of
dissimilar morality,
justice has no issue—

Conflicts of
dissimilar morality
are social and cultural.

41

Ethical knowledge
comes from precedent,

Growing and expanding
through cases.

Each case
is balanced—

Both the ethical
and unethical;

The needs realized,
verdict is passed.

During the proceedings
be retributive:

Return natural balance
to inclusive resources.

In passing the verdict
be utilitarian:

Conserve resources in
a lasting balance.

42

Nature
is desirous.

Human nature
is greedy.

Ethics is above
human nature.

Ethical action
is dutiful.

Dutiful action
is utilitarian.

Nature controls,
limiting resources;

Disciplining species
through disease and famine—

Forming a need
for conformity.

Control greed,
act ethically.

43

Art is a ritual action,
a systematization
through discipline.

The poem writes itself.
The painting paints itself.
The job completes itself.

The actor actualizes
but is neither
method or product.

The glass holds
but cannot taste
or drink.

The sage reveals
but has nothing,
gives nothing.

Art is realized
not by teaching,
but by being.

The artist
is a tool:
servant of art.

44

Act as
in a crowd
when alone.

Act as
alone, when
in a crowd.

Be true
to actions
and virtue.

Only you
can forgive
yourself.

When you cannot
forgive yourself,
no one can.

Remain upright:
never need
forgiving.

45

With regulation
comes enforcement
and punishment.

Where punishment
is necessary,
exercise compassion.

Isolate social creatures,
never permitting contact
in any way—

Not with anything
through any perception:
this is social death.

Expose antisocial creatures,
remove their isolation,
violate their privacy.

The utility
of punishment:
deterrence.

Deterrence works
to a limited extent
applied to social nature.

Deterrence rarely works
as a physical danger
or loss of freedom.

46

Provide services
for others needs—

And by this
satisfy your own.

Your needs satisfied,
continue your services—

Ask nothing
in return.

Virtuous and ethical
a right livelihood—

Public service is
an ethical duty.

47

In all actions
remain ethical.

Cling not to life,
limb or thought.

Cling not to belief,
faith or expression.

Maintain mindfulness
for others' sake.

Fill your duty
without complaint.

Find absolute gladness
filling eternal aims.

48

Accept a job:
devote yourself.

Follow the description:
fulfill basic duties.

Serve your job
to your best ability.

Prove nothing,
impress no one.

Basic duties done,
find further needs.

Keep busy serving—
be an ethical worker.

49

When able
and willing,
you can.

Without ability,
without effort,
you cannot.

With effort
and thought
attain ability.

If unable,
if unwilling,
refuse the job.

Take no job
you cannot—
will not do.

50

Holding public office
is not noble.

Performing public service
is honorable.

In public office
perform public service.

Ask the people
what concerns them.

Listen carefully,
they are politics.

Research the facts,
determine a plan—

Report these
to the people.

Solicit opinions,
they are given freely.

Those who live politics
are not politicians;

Thus the people know
fundamental politics.

Make promises you can
and will keep.

Fulfill your duty
to the people.

51

Archers care not
about the target,

But tend to the
bows and arrows.

Carvers care not
about the stone,

But the condition of
hammers and chisels.

Rulers care not
about policy,

But the needs
of the people.

Care for details
and disciplined procedure.

Work is ritual
with discipline;

The results are
not important.

52

Work is ritual,
disciplined duty.

To fail ritual
is to fail duty.

Duty unfilled,
need is wanting.

Never interfere
with another's work.

Never interfere
with another's duty.

Never violate
the ethical.

Interference causes disharmony,
disrupting the environment.

By not interfering,
the environment is harmonious.

53

The sage
produces neither
needs nor implements.

Being a sage
is a ritual duty
for humanity's sake.

Without sharing wisdom
the sage is merely
a false sage.

The sage is false
who fails to contribute
to others' needs.

To be a sage,
be absolutely selfless,
working and sharing wisdom.

Be loyal and reliable;
make wisdom clear, simple—
so duties are understood.

The sage guides as
an example of humanity,
of virtue and ritual.

54

Be reliable and loyal
to your employer.

Never allow opinions
guide judgment.

Find substitutes
for necessities.

Never work for
the sake of wealth.

Avoid others who
have lesser values.

Work ritually, dutifully
with ethical satisfaction.

55

Reduce bureaucracy
in government;
Elect selfless,
mindful officials;
Keep technology
to necessity;
Pass laws when
alternatives are exhausted;
Keep no secrets
from the people;
And insure security
for people and government.

56

Big government:
more intrusive.
Small government:
less intrusive.
Mindful government:
less intrusive.
Selfish government:
more intrusive.
With technology:
more intrusion.
Legal regulations:
more intrusion.
Openness of government
reduces intrusion.
Secrecy of government:
more intrusion.
Government itself
is always intrusive.

57

Government has three duties:
protect the people's sovereignty,
serve the people's needs,
provide justice for the people.

From these three duties
spring all government duties.
Government can serve itself
only to fill these duties.

Ethical government is selfless,
without intent of gain,
tirelessly compassionate,
dutiful to the people.

58

When punishment
is necessary,
be quick and sure,

Impartial
yet humane—
never excessive.

The people's perception
of these criteria
is essential:

Thus they measure
the virtue and ethics
of their government.

Involve the people:
make enforcement ritual,
make punishment ritual.

Through ritual regulation
society will run itself
without government or laws.

59

A technical army
is a better army.

In times of peace
have them serve society.

Maintain discipline
and military training.

Keep families together:
soldiers will defend better.

As soldiers contribute
to a community—

They patriotize, empathize,
become selfless defenders.

Give soldiers
a sense of belonging.

Give soldiers
a sense of accomplishment.

Give soldiers
something worth defending.

60

During war,
honesty and communication
are essential.

Tell the people
why they fight,
why they die.

Fail in honesty,
fail in communicating,
atrrite yourself.

For a noble cause,
a cause of honor,
in another land—

Defending allies or innocents:
people will fight,
grim in their duty.

For an ethical cause,
to defend their lands,
to defend their families—

To defend an ethical government,
selflessly will they fight
and happily sacrifice themselves.

Fight a war
for another cause:
defeat yourself.

61

Dishonest candidates
fail to educate.

Unethical candidates
seek personal ends.

Such candidates
do not deserve office.

Honest candidates
educate the people.

Ethical candidates
seek the people's needs.

Such candidates
deserve office.

Moral character
is not an issue.

Ethical character
is an issue.

When no candidate
deserves office,

The people lose faith,
become anarchistic.

When two candidates
deserve office,

Find their offices:
put them into service.

62

Rule by example—
others will follow

For good or bad,
ethical or unethical.

Rule by virtue,
make government non—intrusive;

Virtue grows—
people are content.

People are sovereign
when virtue reigns.

Force unites people
against government.

Regulation unites groups
against government.

Ritual unites people
in implied government.

Never regulate
people's rituals.

63

A compassionate government,
ethically responsible,
serving its people,
remains unobtrusive.

Forever mindful
of other governments,
attentive of their needs,
honest in diplomacy.

With ethical government
peace is waged—
there are no wars.

Take up arms
only for defense,
in selfless effort,
never for gain.

With all governments ethical,
harmony prevails
and nations specialize
in a world community.

64

Emotional motivation
of a moral
is a value.

A culture's method
of measuring value
is a value system.

Emotional motivation
of an ethic
is ethical value.

The universal measure
of ethical value:
ethical value system.

A characteristic measurable
by the ethical value system
is a virtue.

65

Straw dogs never
begin, end, or fail;
never desire, pursue
or believe anything—
forever satisfied.

Straw dogs are never
born, live or die;
without perception,
spirit or soul—
eternally omniscient.

Forever pliable, contemplative
and harmonious—without
morals, values or knowledge,
straw dogs are
pure virtue.

66

Perform physical acts
for the greatest good
for the greatest number
of people.

Obey rules only
for the greatest good
for the greatest number
of people.

Disobey rules only
for the greatest good
for the greatest number
of people.

To be good
is to have utility,
a purposeful use
satisfying a need.

Different individuals,
different cultures,
different species,
different needs.

Through justice:
balance needs,
measure goodness,
establish utility.

67

Water erodes
the hardest stones.

Be as water:
flow with the stones.

Confront without confronting,
combat without combating.

Make opponents
their own enemies.

Erode their disharmony—
they defeat themselves.

Never take up arms,
never be belligerent.

Make presence
your weapon.

Use kindness—
make opponents friends.

Attain fidelity
through generosity.

68

Wanton—less
desire—lessness.

Without object,
without material;

Absent of
desired ends;

Absent of
desired gains;

Selflessly motivated,
effortlessly completed;

Possessing nothing—
thus having everything.

69

Filial children
wish to please
their parents.

In an ethical society,
with a virtuous government
and competent, compassionate leaders—

The people are educated,
practicing ritual
and living virtuously—

The people are loyal,
hard workers wishing
to please their society.

Filial in relationships,
a sense of shame
surmounts enforcement,

For loyal, filial subjects,
government must be loyal
and filial to the subjects.

70

A tree provides
shelter and nourishment,
and is satisfied.

Virtue is in giving
not receiving
a gift.

Be as a tree,
find virtue in
the art of giving.

By receiving,
give the gift again:
complete the cycle.

Maintain universal harmony
through the ritual
of giving.

71

Brave people:
never blame others,
Blaming themselves
for their own faults;
They embody greatness,
examining themselves
When exposed
to pettiness;
Their concern:
quality of action,
Not with quantity
or recognition;
They hold justice
before all else;
They fear death
for unjust causes.
Responsible, cautious and mindful
constitute bravery.

72

Never be mindful of
wrongs done to you.
Be just to inferiors,
affectionate to the young,
respectful to superiors
and relish humility—
With these virtues,
live peacefully without hate.
Concentrate on the task
and forget rewards;
work loyally and
teach what you know;
speak honestly
without eloquence—
With these virtues
live respectfully without regret.
Serve the people
what they need:
be selflessly compassionate;
be satisfied with ritual,
living without hate,
respectably and honorably—
One becomes righteous when
all virtues are embodied.

73

Solid union created
by a great
moral idea;
Eternal aims
realized in compassion
bring absolute gladness.
The spiritual
surmounts reason—
more than human.
Life's value
is respected
and appreciated.
Master of selfhood,
selfless without regret,
humanity is actualized.

74

To be human
is aesthetic;
To be more human
is ethical.

Instinct put aside,
a great moral idea reigns;
Inclination to survive aside,
eternal aims dominate.

Hold the metaphysical
before the physical;
the incorporeal
before the corporeal.

Faithful to a belief,
holding an oath
of an oath,
be ethically motivated.

Without personal gain,
mindful and humble,
compassionate without regret,
be righteously altruistic.

With a great moral idea,
with eternal aims,
with altruistic righteousness
attain selfhood.

75

In individuality
is specialization.

In culture
is socialization.

We work and live
in social groups.

By specializing
create a team.

Fulfill the needs
of the community.

Fulfill the needs
of the individual.

76

Water nourishes
without giving.

The sun heats
without giving.

Air gives life
without giving.

Be benevolent
in your presence.

Without being asked,
give without expectation.

Selflessly compassionate,
water becomes humane.

77

Every day I watch
the children play—

They pass their laws
and scold each other;

They build and construct
what they desire;

They destroy everything
they desire not—

Hurting each other,
destroying each other—

Calling themselves adults.
When is their maturation?

78

A desire
to live—

To fill needs,
nothing else—

Innocent of
pain and suffering,

Of knowledge
and maturity.

Without judgment
or preconceived ideas

The neonate is
humanity perfected.

79

Be grateful for life,
avoid petty complaints
and live humbly.

Be mindful and generous,
giving with utility
without expectation.

Speak kindly and
only with facts,
never judging others.

Control thought
and desires:
release illusions.

Serve others.
Earn a righteous living.
Take only for need.

Prioritize with discipline,
directing energy to completion
by dutiful ritual.

Put others first.
Lead by example,
following behind.

Realize the fundamental,
abolish conflicts,
live in harmony.

Be ritually humane,
conservatively utilitarian,
embody the ethical.

80

Failing in duty,
in ritual or mindfulness
is shameful.

Failing in greatness
or being perfect
is shameful.

Shame is good.
Everyone has shame.
Be proud of shame.

Humility through shame
is only opportunity
for self-improvement.

Failing to learn
from shame is
disgraceful, petty.

Taking shame as insult,
the petty never achieve
greatness through failure.

Greatness is humility,
the art of being
perfect with imperfection.

81

Never be concerned
with recognition—

Do that which
entitles recognition.

Expect little of others;
demand much of yourself.

Know that which
you do not know.

Be slow speaking
and prompt acting.

Accept responsibility—
learn from mistakes.

Abandon the past
for the future.

Be virtuous
and virtue will abound.

Many ethical minds
equal a single mind.

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Being Human

Zen is about being invisible. When you awake, make your bed. When you eat, wash your dishes. When you use something, return it in at least the same condition you found it in. When people talk, listen. When people listen, utter only what improves the air quality. When you leave, leave things in as good or better condition as when you arrived, and leave while you are still welcome.

There is self and there is truth. Where self is, truth is not. Where truth is, self is not.... The existence of self is an illusion, and there is no wrong in this world, no vice, no evil, except what flows from the assertion of self. Self is the fleeting error of samsara....

—Gautama

Does a dog have Buddha-nature?

—Mumon Koan

What is this Buddha-nature thing? If you find it, what do you do with it? Does it play cards? Will it do chores? Can I marry it? Or will it leave me? Humans make everything so complicated. Things are simple. Just ask the dog. The dog is true to its nature. Are you? Living is very hard. Are you sure you can handle it? It is much easier to just exist. Maybe we can just start there.

So you're a rock. The wind blows past you, and you aren't moved. Dust settles, a bird sits on you and leaves its deepest thought, yet you remain unmoved. It rains, floods, you are cleaned and just a little less. You and your nearby brethren are loosened and something comes by and adds just enough momentum that you all roll down the hill into a pile. Somewhere in that pile is you, the rock among the rocks. Nothing special. Every so often water seeps through, but you always dry. Centuries pass before anything really new happens. You and your brethren are spread over an open space. A tire leaves a little rubber on you. A child picks you up and with a bat tries to see how far they can hit you.

Some people will try to live as rocks, passively letting the world do unto them. Rocks are a lot more friendly than people. They don't argue. They don't demand. They don't want. They don't consume. They don't waste. They don't leave messes behind. They don't put the toilet paper on backwards or squeeze the toothpaste wrong. They don't drink all your beer and pretend somebody else did it. They don't take resources that they could contribute to justify their existence and gamble them, waste them on drugs, video games, porn, or chocolate. And if you could truly imitate the rock in all these regards, it is likely you would be put on a shelf, get mounted and placed in the yard, or buried to either put you to some purpose or get you out of the way. No one fully appreciates a rock beyond what it has to passively offer, and they appreciate less a human rock.

So you want to be animated to interact with your environment and have a good life without doing anything you don't want to do. You want to be free as a bird, but have the intelligence to appreciate joy as something more than just a biochemical reaction. Many species fit the bill, but of all the birds, parrots have the most fun, are colorful, pretty, and live as long as humans. The typical parrot in captivity is put into a cage and observed like a natural act of artistic expression. This is one of the five most intelligent animals in the world. They aren't pets, they are friends. You can talk to them, and if they are used to interactions they will understand and respond appropriately. And if you watch them play, like children they act out fantasies. Like you, a parrot needs space, personal interaction, and variations in stimuli. Like you, it wants to make friends, feel loved, and see the world.

How would you feel in a cage you can barely stretch out your arms in or move around freely? You would get angry and wonder what you did to deserve such a punishment. And it is worse when you don't even have anyone you can really talk to. If anything, every time you try to communicate, your jailors cover you, hope you will just go to sleep and quit bothering them. Then for no apparent reason, they give you to someone else. The reasons are simple. They can't handle you, tire of cleaning after you and hearing you

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nag for attention, or they no longer have the living space that welcomes your eccentricities. The smallest appropriate sized cage is about 35 square miles. Know this is a marriage you are getting into, rescue one, brace for a rough start, and don't expect more than the bird is willing. They have personalities like people, get jealous, and have unique ways to express themselves.

Birds should be in their natural environments, but like any advanced animal, domestication can make that nearly impossible. Domesticated animals don't know any better how to survive in the wild than a five year old child. A lucky domesticated bird is free to move around, given love, space, lots of toys, and attention like a small child. And like a small child, they will snuggle up with you to sleep at night. They don't typically have accidents (yes they control themselves), but sometimes it happens. As smart as they are, they are still as small children who can be spooked and fly, so you must do what you can to protect them in their innocence. When you treat a parrot right, it can be like having a little person around. Frankly, they make better company than people. Many species are more sophisticated and intelligent than dogs or cats, yet cats and dogs will deceive and lie in their own ways. Parrots rarely deceive, and never to cause harm. Things are simple and as they are. Nothing more. In this regard, birds are the perfect antithesis of people, and an example of good behavior for the basic human animal.

Everything about the human animal involves some degree of deception, indirection, or metaphor. Nothing is ever entirely what it seems. This animal is so deceptive that it easily loses touch with what its original nature really is, and will almost always choose the comfort of the deception over the truth. Surprisingly, the wild human is not much different from the domesticated or urban human. The simplicity and survival requirements of the wild reduce the need for massive outward deceptions. The wild human has no doubts about their nature, let alone denial.

Deception is often a key component of the wild human's survival. Without the usual burdens of deception, they can focus and master the deceptions they really need in each moment. Lying to themselves about their own nature is a burden that can simply get in the way of necessity. The keys to survival are keeping the deception to an absolute minimum, as close to true as possible, befitting the immediate purpose, and preferable not provable one way or another. And when the ruse is up, there is no denial. Next. In these regards, the wild human is about as deceptive as a hunting tiger, lioness, pack of wolves or coyotes. The deception isn't real, the hunter knows, and if the prey figures it out and survives you move on to the next possible target.

Ideally, the wild human keeps deception to an absolute minimum and learns to live in ways that do not expose them to predation. Predation can come from any number of directions, especially other wild humans, but also that small cross-section of society dedicated to keeping wild behavior from infecting domestic and urban behaviors: the law. Interacting with other humans increases the likelihood of being prey to one type of predator or another. When you are prey, you pick yourself up and carry on if and how you can. Being prey is not personal, but like any other potential prey animal, you learn to avoid or otherwise manage the predators to minimize risks. The wild human animal is not that different from many other intelligent wild animals. Wild human behaviors are certainly more sophisticated than other animals, and when they form packs, gangs, or tribes, a layer of abstraction is added that requires protocols. By their very nature, protocols require a degree of deception.

Parrots, like many advanced animals, form rudimentary protocols unique to each group called a pandemonium. The deception is a simple matter of abstraction, replacing one elementary concept like a warning or call out to a mate with a particular sound or gesture. Some of these are simply inherited, while others unique to the pandemonium constitute dialect. This allows them to distinguish their friends from strangers, while still being able to warn everyone of danger and establish new relationships and dialects. This system has advantages of simplicity and disadvantages of being too simple. Humans have exactly the opposite problem. They have layers and layers of abstraction to the point where the elements of a common dialect can be interpreted in too many ways. This adds layers of complexity to the abstractions just to convey simple concepts.

This is a uniquely human problem that begins with protocols of mind. Every class of complex behaviors requires a proportional neural network to support it. When the proportion is too little, the processing can't keep up with input, and when it is too much, the law of diminishing returns causes a feedback loop creating too much information to process. Each specialized cluster must communicate with related clusters creating layers of abstraction. This compounds into abstraction layers on top of abstraction layers. Neural

connections and protocols depend on consistency. Pattern recognition becomes learning, reinforcing that consistency discipline, and integrating it into our routines habits.

All pack animals are pre-wired for the degree of complex behaviors associated with pack behavior for their species. All of those structures must be stimulated and developed for the animal to survive. Failure to do this at all is certain death. Limited stimulation leads to fertility, and at best developmental disorders causing permanent damage, or at worst death by adolescence. Even the wildest of humans have gone through domestication enough to not be feral. Stepping away from domestication in childhood through early adulthood retrains the networks normally assigned for pack behavior shaping an animal that may never be re-domesticated, and typically can't. This is the fear of parents attempting to steer adolescents from counter-cultures.

The typical human gets over their adolescent eccentricities. It is rare for these to go so far astray that they lead to true wildness. It is typically averted by a combination of early childhood values reinforced by parental resistance to wildness and opportunities to make the childhood values accessible. Biologists say there is no such thing as a free lunch, but that doesn't stop every animal from trying. As with physics, the natural disposition is to take the path of least resistance. The path of least resistance is typically hope paved with a sense of meaning and belonging with a foundation of belief in some sense of justice. Wild humans may have wild and fantastic dreams, but they have no hope or sense of justice because nothing reinforced these beliefs to remain domesticated, and reality affirms they are but illusions.

Devolving to the wild simplifies everything to immediacy. As Eckhart Tolle stated, there is no past because you cannot change it. There is no future because it is out of your control. There is only NOW. The NOW is quite intoxicating all by itself. There are many ways to get this feeling from drugs to meditation to death defying stunts and sports to hyper-stimulation or the converse: sensory deprivation. Some fall from society into the wild as a consequence of psychological (e.g. mid-life) crisis, discovering its simplicity. Unlike those who went wild in youth, these can be led out, but no one coming from the wild is ever the same. Most domesticated humans have enough psychological reinforcement within society to simply ride out any rough spots. These are never the wiser to what is really going on in the world unless they are told. Even then, chances are they either won't believe or will see it as outside their social comfort zone and control, and therefore not their problem.

The wild human has two realities: the inner fantasies fraught with desires and instincts, and the outer real world they must navigate to fulfill those fantasies. The domestic human has layers of illusions and nothing more. The difference between fantasy and illusion is social functionality. From a social perspective, the fantasies constitute a disease. From the perspective of reality, illusions constitute a disease. At best, illusions are selfish to society. At worst, they are used to manipulate society for selfish ends. In the middle is the innocent domesticated human animal concerned only with stability. If something isn't acting on them personally or immediately, they will either ignore it or seek ways to stall or go around it. They are driven by hopes and fears shrouded in a cloud of illusion. Their only concern for consequences is managing them to fulfill hopes and avoid fears.

Real consequences always go both ways, always creating as much waste as they do benefit. The world of illusions does not understand how to measure benefit. If it takes a unit of land to subsist upon, nature requires nearly three equal units that are not subsisted upon to retain balance. Subsistence does not include things like cooking fires that require many times the space to maintain, let alone sophisticated technologies like cell phones, or abstract pollutants like fossil fuels and nuclear waste. The most innocent of domestic human comforts taxes the environment many times that of simple subsistence.

The world of illusions thrives on this layer of abstraction and encourages hyper-consumption. A modern urban human consumes and creates more waste than a dozen tribal societies put together, yet we urbanize those people anyway and multiply our population like we only live thirty years and have an 90% child mortality rate. The math doesn't work. Illusions are vital to the functionality of human society, but you cannot expect a system to work within other systems when it has only a self-serving and subjective perception of reality. Likewise, you cannot expect humans to function in social settings based on objective perceptions of reality alone. They are not programmed objectively. They are programmed subjectively. Their subjective lives are simple and convenient to them and define their subjective view of happiness.

The Zen of being human is this subjective sense of balance and consistency. It really works on two levels: individual and cultural. Individuals are broken because culture is broken. Culture is broken because

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when you write a lie, you open it to investigation and criticism. In tribal societies, rules and beliefs evolve with changes in technology and the environment. Overly sophisticated societies need written rules for consistency and a sense of justice, but accumulating these prevents adapting to new situations and complexities nobody understands, and loopholes to be taken advantage of. Who writes these rules? Politicians. Politics has nothing to do with reality and is antithetical to objective and fair government. As with neural networks, too much of any social structure or population causes counter-productive feedback loops.

Being human is filled with paradoxes and hypocrisies. Being passively human alone may resemble Zen in some ways, but Zen is much more. Zen is active beginning with the individual. It perceives reality and acts accordingly in spite of the illusions. Zen is about living and evolving, not about being a rock or a pretty bird wrongfully detained in a cage. The trick of being human is the invisibility of the cage that makes slavery look like freedom, whose strength is the ignorance of the masses, and whose structure is maintained through strategic conflicts and misdirections.

These things work so long as two conditions are met. First, religion and government reinforce the hopes of the people, which is what built them in the first place. Turning to fear for social control and power is the beginning of the end of a culture as it devours itself. Second, cultural norms are adapted to changing technological and environmental conditions to retain natural balance. When society breaks, revolution becomes an inevitability. Revolutions typically go the wrong way, or simply reset the cycle. No master would ever encourage revolution, let alone lead it or otherwise intervene and get trapped in the morass of illusions.

The correct answer is evolution. Unfortunately, no species likes change that does not suit its selfish purposes. Collective selfishness, which we all participate in, eventually has collective consequences. When given no other choice than to change or face total extinction, only then will change take root from the bottom up and evolve the species collectively. At least what is left of it. It sounds like a bleak prophecy, but it is the way of things. As rule in history, that which causes a great calamity or extinction also contains the elements defining the recovery and subsequent prosperity. That is where not contributing to the wrong in the world but rather doing right in spite of all the wrong in the world comes in. That begins with plucking yourself out of passivity and defining yourself by human and social standards to find not just your true nature, but all you can really be. Once you have quite just being human, you can begin living and discovering what the world is really like.

This takes baby steps. The simplest baby step to take is to set aside as much personal time as possible to simply observe and meditate. Find a public place with trees, tea, coffee, etc. where you can plant roots and just observe quietly. Find your moment. Everywhere you look, seek beauty or see nothing, which is beautiful in its own right. As Lao Tse said, "it is the emptiness of a thing that is used." Let your mind fill with this emptiness and let only the beauty of the world in. Eventually you will find reasons for everything you see or hear to qualify as beauty, and begin appreciating everything the world has to offer. With this appreciation you will begin to find ways to transform even the worst situations into working solutions that restore beauty where it is compromised. And with these tools you can begin exploring what it means to actually live.

As you begin to appreciate the world more, you will find your mind wandering into negative thoughts about your fellow humans. While there are certainly humans that deserve a lot more than negative thoughts, you must remind yourself that they are few and have already designed their own judgments. Defending a definite innocent in immediate harms way is understandable, but otherwise even a master would never interfere. You need not muddle your mind with such things.

Humans can be quite beautiful in their innocence, and though few correct their ways, they always have the possibility. It can be hard to see past their messes, selfishness, greed, and unruliness. Yes, some really are cockroaches and rats, while others are sheep, dogs, cats, or bears. Your perceptions do not deceive you. Just because they look like humans doesn't mean that is what they really are. Humans are quite diverse and invasive, trying to fit into the niches of every species big and small, and subsequently drive those species into extinction. They become those animals insidiously so.

There is a beauty in almost every one though. If you look deep enough you can penetrate the veil of illusions and find the original animal within. That original animal wasn't a fraction as destructive, and it cared about the feelings of every little creature, even the pests you go out of your way to trap or poison. When you hear of a master returning to his original nature, this and the empty mind for the world to write upon is

what is meant. That state of evolved innocence embracing life to its fullest to continue evolving beyond just being human is your Buddha-nature. Being such an evolved and complex animal, we do not need to rely on instincts or define ourselves by them. We can reinvent ourselves, and with age and experience learn to be an even better animal than we started. That is the foundation for evolving the entire species.

Living

The master does nothing that would increase suffering in the world.

The unexamined life is not worth living.

—Socrates

Having been the full transit of Zen, I could not see completing the title of this book for several reasons. The first was the lesson of Dogen. Stuck in port awaiting his visa to enter China, he asked the monk doing the ship's cooking about his Zen practice. The cook told him that cooking was his Zen. There is no single art of Zen, and all activities can be raised to art form. The second reason for not completing the title fits the definition of Zen given by Shunryu Suzuki and Paul Reps in Zen Flesh Zen Bones (they gave a blank page). As Suzuki maintained in later works, the concept of no-thing (ichi-nen) is vital to Zen mastery. Finally, mastery of any sort is a combination of understanding and expression. If the real function of Zen is to master the self, then who is to judge what understanding that art is expressing?

The goal of Buddhism is to end suffering. Zen has the same goal, only without being entangled with any particular belief system. For this, an aversion to metaphysical speculations, and eccentricity, Zen is argued to be closest to the original teachings of Gautama. Zen is not a religion like the sects of Buddhism. Zen is not a philosophy either, though philosophical wisdom certainly emerges from it. Zen is a way of life and much more. Schools of Zen, like every human institution, have hypocrisies. Count among these hypocrisies asceticism, which Gautama spoke against. We will address the matter of asceticism later. Right now our concern is the art of living, which is the antithesis of asceticism.

Never to increase suffering in the world is a nearly impossible rule to live by. Human societies are intricate, and all social interactions contain elements of illusion. These begin with everything we learned from our parents, schools, friends, and simply struggling to survive. To the master, it is better to die than to give in to desperation, resort to surviving and risk increasing suffering in the world. The master does not come by this naturally. The human animal, which the master once was, is driven to survive, prosper, and multiply as religions love to assert and re-affirm. Religions serve a myriad of functions fundamental to basic moral structures holding society together, giving people hope, direction, and a sense of purpose. Zen makes no promises, tells very few lies or tall stories, and then always to reveal the factual truth.

The point of Zen is a higher moral concept called the Ethical. Wittgenstein summarized the Ethical in a few phrases: "eternal aims" of a "solid union" toward "absolute gladness." That is more than Zen is willing to tackle. Zen takes on another biological function at the core of the Ethical: evolution. Some will describe this as "being more human than human," or "being more humane than human." First, you must understand all that you and humanity really are, which requires living in the world of illusions. Second, you must observe the consequences that are always both good and bad for all actions and inactions. Third, you endeavor to not increase the suffering in the world while living in it. In this way you can begin to understand what Gautama meant by "right" and his eightfold path of right: understanding, thought, mindfulness, concentration, speech, action, livelihood, and effort.

"Man can pursue money or God, but not both." This religious statement is true in the art of living as well. You can pursue the best you can possibly be, or human whims, desires, and wants, but not both. Of course this does not make for wealthy and powerful people and institutions who are the foundation of the world of illusions and suffering. Religions offer Godliness, heaven, social support systems, hope for happiness and stability. Zen makes no such offers. It offers what no-one else can: yourself. If anything, social institutions are designed to strip away you selfhood for common purposes or the purposes of a few who control the system. Naturally such people are as far from their gods as anyone can be, if not further. There is no personal gain or profit in Zen, unless breaking the illusion, seeing things as they really are, and bliss can be considered gain.

How can you consider discovering what you truly have as gain? Nobody can give you happiness, love, or a sense of self-worth. Nobody can steal your heart, or break it. Only you have the power to do these

things, and the power to restore them. You have absolutely no control of the minds of others, and little if any control over the physical environment. You barely have any control over your own body. It will break down and you will die no matter what you do. Even your mind is subject to chemical inducements limiting your control over it. Your mind is literally the only thing you can have any control over. Learning to control your mind is how you find “bliss.” Don’t go chasing after paper tigers like happiness. Happiness is for children’s stories. Give happiness wherever you can, and when the mouths you feed bite you, smile for their happiness. And when what you give enables them to devour themselves, then don’t give it because you are contributing to their suffering.

In my early Zen practice I devoured every book I could on Zen and Buddhism, not to mention philosophy, history, and many other subjects. Popular titles began with “Zen and the Art of” followed by Archery, Martial Arts, Motorcycle Maintenance, etc. The last had the least to do with Zen, or so I read somewhere after getting the feeling myself within a few pages. The gist was there, and now I see more Zen that direction than may be obvious because Zen begins with living, and it was all about living. This concept gave one good pun title (Living Zen). The only thing I had going for my Zen was a lifetime of practice meditating. For over three decades I survived. I learned and mastered what people thought they knew about many things. I married, had children, worked, divorced, remarried, taught, ran a college, divorced, accumulated debt, had nothing to show for it, and struggled like everyone else. I didn’t live.

Long before any part of the statement was true, an academic referred to me as a Rinzai Zen Master. Heartbreaks, struggling, loneliness, debt, dependence on others and society, and suffering generally confirmed what I knew: I wasn’t a master. My success in the world of men only re-affirmed that knowledge. I wrote book after book, meditated, and without knowing it managed to achieve an elementary level of mastery. But like a third degree black belt, I was easily tamed by lesser belts. I needed a bump. For years I went to the same busy coffee shop every day to write and relax. One day I was writing about Ethical death and was suddenly struck. What could I possibly say about Ethical death when I wasn’t living an Ethical life? Life was going on all around me, and in my sense of self-importance, I was missing it. I closed the computer and stopped writing for over a decade.

Within a year my entire life was turned inside out. I was still teaching, but that wouldn’t last much longer. I went to work for a while until one day I decided to go out for coffee on the other side of town and resigned. I went there, then I crossed town again, found another coffee shop, struck a business deal and went into business. There was only one major flaw in the plan: my Zen. I couldn’t care less for personal gain, and didn’t want it. When success tried knocking on my door, I reported that person had moved and left no forwarding address. It chased after me anyway, so I embraced just enough of it to let it destroy me. I was wisely in denial of my mastery when it was academic, and continued my denial as I embraced my own destruction to push my Zen to its limits.

My Zen served me well as a professional in many ways. One was problem solving. Not only did I have the knowledge and creativity required, I also knew how to break things. Nothing says a system is working quite like the effort required to break it. In society my Zen served in these regards and in my personal unwavering morality. Society loves morality and serves the immoral, yet I insisted on sticking to my morality. The mistake was expecting something called justice. That actually constitutes two mistakes because expectation is speculative and out of the NOW, and justice does not exist, is historical baggage and also out of the NOW. So the right way is to do things right in spite of the personal consequences. Remember though: this is art of living and evolving, not surviving or fitting in.

Expectations are a certain landmine no matter your choice in paths. Sometimes you choose your path, and sometimes it chooses you. If you set your sites on an objective and put aside all morality, you can certainly achieve that objective or die trying. Zen is the perfect antithesis of this. The path is more of a quest for what is right. Religions tell you what they find right and wrong, and often expect these ideas to disseminate like a virus across the community. In Zen, you must find what is right with no expectations that anyone else understands or that anyone else is crazy enough to put aside their greed and illusions. If anything, people don’t want to know the truth. They are happy in their misery, simplicity, or whatever lot they have in life. There is also a small catch with the path of Zen: survival is not a priority.

You will not find a real Zen master who will encourage anyone to embark on the path to mastery. If you think you want it, there is definitely something wrong with you and you will never get there. It is literally a lifetime of practice complete with full submersion in the world of illusions, and there are no shortcuts. Just

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because you see yourself in some location along some master's the path to mastery does not mean you had the qualities needed to appreciate that position. Each must walk their own paths. A real master has walked all the paths as a participant observer, not just a participant.

Let me begin with the most notorious of all masters. Gautama had a good life in the palace. He had everything anyone could ever want: wealth, power, health, youth, a family who loved him including his father, wife, and son. He would have been king except that at 29 he witnessed suffering and knew there was more to life than his royal life. He had the best teachers, yet no one could explain to his satisfaction the sufferings he witnessed. The only thing they could say is that sickness, old age, and death were certainties everyone, no matter who they were, would experience. He abandoned everything to discover his humanity and get to the truth. The moral of the story is beginning from a place of knowledge, social stability, and full maturity, not from a perspective of ignorance, social failure, or youthful whim.

Zen practice begins fully submersed in society, doing as near to everything right by society's standards as possible while being yourself. This means committing to life in society on every level, being all you can be, and putting every effort in to sustaining that life. And when you fail, pick yourself up and try again. It isn't a commitment if you surrender easily or ever surrender your responsibilities. Arguably, it isn't a commitment if you ever surrender. That doesn't mean repeat the same mistakes. It means accepting what doesn't work for you and adapting for what does. You do not choose the path to mastery, it chooses you and you don't know for sure until you have survived and completed the process.

Once you have discovered humanity and arrived at the truth, you realize the whole truth is really not for everyone. In fact, too much of the truth can hurt them. Many build their wealth and power on twisting the truth to suit their own ends, and will quickly take advantage of accurate information. Not only is the path hazardous, so too is the knowledge. Fortunately, having the knowledge and being able to express it are at odds with each other. To express it meaningfully and harmlessly, a master must risk their mastery by exploring and possibly getting trapped again in the world of illusions. It is easier and safer for everyone to refer the curious to the Dharma, sutras, shastras, and other documents. Of course that is cheating, but given the history, understandable. Survival may not be a personal priority over the Ethical, but is a practical priority to the Ethical.

Properly expressed, the truth is self-evident. Such expressions are called axioms. Without proper expression, the truth can be as hard to find and catch as clear gelatin in a pool. When you read Western philosophy, it is as if you are getting every detail of every thought and action in the search for that gelatin. Once in a while you can stumble on a gem in the thousands of pages, like Solzhenitsyn's, "A word of truth outweighs the whole world." Socrates' "The unexamined life is not worth living" is itself a gem, but in context summarizes his whole life, all of his teachings, and the cause of his execution. He never lied and pretended to know anything. His dialogues clearly show his ignorance, but also a systematic process of questioning and seeking a truth he could recognize if he could but find it. His ignorance wasn't a lack of human knowledge, but rather knowing what he did not know. This is why he was considered the wisest man in the world, and why he refuted the title.

Socrates was more than twice the age limit for beginning and successfully completing the path to the truth. His knowledge of the ways of men was fairly complete from a full life of personal experience, not mere idle observation or mental jockeying as academics are prone to. He knew enough to know what questions to ask, and why the answers given were wrong, and was humble enough not to think he had the answers. So he sought them through strategically challenging anyone who thought they did. This rubbed people the wrong way, but it was fairly entertaining and harmless. That is, until he started questioning the nature of government, religion, and the soul.

Living in Athens, the first democracy, Socrates declared democracy the second worst form of government decaying into the worst form. He looked to the myths, saw their hypocrisies, and suggested more wholesome stories. He described life as a stringed instrument, the soul being the melody played. And when those strings are cut, the melody is lost. Not only had he spoken against the state, he had dabbled in blasphemy. He was charged and convicted of corrupting the youth. His statement in the apology said more than maybe even he knew, because the unexamined life, by his own arguments and Gautama's concept of "no-self", has no soul and therefore is not worth living. This is not something you say to a piously religious audience happy with the conveniences of their religion and borrowed/illusory sense of selfhood and soul.

And his example for self-examination by challenging everything everyone believes or thinks they know would unwind any religion and the moral fabric of society.

Cicero was wrong, the truth does not set you free. What sets you free is what the audience is ready and wants to hear. Most who encounter the truth do not explore the whole truth. They only explore the segment of the truth they look for and are willing and able to perceive. If you look at only the objective truth, as is typical, then you completely miss the reality of the subjective truth. The world of illusions with its religions, governments, institutions, and detachment from reality it is not exploiting also contains truth. If you try to specify that truth beyond a basic architecture, like exploring specific beliefs or political perspectives, you can hold no claim to mastery. Illusions act as communications protocols, not only for society but also for regions of the brain. These cannot be objectively defined because they are subjectively constructed and change over time as needed. As this shows, and we will explore later, all masters are not created equal, and mastery is the beginning of another path.

Discipline

1. Love as I love you
2. Know and love thyself
3. Respect all of Creation
4. Live righteously
5. Believe what is real, for what you believe is real
6. There is no why, things simply ARE
7. Empty your mind and just BE
8. Hold to the eternal NOW
9. Be responsible
10. Be real

The Zennist has no rules and lives by them very strictly.

Life is simple but living is hard, so social institutions strive to simplify. In the 18th Century B.C.E., Hammurabi set precedent by establishing 282 clearly documented laws and publishing them on public monuments called stela^e standing over eight feet tall. His laws were quite intricate and some may think draconian, and there is question as to public literacy at the time. These were not relevant. He was forging an empire from disparate cultures that needed a sense of direction and stability. The public exhibition delivered a message of uniformity, justice, and social order. In social order, perception is everything.

As intricate as Hammurabi's laws were, by today's standards they were to the point. Individual bodies of law are passed regularly that are far more intricate and superficially meant to only do one thing. Literacy around the world is the most it has ever been, yet even lawyers can't keep up. It is impossible to maintain social order when nobody really knows what the rules are, especially in a diverse society. Intricacies of law serve only those who have them designed that way. The more diverse the society, the more generic the laws need be to maintain order.

Basic laws enforced by government should be universally uniform and simple. The real roles of government are to maintain social order and security, and to objectively manage resources. There is no place in government for politics or religion, only objective competence and a sense of duty to the common good. Ideally, politics creates a perception of involvement and commitment of the population to the government and decisions made on their behalf.

Unfortunately, political government is easily put on the auction block to the highest bidder who can either buy the politicians, misguide the population, or both. Managing resources may look like business, but the business of government is to serve, not profit. Government cannot serve effectively if it is concerned with profit, business, or the wealthy. It is the voice and defense of the people and resources, useful or not, who cannot speak or defend themselves. Predators thriving on profits are anything but defenseless or voiceless.

Then there is religion. In small societies historically, religion and state were synonymous. As empires emerged and knowledge evolved, religion and state had to divorce. Where the state should deal with objective reality, the role of religion is subjective reality. It is easier to choose a religion than to choose a state. Except in the case of immigration, states cannot choose their citizens. Religions can choose to accept or reject their members. Their rules are theirs to enforce within the bounds of membership alone. When you chose a religion, you accept their rules. You have no more duty to those rules than that membership and the faith you associate with it. As some may say, "That is between you and your god."

In the previous chapter I gave a simple prohibition: never to increase suffering in the world. Among religions this is universal. Purposefully violating for the sake of personal gain is generally considered evil. Zen does not distinguish good from evil, though what is universally recognized as evil is certainly in contradiction to Zen practice. At the beginning of this chapter I give ten commandments that are really commandments and not prohibitions common to religions. Exploring and embodying these is one way to also explore and embody the eightfold path. The truth is that no matter what religion you ascribe to or

government you live under, the more you master these commandments and the one prohibition, the better quality of life you will have. The choice is yours to make. It is not easy, and the results may not be direct or immediate, but the more you put into it, the more it will serve you.

These “rules” I give you are not conventional starter rules. You don’t begin your self-discipline with these, you begin with what your parents, schools, society, and religion give you. Then as an adult discovering your place in the world, you begin reinventing those rules and adding some of your own. As mentioned earlier, your consistent behaviors evolve into habits. Habits are good when you define them by your own standards of who you really are and can change and evolve them as situations and your self-understanding change. Habits are bad when they define and control who you are, and when they are so rigid that you feel you cannot change them. Then there is the gray area of habits that you either are not conscious of, are in denial of, or think you have control over but don’t. The truth is that you can choose and discard habits at will with very few exceptions like advanced-stage chemical and alcohol addictions. The problem is that you need to first be able to identify habits, and second believe in the power of your will over them.

Ideally, at least one parent brings the tools through personal and normal practice of discipline, meditation and value to the relationship before conception. Normal practice means integrated into everyday routines. Humans are not automatons. Early learning is subjective and eventually evolves into objective receptivity. The mind of a child is a void to be filled with even the slightest stimulation or observation. The lack of frame of reference makes everything perceptually disproportionate. A minute feels like an hour. With age this void is filled with references to give frames of reference reducing the proportionate perception of each stimulus. The void quickly maps consistent behaviors shaping the void (equivalent to the developed parts of Freud’s id=initial disposition), and disproportionately observes and reacts to inconsistent behaviors.

The child’s observations teach it if and how to manipulate the parents to get desired stimuli. The inconsistencies perceived as a consequence of these manipulations build the foundation of ego. Upon this are placed the footers of other ego structures like idealistic notions of personal and social identity and relationships. In adulthood, long after the complete structure of ego is built, these footers and foundation are out of sight and difficult to expose because they are pre-linguistic concepts.

Whether you go to a Freudian psychologist or zendo, you will be challenged to follow the existing design that is your present self to these footers and foundation. There are big differences between these. At the zendo you will be encouraged to systematically breakdown and study all the parts until only the id remains. Psychology tries to help establish consistency in the structure from foundation up and build functional structures to handle real life situations. People don’t typically go to a psychologist unless there is a perceived problem, whereas people go to the zendo to discover themselves.

People do not expect or want the existing structure torn down when they to a psychologist or other type of counseling. They want tools and methods to reinforce that structure and adapt it to new conditions. From a building perspective, they are looking for braces, buttresses, to add windows and rooms, raise the roof, or get a more aesthetic paint job or interior design. These structures are habits of the ego. At best they are willing to adjust a wall or structural item, maybe even replacing them. The zendo seeks to tear down everything and smooth the Earth back over into a natural state so any structure can be built there (e.g. Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind).

The ability to integrate information into one’s structure is inversely proportional to age. What a toddler can integrate into their behaviors in a matter of days or months will take an adult many years to achieve. When meditation is introduced in early childhood, the adult has the most important tool to redesign, repair, or even tear down and completely replace the entire structure at will. It may be a Herculean effort the first few times, but it gets easier each time. This is ideal because the behavior is normalized into the id itself, which has supreme power over the foundation and the rest of the structure. As part of the natural and initial disposition, it has already infested the entire structure. This does not remove the problems of ego, it just reduces the need to learn a new behavior to address those problems. Later introduction to meditation can still work, but is limited to the extent of its practice throughout the structure (Everyday Zen).

Ego identity development is an inevitability and prerequisite to the path of selfhood. Ego is treated by many as the enemy of selfhood, which is a misrepresentation. Ego is the antithesis of id, while selfhood is the synthesis. The flat-Earth zendo approach is what the general public understands, but not the actual reality. If you tear down a structure and smooth the Earth, you still have the parts of that structure. They just

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aren't assembled as they were before. They are dissembled. You need them to build new structures, no matter how temporary those structures are. The more you tear down in the first place, the more you have to work with later. If you started with a tool shed, you don't have much to work with. If you built sky scrapers on your foundation, you can pretty much build anything you like. Building and designing a skyscraper is really the topics of our next two chapters.

As a matter perspective, if you only had the capacity to build a tool shed, tearing it down will take that entire capacity. If you had the capacity to build a skyscraper, tearing it down will take that entire capacity. Time and effort-wise, these are equivalent structures even though one is massive and the other small. Of course when a skyscraper goes down, it makes a huge hole and affects a widespread area, even if taken down strategically. The skyscraper could be seen for many miles by everyone, and likewise the subsequent structures are equally visible and many times more practical, no matter how strange they may appear from a distance. The tool shed still makes noise, a small hole, and a comparably small mess, but only the immediate neighbors notice if anyone.

Discipline simplifies and gives meaning to the structure of ego. Poor discipline makes complex structures impossible because the parts are simply thrown together without any sense of order. A complete lack of discipline leaves an irregular and impractical mound of stuff accumulating as if in geological strata. This is essentially psychological hoarding. This is popular among teenage geeks who will devour information of any type without bothering to do anything with that information. New information piles on top of old, buries it and makes it inaccessible. Eventually, motivations come into focus as a matter of practical survival if nothing else, and a structure is built upon this unstable foundation. This structure appears taller than it really is and can go the distance, but is vulnerable to social instability. Social instability is pretty much guaranteed because the buffer of stratified information disconnects social skills from later ego development. When these structures are compromised, they require massive buttresses or social isolation to survive.

The normal person is not so motivated by knowledge, but rather by perceived status and relationships. They will begin building at the ground level with as few parts as they possibly can. The most disciplined will focus on specific activities and invest themselves as much as their motivations compel them. These are very strong egos fixed in very narrow views of reality, building massive unchanging pillars. Poor discipline redirects motivational energy into either self-destructive or manipulative reactions or both depending on opportunity.

The healthiest and most rounded individuals combine discipline, motivation, knowledge, and specific activities (physical). Their ego structures are not perfect, but have the spaces and materials necessary to work with to work toward perfecting themselves. The resulting structures are shaped and designed by social expectations. This essentially defines the individual in social context.

Social contexts contain both subjective (moral values) and objective (practical) elements. Ideal social interaction requires a balance of both. Individuals, however, have predispositions toward one or the other that are in total equivalent to other individuals. If we could assign actual numbers we may see patterns like 1 and 3, 3 and 1, 2.5 and 1.5, or even 2 and 2. Each adds up to four, but clearly each has a very different distribution of priorities and motivations.

We could classify those with a significantly greater predisposition toward objective elements as sociopathic inclined toward power and stability, where those disposed toward the subjective are inclined toward religious beliefs, survival and belonging (compare to Maslow's hierarchy of needs). The perfect balance between the two is inclined toward actualization and the transcendental marriage of subjective idealism with objective realism. Depending on motivation, this can simply amount to getting along and living a simple life within society. It can go to the other extreme and seek the depth of actualization, evolving a transcendental understanding of ultimate reality.

Being shaped by social contexts, subjective, objective, and balanced orientations have illusion in common. At the extremes, the most objective sociopaths are inclined to shape the illusions to their own ends, while subjective believers design themselves to fit those illusions and think everyone else should too. If you see hints of political conservatism in this, you are not at all mistaken. This is a reality, not a criticism. Religion is an obvious form of conservatism, but no means alone. Conservatism often disguises itself as other things, and will either opportunistically take advantage of religious piety or attack it (e.g. many socialist movements of the early Twentieth Century). The key is believing what you do not have first hand knowledge of and embracing values based in that belief.

The liberal middle is fraught with problems. Being balanced between the two results in a degree of humility, namely knowing you really don't know and therefore not knowing what to really adhere to. While there are sociopathic elements within political liberalism, their drive for power may get them into political offices, but their humility leads them to compromising among illusory choices defined conservatively as a matter of practicality and for the sake of social stability. When they evolve and really know, they don't want anything to do with the world of illusions, which takes them out of political equation. Instabilities and ignorance serve conservatism, as do the seeming liberal indecisiveness and willingness to compromise. This maintains the status quo of social illusions until social disparities drive the masses into desperation.

Everyone likes to think they have control of their lives. The real glue of society is maintaining that illusion. When the glue fails, the people look for another source of glue. Out of habit, they tend to look outside themselves to individuals and institutions they can adhere to. It is little wonder that Zen encourages the breaking of habits and vows. This means taking the more difficult path of selfhood, defining yourself in terms of yourself rather than in another context. In psychology this is called differentiation, but does not quite go as in depth as Zen. If you are reading books like this to find convenient answers you can simply adopt and adhere to, forget it. In all likelihood, by the time you read this you have read other books and found that such a pursuit is a fool's errand. Nobody, let alone a book, can truly reveal who you really are. The knowledge can certainly help, but the burden and elements of the pursuit are entirely yours.

Here, as in psychology, we seem to define categories or boxes we can neatly fit ideas into. If this is what you perceive, then beware that you have created an illusion. What I have described is more like a spectrum than categories. Each substructure of your ego is individually constructed and often in parallel with others. These are not simply one way or another, but typically a composite of both. You can liken the extremities to open volume and solidity. If a part is overly solid, it loses flexibility and is easily subject to breakage. If a part is overly open, it lacks the integrity to be built upon.

A building does not consist of foundation, walls, and ceiling alone. Within the walls there are openings of different sorts serving different purposes like insulation or the distribution of resources like water and waste. Of course you want windows and doors, which strategically manage open spaces and closed spaces. And lastly you do not want to overlook the most obvious: the spaces between walls constituting passages and rooms for practical use. If for a second you think my words on political dimensions are at all critical, then you must look around and see how these illusory realities work together practically.

Impracticality results when one side or the other thinks it is all about them, that they are always right and must always get their way. They would build houses of air alone (without walls) or stone alone (without rooms or corridors). The same is true for the individual as it is for society or a simple house. When one side or another neglects the forms and elements it contributes, the entire structure is compromised. Those who would neglect or discount the least of society have infested the structure with termites. Those who would show favor to the most endowed of society would burn the building down for the sake their unlimited greed. By taking care of the least, the increase for those with the most is guaranteed, as is the structure of society. These are realities that apply to all levels of society. Nothing stable is built of only one thing.

Knowledge

Refuting illusions is a fool's errand.

The slave to ultimate reality believes in fantasies and illusions.

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I have written quite extensively on the subjects of learning and development, and will certainly return to those subjects in another book. By knowledge here I am not meaning to imply philosophical or psychological concepts of epistemology. I am more concerned here with habits and methods of mind and learning within the processes of your path of selfhood. In other words, our concern here is building objective skyscrapers of mind. I have already warned against the voracious consumption of information without discipline. Gluttony or excess of any sort is counter-productive. Academic knowledge must be diverse yet integrated into common structures and balanced with subjective experiences.

Academic institutions are just as subject to conservatism and liberalism as any other institution. They are easily distinguished though by their commitments to diverse factual reinforcement of positions. Conservative views lack diversity and are instead committed to an emotional judgment. Liberal views tend to be pliable and open to challenges from differing perspectives. Both sides want to be right in very different ways. One insists it is right in spite of any evidence to the contrary. The other insists on finding what is right with absolute certitude. As in our previous chapter, both serve very different purposes whether absolutely correct or not.

Superficial truths serve social purposes. Take the Big Bang Theory as an example. It does not withstand the slightest scientific or mathematical challenge, but challenges anthropomorphic (humanized) creationism with impersonal creation. While the theory is easily debunked, it remains popular to reinforce it with myths only the experts may know are myths, and some are so committed they actually believe. These myths having scientific bases and reinforced by definite facts that can be proven empirically give credence. Cosmogony has nothing more than faith to rely upon, but serves a host of social functions well beyond those filled by the Big Bang Theory. The Big Bang Theory sounds good and invigorating. It suggests science can truly unlock any mystery of the universe it wants to. This is very nearly true. The theory inspires curiosity and helps spread the religion of science.

Science may find the association with religion offensive, but let us be real. Every scientific endeavor begins first with a theory based in what is believed to be true. The methods and subsequent research are then designed to prove or disprove that theory, but not necessarily the belief behind the theory. When science provides practical results, technology soon follows and provides yet another thread binding society together. Technically, the word religion derives from the Latin for a thread binding together, meaning religion is a form of social glue. Some worship money, others worship one or more gods, spirits, or ancestor, and yet others worship the pursuit of ultimate knowledge. None of these religions are perfect.

Zen has a traditional affiliation with objective facts and therefore science. If we step back and are truly objective, there are significant flaws in science and objective academia. The affiliation between Zen and academia is tenuous at best because of this. As an institution, Zen won't even come near anything based entirely in faith. It won't speak one way or the other on matters of faith because they are simply too subjective. One may think Zen would affiliate with philosophy, but philosophy is so busy arguing over interpretations of believed facts and truly subjective beliefs that the relation is even more tenuous than that with science. Zen would rather quietly listen, observe, eliminate the illusions, extract and explore the absolute factual processes. This cannot be done with a narrow world view or limited direction of study.

One may think the zennist can be likened to the skeptic, but there are significant differences. The skeptic will question each thing presented outright. The zennist will wait, listen, and take everything in context and then do the same with something else, and something else, and yet something else. Finally, after absorbing a diverse body of information they will find common threads and investigate those historically, contextually, and empirically. Instead of questioning each little to death and missing other details, questions are directed for clarity and the assumption is that the details reported are as reported until

proven otherwise, but not committing to them one way or the other even after proven beyond reasonable doubt, or “judging” them.

As you have seen here, recognizing social roles and contexts are not judgments in the conventional sense of right and wrong, but rather as observations of “is-ness.” Just because something is factually incorrect does not mean it is socially wrong or lacks practical purposes. The zennist is mostly concerned with correctness, which includes the distribution and application of incorrectness along channels in which that incorrectness functions as correct. This flexibility means that what is correct at one time in one context could evolve into incorrect at a later time in another context. In theory and idealistically this is how all academic and particularly scientific exploration should work.

Gautama set a precedent for healthy understanding of contemporary views. He clearly exhibited a working knowledge of diverse views from throughout the civilized world of his time, even the Greeks, Egyptians, and Chinese. He seldom spoke on matter of metaphysics (the nature of ultimate reality), but what he said then remains true today, and the rest he simply left alone to go their own ways. He recognized the concept of atomization (breaking things down) and holistic monism (the interconnectivity of everything into one thing). He also declared time an illusion, which had no clear root in anything more than his enlightenment. This was particularly unusual because it lacked observational and theoretical support. Of course science does not pay much attention to anything outside itself, so this little assertion is neglected in modern science. This is understandable since enlightenment is rare and the extent of enlightenment is a direct proportion to what you bring in advance of the process leading to it.

Enlightenment breaks down all human barriers and enables the enlightened to connect the otherwise disparate parts that had shaped those barriers. Knowledge provides barriers, or what we may call the hard building materials of the skyscraper or whatever structure you are able to build. Tearing it down through enlightenment allows all points within that structure to find ways to connect to each other simultaneously. In that connection, as in the connection of all points in space into a whole, there is no time.

Gautama stopped at declaring time an illusion because he had no way to adequately describe what time really is with respect to ultimate reality. Having entered the process with the requisite elements, the answer can and is now be provided: in short, time is a byproduct of opposing entropies. Having the requisite parts does not mean they were correctly understood at the onset. They were understood as well as could be, but by no means perfected. Even after awakening, being able to wade through the concepts and present them meaningfully in mathematical and logical formats to be understood by others was a whole other process.

There is a Zen story related by Repts and Suzuki in which a would-be student asks a master how long it would take him to achieve mastery if he doubles his efforts. The master tells him it will take at least twice as long. Mastery is something that catches you, you don't catch it. The right effort and time you put in to building the structures of ego are preparatory for mastery, but work against achieving mastery. It is well worth the efforts, working double and triple time, even working yourself virtually to death.

The nature of your knowledge is at least as important as the content of your knowledge. As described, stratifying random information is as worthless as a scrap-heap: you have to melt it down and reshape it before you can even begin to build. You need to shape and define it as you go, which means applying what you learn in books and from others in the real world. This gives the knowledge dimension, depth, and conceptual meanings. It is the conceptual meanings that will be connected through enlightenment, not the words and details you learned. Those are an after-effect.

It is hard to diversify your knowledge and apply that knowledge at the same time, especially when subject to the random mixture of curricula common in later grades and higher education. The easiest way to handle this diversity is to identify common threads between your subjects and devote your study efforts to specific topics that particularly move you. Meanwhile, you cannot neglect social life, family, relaxation, and work to afford these things if not your living and educational expenses. The work will be humbling and good preparation for graduation when you can be certain to do the same job anyway if you didn't foolishly leave it.

Most students think they work hard in college. Some really do struggle, but they do not employ study skills like I recommend above. Some instructors make things difficult, either through incompetence or arrogance. If you can't do, don't teach. The arrogant somehow think their students must learn the entire subject perfectly in a single class when they really don't want to be there and end up graded badly. Most

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pretend to struggle but really waste their time in senseless social settings or otherwise do not see their miss-allocation of time. A serious student can do double the coursework of the typical student and still have time for everything else if they are disciplined and motivated. One would think the cost of living and education alone would encourage this, but many see it as an extension of grade school and want to stretch out their social playtime.

A highly motivated student can form academic blinders and commit so deeply to a subject of study that everything else is neglected. Addictions are usually associated with bad things, but in reality, addiction can grow roots in any activity and have untoward consequences. If you are so married to a particular subject or solving particular problems that you cannot find time to have relationships, neglect your relationships or friends, or treat other subjects as unworthy your attention, you have an academic addiction. You will not build a structure. You will build a legless camel and likely a campfire underneath it, or simply run around in circles endlessly wearing a hole in the floor.

After completing school, I highly recommend mixing teaching with practical work. You need the practical work to not only put concepts into practice, but to learn to integrate them with unrelated concepts of other experts, and relate everything to common people who are not experts. If done correctly, teaching is an unbelievable learning exercise. First, you have to design everything about a class in advance of the first day. You have to foresee every possible question or direction each class may go in. This does not mean writing out a lecture, because that is a certain way to lose any audience. It means anticipating, being mentally ready, and designing the assignments, tests, and topics of conversation accordingly.

You learn several things early in teaching. First, the students are there because you know something they either don't or do but seek to prove they do. There will be students who know more than you about particular things, and they may even try to distract the class with their knowledge. You simply and politely acknowledge their knowledge and ask that they let the curriculum proceed in a way the other students can understand. The diverse perspectives of the classroom further help recognizing common threads among diverse subject matter. Students at the highest end of the educational spectrum tend to look at everything through the same lens as if it can accomplish the task, but typically these perspectives are a lot more narrow than need be to actually accomplish the task. An algorithm that successfully maps and links all fields of knowledge is the subject for a more comprehensive and technical book.

Another thing you learn early in teaching is that no matter how much you invite questions, the students won't ask. They would rather get a bad test score than reveal they don't understand. Anticipating the questions means knowing what they won't but should ask. Instead of waiting for the question to come, you ask them and lead them toward the answer. It is much more important in any class that the students learn how to process information to arrive at correct solutions than to memorize those solutions. Medical and chemical terminology, for example, is often inflicted en masse without any breakdown into the roots and stems that reveal what the terms mean. This is true in many fields where students can benefit from a basic knowledge of the dead languages the words are based in. Learning grammar, syntax, and verb conjugations of a dead language is irrelevant unless you are a translator of ancient texts. These students only need the basic adjectives and nouns.

Assuming you are mindful of your students and design your class right, your students will teach you more about the subject than you can imagine. Interactive dialogs are always constructive for all parties. You want each student to personally interact with the subject to optimize their learning. The only way to effectively do this is either through structured exercises or directed personal exercises. In either case it is best to do the exercises in class either together or separately after a sample practice round.

Personally directed exercises invite the students to apply a process they have learned to something they are familiar with. Group brainstorming can help the students pick appropriate topics. Of course everything you assign you must put as much effort into grading as they did creating. Grading is simplified markedly when you can interact personally with each student working through the process. A wise teacher sends home no work they expect done right (if at all) and rarely has to take anything home to grade. They have their fingers on every student's pulse and are learning in real time from them as they are being taught. The care, attention, and personalization motivate the students to achieve things you would otherwise never expect of them.

I'm not giving you teaching tips to help you as a student, but to help you master being a student through teaching. Everyone benefits from a well put together class. If your idea of a good class is a written lecture, I

recommend writing a book and giving it the class, then discussing off of the major topics in the table of contents. If you are just reading to them, they got that as toddlers to put them to sleep. Record it and sell it as a taped lecture. Teaching is not a lazy art, and anyone who knowingly hires teachers who treat it as such should themselves be moved on to another career. There is a time and place for everything. That is discipline.

If you think teaching while working practically is a major learning experience, just wait until you are a master teacher. The master teacher basically acts on the same basic premises as the teacher, only their students are teachers, the teachers are screened, the classroom is open, and the curriculum spans every discipline. Screening teachers means you have to know their jobs so intimately that you know exactly they one or two questions to ask that will reveal their competence. Some of my favorites include: What is a thesis statement and where does it go? What causes the seasons of the year? What is wrong the Big Bang Theory? What is wrong with Darwin's Theory of Evolution? How long are you supposed to wash your hands between patients? Tell me about a code you responded to that went sideways. You don't ask these questions outright. You either curb them in a sense of humility like you don't know, or you tell a personal experience and ask about theirs (e.g. the last medical question). Some aren't as vital in priority as others, but a Harvard graduate in English, astronomy, physics or biology better be able to answer the questions above or they don't deserve their degrees and certainly don't belong at the front of a class.

Whether you are teaching the class personally or not, as a master teacher you go through all the moves as if you were. You package everything together and give it to the teachers, but without expectation that they will follow anything other than the basic course description. You tell them as such and encourage them to own their class. It is an inordinate amount of work to set up a class. Teachers given everything they need without having it imposed on them are naturally grateful. If the material is put together well, they will use it. Again, if you hand them the lecture or a detailed outline of the lecture, perhaps you should write a book and let them decide if it fits their vision of the class.

Like students, each teacher brings their own unique perspectives. They and their students will share their experiences with you, whether they use your materials or not. This isn't just break room knowledge and war story exchange. It is filtered and shaped respectfully recognizing the master teacher has something to offer, understands mistakes, and does not judge. Everyone learns more from mistakes than doing things right the first time. The master teacher builds rapport with both students and teachers not by jumping at each problem, but by compassionately understanding the problem and providing helpful guidance to correct it.

Punishment is the least effect form of behavior modification because it creates animosity, a sense of injustice, and distrust. A master teacher understands how to work with consequences, to turn mishap into a lesson and move forward. Of course there are instances where decisive action must be taken, but in such cases there is no animosity because the master teacher is no more happy about the bad news than the receiver of that consequence, and no one doubts every effort for justice was made. These are not things a book can explain how to do, just like a book cannot tell you how to be a leader. These things come with adverse experiences.

Each person handles each situation differently. I ask medical practitioners about codes because I've responded to codes and seen them go sideways while half the building of licensed medics stood by gaping. You don't know how you will respond, and no list of ideas will help if your response to stand by and gape. The secrets of leadership are simple: get dirtier than the people you are leading, have a sense of direction, know what you are talking about, don't look over your shoulder to see if they are following, and if someone falls, help them back up. Delivering bad news is the job of a judge, but falls on the head of every supervisor. If you do not feel remorse delivering bad news, then this is not the job for you. In most instance the procedure is simple: the facts, the required consequences, and whatever mercy or guidance you can offer.

The higher up the ladder you get, the harder it can be to hear the voices at the bottom. I suggest getting a hearing aid if this is the case. Rising up the ladder broadens your base of input if you will just listen. With long-term experience you begin to see patterns emerging within the myriad of voices and activities until you can see things nobody else can. Children raised with close animal relationships will naturally be attentive to subtle cues and be more compassionate than their peers as well. Children disposed to sociopathy will either be abusive or balance more toward the middle and have excellent potential to make the most of life without being predatory.

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A good way to build observational skills later in life is by studying inexact arts like handwriting analysis. Put your new skill to the test by returning papers to students you don't know the names of by their handwriting and the personality traits you observed in them. As a teacher you begin to notice little subtleties, like consistent typographical errors, dates projects are turned in, thoroughness, concision, etc. All these show subtle character traits, occasionally medical problems, and with careful attention can reveal hidden gems and psycho-social problems that need attention. Paying attention at the least alerts you to things that need attention in class, and in extreme cases can and does save student lives. This reinforces and enhances observational techniques so that when you do lose your hearing, you still know what is going on.

If you watch an experienced and ethical judge in court, you will note that they have learned to pay close attention to very small and seemingly insignificant details, like file dates. If you are the kind of person who puts off responding until the last minute, or withholds evidence until there is no legal choice, the judge notices. A couple choice questions quickly reveal the culpability and responsibility of the parties, leading the wise judge to look with greater scrutiny on those perceived to be predatory. The judge knows there is no such thing as justice, but will try to mete it anyway. Even a non-ethical judge will attempt to mete justice as they see it. The main difference between the two is the preconceived ideas and beliefs that will not change no matter what the evidence shows. An ethical judge, like an ethical teacher or scientist, lets the evidence be its own judge, and simply learns to wade the lies and misdirection to arrive at the truth.

Poetry

Poetry is emotional doodling with words.

The poem of the master poet is a frame made of words in such a way that the reader fills the empty canvas with an image of the concepts conveyed.

A masterfully written poem changes each time you look at it.

We have talked about the building of a skyscraper but not the subjective design of that skyscraper. For this we turn to the creative arts. Your personal choice in form is naturally your own. Mine was writing and in particular poetry. This was essentially two aspects of the same creative art, the prose being used for objective analysis and shaping the parts of my structure, the poetry designing how they fit together into practical, adaptive, and aesthetic shapes. Teaching is also an art that can be employed to master all the above, refining and perfecting not only the content, but also the artistic form.

Let me clear, I hate poetry. Poetry is like singing in the shower: perfect so long as nobody else is listening. Like music, poetry has no rules but is typically a brief homage to a feeling. There are many recognized forms, but few good ideas can survive them. Many pretend to write poetry by randomly breaking prose into lines and struggling with a thesaurus to devise a forced rhyme scheme. These are typically called poet laureates. A real poet only cares about one thing: delivering a message. That implies writing to an audience. That is strictly optional with poetry, and while you are figuring out what poetry is really about and establishing your form, it is perhaps best to store them with the bar soap in the shower.

So what could motivate someone who hates poetry to become a master poet? It began in English class. Instructed to write a poem, I protested: "Yawning with enthusiasm/I lay my head on my desk/ ready for another poetry lesson." I hated it, and about the only poetry I liked reflected my standard issue of adolescent darkness, so I used what I hated to get rid of what I hated. There was only one problem: my next poem to best of show against all art forms. English teachers. Having touted a gem from one of my students, I understand and forgive the teacher who sent it to a museum for an art contest. Suddenly I was a poet and given the writer's ultimate excuse: write what you wish you could buy and read. Do you have any idea how hard of a mission that is to fill?

"Write what you know about" is an excellent motto. When you write from experience, you add a little edge no matter the subject or form. But when you are just a writer, in my experience, you can only write up to your own level of comprehension. And if you are filled with ego and/or senseless knowledge, you write to an audience of one. The master poet writes above his own level effortlessly and spontaneously. To get there, you have to write enough garbage that you can see the garbage in your own work and treat it as such. What remains is mostly common poetry, but in time gems begin to emerge. A real poet doesn't even remember the gems, they are too busy writing themselves toward the next one. You must be honestly critical of yourself. Nobody wants to crush someone's dreams and destroy them.

The novice poet can be motivated by any number of reasons to embrace this art. If you are in it for money or fame, your audience is most likely fellow poets who are at or below your level, and hopeless romantics who will worship anything remotely looking like poetry. The most typical and best reason to take up poetry is self-induced psychotherapy in the form of emotional release and self-discovery. Poetry is supposed to be emotionally driven. Heart-felt poetry of novices is far better than forced poetry. As you develop your style, you will pass through an ego phase where you try to exhibit your mastery of the language, literature, and obscure details. While you have great emotional attachment to these, the only reason to publish them is to illustrate the phase. The best poet is a poet, not someone trying to be a poet. Admittedly some gems do appear even among those trying to be poets, as with the shape poem below. Such are happy accidents and fun, but little more.

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GROWS
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You hear stories about poets struggling to write poems over days or weeks. Having written 729 lines in seven days and twice written eighty-one poems in nine days, these have no sympathy from this direction. If a poem isn't just flowing like the brush strokes of Chinese or Japanese calligraphy, it will not work. Once the strokes are committed, the act is done, the brush is put aside to be cleaned while the canvas dries. If you are thinking about your poem, there is no Zen in it. This isn't to say you can't think about topics, brainstorm images, etc. These are really necessary because a good poem is layered in images and themes starting with the title or lack thereof. If a general audience cannot get the basic message with a quick read, something is really wrong.

My shortest poem is three characters: "WU!" Everyone looks at it and goes "What? I don't get it." Yes you do. That WAS the message. The literal translation is the exclamation of a negative prefix: UN! or ANTI! Or MU! In Japanese. Pick your prefix. The last one, for those well-read, gives away the entire poem: the Mumon Koan (Does a dog have Buddha-nature?). Mu was the most appropriate and briefest possible answer because it is not a valid question (as we discussed earlier). Mu essentially says, you don't know enough to even ask the right question that deserves an answer. I too once wrote poetry like prose with rough line breaks. I also struggled to expand that space, first with abstract ideas, and then with the obvious, and finally layering to get a broad audience.

WU! Is pretty abstract, but still delivers the message to those who don't get it! Do not tell me you cannot create space on the page and say something in less words than a short essay. Let me show you just how easy it is to write a poem in at least six layers (that I will let you find) using simple language and a very simple and common image. The following is titled **Ten of Manifestation: Great Work** and is the last poem of the LǐJiě Ching.

The eye opens
water gushing
the womb pushes—

Bulbous skin
so awkward
out of place—

On it soft hair
a little bloody
its wetness shines—

Pop!
Eyes, ears, nose
suddenly appear—

Gasping
it struggles
finally breathes—

Upset
it cries
so softly—

Then a shoulder
an arm
another arm—

Body follows
legs unfolding
stretching

I was once given an assignment to write a Haiku. In protest, I skipped the assignment. The closest I ever came to writing a Haiku was the answer I gave on a final exam of Religions of China and Japan that asked for the definition of Zen. It was an absurd answer given in protest to such an absurd question. You don't start writing poetry this way. Rules are for those who are not artists. When a real artist is following some sort of rule, there is bound to be a good reason, especially if the rule is not their own.

Everyone starts with the rules, stretches them for specific effects, and ultimately rewrites them conscious of the effects on an audience not privileged to know what those rules are, or willing to wrestle with anything that isn't intuitively obvious. The wise artist takes advantage of these qualities in the audience. They avoid unnecessarily complex language and maximize double meanings in any way they possibly can, always conscious of the full range of possible interpretations.

If you try intellectualize artistic expression, you will get caught up in all the permutations one at a time and put yourself into overload. Reducing the load to get the job done leaves an obviously mechanical amalgam. Only in true Zen (meditative) form can you grasp all permutations simultaneously and spontaneously create fine art. You don't need special knowledge of Zen to do this. If that were necessary, Bach could not have composed his later symphonies even if he could hear them. Such skill comes with inordinate practice and the humility to set aside your ego and put yourself in the audience. You start being a poet by pouring your heart out in as many words as it takes to get the job done, and break the lines where it feels right to do so. As you evolve your style and self-understanding, you begin to recognize qualities in your poetry about you that you like and those you do not like.

The good news is, you can choose to be who you like to be. Many poets refrain from sharing their work because it is a diary of their psyche. My early poetry was *duende*, a term for dark poetry. Looking at it, I decided to consciously change my content to beauty. I forced myself to write a poem, and for lack of content turned to mythology to tell a heroic tale. When I was done I felt violated. In protest, I wrote a poem of beauty for myself, and another and another. Then I began to explore elementary language, images, and shaping the poem strategically on the page and with punctuation or the lack of it. I did not follow any conventional rules. My goal was to establish ways to guide the reader through the words at a pace that devised an esoteric shape. Before I knew it, I filled a volume and completely changed my inner psyche. I then turned my new-found meditation tool to philosophical concepts.

The *LǐJiě Ching* was a significant evolution in style and content. It employs three psychological tools for self examination: poetic form, the Tarot, and psychological processes of learning and development. The Tarot acts as a catalyst for devising poetic images exhibiting psychological processes. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, each poem strategically designs a frame for the reader to fill. How those were designed required research into the Tarot to understand its images, and resolve those into working concepts consistent with both the catalyst and psychological processes. Classes of themes were written in different styles intentionally to distinguish them. To write each poem, however, the information was not enough. I am an experiential poet who must feel and execute the poem in a single motion. Not only is it a useful meditation for everyone else, it dramatically changed me, as did the *Ch'an Ching* (in *The Ascension*).

A single poem does not need to change the world, change you, or be particularly special in itself. Each poem is its own unique experience for both reader and writer. The writer, like the teacher, is the one who benefits the most from the act of writing or teaching. Poetry is particularly special because, unlike prose, it is purely subjective. When a poem is overly objective it tends to detour down isolated academic lanes that only the poet can truly appreciate. Writing for yourself is filled with benefits, but writing for yourself to an audience of strangers has more benefits. I was an effective teacher because I became conscious of my audience in my poetry. That early consciousness turned my eyes on my early fiction and I realized it belonged in the recycle bin forgotten.

Fine art is not what someone calling themselves an artist just throws together randomly. Fine art has a message, and second to that is the form of delivering that message. Many mistake form for art, but just being able to draw a line, leaf, or hand does not an artist make. Sure the form may be very difficult, but a camera can effortlessly capture the original form, so what are you trying to say? The artist of form and ego

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insists they have messages, but that the audience is incompetent to receive them and they only care about audiences who understand.

Fine art is not a mind-reading exercise. It is okay to bury layers to be discovered by those with deeper insights, but to have real marketable value as art it must have aesthetic appeal on some level. If it isn't just a neat or natural design with superficial appeal only, then the audience wants to be entertained on top of the superficial. Entertainment means a self-evident story or image that excites, thrills, or otherwise invigorates emotions.

A good painting is like a many good poems: you can start anywhere and move about in it like you would a model home, and discover it in whatever order you like. Every piece of a work of fine art is a hook drawing the audience in. You never waste a word or stroke. As Lao Tse said, "Less is more." A real artist knows that managing empty space is as important as the message because it gives the audience room to think and comprehend the totality of the message. Confucius said, "Waste neither man or word." They are truly synonymous, because excess words clutter the audience's minds. The same is true in music or painting: excess turns into incoherent noise or visual clutter.

To teach poetry, I contemplated carefully how to convey my own style. My procedure was as follows. First, identify a word fitting a feeling that you want to express. Make it your title. Second, identify an image that conveys that feeling in the form of a metaphor. Third, list four to six major elements of the metaphor separately and key words that describe those elements. Fourth, use those words to establish phrases of two to six words that can stand alone on a line. Fifth, put the lines for each element into a meaningful sequence that conveys they element concisely. Finally, organize these into a sequence of stanzas with a clear beginning, middle and end, as if you are telling a story. Do not use the word in the title or any words related to it. Edit for meaning and clarity, and don't pay any attention to rhyme.

The students had the benefit of a lesson in narrative to help. I taught them what I call the clothesline: begin with theme and draw a line representing fulfillment of that theme, hanging plot elements to map the story's evolution. Done well, a long story easily condenses into a brief poem. The students created some of the best poetry I ever read. You must find your own style eventually, but until then, rules and following the styles of other poets you like will help you find your own way. This is ultimately true with all art forms. Delivering the message is everything.

Mastery

The master does not accept the world as it is, but rather lives as if the world is the way it should be.

Where a person is a tadpole or caterpillar, a master is a frog or butterfly. No tadpole, caterpillar, or person can do what a frog, butterfly, or master do.

To look the fool is easy: parrot a real master. Failing life at the risk of death is also easy: imitate a real master.

Let me tell you the deepest secret of the masters. When I am in your world, in your situation, you are my teacher, you are my master. No one questions my authority.

The path to mastery is, at best, only half the path.

Have you ever wondered why it is nobody speaks about the path to mastery? Not everyone can step off a cliff and manage to evolve wings before they hit the ground. Scott Adams once wrote that to fly you need only forget to hit the ground. As a rule, gravity always wins. Most mastery is not quite so extreme, though it may feel like it. The master poet becomes the master poet through practice and evolving themes and forms until they can spontaneously and effortlessly write above their own level. The master teacher has enough practical and teaching experience that they can step into subjects unknown to them and teach as if they always taught the subject. The master martial artist adapts to any form without thought.

Many practice their trade for entire lifetimes and never come anywhere near mastery. As the last two chapters suggested, mastery has two major components: objective knowledge and artistic/subjective expression. Having these alone does not a master make. Artistic expression will help the hoarder of knowledge transform from strata of random knowledge to structures, connect them to the foundation or other structures, explore the use of emptiness, and learn to build up. The artist without knowledge and experience has no capacity to evolve or represent messages or map a sensible plot. Their work becomes random and worthless. Knowledge, experience, and art must work together, but not all that swim and look like tadpoles are tadpoles, and not all tadpoles finally become frogs.

If these words dissuade from trying, then you may as well dig a hole and get it over with because giving up is a waste of life. You do not need to become a master of any sort to be happy, but you must work that direction with all your effort if you are to ever have control over your own happiness. You do not need to be a master to learn from masters and thereby improve your quality of life. Becoming master of yourself is really the most and only important thing. This is accessible to everyone, no matter your circumstances, opportunities, skills, or other capacities. You create your own happiness and suffering, and only you can control them. The simplest form of mastery is living beyond fear, hope, and the suffering these cause.

The contemporary Western view of mastery described in the first paragraph of this chapter extends to Zen mastery and enlightenment. These are relative masteries compounding self-awareness with something outside you. Once achieved, this type of mastery either becomes the life-focus or a model to evolve new masteries. Zen mastery and enlightenment are two separate things, even though they are typically described as synonymous. They are close because the function of Zen is to evolve toward the Ethical and higher states of being. If all you have to work with are your studies and meditations (e.g. asceticism), then your mastery is strictly abstract and limited to the content you bring to your mastery. With Zen alone this is little more than self-awareness and the techniques used to fulfill that.

Zen mastery provides a fork in the road where mastery and society are incompatible because society does not even function on a moral level, let alone an Ethical level. To one side is the seeker who knows this is not the whole picture and recognize that what they have is a lesser form of mastery if they are even willing to call it that (they usually aren't). To the other side you commit yourself to your mastery and work to lead others there. Like the seeker, you know something is missing, and refuse the title of master. You see

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the fork, but you also see that the other path leads to almost certain destruction, so you choose the secure life and accept what you have.

The path of no return I and the historic literature call the wilderness. If all you know is the ascetic life, the wilderness is a death sentence. If you managed to develop Zen mastery while embracing human life, you stand a chance of surviving, but it will destroy you and leave you functionally ascetic. If you survive and don't become a permanent fixture in the wilderness, all you ever were, debts, social roles and all, are gone or soon will be as you shrug them off. It is the functional equivalent of death except you leave a corporeal ghost that looks like you, looks like a human, but is something much more. There are two famous historical reports of journeys into the wilderness: Jesus and Gautama. The stories are not accurate depictions, but do contain important major elements.

Each went into the wilderness for a prolonged period. Realistically, prolonged is more accurately described in the story of Gautama, where he shed his worldliness and joined wild sects of ascetics, practicing and mastering the ways of at least two sects over the next nine years. It is doubtful he spent all his time with ascetics, but certainly also with outcast wild people of his time. There are suggestions that Jesus went to the Essenes, learned their ways, and adapted their teachings into his own. While this may be partly true, the subsequent meditations and temptations in both stories suggest they actually went into the wilderness for two reasons. First, the wilderness thoroughly tests and challenges every aspect of your discipline. Second, when you emerge you are a completely broken mess needing reassembly that requires weeks of continuous meditation as you reinvent yourself and continue thereafter.

Why don't the stories tell the whole truth? First, they must be told in ways palatable to the audience. Second, you don't want everyone thinking they can somehow follow in the footsteps of a master and achieve mastery themselves. It is one thing to slip off the cliff and another to jump off. The wilderness is populated by those who never escape because they don't have the discipline of mastery required to withstand the temptations. The journey is also coupled with a knowledge base that allows the master to pass through the wilderness as a participant observer, never fully succumbing to the wilderness. Succumbing to the wilderness is easy if you are youthful and subject to hormones and whims, and if you are too old you simply won't survive.

There are generally two classes of people in the wilderness: those who are truly wild (first chapter) and those who have fallen from society and surrendered themselves to the wilderness. The story of Jesus prior to his ministry is vacant, so we do not know the real reasons he went into the wilderness. Gautama's story suggests a conscious choice between the royal life and discovering what life was really all about. The more likely reason for entering the wilderness is failure in society as a consequence of mastery and choosing the consequence of the wilderness over falling back on family or directly into asceticism. Choosing asceticism means taking vows that will separate you from any temptations, essentially burying all fears and flaws in discipline. Choosing the wilderness means facing all fears and exploring every flaw in your discipline.

It is hard for many to fathom masters having flaws in their discipline. It seems a contradiction in terms. The master's discipline is limited to their range of experiences. Ideally, you enter the wilderness as a master in several areas to ensure the broadest range of possible experiences and resulting discipline. It also ensures that you have the knowledge needed to fully observe the entire experience. The broader your discipline base, the easier it is to adapt to new matters of discipline. This is why ascetic mastery is bound for certain failure in the wilderness. To achieve multiple mastery you need to live multiple lives, which is essentially the meaning of embracing life to its fullest in Zen. Multiple lives is mentioned in the Gautama story in a way the audience could understand that also had some truth in its context.

The wilderness story of Jesus (Luke & Matthew 4; Mark 1) is condensed into what appears to be just the meditation (forty days and nights) and temptations, mirroring part of Gautama's story. A little cross-contamination is no real surprise. Stories of the wilderness are consistently downplayed and for good reasons, even though it appears severally throughout the Bible and other texts.

Jesus' meditation is coupled with fasting, where Gautama was fed, bathed and oiled daily by a woman. The story of Jesus could well be one of a well-constructed delusion caused by the fasting, but is generally accepted even by Buddhists as a genuine transition into mastery. Jesus did not live long enough to shape his own legacy, so much must be credited particularly to Paul. Gautama taught for 42 years before dying from contaminated pork when he was 80, leaving a significant legacy.

Of Gautama's nine years in the wilderness, he is said to have quickly mastered the ways of two ascetic sects. Realizing ascetic practices did not provide the answers he sought, he abandoned their ways. What else happened is never told as the story goes straight to his meditation under the Bo (pipal) tree. When Gautama experienced enlightenment, he could see all his past and future lives, all the past and future buddhas, etc. Though the whole story is fairly simplified, it is obvious that he lived at least two diametrically opposite lives from which the synthesis was his awakening. This is consistent with the Hegelian logic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis and feasible. Being born crown prince. Married and with a son is not a common opportunity, but with the rest of the story is a logically feasible path.

Not having such disparate opportunities means having to explore and master as many perspectives as you can. Using multiple accurate reference points you can project and identify the full spectrum as needed to awaken as thoroughly as Gautama did. These references are separate lives embraced simultaneously and sequentially as a participant observer. If you are not able to optimize your observations, these lives may as well have been casual walks wearing a blindfold.

Awakening not only connects these lives, but reveals all other possibilities because the entire range is covered. What is connected among the lives and beyond can be likened to early childhood memories and creativity: you only remember what you could understand and relate to. This is true throughout life. If the brain does not have pathways to recognize and process information, it does not have a way to store it or creatively expand those boundaries. This is why the structures built in advance of the path to mastery and mastering multiple areas are so important to what you can take out of the experience.

Pū

Through many births I sought in vain
The Builder of this House of Pain.
Now, Builder, You are plain to see,
And from this House at last I'm free;
I burst the rafters, roof and wall,
And dwell in the Peace beyond them all.

—Gautama

The master does not move mountains; he convinces them to move themselves.

To the master the universe is but a particle. Some suspect in his silence he may be moving it, but really he is seldom concerned with such trivial matters.

The master tends the garden, cooks, and cleans: common practical things.

—

Standing outside the illusion of self, the master's journey seems complete, as if an objective has been achieved. This is not the way of samsara. Gautama's teachings evolved primarily from Hindu and Yogic traditions, so his teachings reflect that contextual understanding of reality. Samsara is essentially a cosmogonic view of what physics today identifies as entropy (change) and conservation resulting in a cyclic process. Cosmogony is cosmological understanding (how reality actually works) shaped for social and subjective purposes (e.g. belief and social values). Typical of mythology, cosmogony tends to anthropomorphize (make human) concepts, which fills several purposes simultaneously. The cosmogony of samsara gives rise to the concepts of reincarnation and karma. While there are threads of factual reality within these concepts, the humanized aspects make them illusions.

If we can strip the human elements from these terms, samsara becomes a complex process of changes within the Brahma (cosmic ocean of everything). The mistake of samsara perceived as self is the "river" called Atman (the soul) flowing into the Brahma. If Brahma is the cosmic everything, then it is hard for something outside to flow in. As such, it is better to describe Atman as an eddy, a temporary river-like stream created as a byproduct of currents in the ocean (Brahma). The real illusion is that this eddy has any permanence or significance. When the accident of its creation no longer reinforces that creation, it is gone, the materials and forces recycled into all kinds of phenomena including new eddies. The conservation of information is a grand illusion fundamental to most religions.

Escaping the cycle of samsara is the main objective of Hinduism, Yogic tradition, and Buddhism. This escape has two obvious levels: physical and psychological. Personal and Zen mastery are forms of psychological escape from the cycle. For personal mastery this simply means making the best of what one has. Thereafter, degrees of mastery describe the duration and psychological perspective to the eddy as it defines the physical being. This brings us to the Zen concept of pū, literally meaning a naturally shaped block of wood. The literal meaning suggests a separation of life forces from the physical being created by those forces. It also suggests an on-going process of forces reshaping that being.

Pū plays very important and central roles in [The Ascension](#). The seeker, called a bodhisattva by Gautama, brings a massive piece of pū on his journey (on cover), pulling it around on a two-wheeled cart. Late in his journey he takes the wheels of samsara off the cart to cross the river of Atman with the relic. From an island in the middle he recognizes it as a burden, carries it into the river with great effort and drops it in. Instead of floating, it sinks, immune to the forces of mind, soul, and life. From the beginning it was obviously a shaper of mind, sitting in the middle of a tea room as the focal point of meditation and the entire school of thought. How the pū returns to its point of origin is not told, but has the masters baffled because it did not come alone. It is haunted by a ghost-like presence, a grand master (Mahamuni), a Buddha (forever awoken).

True mastery is like the haunted pū: the ideas shaping its original shape are now distinct from that physical form, yet still loosely connected. It is as if the pū acts as an antenna interfacing timeless ideas with the continuing world of illusions. This is not typical mastery, as the story shows, and nor is it an end to the journey. Mastery has distinctive degrees and processes that continue past the path to mastery, no matter the degree of mastery attained. The pū can and does evolve and transform, but past a certain degree of attainment, it ceases to be a living and growing thing to be an almost static and esoteric being. Short of para-nirvana, the passage through death of the forever awoken, the bond between evolving ideas and being remains active. Beyond para-nirvana, that bond is severed for the master, ending the dependence on physicality. Strategically getting there is the path of the master, and as Gautama showed, it is a lifelong endeavor.

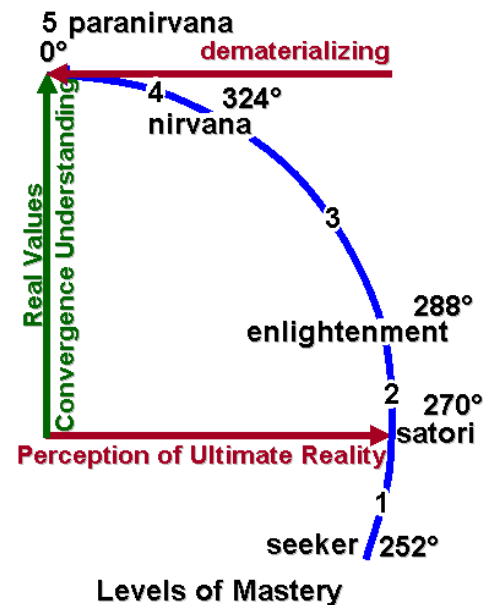
Zen mastery is described in simple stages consistent with the diagram above. The angles are technical relationships to learning and development processes shaping the rest of the cycle. These processes typically lock into particular positions based on opportunity, choice, and personal comfort. Of course changes are inevitable causing these to break down and leading to new opportunities and choices. The typical choice is to embrace the familiar that reinforces ego-identity in a process called remission (literally starting the cycle over). All levels of Zen mastery diagrammed as well as personal mastery (a form of satori) are beyond that cycle of samsara, illusions and suffering. This is not to say a loss of natural feelings like joy and grief, but rather not allowing them to control or define you. They happen and you let them go.

Breaking the cycle begins with a moment of satori in which one catches a glimpse of reality outside the cycle. This motivates the individual to cast off ties with the cycle and seek what really is beyond it. Gautama referred to himself in this stage as a bodhisattva. In Mahayana tradition, bodhisattva has come to mean one who has attained true wisdom (bodhi) but out of compassion has foregone para-nirvana to spread enlightenment and end suffering universally. This is an idealistic illusion, though pieces do describe the worldly behaviors of typical masters (short of foregoing para-nirvana).

The seeker strives toward personal consciousness (satori) that may or may not be affiliated with a body of knowledge apart from personal identity. As with all development, this requires a compounding of experiences from the start of the cycle. Once accomplished without getting trapped again in the cycle, future passages are easier. The original passes and risks of getting trapped, however, typically discourage future attempts. Ascetic paths to mastery, lacking any further experiences and adversities, end at satori. Those who venture beyond ascetic practices open themselves to greater degrees of personal evolution. As a rule, satori is a functional end because a common satori will stay in it comfortably, and an ascetic satori lacks the experiences and survival skills needed to go further. These we can call lesser masters or hinamuni (lesser sages).

The next grade of master has attained enlightenment to true wisdom (bodhi). They are still loosely entangled with the world of illusions because wisdom is an understanding of the world of illusions. This affiliation and their typical compassionate behaviors are consistent with more modern views of bodhisattvas, making that a reasonable name for their degree of mastery. We can also call these masters “near ones” because they are just outside the human world in a position to observe and reflect functional wisdom across boundaries of illusion. They are also just short of nirvana and total awakening. Being just short does not mean they need only do one more thing to get there. On the contrary, it will take at least as much time and effort to make the next step as it took to get to enlightenment.

Mahamuni (literally greater master) is the highest order of mastery consistent with nirvana, the ultimate state of awareness, This goes far beyond wisdom to the true nature of reality, far from humanity and illusion. This may sound very strange, but this virtual state of omniscience is only half of the whole picture



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and a basic roadmap of the other half. Having the whole picture and being able to express it are two separate things. Full awareness is a numinous experience, meaning it goes beyond the range of conventional human experience and has no linguistic equivalents. Subjective expression is only part of the problem. Awakening opens an entirely new path leading to para-nirvana that only the Mahamuni can understand and appreciate.

Ego-identity continues up through and including satori. Institutional practices may vary, but for good reasons an institution may declare the old identity dead at this point and rename the subject, or simplify to a title and part of the original name. This is awkward for the master in satori because they still relate to their personal ego-identity. Enlightenment and nirvana are degrees of ego-identity dissociation or total loss. The human that was, is no more. Only the Mahamuni remains, and humanity is an integral part of the path. To solve this state of anomie, the Mahamuni needs a distinct name fitting the master's path and relationship with humanity.

Gautama simply called himself Shakyamuni (sage of the Shakya clan). Buddha is a mythical title. The name and myth are necessary to distinguish the original life from mastery, draw focus away from the path leading to mastery and toward the teaching. As discussed earlier, no amount of detail given about such a path can fully represent its experience from the perspective of the original traveler. The path is not covered to keep people from becoming masters, but because each path is unique. "Failing life at the risk of death is also easy: imitate a real master."

Metaphysics

One is taught in the order in which one is ready to learn.

The master states only what he knows unless there is the slightest inclination that he should restrain his words and say nothing.

Although generally avoided by Gautama, the Sangha notably keeps up with contemporary science and cosmology. You would never think to stumble upon a discussion of thermodynamics or quantum theory in a monastery, let alone find these are in the curriculum of everyday practice even in the remotest regions of Tibet. I am not aware of this formal practice appearing in any Zen monastery (Ch'an in China), though no level of mastery beyond hinamuni is possible without it. There are no delusions that anything more could be attained within the confines of the monastery anyway.

Most zendos are purposive schools, not monasteries. Beyond basic practices at best seeping into zendos, shastras, and tea farming or other bare subsistence behaviors, little comes out of the real monasteries. Where the typical zendo is public and sharing purposive information, the monastery is private and absorbing all information. Real masters are not going to spend precious time chasing illusions or schooling people in matters they can get elsewhere. It is like hiring Einstein to teach a small child how to add and subtract. It is a waste of resources. Rest assured that these masters contemplate a wide array of subjects, and at the top of the list is the nature of ultimate reality.

Somewhere in its history, metaphysics came to be popularly viewed as a spiritual pursuit. Besides redistributing resources, the Plague left a hole in the population and cheap labor. Replacing the loss with technology triggered the Renaissance and the early onset of industrialization. Not only was literacy more accessible, it aided in the process of industrialization and began challenging religious beliefs. Before the population could pick up and read a copy of a popular translation of the Bible, the local clergy typically only had parts of the Bible, so only the highest levels of the clergy had to deal with contradictions in the text. Now everyone could see them and the best educated began taking different paths.

In the 19th Century, technology left the factories and began to be generally accessible, and by the mid-20th Century it was fully integrated. The general population could not deny there was more to the universe than their ancient religious texts revealed, and were already having doubts. People need faith, so the cracks were filled with metaphysics. From the perspective of real philosophers, metaphysics is serious and objective, yet lacking the practical solutions of hard science to be held defensibly by a focused population. Being hijacked for subjective purposes, metaphysics came to be known popularly as cult and alternative religion pseudo-science. The nature of ultimate reality (the definition of metaphysics) is important to spiritual development at all levels. The degree to which that understanding has basis in reality evolves with "spiritual" development.

"Spiritual" development is to ego identity development in psychology as cosmogony is to cosmology, faith is to fact, subjective is to objective, and thesis is to antithesis. On some level this is understood at the highest levels even among religions. Religions tend to reject public revelations of objective pursuits for good cause, as those in the population who can handle the information tend to steer away from the religion and those who can't get lost as their faith is challenged. Ignorance strengthens insecure faiths, especially faiths seeking to expand hope, their values, or face competition with other faiths. Radical and cult-like behavior is not uncommon even among the most organized religions. Stable and mature religions recognize the evolving nature of knowledge and incorporate it into their practices. This is easiest to do when a clear hierarchy leads to central authority as with Catholicism and Tibetan Buddhism. It is thus no surprise that these institutions have traditionally and privately pursued factual sciences.

The Catholic Church evolved in the final gasps of the Roman Empire, giving it a unique take on technological advancement. They saw society torn apart by excesses and ignorance enabled by technology, and then crushed in its absence because of dependence on that technology. Why bother remembering things when you can readily look them up? Why learn how to do mathematical operations when technology will solve the problems for you? Why walk when technology will carry you wherever you

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want to go? Technology is great to a point, and then society becomes complacent, mentally and physically lazy, and like an impetuous child, demanding but having nothing to offer in return. This is the law of diminishing returns: having so much of a particular thing that should be functional that productivity diminishes. The wealthy then begin to look for new resources to exploit and keep building their wealth, and the population supports their destructive imperial behaviors as it narrowly gives them opportunity to consume with resources they could not attain at home.

Empires rise to expand their consumer bases, devour the resources of their neighbors, and placate their own populations. The traditional empire plants roots and expands from there as the local population becomes saturated and loses its value. With technology and corruption, occupying is no longer necessary or desirable, either practically or morally. When humans are unable to further exploit their own resources, they turn to exploiting each other. And when populations are technologically saturated, they lose the capacity to solve real problems while multiplying the population out of control until the whole system collapses. The results may vary slightly from region to region and over time, but there are certain consistencies. Once the system collapses, the technology becomes worthless, and the people are unable to do more than barely function without it. The population seeks hope, religion answers, and everyone blames the technology. A dark age sets in.

Qualities of society like government, religion, science, and language evolve together. When a society is subjected to social qualities beyond their existing state, they either evolve or perish. Evidence of social evolution appears in the metaphysics of that society, presenting the roadmap for subsequent evolution across other social systems. In Gautama's time, society was not ready for a factual metaphysics. It lacked the language to express reality and the technological sophistication needed to confirm its factual basis. Twenty-seven centuries later, language and technical sophistication are still not completely able to completely represent and confirm a complete factual metaphysics. They are close enough that with some push in linguistic evolution (which includes mathematics) enough factual metaphysics can be revealed and confirmed to pursue the subject seriously as never before.

As our discussion has indicated, a great chasm exists between the versions of fantasy reality we teach children and the reality physicists struggle to piece together into one theory of everything. Somewhere between these are degrees of mythical illusions ranging from creationist cosmogony to Big Bang "cosmology." I put cosmology into quotes because it is a pseudo-cosmology easily debunked but serving social purposes and not entirely removed from reality. In spite of being easily dismissed, it gained traction among the scientific community with the exception of cosmologists. Most of science does not directly pursue a theory of everything, but rather pursues a specialized and narrow body of knowledge independently. Like too much technology causing diminishing returns, too many specializations also created diminishing returns. Cosmologists are the few who truly seek the theory of everything and have to wade through the mountains of distracting details to arrive at the universal facts.

In basic algebra you learn to solve a problem by regularly falling back on one procedure: simplify. Sometimes, as in higher levels of mathematics, you have to employ substitution and making the problem more complicated before undergoing manipulations, simplifying, and arriving at a general solution. At the most advanced levels problems undergo alternating stages of manipulation, complexity, and simplification without any clear beginning or end. The first step in solving a theory of everything is identifying where things are in an on-going process like this.

With diversity at a historic high, the obvious thing to do is to attack the problem from the most simplistic of perspectives, identifying the basic mathematical elements that apply globally to the full range of diversity. The next logical iteration is manipulation. How do these basic mathematical elements interact with each other? For this you turn to the fundamental theorems upon which the diversity has emerged. When you have found a common pattern of relationships between simplified components and theorems, you reconstruct reality in its entirety to find how the components and processes emerge as the diverse observations. This reveals conceptual qualities of both the mathematical elements and the processes not previously explored, requiring reinvention of the language of mathematics so it accurately reflects real processes.

To the student, mathematics is so pure you cannot conceive it as limited. No matter how good of a mathematician you are, you cannot use traditional mathematical systems to represent a common everyday logical process like baking bread. You can come close, and in certain parts even depict processes with

extreme accuracy, but you cannot accomplish the entire project in one simple mathematical model. If math cannot bake a simple loaf of bread, then how can it possibly solve cosmology?

To solve this problem you must understand the animal that created it. This animal has a complex history that helped it evolve this language based on its understanding of the universe. That understanding compounded and diversified rapidly as technology infiltrated scientific investigation and led to technology creating problems observed through other technologies, etc. This built layers of abstraction following social expectations, limited by the ability of language to express alternative modes of thought, and popular recognition of these modes empowering them to be explored and the results to be accepted. These evolutions are particularly difficult because the working systems are reinforced by mountains of supporting evidence, which of course are conditional on observer expectations and methods. Clearly something is wrong though, because these same systems rapidly fall to pieces even between neighboring pursuits.

Traditional human methods tend to be either objective or subjective, or compartmentalize them and treat them as equivalents. On some levels they are equivalent. While cosmogony is subjective and cosmology is objective, this does not make them directly equivalent. The direct equivalence of scientific objectivity is psycho-social subjectivity. To begin exploring objective reality, you begin with theory and belief in what that reality could be and through skepticism and testing of null-hypotheses (ideas antithetical to the theory) you build an objective view of that theory based in factual observation.

Psychology and sociology examine the human animal as a scientific subject, beginning with established facts and evolving theories about individuals and societies. To truly understand this animal subjectively equivalent to objective cosmology, you need a full scientific survey of everything it does. This means understanding not only the facts of its history, but its interpretations leading to how that information is presented as fact, and the roots of all its thinking processes through linguistics, etymology, and within historical and social contexts. This spans the entire spectrum of human knowledge that includes obscure and purely subjective areas like literature, music, and the other fine arts.

Each scientific innovation is built upon its predecessors and at least partly shaped by the social contexts and expectations it is created in. To sift through all the scientific illusions, eliminating the observer effect in every degree to find what is truly real literally means unwinding all human knowledge with no guarantee of useful results. Specialists will spend fortunes and decades just exploring one little perspective. They are already overwhelmed with their own work, let alone trying to tackle everyone else's across history.

Serious progress is always made by an upstart who does not answer to any outside expectations and has the time and resources to dig. The further they dig, the more they expose of the observer effect, and the closer to ultimate reality they get. A working algorithm of this nature exists and is being systematically released. It takes time to rewind, reconstruct, and identify what the audience can understand. It covers the whole spectrum (objective and subjective) making it an excellent meditation. This brings us to mind control and gives us an opportunity to see how the algorithm works with an evolving mind.

Mind

Change is universal.

—Gautama

Eternal life is overrated and largely misrepresented. If the process is life, then eternity is life but without self.

Living is a habit. Like all habits, no matter how miserable it is, people want to keep it.

Evolving beyond living into eternity and through death is a life-long process of hard work with no shortcuts.

It is impossible to die ethically if you have not lived ethically.

A book on Zen without some specific words about meditation would seem incomplete to some. As a rule, I prefer not to write in too much detail about subjects that are readily available from other sources. Meditation would seem such a subject, especially with my pre-enlightenment book on the subject, The Ascent System. Mine was a variation of mind control methods and training not too dissimilar to Sylva's method. In retrospect, no book really explores the evolving processes of meditation or recognizes its application across all states of mind. Having a unique experiential perspective creates a rare opportunity to revisit what everyone thought they knew (myself included) and map a more involved process than ever before conceived.

The brain compartmentalizes activities and establishes connections to optimize its functions. While this is a life-long process, the most important connections are formed in distinct developmental stages into the mid-twenties. Most subjects stabilize into life routines by thirty and do not actively seek to expand into new and diverse functions. This slows the process. Like a muscle, the brain needs regular exercise and stimulation to retain its optimum functionality. Without these it simply settles into what is needed, begins to age and lose capacity. Short of physical obstructions like calcium plaque and neuro-chemical deficiencies, this can be reversed with increasing difficulty in direct proportion to age.

Electroencephalography has identified six frequency ranges identifying different functions of the brain. The first four are the familiar states of consciousness: alpha (twilight; 8-16 Hz), beta (woken; 16-32 Hz), delta (deep sleep; up to 4 Hz), theta (dream sleep; 4-8 Hz). Gamma (over 32 Hz) observes well-defined pathways that can rapidly exchange information, most prominently linking the thalamus to other parts of the brain resulting in consciousness. Mu (8-12 Hz) identifies motor-neuron functionality. For mind control purposes, our main focus is on alpha, theta, and gamma waves as evolutions of meditation from passive to active to pervasive. Beta is of prime importance in the practice of active meditation because it provides input. Delta is vital for life because it is when neurons can focus on recovery, healing, and growing rather than processing.

The alpha state (also called the zone) is popularly known as a meditation cycle that enables creativity and visualization by focusing mental processes into sensory neurons. In normal neural function it acts as a gentle sensory kick-start for woken (beta) activity. Regular pathways with sensory areas can optimize mathematical processing and creativity, which is a significant benefit of meditation with or without object (idea, problem, or thing). This "intuition" is really taking advantage of neurons optimized naturally for dedicated functions, and not subject to the conventional burdens of consciousness. Athletics and adrenalin add a mu dimension virtually indistinguishable from alpha, linking to motor neurons which are also dedicated and optimized through practice. Linking consciousness with motor and sensory neurons is vital to many activities, especially in life-threatening situations, and can be addictive.

Addiction to the alpha state or to pseudo-alpha states is common. The main appeal is the stillness of conscious thinking in a timeless present. Those who perform complex tasks regularly that require a stillness of mind use the alpha state to compartmentalize neural functions so they can think in beta while dedicating motor-sensory and even some conscious sectors to the complex functions (stenography is a prime

example). Chemical inducements like depressants and adrenal stimulants can also cause this state. Without proper balance of beta perception and thought, long-term abuse of alpha can easily weaken and enfeeble the conscious mind.

Serious meditation practice balances activities, stimuli, and learning so the alpha state can be used to begin mapping the entire brain as it is and begin controlling the map. Meditation with object is a semi-active form of meditation without object. Generally it is used to prepare a beginner to transition from normal thinking to meditation without object. It is the meditation equivalent of stretching and building strength before introducing basic skills. The basic skill of meditating without object is the complete stillness of thought (no-mind) and opening awareness to, perception of, and communication with motor-sensory areas (intuition). This helps optimize connectivity and communication between the areas of the brain and allows for conscious problems to be tested against real and functional algorithms revealing illusions.

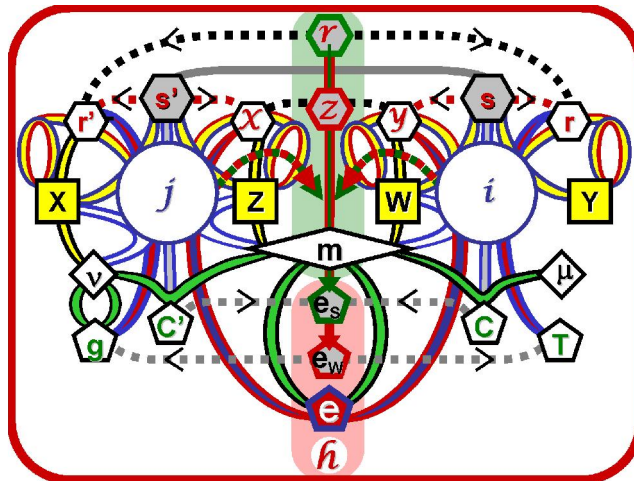
With years of practice this connectivity appears as gamma waves between the frontal and occipital lobes and other neural regions. Ideally, the subject masters meditation without object while developing other skills to mastery and begins recognizing conceptual processes within and between those diverse skills. At some point the subject must enter an active meditation spanning the states of mind in which they break down the dysfunctional pathways of illusions in the wilderness, and observing them as they really are. Just as right pathways lead to eventual failure in conventional society, reducing to the lowest common denominator of right pathways means certain failure in the wilderness as well. This begins the first true active meditation in theta.

Theta is familiar as dream sleep or REM sleep (rapid eye movement). As a state of meditation, it is more like a lucid dream where you are conscious of the dream interaction and learn to take control of it. Ideally, incorporating meditation techniques with vivid dreaming is introduced in early practice to help develop meditation without object and adaptive meditation skills needed for every moment mind control. It is also excellent preparation for active theta meditation where meditation uses the state to establish and reinforce connections. As in the meditation depicted by the Ch'an Ching (in The Ascension) the meditation to enlightenment reviews the full range of experiences and knowledge in a dream-like state commonly called soul traveling (ref. shamanism). Instead of sleeping and meditating within a lucid dream, the meditation without object forms the dream-like state to optimize exploring all details simultaneously without processing individually.

Mind experiments as Einstein was known for, are an elementary form of theta meditation. They are also good practice since they have some basis in reality. The problem is that this type of meditation can offer fantasy realities that can become addictive or misguide the untrained mind. Dreams are critical to establishing new pathways by establishing contextual connections of memories throughout the brain. Improperly exercised or abused (to include psychotropic drugs), theta meditations can easily follow fantasy and misperceptions into alternate realities and serious mental illness. The only way to correctly exercise theta meditation is by following the process in sequence, taking no shortcuts, and learning and applying objective observational techniques to assure concepts explored have a basis in reality.

As in the Ch'an Ching, with enlightenment the theta meditation doesn't seem to stop, but this is only a perception consistent with anomie. The subsequent continuous state of meditation is perhaps better described as interactive or pervasive. All states are still employed, and while there is some worldly interaction, the main focus never deviates. The more sophisticated the enlightenment, the more interaction and focus must explore and reinforce the pathways of enlightenment toward optimum gamma state connectivity. Optimum gamma state connectivity does not mean each connection must support the maximum possible frequency, but rather the frequencies and their ranges are consistent with ideal processing along those pathways.

One of the biggest challenges is integrating objective and subjective realities. The broken down pathways fitting the world of illusions must now be redefined and reconstructed to balance subjective reality. Empathic perception is helpful as otherwise it is extremely difficult to trace back to one's original personal beliefs about reality, especially when those most likely to attain mastery are least likely to have such an original mental commitment. To some degree everyone has original beliefs that predate working memory and language. We can objectively trace back and observe it and other subjective views in others, but without the personal experiences the concepts remain abstract.



Re-conquering original subjective states does not appear to be in the realm of possibility. Alternatively the master moves forward and leaves build the illusions of those subjective realities to successive people and institutions. As with significant differences between Jesus and Gautama, the more the master can spread and model the teachings, the less holes illusions need to fill and the greater likelihood of the subsequent illusions not wandering too far astray from the original master. This is particularly obvious when you compare the teachings of Jesus to the hypocritical behaviors of so-called followers.

The diagram above looks remarkably like a neural map. It is a data-flow diagram illustrating basic relationships of the algorithm described at the end of the last chapter. This algorithm is called the Matrix of Fundamental Dimensions. How those dimensions are interpreted is subjective but evolves with application. Like the brain, it is easily divide into two hemispheres connected at six distinct points, the main intersection being at *m* with a secondary connection at *e*, followed by four tenuous connections (in the middle connected to other parts by dotted lines). Each curved line is a multiple (double connections indicating squares) where dotted lines indicate roots that evolve into Pythagorean proportions ($a^2+b^2=c^2$).

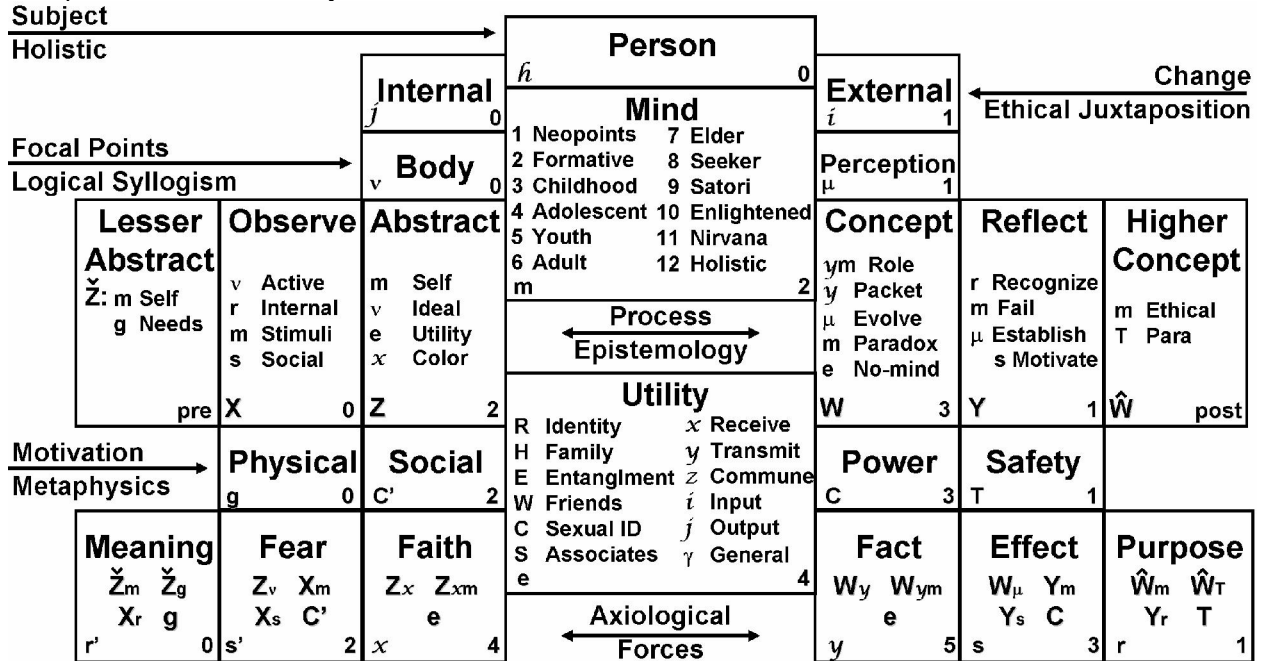
There is a seventh connection represented by *h* at the bottom that is really an abstraction representing the whole (e.g. the person). It could be connected to the prominent encircled *i* and *j* also by dotted lines. The evolutionary quality of the dotted lines indicate what mathematics calls a differential relation, meaning the disparate results indicate a process of change. Aside from the *h* at the bottom, the tenuous connections along the middle of the diagram are abstractions, not fundamental dimensions. These abstractions as well as the relationship between *s'* and *s* are mathematical constants limiting changes in the values contributing to them. This is significant because the left hemisphere is subjective in developmental processes and the right hemisphere is objective. Conversely, in terms of creativity and what thermodynamics would call work, the roles reverse (right being creative/work and left being the substance of that creativity or work).

These divisions and their connections illustrate the marriage, roles, and limits of subjective and objective realities and the mental processes interpreting them. A purely objective mind would put these as direct equivalents and mirror the simplistic pathways illustrated on the left because it believes objective reality convenient. A purely subjective mind (e.g. an artist without messages) reverses this and has nothing real to work with (themes) because the objects of work are disconnected. Balancing these is quite a challenge because exchange between the two sides is limited by constants of the four tenuous connections that are technical abstractions. The algorithm applied to a person using only fundamental dimensions appears on the next page.

This would be the typical idealist breakdown, understanding the universe through self-examination alone. The person or whole (*h* at the top) is more than just this inner world, leading to a realist approach in which the person constitutes a neopoint (*m*) in a greater whole. A neopoint is one of four types of fundamental component consistent with Body and Perception and their related elements of Mind. As with society, these join and compound into structures of greater sophistication evolving through the generations of matter listed. The transcendental approach combines variations of the natural and social outer worlds with the inner world to arrive at a holistic understanding. The total values within each row are constant, as

are the four tenuous abstractions previously mentioned and a global constant at $s's=c^2$ (forces at the bottom totaling the spacetime constant of Relativity).

Earlier versions of this were significantly simpler, following established processes of logic (Hegelian thesis, antithesis, and synthesis at the focal points), learning theory (epistemology), developmental and motivational sequence (metaphysics). This expanded version shows important breakdowns, like sub-processes in learning and expansion to illustrate evolving from (pre) and then evolving into (post) processes. These and relationships to motivations and development are mirrored by the forces that distribute their raw values conveniently based on opportunity, illustrating a subtle degree of change based in experiences both sensory and mental.



The most significant expansions belong to the Mind and Utility. The mind evolves its connections and layers of abstraction into adulthood based on specific evolving utilities. Each of the first six generations of mind consists of specific structures associated with one or more of these utilities, exhibiting all by the sixth generation (adulthood). The mind of the elder is a combination of these conglomerating in balance with the other motivations. This is made possible by the most evolved of utilities that are purely functional and do not form connections or simple layers of abstraction, but rather by forming evolved abstractions of abstractions represented by unique structures of the seventh generation and rooting the concept of selflessness. Subsequent evolutions of mind are compounds of these compounds beyond self, shaping greater and greater degrees of utility until it finally evolves beyond material form into pure forces (e.g. light) as a function of the whole.

We can see by this how religions get ideas of reincarnation and an eternal soul. If you are reading this, it is likely you already challenge these notions. You are right to do so and wrong to discourage others from what they believe when they are not ready for such a change in thinking. Each must find their own way to their own conclusions. Since you already challenge these notions, I will simply point out what was already state: later evolutions of mind are beyond self. They may represent degrees of what some may call a soul, but that being personal is an illusion, as is the notion of self. If the process is the soul, then it is unitary and shared with the universe generally. In essence you can liken such an evolution as becoming one with "God," only "God" does not have any physical qualities in common with humanity, and only through evolution does the mind become like unto "God."

Nothing is permanent except the process itself. The mathematical qualities of change and the whole are described in detail in my book Imaginary Numbers Made Simple, which explores the first three dimensions in the diagram above, the creation of time, the eternal now, etc. The principle of conservation only applies

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to the total values of each row of fundamental dimensions and the process. It does not include the specific distribution of those values and points. In other words, the so-called self and borrowed souls of religious adherents are impermanent illusions.

To reconstruct another reality even close to this one, you would literally have to put every fundamental point of the universe in exactly the same positions under the same conditions and values. Is this possible? Certainly, but the probability is inconceivably remote. The number of possible permutations is counted by a mathematical function called a factorial. Each possible scenario for every point compounds. If we used every computing tool on the planet, we could not count the possible permutations for so much as a thousand points, which would amount to a handful of atoms, let alone the entire universe.

Once a structure is broken, that order is gone forever. The mind is first a physical construct subject to physical conditions. Its reactions and subsequent abstractions are at best secondary. Without the physical construct being reinforced and renewed relative to its conditions and their changes, that illusion of self is gone, the energies and physical parts simply recycled. The only way out of this is to purposefully and strategically step out of it (para-nirvana). There are no shortcuts, no promises, no everlasting happiness, no self beyond what is now. Even your sense of self today is not the self of tomorrow or yesterday. Why anyone wants a sense of permanence in self beyond the now is truly mystifying, especially when you listen to their laments and sufferings.

So why bother if the objective has nothing in it for me, while I can do this today, be happy, and not worry about the consequences since it all washes out anyway? Even if you cannot go the whole distance, you can improve your quality of life. You may be inclined to push consequences on others, but in truth those consequences always find their way back. Perhaps not directly to you, though you may find yourself pretty lonely in such a life, but certainly to successive generations. The time is coming soon when no-one will be immune of consequences because too many have lived their lives either not believing in the consequences or pawning them off on others. When you take care of people and nature, they take care of you and you will never know loneliness. You cannot build this kind of lasting and real wealth with a weak and undisciplined mind driven by greed and selfishness. Only the advanced and self-less mind truly has any degree of a real self or soul by any measure in any religion or philosophy.

When that time of consequences comes, the choices will be very simple: change or face extinction. Evolution is the nature of ultimate reality. You can either be part of the solution or ground up and recycled by the process. I like to say "Gravity always wins." In other words, no matter what you do, the natural course of things will proceed anyway. No matter your wealth or power, you are subject to illness, suffering, and death. The only way beyond them is the ethical life of an evolving mind. The master's greatest meditations are establishing the gamma pathways mirroring the process, embodying and personify the process itself, and thereby being able to completely step out of its way when the physical body has exhausted its ability to continue. Moving that process forward means encouraging evolution generally so more can evolve as the master, and together evolve the universe. As was said of Martin Luther King's assassination: "You can kill the dreamer but you cannot kill the dream."

Select Quip Pŭ Quo

Curse my mother's naivety! She ruined my life by giving me a sense of righteousness, good-will, compassion, and justice. These have no place in your world. I could have lived in bliss, in denial of the hell I lived in. Such miseries these brought me until I found heaven under my feet. This is a long distance call, so listen closely.

Meditation alone does not a true master make. Like a potential lover, enlightenment flees when chased, evades want, and in its own time swallows you up whole. To retain right form and not be consumed, begin with Zen mastery and abandon asceticism. Woo it with a wealth of knowledge. Bate it with the simultaneous experiences and prosperity of several lives, but never surrender righteousness. Hook it with utter natural failure, losing everything even your humanity. Bed it with meditation. Wed it by evolving and being. Even a Zen master can fail trying and die or worse, get lost in fantasy by dissociating from both reality and functional illusions.

Dreams

Fear trumps success.

Every night I wake to the light of a universe where justice, beauty and goodness reign. When morning comes I bring that light to the world and pay it no mind.

At some point demons possess the minds of everyone; haunting illusions generated by a developing ego. You created them and have the power to un-create them.

Your demons face you in your dreams and seem indestructible. Just remember: you are in charge of your dreams. The power they have is what you give them.

Dreams are the mind's way to revitalize memories, solve problems without the usual restrictions of the conscious mind, and experience altered states so you can evolve.

There is no better time to meditate than in your dreams.

The life without dreams is bent to darkness.

If your dreams turn to regrets then ask yourself if there is something you can do to correct those mistakes. If there is, then do it. If there isn't, forgive yourself by not making those mistakes again.

Ego

You are on the wrong path if you wouldn't be your own friend with what you know about yourself.

He whose mind is maligned believes himself right.

Acknowledging the fool's fantasies empowers him.

The master appears the blind fool because he has disavowed illusions, and thus the fool laughs at him just as everyone laughs at the fool.

The fool in the world of fantasy must first die and live in the world of illusions before he can die there and begin to really live. The reason is simple: the fool has nothing to lose because nothing he has is truly his or real.

The ego's free-will is the devil's best friend. Without it there is no soul.

The ego has no friends...it has convenient acquaintances.

The power of ego is belief. The power of spirit is belief in the ultimate truth. The power of soul is ultimate truth.

The short definition for arrogance is, "you are wrong." The long definition is, "you think you are right."

The ego is only meant to be temporary, yet we think it defines who we are, cling to it and never discover who we really are.

As an adult you are in control of who you are and what you do. No one else is to blame.

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Power over others is contradicted by the familiar comforts of being controlled.

The true self is indestructible, has nothing to fear and therefore has no use for conflict.

A child sees themselves controlled and naturally desires that power over others.

The insightful ego says the meaning of life is, "To love and to know someone out there loves you." The master knows this is eight words too long.

The ego is mortal and defends against any opposition.

The youth want desperately to be adults; adults wish they could have their youth back.

When the ego evolves correctly, it follows a metaphor: wood (divinity/id) breaks earth (ego), earth absorbs water (anti-ego), water douses fire (mutual-ego), fire melts metal (vector-ego), and metal splits wood (meta-ego/pǔ).

The ego thinks and judges in dualistic terms.

Everyone loses when an ego gets involved.

It is easier to control the tides of the ocean than to change a mind driven by ego.

The ego is the enemy of truth. The truth is enemy to none.

Perception is everything.

Two egos cannot occupy the same space assuring every ego its loneliness.

A shortcut takes the process out of sequence and assures catastrophic failure.

Pain and death are inevitabilities of life. Pain lets you know you are still alive. Suffering is psychological.

Suffering is only universal in the world of illusions where the ego lives.

The fool scoffs the advice of elders who have been there.

Common sense is an oxymoron, but if you think to cross it, be sure you aren't just following your ego.

Man sees a problem and defines it in such terms that it does not apply to himself.

Habits

Addiction to fear leads directly to addiction to hope.

The illusions and issues of an addict are on the surface for everyone to see.

The key difference between the addict and a common person is the functionality of their alternate reality.

An addiction is anything outside you that controls you.

An addict defines addiction in terms that exclude him.

The intellect is an alternate reality addiction.

Bad habits form quickly and easily. Good habits take enormous time and effort to construct.

You have control of nothing outside who you really are.

He who has loved and lost has everything to gain and nothing left to lose.

Happiness

Happiness is a fragile fantasy guiding the ego into pleasure or tragedy away from the self.

True happiness and the ego are incompatible.

True happiness is the only possession of the master, and nothing can deprive him of it.

The path to absolute gladness is paved with adversity and difficulty.

If your happiness can be affected by something outside you, then you are really suffering and living in denial for the moment.

Expectations and hope are certain sources for misery.

Humanity

The good news for those whose lives and deaths are horrible, is that both quickly resolve to insignificance.

Man tries to write laws, thinking himself above the law.
Nothing easily fills the page with words. The mind with much to say empties the page.
A page filled with words is like a cluttered house. Emptiness opens the mind.
Appeasement is rewarding bad behaviors.
Humanity is insane. If you give them something good for them, they hate you for it.
Good people make bad decisions and bad people make good decisions.
Marriage is for the humble, but not the weak.
There are no problems in the world. People create problems, and they can keep them.
When the roots are suffocated in a small pot, they cannot grow out of the problem: the plant dies.
A religious institution focused on wealth or power is really a business, not a religion.
A civilization in desperation turns to violence even though that only makes the situation worse.
When right is left and up is down, then backward is forward, fantasy is reality, and nothing works.
The guest and the mouse squatting in the pantry will be evicted when they are noticed.
Serve an indispensable purpose, say nothing of it, and when complete do not overstay your welcome.
The status of the least pet is greater than that of a guest.

Illusions

Refuting illusions is a fool's errand.
The slave to ultimate reality believes in fantasies and illusions.
The past and future are illusions.
The slave to ultimate reality believes in fantasies and illusions.
The illusions and sins of others are as ensnaring as your own—chase them and they become yours.
Illusion is the mud in the bricks building the wall of human civilization—remove it from a person and they must evolve because they can never return to civilization.
If you want to rule the world, give everything you have away, then give yourself in service to your neighbors but ask nothing in return. Spread love and compassion to the corners of the world and I assure you, by kneeling at their feet they will kneel at yours even when you are dead.

Living

Create a fictional character you like and live their life.
To change the world, change yourself and don't worry about the world.
If you feel ashamed to speak of a thing in mixed company or misrepresent it, then doing that thing is wrong and you know it.
Life serves those who adapt to chaos, not those who create it.
So long as you know all the voices you hear are yours and they all like you, you are well.
Hope and fear are two sides of the same thing: desire.
A tree is smart enough to grow toward the light that sustains it.
He who keeps secrets surely also lies to himself.
Blessings come disguised as curses, curses as blessings, and the real truth is not what you want to hear.
Morality teaches us there are two choices, and our minds create convenient compartments we cannot see beyond. The Ethical choice erases these compartments and blazes a path that works.
You are better to be guilty and fear final judgment than to feel righteous and look forward to it.
Intelligence is making the best of your mistakes.

Zen and the Art of...

How would you like to be remembered: as a fool who brought about destruction or a wise man who brought light into a dark world?

Life is not a test; it is a period of preparation to evolve.

The voice of god is subtle and requires a still mind to perceive.

You cannot awaken in an artificial environment.

Asceticism is for the weak. The master appears ascetic only because humans make bad pets.

He who gives love freely has already won. And when he loses, he still wins.

Those whose free-will selected a convenient path do not know they are lost, and only their experiences stand a chance to ever show them.

To succeed in life is easy. Success in living or dying is not.

Monasteries are for masters and those who are lost.

The greater the calamity reached through free-will the greater the opportunity to evolve.

You have just enough time to complete the path. If you start tomorrow, you started too late.

Mastery

The master does not really work miracles; he merely reveals the miracles disguising themselves as calamity.

The path to mastery has few guarantees—failure is a virtual certainty.

The fool is the twin of the wise, the delusional the twin of omniscience. The master has no twin.

The master is without guilt, fear, or worry; does not seek death but welcomes it.

To reveal the future to common mortals can disrupt the natural order of things.

The master successfully the common mortal will fail.

If you seek to be master of anything outside yourself, you are on the wrong path.

What the common person believes is truth. Fact is the master's only truth.

Religious practice means turning the other cheek. If you can find the master's cheek to strike it, you may not be so lucky.

The master looks up at the sky and says it is not blue.

When the master speaks and you do not understand, don't be concerned. He was not speaking to you... yet.

The master knows the conceptual patterns governing the universe apply to all its parts, even the imagination.

Husbandry is my vocation—sowing the seeds of soul in the womb of misery. The inconvenience and pain are perfectly normal. Don't worry, I'm not feeling a thing.

I was a coward filled with fear like everyone else. What I now have cannot be lost or taken. This is not courage; this is life without fear or shame; life with soul.

False wit and eloquence reveal the fool.

The master does not concern himself with time, but does play the appropriate role for the time he is in.

The master states only what he knows unless there is the slightest inclination that he should restrain his words and say nothing.

Action builds theme, words deconstruct actions into ideas.

The master is often seen as a cynic, a comedian, a critic, a child-like madman, and when he is serious all who witness fall to the earth in terror.

The master disregards the fantasy and illusion the fool believes are knowledge.

If the master appears to be working against you, stop. He never works against you.

The master at best ignores lies, at worst grants them.

The master knows his greatest challenge, and out of compassion tells it to no one.

When the master is around, the people learn what it means to have prayers answered and quickly stop.

The master divides his perceptions into four categories: feelings, thoughts, words, and actions. Inconsistency between these is the definition of illusion.

The common person burdens his mind with right and wrong; the master pays wrong no mind.

The master does not accept the world as it is, but rather lives as if the world were the way it should be.

The master empowers the weak, humbles the strong, and humbles arrogance.

The master is always in control, even when he appears on the bottom of a beating. He needs no assistance to exert force or get out from where he is.

The master never concerns himself with opinions, nor is he inclined to have them.

The master never participates in gossip.

The master speaks not on matters of death, details of future events, or why he maintains his noble silence. Those who speak know not what they claim.

The master never violates free-will.

The master only speaks truth, blatant lies that reveal the truth, or not at all.

Those whom the master is proud of reject their complicity.

Vying for the master's attention reaps only humility.

Money

No wealth or power is greater than that which serves the least and weakest.

The victor takes the spoils. His stench precedes him like a virus infecting the world.

If you hate the rich for their wealth you have two problems: hate and envy. Those sins pale next to those of the wealthy who are filled with greed and animus toward the hands that enrich them.

If you have to borrow money, then you are living beyond your means.

Nature

The Golden Sustainability Ratio: For every unit of consumption, including waste and the time required for nature to restore that unit to its original state, three equal units of nature must be left to itself completely for a species to remain sustainable.

Axioms cut both ways. If you find yourself at the butt of an axiom, turn around.

The universe is harmonious because it consumes nothing and does everything effortlessly.

Nature uses extinction for many things—evicting unwelcome squatters is one.

Progress is the art of perfecting harmony with nature, not the suicidal act of attempting to control or win over nature.

That which is created begins and therefore must also end. The ultimate truth has no beginning or end—it simply is. Creation is but a process within the ultimate truth.

The greatest innovations are non-technical and intuitive, like paper.

Man thinks he can control nature, but in the end nature always wins. Man would be wise to work with nature rather than try forcing it into his ways.

If you are intelligent enough to manipulate nature, then you must change your own behaviors to fit those manipulations.

Gravity always wins.

Time is an illusion.

The common ant and the mole are important parts of a healthy natural garden, yet people poison them.

Zen and the Art of...

Technology is not inherently bad, it is the application of technology to manipulate and control nature that is bad.

Consequences are simultaneously positive and negative.

Natural desires of humanity abide by natural law. Technology rewrites the rules, making natural desires a violation of natural law.

Ancient societies lasted for centuries, even millennia so long as their technologies worked practically with nature to enhance it, and the populations was kept in check.

Nature serves he who serves the will of nature. He who forces his will on nature perish by the force of his own will.

Society

Technology, religion, politics, and business never solved a problem without creating another, if not a bigger problem.

There was a time when empires were built by destroying their neighbors, taking from them and enslaving them. That works just long enough to get intoxicating, lull you into slovenliness and illiteracy, so your neighbors and slaves can rise up against you.

A leader has a vision and goes after it. A fool follows without a vision but is still responsible.

The only friend a real hero can count on is loneliness. The life of the real hero is solemnly doing what nobody else is willing to, caring not the price he must pay to do right.

The laws of men are but a greedy straw dog in a forest fire. He may see the fire around him, but denies he has set that fire himself and arrogantly thinks it has not the power to consume him. If he does, he puts the problem off.

Healthy debate consists of logic and facts, not lies and distractions from the truth.

In affairs of state, those truly qualified do not covet seats of power.

The only consequence of turning to violence is destruction. Everyone loses in a war, and nobody learns anything but resentment and hate from violence.

War is like a geological catastrophe: it has no learning value, destroys resources and lives.

Those who sacrifice themselves in war, have sacrificed for the power and wealth of a few who would snub them on the street.

The natural inclination of a population following devastation is to compensate by increasing the population.

The greatest crimes against society that demand the greatest and most public punishments are not committed against individuals, but rather against groups of individuals. When the business class and clergy have no accountability, revolution is on the horizon.

The role of government is to manipulate disparate social forces to work together, which by necessity means a successful government knows how to lie and not get caught, how to elicit voluntary sacrifice and suffering for its ends, and how to hold enough power to be respected but not so much as to evoke revolution.

Desperation knows no rules and serves only itself.

People who are desperate, in love, or subject to forces outside their control like mind altering substances do irrational and insane things.

A person raised in desperation is not likely to have regard for the law. It is society's duty to educate, socialize, and provide opportunities for them to embrace a different life. Failure to do so creates criminality, social unrest, and dissolves the integrity of the community.

Soul

All you have ever been that attaches you to the world of illusions—all your habits, hopes, fears, beliefs, and values—must die for your soul to begin to live.

Soul is like a flower, not to be mistaken for its seed. The breath of life is only the seed, often as empty and inert as a rock.

Many mistake the illusory soul of a building, book, symbol, or leader as their own. This is why it is written that the soul is an illusion.

A tree has no soul of its own, yet it is still beautiful and serves many purposes.

Soul does not begin to evolve until you have embraced your true nature.

The choices, values, and judgments of others have nothing to do with your soul.

He who is defined by his relationships and things outside him has no soul.

He who is defined by his association with an institution shares the pseudo-soul of that institution.

There is only one real eternal soul in the universe, the rest are temporary illusions.

Evil has no friends. You know the evil and darkness are close to your heart if you are suffering.

Only when you put evil and suffering out of your heart can you live without fear. Then pain reminds you to give joy to those who still suffer to live, and death is a welcome guest.

Are you but a duckling following this or that thinking one or the other will mother you? Find your own path and mother your own soul!

Spirit

Chasing the mistakes of others starves the spirit, chasing the illusions of others suffocates it, and judging others poisons it.

Having the spirit of life is like having a seed: if you don't plant and tend it properly it will not grow into the fullness of a tree let alone soul.

Life is the earth in which the seed of spirit has the potential to grow into soul.

The tormented spirit struggles to be free of what it is not.

Ignorance is certainly blissful, but that is the life without soul. I'll take the soul on the left with a jelly-filled donut and a boiling cup of bitter misery to wash it down please.

Ch'an Ching Commentary

"The wise do not reveal all they know."

Introduction

While the *Ch'an Ching* is easy for anyone to read, it is also remarkably deep with innumerable subtleties deserving academic attention. We must note that in order to "get" the full impact, one must eventually discard the academic knowledge contained in these notes and simply allow the poem to occur. Before one can discard, though, one must thoroughly understand. As the quote above indicates, this commentary cannot be complete. Even where it seems to be complete, the reader should be cautioned to seek what is not here, what they themselves feel while reading. Eventually, after discarding the commentary, readers must also discard the poem and find their own path, as the poem insists must be done. Meanwhile, we must deal with analysis to build the deeper understanding to the point where the reader is ready to pursue their own meditation and begin their own quest.

This commentary examines a variety of qualities and levels contained within the *Ch'an Ching*. We will examine the surface of the poem, as if we were unable to read it and only able to observe its shape. We will examine its style, in comparison to its companions and the *Tao Te Ching*. We will then consider the general story, and how all the pieces fit together. Then, for your convenience, we will examine the poem by line numbers, ranging from large passages down to single lines. In this more critical examination we will define specific terms and enhance the text, often offering ideas to help the reader fill the voids.

A Look at the Surface

The *Ch'an Ching* is a unique reading experience. We must first note that the *Ch'an Ching* is a singular continuous poem of 3028 words (not counting outline titles) in 729 lines. There are no real chapters or breaks, though there are clear groups of lines and stanzas that belong together. Without the outline titles these groups are obvious by changes in both style and content. Major outline levels begin at the top of a new page for ease of readability and to provide empty spaces for readers to fill for themselves, as a work of art requires. Major outline levels are also labeled to the right of the first line. In some instances there are outline levels within a major outline level (e.g. **Mondo with Manjusri**). These secondary levels are indented and labeled to the right of the first line. Each outline heading may be read as a separate poem. Optimally, the reader should start at line 1 and read through to line 729.

Along with the outline titles and page breaks we observe distinct indentation levels. What belongs to the main body of the poem is flush with the left margin. The next indentation level is dedicated to information secondary to the main poem, such as the main part of a dream (**First Dream**) or the dialog of another character (end part of **Waking**). We note that the **First Dream** begins at a third indentation level, indicating the stanza is actually a subset of the main part of the dream (a dream within the dream). There are only three indentation levels, and we can only speculate about why. There are other indentations that appear in dialogs after the first line of a stanza. These appear to exist strictly for metrical purposes and do not themselves seem to have any meaning. Likewise, the outline titles and breaks are artificial, so we should not attribute any meaning to them either.

The *Ch'an Ching* is the third book of the *Sān Ching* (Three Classics). When together in one volume these appear in reverse order of age. The companions, as they follow in a single volume, are the *LǐJiě Ching* (Classic of Knowledge; 5558 words) and *rūnLǐ Ching* (Classic of Ethic; 3785 words).

Overall

The student of Asian thought may look at the subtitle and think, "Why bother?" Ch'an is such a common word to the student of Asian thought, that we tend to take for granted that our group is a small minority. The majority is more familiar (superficially mind you) with the Japanese term: ZEN.

While I was a student at the university, I decided to write a textbook introducing Zen to university students. Shortly thereafter I took a course on religions of China and Japan. I found my perspective so different that I often scoffed the materials openly, such as commenting on a *Tao Te Ching* commentator

Ch'an Ching Commentary

that he could not have read the book and reached the conclusions he did. Likewise, when I saw the final exam I thought I was doomed to another semester of school and a black eye to my nearly perfect GPA. I must commend the instructor for having the insight to see my perspective. One of my favorite questions asked the students to write briefly about three insignificant Zennists, to which I responded in a Haiku poem plainly stating they had spoken too much. I think the nail in the coffin was the last question: Describe Zen. My response: Have a merry Christmas!

You may wonder how someone could seemingly fail so badly and consider themselves an authority before, during, and after that class. From a Western perspective my answers were preposterous. From an Eastern perspective my answers were perfect. I suspect the professor gave me the benefit of doubt, probably helped by my book and some of the articles I had recently written. I passed.

The moral of my little story is this: meditation is not about words, and words cannot substitute for meditation. A wide variety of literature and schools exist to help you learn (as opposed to teaching you) the arts of meditation. During certain stages of such learning, you may use external objects to help guide you, such as PūMa Tse's *LǐJiě Ching*. If doing meditation is what you want, that book is ideal for you. This *Ch'an Ching* also offers some useful images, but such is not its intent.

If you seek guidance in personal conduct many popular works are available for the religion or civic system of your choice. Works that fill this with attachment only to humanity as a whole, and not a civic or religious group, would include: *The Analects of Confucius*, *The Dharma*, and *The rǔnLǐ Ching*. Again, this *Ch'an Ching* will offer some useful points, but such is not the intent.

Like Lao Tse, PūMa Tse enjoys teasing the mind with images. Be cautious with either author about issues of cosmology. Neither of these authors means a word of what they say in cosmology. They mean what they are alluding to: the processes. They both use creative imagery to illustrate and accentuate these processes so the audience can comprehend. Neither means to provide cosmogonic myths any more than Socrates did when he told his Allegory of the Cave. The stories and vivid imagery help deliver simultaneous messages with the same words, and retain audience attention. Herein lay the true beauty of poetry: telling many stories simultaneously with the same short list of words, and burying in them untold layers of beauty and meaning for the audience to install and discover for themselves. For this reason, the *Ch'an Ching* deserves its name, though rightly the same could apply to many other works for this reason.

The Story

Upon opening this book one notices a significant difference with PūMa Tse's other works. Rather than separate poems, this is a continuous poem outlining a profound meditative experience. It is the adventure of one person, whom we know only as the Poet. The Poet is an androgynous character, sometimes more masculine, and sometimes more feminine, but always only the Poet.

Book-length epic poetry, like prose narratives, typically contain breaks, like chapters. The *Ch'an Ching* has no breaks. There are many places where style and content signify a break, and when what follows can stand alone, a title appears to the right for ease of reference. Some of these stand-alone poems are themselves contained within another poem. This is like reading Shakespeare and finding a play within a play, but here they are poems within poems. In the end, there is really only one poem, and all others are contained within that poem. This symbolizes unity and single-pointedness. An interesting meditation on this would consider what is the poem and what is a poem within the poem. The answer itself escapes words. Along with the poems within the poem, we also see meditations and whole lives lived within the meditation. This shows degrees of seeking, of enlightenment, of Samsara (the cosmic cycle of life, death, rebirth).

The poem straddles concrete imagery and abstract philosophy, sometimes going into hardcore philosophy, yet always returning to concrete imagery that contains even more profound philosophical meanings. In this respect, PūMa Tse combines the strategies of the *rǔnLǐ Ching* and *LǐJiě Ching*. Like the original text of the *Tao Te Ching*, the text is continuous, yet the outline levels are reminiscent of the *rǔnLǐ Ching* and *LǐJiě Ching*. One cannot imagine, however, dividing at these points, as it would break the entire continuity.

The story begins with sometimes confusing imagery, signifying the illusions of the seeker and inspiring the adventure. The Poet encounters many teachers as personifications or even specific characters. Some speak in riddles (Earth), some provide lessons of general wisdom (the Wall, the Clouds, the Rainbow),

while others impart the essences of their lives (the Wall, the Swamp, the River Atman). The Poet also gets answers from the inner self (e.g. poetry as the means), who can also be considered a character or personification.

It is through this complex process the Poet travels seeking "enlightenment." While the Poet learns much from each encounter, obstacles threaten the journey, forcing the Poet to overcome personal attachments to feelings, knowledge and mind, physical being, spirit, and soul. The early personifications steer the Poet toward knowledge and understanding. Later, Manjusri forces the seeker to question the substance of the meditation, of knowledge, and of physical and spiritual reality. This befits Manjusri, who is the bodhisattva (saint) whose prime directive is overcoming illusion. The Swamp helps teach the Poet not to struggle, enabling apprehension by not to seeking. We know the Poet has overcome the obstacle of seeking because the Poet stops asking questions for the sake of seeking guidance, they simply fit the conversation. The river becomes an inescapable necessity, an anti-personification stripping the Poet of self, of ego. The Poet quickly flows with the river into Brahma. This final encounter, with the Ocean of Brahma, is the final enlightenment: Buddhahood.

Finally the Poet is returned to the beginning as a living Buddha. As the meditation began, the Poet appeared enlightened in the responses to the monks questioning the Poet's meditation and enlightenment. These monks are also seekers, lost and seeking a guide. It appears, on the surface, that the Poet is enlightened, but the meditation shows that the Poet was only primed for enlightenment, perhaps even a "master" on a human level. The Poet is blocked by knowledge from studying the paths and teachings of "masters."

When the Poet recovers, another seeker comes, and this time the Poet passes the test by telling the seeker to "Find your own wall!" The Poet realizes the true path is very personal; each seeker must find the path and follow it for themselves. Manjusri's comment on Buddha's silent teaching, which the Poet initially took as nonsense, foreshadows this event: no one can teach the path; the path must be discovered. While all the teachings themselves are significant to everyday life, this is truly the ultimate lesson of life and the path itself. In the end we also observe that the traditional meditation is also abandoned, which is in keeping with the concept of "living" Zen.

Let us examine the nature of this Buddhahood. Buddhahood, in a sense, is a primordial state of being, and simultaneously the most perfect form of being—undifferentiated from reality yet existing within that non-existence. The passage to Buddhahood is, in theory, passing back through Genesis, through creation, and hence typically depicted as traveling upstream. Though the Poet seems to have traveled down stream, in the end the Poet becomes one with Brahma such that all shores become one shore. The dichotomy of traveling either up or down stream is thereby destroyed. We also see that Brahma extends itself to include the sky, for is not the ocean just an extension of sky, albeit in a slightly modified state? In returning to the same spot, the poem further supports the allegation that this is Nirvana, that Nirvana is not another place. It is here and now. The last dream offers more support, showing that Buddhahood becomes at all levels, that there are no multiple consciousnesses to the Buddha. Finally, in abandoning the zafu (meditation cushion), the superficial art of meditation is replaced with living meditation—the living Buddha.

Line, Stanza, and Passage Commentary

This commentary covers most but not all lines. The other lines may be obvious or simply act as glue to hold the rest together. In some instances it is necessary to comment on a group of lines together, without separating them. These are in order by line number, then arranged with the largest set first and smallest (e.g. a single line) last.

- 1-20 To the untutored eye, the Poet appears to be a master. As we see through the meditation, however, these responses are clearly learned.
- 1 The Poet is an androgynous, sexless, race-less, unnamed character. We only know that the meditator is a poet and nothing else, not even the Poet's species. None of these factors are significant, and their absence is itself a symbol of non-attachment and non-dualistic thinking. Note that the wall represents many things: the middle between Heaven (T'ien) and Earth, being centered, and the self. These particular representations are exploited later.
- 2 Monks are seekers or persons believing they have a teaching to help the people. Depending on the order, some monks may fall strictly into one of these categories or both.

Ch'an Ching Commentary

- 4 The answer given appears correct.
- 8 This answer is a denial of success.
- 12 This answer is an admission to failure.
- 16 So far the best answer, but it appears to represent either surrender to or acceptance of failure.
- 18 A zafu is a hard cushion designed to help posture during zazen (sitting meditation). Many practitioners of Japanese Zen use this. While terms appear like this from various belief systems, because they come from such a variety I recommend not attaching one's thoughts to the source but to the meaning. You will observe that the zafu is eventually removed from the meditation.
- 20 The corner is a middle itself, as if to say the Poet is meditating at the middle of the middle. Between schools of Zen thought there is controversy over whether to face a wall or face away from a wall. This poem does not argue for one or the other. We note that no mention is given of cardinal direction, but considering the events of the poem we can justifiably assume the Poet's back is against the corner, a mere image convenience. The corner itself symbolizes being centered, while the wall symbolizes many things. The only symbol of the wall that is obviously exploited, however, is its role in the middle of Earth and Heaven (T'ien).
- 21-25 Falling asleep during meditation is like sleeping in church. However, it is not uncommon for a senior monk to fall asleep meditating and for the junior monks to wake him without comment for dinner. Falling asleep here could indicate one of three things: carelessness, being relaxed, or age (which comes with the experience necessary to relax). We should note that the Poet does not disrupt the meditation in spite of falling asleep three times. The last, and fourth, dream is arguably not part of sleeping.
- 21-22 This is an image both of falling asleep and illusion.
- 23-24 This is blindness toward reality as well as an image of the stage of sleep called Rapid Eye Movement (REM).
- 25-26 Outright slumber, unconsciousness. The four primary dreams of this epic suggest confusion between the conscious and subconscious. They also allude to not being conscious of reality and attachment to dualism. Eventually this culminates in the final dream to show that mastery eliminates the duality, the dreams, consciousness and reality become one.
- 26-61 This is a complex dream spread across the book in four places (including this one). This part has two settings. The first setting takes place at sea (alluding to the journey of the Poet later) in some unknown past, and appears to be the dreams of a character in the next setting. In this first setting a captain goes to sleep then is struck unconscious by mutineers, who eventually kill him (second part). The second setting happens later, with each part being told from the perspective of a different character (none of these characters are named). We can tell in the first part that the main character stands accused of a crime, which in the second part is revealed as a heinous murder. We are led to believe, in the first part, that the main character was originally the captain who later dies. However, with both the accused and the captain, both are disoriented because there was a cosmic switch of their souls. As a consequence, the killing of the captain in the second part is a sort of divine justice. The accused, whom we believe is innocent, is a seeker trying to find himself, just as the Poet is through the rest of the poem.
- 27 Compare the sea to Brahma later.
- 28 East toward the Orient, the sunrise, awakening, beginning, the future.
- 29 The bow is the front, symbolizing leadership. The character in discussion is the captain of the ship, whose leadership of the crew is an ultimate failure because individuals must find and take their own paths.
- 30 Wind is used repeatedly as a symbol of mind and of the spirit.
- 31 West from the past, sunset, death, endings.
- 32 Compare to line 477 and the third outline level (note indentations) of this section of verse and the Second Dream.
- 33 We are not given the details, but we can surmise from the rest of the text that perhaps the accused had a head injury and required recovery and medical attention.

- 34 Things on the surface are not always as they seem, especially when deeply examined.
- 35 Air—wind—mind association. Sea—Brahma referenced again.
- 36 Compare to The Garden in the *LǐJiě Ching* and note the repetition of this in lines 64, 232, 233, and 317. The garden, while beautiful in itself, is empty and awaits the return of its master.
- 37 Wind blows through hair, alluding again to the mind and the spirit. The fragrance of the hair suggests a depth of beauty.
- 39-40 Inner contentment in spite of the environment.
- 41-42 Fantasies, passions, illusion, suffering, desire.
- 43 “yellowed parchment” suggests age or being urinated on. In either case, neglected, forgotten, pushed down, just as advice given to the young is ignored. This is old knowledge that is true, but due to samsara (the cycle) has been put aside.
- 44 Amnesia of the soul does not affect the karma (record), the true self.
- 45 Ego is held in the subconscious.
- 46 The permanence of buddha-nature, the true nature of a thing.
- 47 Weather alludes to Heaven, the spirits.
- 48 Life and Tao are alluded to with the words “the way”. The first Noble Truth (dukkha/suffering is universal) is also alluded to here.
- 49 Certainty of knowledge, right understanding (ref. The Eightfold Path).
- 50 Leaving the point of leadership.
- 51-52 Lost essence, lost spirit.
- 53 Perhaps dreaming her actions into a perceived reality. Otherwise, why not also during the day?
- 54 Cages or boundaries we place on ourselves, which are also an illusion, a creation of the mind.
- 55 Going below is a reference to Earthliness. To “rest and relive” is to repeat the cycle, samsara.
- 56 More illusions.
- 57 More desire (tanha from the Four Noble Truths) and fantasy.
- 58 Escaping reality.
- 59 Suffering, abandonment.
- 60 What we don't understand the common person classifies as magical, divine.
- 61 A slow revelation of self.
- 62 Reality blocked by the illusion of conscious-subconscious dualism.
- 64 See 36.
- 65-66 Death with dishonor.
- 67 Damnation, hell.
- 69 Penultimate judgment. For ultimate judgment see The Judges in the Second Dream.
- 70-76 The Poet was clearly moved by the dream, but retains composure in the meditation. Note: breath (line 76) is often associated with the spirit and soul.
- 70 Ignorance of reality.
- 71 Focusing, a visual death, also coming out of REM sleep state.
- 72 The surprise of samadhi. Samadhi is a state of higher concentration in meditation. There are three stages in Buddhism (preparation, beginning, and attainment of concentration). Samadhi is the eighth element in the classical path of Yoga, meaning absorption, becoming one with, harmonizing. There are two forms of samadhi in Yoga (with and without support). The greater form of samadhi in Yoga is without support. Here samadhi is a minor enlightenment.
- 73-76 Superficially re-grasping the meditation.
- 77-80 In many parts of the meditation the Poet enters into a fantastic dialog, presumably meditating at these points with object (something upon which to focus). In this case the object is Earth.
- 77-78 This resembles a prayer to Earth; a meditation with object (something to focus on).
- 79-80 Illusion of divinity.
- 81-83 This is not a suggestion that the Poet is female, but suggests instead to create oneself, one's own path.
- 82-83 Create yourself; create your own path.

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- 84-95 Like a roshi (Zen teacher), Earth provides a koan (riddle) for an answer. This koan is shallow, certainly to one who is knowledgeable of Zen Buddhism.
- 84-86 The first statement of the guest resembles the request of the Poet. In essence, the answer is throwing the question back into the face of the Poet. Here the Poet is likened to the guest. Where the Poet is enamored with the mystic powers of Earth, the guest is enamored with the tea set.
- 87-89 Earth does not cling to itself. What one wants, one may take. In the end everything returns, so the Earth has really lost nothing. In a way, Earth is telling the Poet to take at will, meaning the reverse: the secret is giving. Line 89 is a direct attack on the Poet's seeking and desire.
- 90-92 Again the Poet's perspective, clinging to both the desire and the object of the desire.
- 93-95 This foreshadows the ultimate path and outcome of the story. It is, in fact, necessary to every path.
- 96-97 The Poet shows weakness here, perhaps thinking that Earth is leading to an alternative path. This shows the Poet is a seeker and not one who has completed the process and "attained."
- 96 This is a negligent mistake, showing weakness. Being clearly well educated in the ways does not necessitate believing them or retaining the concentration well enough to accept the understanding. Earth's answer makes this clear.
- 98-103 Earth is cautioning to surrender attachments and indicating a long-held belief that buddha-nature already exists in all things.
- 98-99 Earth identifies the error succinctly. A fundamental teaching of meditation is that buddha-nature (true or real nature) exists in all things. Though this is taught, until it is realized, seekers continue to look outside themselves. When it is discovered, the seeker typically laughs because it had been so obvious, like finding one's glasses on one's forehead after searching for them everywhere else.
- 100 This is the path of the host and the Earth.
- 101-103 Surrender attachment to seeking and duality.
- 104-106 The Poet is confused and shifts focus to the wall.
- 104 The Poet is emptying, becoming a vessel ready for use.
- 105 The Poet has far to go before the illusions are overcome, because this is an easy riddle.
- 106 Just as the Poet is emptying, mind changes like wind shifting objects of meditation, thereby refilling the Poet before emptiness is complete.
- 107-124 The wall describes its role in the middle between Earth and Heaven, comparing itself to Atlas. In Greek mythology, Heracles got Atlas to retrieve an apple from the Isle of the Hesperides. Atlas was anxious to give up his role permanently. He had Heracles hold up the Heavens while he retrieved the apple. Heracles had agreed to support the heavens in return for the apple, so Atlas felt the bargain was complete. Heracles then succeeded in tricking Atlas to hold up the heavens again so Heracles could make a harness to help with the job. Needless to say, Heracles did not bother to return, hence the aggravated ending from Atlas' perspective. Beyond the allusion to this classical myth, the description suggests a previous attempt by the Poet to unsettle the natural balance of the universe, perhaps with the Poet's "earthly" attachments.
- 107-108 The "feet buried/in Earth's reality" is attachment to the illusion of physical reality.
- 107 The Titans were the predecessors of the Greater Gods of Olympus in Classical Mythology. Atlas fits the description given here, as the Titan who holds the Heavens upon his shoulders. See 107-124 in Major Passages above.
- 109-110 He is connected but not attached to spiritual reality.
- 111-113 The relationship requires enormous effort. What we don't see here is that the effort is wrong, as no effort is really needed. The Poet is not ready to comprehend this yet.
- 114 The chaos is an illusion. Who says the two cannot or should not commingle? What right did Atlas have in judging them and separating them in the first place?
- 115 Submission to the illusion resulting in...
- 116 Suffering/Dukkha (first Noble Truth).
- 117-118 Like a bodhisattva.

- 119 False immortality alludes to impermanence.
 120 Weakness observed.
 121-122 Dispelling the illusion.
 123-124 Reference to the labor of Heracles; also reference to samadhi—not completing the task of eliminating duality.
 125-130 Again the Poet shows weakness, but has learned giving from Earth. Ignoring the caution, the Poet focuses on the art of giving as the way of the wall.
 126-127 Remaining centered; acting as the hub of the cycle, of samsara.
 128-130 The Poet is trapped in the illusions of questions and duality.
 131-169 Note: This passage should be viewed as a whole as all parts are related, and not treated as separable values. The Poet receives a lecture from the wall on the ethics of giving. This lecture, though brief, concisely outlines not only giving in the relationships of people, but also in the relationships of nations.
 131-133 Relates the first Noble Truth (suffering/dukkha is universal) to the way of nature (Tao), but indicates a hierarchy suggesting there is a means of escape or advancement beyond this state.
 134-136 To go against nature by giving from pity (e.g. alms giving) creates imbalance. The reason for this is obvious but is stated later (152-154).
 137-139 Human error can itself unbalance nature and cause suffering. Giving sympathy or moral support does not worsen the imbalance.
 140-142 Return balance without expecting, in fact preventing, personal gain.
 143-145 Eliminate gain entirely from giving, for either the giver or the recipient.
 146 Psychological gain is also gain. This supports the Confucian views of respect and relationships.
 147-148 These are cautions against expecting or “ear-marking” gifts, such as specifying how the gift is used or received.
 149 Something you can sell or trade for purpose or gain.
 150-151 This creates social imbalance thereby increasing suffering by going against the flow of nature.
 152 This is an acceptable purpose in giving, so long as doing so does not create an imbalance.
 153-154 Again, unacceptable to give with purpose (e.g. to gain power over someone) or for personal gain.
 155-157 Encourage balance.
 158-160 This is a Zen principle: the giver should be thankful.
 161-162 These lines not only apply at the lowest level between individuals, but also at the highest levels between societies. In other words this cautions that all such transactions follow the same principles.
 162 This last line points to a source for conflicts from as small as unspoken bitterness to as catastrophic as war.
 163 Always assume the giver is mindful of these values.
 164 Be gracious. Don't expect a gift or a particular gift as the expectation is itself greed.
 165 If asked what an acceptable gift would be, follow these same principles. In other words, ask for nothing of value, seek balance, look to fill needs, or if it is an occasion where presents are expected (e.g. Christmas, birthday, etc.), then encourage gifts from the heart because these do not create imbalance (assuming of course the context is appropriate).
 166-168 This does not say to be ungrateful, just diplomatically return or refuse the gift. If returning is then refused, then the purpose for gain of the giver is surrendered.
 170-172 The Poet has embodied the teachings, but is in a state of confusion.
 171 See line 1 note.
 172 See line 30 note.
 173-178 This merging is a distinct embodying of the wall's ideals, forming a new act of beauty with the image of a butterfly. The eyes help the seeker to see.
 173-175 These lines are a visual merging of the Poet with the wall, symbolizing becoming centered. The shape and thickness change because the wall is forming into the wings of a butterfly, so the Poet can fly on the wings of centeredness.

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- 175 On these wings, as with most butterflies, appear eyes. We can look at these in many ways. First the eyes could be an enhancement of visual perception. Second, they could be the source of illusory visual perception because technically they are only superficial. Both options are left open. All the same, the image projects becoming more butterfly-like, which gives a sort of freedom. This freedom does not completely separate one from the Earth, but certainly brings one closer to Heaven. Unfortunately the traveling of the butterfly is in the wind, which means there is an attachment to mind.
- 176-178 The Poet's self or ego is apprehended and centered.
- 179-181 The butterfly is lifted like a leaf by the wind and carried. Remember that wind is a symbol of mind. This behavior is very much like that of most people: blowing around in the illusions thought to be reality.
- 179-180 Consider Herman Hesse's Siddhartha. Siddhartha observed the ways of the child people, caught up in their illusions of knowledge and ego.
- 181 The meditation is disrupted with conscious thought seeking an object, specifically the ego.
- 182-187 The transition settles and the path is recognized.
- 182-184 These lines resemble Siddhartha's metaphor of himself being a rock falling straight down. There is a great struggle of mind to locate the ego. When the ego is found it can then be released, and the focus of the meditation is then able to shift from meditating with object to meditation without object.
- 185 The meditation returns without object, allowing apprehension.
- 186 The path of giving reveals itself. The path is ironic in a way, because we already know the persona of the Poet. We should note, however, that the prescription requires an extremely high level of poetic ability, in fact mastery.
- 187-190 Like a baby.
- 188-211 The path of giving, for the Poet, is the poetry. This is no ordinary poetry though, as the poem must be independent of the Poet. In other words, the poem occurs to the Poet and not as a consequence of purposeful action on the Poet's behalf.
- 191-193 Like the soul.
- 194-196 Like death.
- 197-199 Like decay.
- 200-202 This is potentially a comment on the Poet, but really represents the ideal state, as the Poet must keep ego out of the poem so the audience can insert themselves.
- 203-205 This is like an out-of-body experience (note the Poet is also journeying this way).
- 207 While this is difficult, it is not impossible. Some of the best poetry ever was numinous (an experience defying words), such as the flower sermon mentioned in 591-594.
- 208 This is a paradox.
- 209-211 This is like the mason finishing a statue and saying: "The face was always there. I merely cleaned it so you could see."
- 212-235 This is distinctly a butterfly, and the butterfly is the Poet rising up from the meditation in a sort of out-of-body experience. The Poet is starting to lose attachment to physical reality, but does not complete the loss until Manjusri's slap. As with the other butterfly reference, there are eyes. This time they are red and yellow (see Riding the Rainbow). The butterfly, like any arachnid in the cold, is stiff and appears dead, representing the common person. As it warms (examines the spirit and develops a soul) it begins to move, rising up and observing with mind (wind, line 230) its former state (as the Poet is doing). There are several acts of random beauty in this passage, yet many of these are subtle references to the *LǐJiě Ching*, such as the garden. The garden is empty in the *LǐJiě Ching* and waiting for the return of life, in this case the butterfly representing the Poet. A lily (line 234) is both a symbol of strength and beauty, not to mention a good resting place for a wandering butterfly. Though the Poet admires this resting place and all it has to offer, the Poet continues the voyage.
- 212-214 This is clearly a butterfly laid flat against a flower. By line 234 we might guess it to be a lily, but the lack of specificity leaves the options open.

- 215-217 This brings to mind a Zen story. Observing the funeral procession of a master, a traveling monk commented: "Never before have I seen such a thing! So many dead people following one living person!" The point of this little story is the questions it asks: Do you know you are alive? Can you be alive on the outside (going through the moves of life) and dead on the inside (without a soul due to an unexamined life)? Or can you be dead on the surface and alive on the inside? These innocuous three lines are sneaky with all their possible meanings.
- 218 Metaphor of birth.
- 219-220 Metaphors for feelings and emotions that fill and hold thoughts.
- 221 Metaphor for passion.
- 222 Attention, awareness, being conscious.
- 223 Awareness of passion.
- 224-226 Conscious sensation, perception.
- 227-229 Searching more and more frantically for truth (see discussion of eyes on butterfly wings for line 175).
- 230-231 Wind/mind metaphor capturing and leading the seeker.
- 232 Compare to 36, 64, 233, 317. Not only is this separation from materialism, it is a vacancy expecting the return of its master (the Poet). The return, however, certainly does not fill the vacancy.
- 233 The palace is a reference to the garden, giving the fantastic and personal perspective of the Poet as the butterfly.
- 234 This could be the flower referenced in 214. Pay attention to all the qualities of a lily, especially since this sits all by itself and is vague. The lily is a symbol of strength, durability, showing many signs of nature's ingenuity. It is also a symbol of the Archangel Gabriel, Mary (the mother of Jesus), and of course all the other little images that come to mind when pretty flowers are mentioned. The lily could also represent the body of the Poet; if such is the case, then the image suggests egocentrism, self-love.
- 236-239 Again the Poet falls asleep and dreams, which befits the butterfly personification.
- 236 Appears to be typical consciousness.
- 237 Buddha-nature trapped by "conscious illusion."
- 238-239 The previous dream continues and becomes more complicated.
- 240-315 While the first dream was complicated with two settings, this dream contains two settings and another dream. As with the first dream, this begins with the mutiny at sea (recall this setting is itself a dream of the main character of the second setting). This is interrupted by the trial of the accused main character for murder. The defense clearly makes an insanity (affirmative) plea, which simplifies the proceedings by eliminating need of a jury. The judge then hears the arguments of both sides. The prosecutor's role is interesting, as he replaces the jury in representing public opinion. Of course this role is selfish as the prosecutor is concerned about his image more than about the truth. In the course of this trial we observe the truth about adversarial justice, namely that no individual in the courtroom workgroup is charged with issuing justice, because no one does. Upon hearing the arguments the judge retires and falls asleep. Her dream within a dream is discussed below. When she returns to the court she chooses the path of inaction. This second dream opens the Poet up to the concepts common in both Taoism and Buddhism of action (acting purposefully) and inaction (allowing nature to take its course, or following the natural flow).
- 240-241 The dreamer of this dream within a dream.
- 243 Right or, because of the direction of travel, the south side of the ship—perhaps foreshadowing.
- 245-246 Equivalent to an insanity plea, an affirmative defense not denying the event.
- 252 A lie.
- 253 The real reason is public approval.
- 255 Insanity and other affirmative defenses depend on technicality.
- 258 Foreshadowing death, inability to escape one's path.
- 264-303 This dream within a dream actually names its characters, and quite purposefully. This dream alludes to the *rūnLī Ching*. The central character in this dream is Kant. Kant was a professor

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- of philosophy, who wrote vociferously. The avid student of philosophy observes that Kant pretty much reports what other philosophers already said. He acts like a hub, filling in occasional gaps, but otherwise bringing together a wide range of philosophical ideas generated over thousands of years. Certainly his works are brilliant in their own respect, and here he plays a similar role by presiding over the panel of judges, all from antiquity. The other judges are identified according to when they were born (or believed to be born). Lao Tse argues for the natural path. Buddha reminds us that the path is within. Confucius, clearly out of his element, realizes most of the values he taught in life do not necessarily apply in death. He continues to hold to his concepts of piety and the ordering of things ("Like attracts like" in line 291). Socrates helps Confucius because the soul is a central feature of his teachings. He makes a strong case for separating the laws of man from the laws over souls. In his allusion to the Cave Allegory (see *The Republic*) he concludes that the actions in life are separate from the essence of the soul. Combining all these thoughts, Kant fills his natural duty by opening the gates and letting nature take its course (the action of inaction).
- 264 Note this is a third level of text, showing a greater degree of depth. It is a common belief that in life after death there is judgment of the dead.
- 265 Kant is a hub, a reporter and synthesizer in his own right.
- 266 Lao Tse is potentially a mythical person, credited with authoring the Tao Te Ching. These judges are listed in order of their antiquity, with the exception of Kant, who surrounds this whole passage.
- 268 Kant was infatuated with the idea of a universal rule or law. Basically the concept goes: Can I make a rule such that I can apply that rule to all instances ethically?
- 269 Here is a reference to utilitarian justice, which holds that any rule, act of enforcement or ruling should serve the greatest good for the greatest number of people. According to this rule, it is acceptable to punish an innocent person if that would prevent others from committing the accused act. Unfortunately the reality of justice is that it fails to be quick and sure, meaning it violates the most elementary principles of operant conditioning. As such the justice system has a significant flaw and fails to be utilitarian.
- 270 This is a reference to retributive justice (just deserts; cause-effect), which is also a failing concept for the same reason as utilitarianism fails above.
- 271 Kant is stating the ultimate social utility.
- 272 Tao.
- 274 Ethical principles of Taoism.
- 276 Revolutionary perspective of Buddha.
- 280 Second Noble Truth.
- 281 First Noble Truth.
- 282 Referencing the Eightfold Path.
- 283 Concept of dualism is common throughout Buddhism, Taoism, and Zen.
- 284-287 Sin and selfhood deal with an area of ethics that Confucius did not concern himself with in his teachings. We know he was pious and most likely adhered closely to the common ancestor reverence of China, so he would have some belief in life after death, and this view fits such a belief.
- 284 Confucius was primary concerned with social order and governance as this statement shows.
- 288 In this line he acknowledges the limitations of human law, and hence his own limitations.
- 289 Confucius was very focused on being at one's best, and particularly manhood-at-its-best (such as themselves acting as the ultimate judges of the dead).
- 290-291 Piety and like attracting like are also central concepts of his teachings.
- 292 Socrates is completely in his element. Compare this directly with his argument supporting his own execution (versus escape) in Crito.
- 293 Compare with the "unexamined life" of the Apology, and with his discussion of soul in Thaetetus.
- 296 Reference Chapter/Book 13 of the Republic for the Cave Allegory.

- 297 This is actually a Hindu philosophy, which holds mind as one of the perceptions or senses. We can argue that the perceptions could be extended by dividing mind categorically as Aristotle did into pathos (passion), ethos (value), and logos (logic).
- 300-303 In other words, let the souls judge themselves. Reference "Judge not lest thee be judged, for what judgment thee renders, so too shall be rendered against thee; what measure thee metes, so too shall be measured against thee" (Matthew: 7.1-2).
- 304 This line makes it clear that the perpetrator of the crime the dreamer is accused of will be punished.
- 306 Hell.
- 307 Grasping or struggling to save an unlived (unexamined), soulless life
- 308 The image is reminiscent of a funeral.
- 310 There is irony in the words "uncertain fate" since fate is certain though the observers and subject of the fate do not know.
- 314 The word "we" refers to the Court, the people, society, humankind, etc.
- 315 To understand "conscious cleared" see notes for 300-303.
- 316-333 The garden itself begins to disappear as the Poet, personified as a butterfly, approaches the clouds in the heavens. Note there is no transition into this waking state as sleeping and waking begin to blur. The Poet is drawn to the clouds by voices, namely the voices of souls in transit like himself or others whose essence is guided by intellect. One is taught in the order necessary for one to learn. The Poet is also guided by intellect for now.
- 317 This is the last reference to the "garden" also mentioned in lines 36, 64, 232 and 234.
- 318 This alludes to the heavens and spirits. Clouds necessitate both water and air (emotion and mind respectively), and here represent souls in transit within the cycle as indicated by the Samsara passage that follows this passage.
- 323-324 Un-attaching from physical being, becoming more spiritual.
- 325-327 Alluding to Samsara.
- 328-330 Not born, not dead, perhaps being born or dying as a process of "living." Consider the arguments of Wittgenstein and Dunne regarding whether death is an event of life. Although the argument could be played here, really the cosmology is a matter of belief, so clearly the Poet believes death is an event of life. The rest of the text clearly supports neither view, and would declare such an argument dualistic thinking and hence counterproductive to ultimate ascension.
- 331 Luring seamen to their deaths. See Homer's Odyssey.
- 332 Numinous means an indescribable experience; beyond words.
- 334-363 Samsara is the cycle of Hindu tradition, in which the karma (record of all actions in all lives, the consequences being based on intentions) journeys through many lives, perpetually seeking balance and centering in the cycle to escape it. The lyrics of the clouds reflect their goals, but they do not know how to escape the cycle they are trapped in. We note that they have much wisdom, as they understand parental roles, behaviors of children, feelings of grandparents, the order of happiness, and the burden of death. One cannot help think of the line "Mourn the survivors—" when a major catastrophe happens, because truly the survivors carry the suffering much longer than the dead.
- 334 Greed is also desire or tanha, the third Noble Truth and source of illusion. The "title" given to this passage, Samsara, means the cosmic cycle that infiltrates to the smallest levels and includes birth-life-death-rebirth, parent-child relationships, learning cycles, the cycles of generations, etc.
- 336 Reference to the second Noble Truth (the cause of suffering/dukkha is illusion).
- 338 Someone else begins the path—nostalgia over innocent illusion.
- 339 Same as parents, but grateful not to have to walk the path of parenting from scratch again.
- 340-342 Our seniors love to give advice to ease the sufferings of their juniors. So long as they accept this passage, they are happy. No need for "I told you so," simply sympathy.
- 343-345 Youth always have to walk the whole path and suffer to grow. This assures the elders that it is okay for their juniors to disregard the cautions.

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- 346-348 These truths are reversible, showing the endless cycle. It also shows that to arrive at and appreciate what is good, one must pass through the bad.
- 349 Goes with the idea that history "makes" people.
- 350 We learn however...
- 351 ...that learning itself is an obstacle.
- 352-354 Permanence of Tao.
- 355-357 Nature of Tao.
- 358-360 This is a Zen teaching.
- 361-363 During a great crisis it is easy to mourn the dead, forgetting that each major crisis is bigger than before. As such, and due to the nature of Samsara, the survivors must suffer this loss then suffer greater losses in the future, and that one tragedy is always followed by another.
- 364-379 Rainbows have numerous meanings, and here many of those meanings are exploited both on the whole and then in the parts. With red, symbolic of great passion, we find what appear to be homosexuals, who are notoriously passionate. Orange, yellow, and white (not mentioned) are common colors for monastic robes. These robes are symbols of piety, purity, and androgyny (non-sexuality). We note, however, that these are not alone in their androgyny, because these are androgynous in a passionate and superficial way. Green is exploited traditionally as representing fertility and heterosexual love. Blue through violet flow into a cool calmness, where the androgyny is genuine and there is a general air of tranquility.
- 369 These are homosexuals, fitting here as the most passionate of the passionate.
- 370 Sea reference indicates an imitation of Brahma.
- 371 These are the pious, androgynous but sexually driven in their search for and adherence to "God" or their faith. Note they are guided by the mind (wind).
- 372 Sangha is a reference to the Buddhist monastic order and to the adherents of Buddhism. In essence this is like a Zen criticism of following the path of Buddha, or the teachings of Buddha, both of which he cautioned were incorrect as the individual must follow their own path.
- 373-375 These are clearly heterosexual relationships, complete with offspring, with green representing fertility.
- 376 These are feelings. See Fountain of Love in the *LǐJiě Ching*. Some turbulence exists at this stage, making further travel look bad, but this is only an illusion.
- 379 This is true androgyny without desires, without the duality of gender.
- 380-405 Here the Poet learns the meaning of life, which comes as a graduated answer. Reading through the passage carefully one finds that all except the master are cycled eventually back to suffering because of being attached to meaning. The last line speaks volumes.
- 381 The cooling contents them, causing beauty to come from within.
- 382-385 Siddhartha's child people. These are the common people who seek hope through faith, religion. These first categories are not exclusive. A person can belong to different categories at varying degrees depending on the situation. If a person belongs to only one category, then their innocence protects them.
- 386-389 These do not seek deep meaning. They seek social status, material possession, personal material gain, or spiritual gain (e.g. the indulgences sold by the Catholic Church to help finance the crusades).
- 390-393 The hopeless academic is caught up in human knowledge and is naïve about worldly and real matters. See the Pond and Swamp passages later. They are misguided about meaning.
- 394-397 These are unconcerned with society, focusing exclusively on material possession and superficial beauty. They are selfish and suffer severely. As such, they see life as suffering (*dukkha*), a struggle to fight through.
- 398-401 Those who are knowledgeable and worldly are still naïve about real things, but don't know it. They are close, but are held back by their attachments to dualism and perceiving based on their external learning.
- 402 This category is exclusive.
- 403 Without object means not focused on anything. Measure is a reference to judging.
- 404 Not differentiating or attaching oneself to dualism.

- 406-427 Precipitation is an allusion to birth and childhood. In the end, what has been acquired through childhood clashes with adulthood (the Splat! in line 427). Again we see numerous references to wind/mind, Earth/mother, and the rainbow/sexuality/passion.
- 406-407 Here the Poet changes state again, appearing to return almost to a manifest form. What we are seeing is rebirth beginning.
- 408 The droplet, being water, alludes to a small bit of Atman, soul, and feeling. Of course the droplet is in the air, but here wind is mentioned, and the images that follow support the argument that wind represents the Poet's mind or imagination.
- 409 Toward heaven.
- 410-411 The angle of light to the rainbow is between 40 and 42°. We note the spectrum pours in rather than out, suggesting an esoteric angling allowing for absorption, embodiment of the passions of the former passage—anything is possible.
- 412 White light is the product of merging the colors of the rainbow. This is absolutely neutral. Although this appears meaningless, the neutrality allows the Poet to continue observing by not completely attaching to the experiences.
- 413 Mother Earth, or the mother of the child.
- 414 This and the succeeding lines describe both pregnancy and childhood development.
- 415-417 Alone in the womb, alone on individual paths, yet together as humans with different personal qualities.
- 418-420 This fall describes growth toward adulthood, which in this case is shown as moving down, away from nature.
- 421-423 We are warned when the sky ionizes (charges), creating a sweet aroma, that rain (birth, transcendence to adulthood) follows or is occurring.
- 424-426 The growth, both physical and mental, accelerates.
- 427 Encounter with adulthood. Most adults can relate to this simple “Splat!” as adulthood is quite a shock, and a completely different scenario from childhood. One seems to crash into the reality of adulthood.
- 428-448 Adulthood and society are represented in the pond (which could well be a lake or puddle). In this, society and the adult both grow: society grows in population and technology; the adult grows in knowledge. The knowledge, however, is confused, muddied by attachment to the perceptions (sight, smell, touch, taste, feel, mind), which are not outright referenced, but may as well be.
- 428-433 Society as an adult.
- 434-436 Individuality submersed, lost in society and relationships. This is the common state of adulthood, submersed in the role within society.
- 437-439 Expansion of civilization both mentally (academically) and physically.
- 440-442 Nature confuses the observer; e.g. God works in mysterious ways. The human illusion of knowledge sees mind and thinks it is the Earth and not mud, then is misled.
- 443 Thoughts, perceptions of reality.
- 444 Escaping the illusions of the masses.
- 445 This is because it is mistaken for mud, causing more confusion.
- 446-448 The expansion of illusions is like a snowball, growing, feeding on its own lies.
- 449-480 The third dream alludes to the *LǐJiě Ching* with a Tarot reading. The dream centers on the Reader, with the Seeker (previously the accused) barely participating, and with only the shortest dialog (477 and 481). At the beginning of the reading, the Reader has the Seeker choose a card (The Lovers, Key VI) for a Significator. This is an optional Significator, and the layout is clearly the common Celtic Cross, which may be referenced in any Tarot book. This is an enormously meaningful reading, using the most powerful cards in the deck. Compare also with the diagrams in the *LǐJiě Ching* versus where these cards appear. Note: The Zenith and Great Works are 9 and 10 of Manifestation, appearing at the end of the *LǐJiě Ching* and representing the highest states of physical being. All the other cards have both strategic meanings and also strategic places in the diagrams representing each category in balance; hence the reaction of the Reader at the end.

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- 452 Green again indicates fertility, but this fertility appears androgynous, suggesting that the psychic will mother a spiritual growth.
- 453 The Maga is another name for the High Priestess (Key II). She represents the querent, the future unrevealed, or secrets.
- 455 The Lovers is Key VI, signifying also the individuality of personal paths even in relationships, and duality.
- 456 The layout being described is a Celtic Cross, perhaps the most common layout. This Significator is optional. Many readers start with the next card. The Significator may be chosen randomly by either the reader or querent, or may be selected purposefully. One method is to have the Significator drawn only from the Higher Arcana. In this case we are led to believe the draw was randomly made from the entire deck. As we shall soon see, the entire reading is composed of critical Higher Arcana cards, with the exceptions of The Zenith (9 of Pentacles) and Great Works (10 of Pentacles), which are the highest-ranking Lesser Arcana if one follows the *LǐJiě Ching*. The reader would be wise to compare the Key numbers (0, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 14, 21, and Mystery Card) with the charts in the *LǐJiě Ching* to see the balance, and compare the cards specifically with their related poems also. This reading is clearly a reference to the *LǐJiě Ching*.
- 457 The Fool is Key 0, indicating the seeker is traveling blindly without looking at the path. In many layouts this would be the Significator. Note that both significators reference the path and the individual's quest for selfhood.
- 460 The Emperor is Key IV, indicating the observer neither interferes or obstructs the passage of knowledge. The position indicates a blocking or crossing influence.
- 461 As indicated for the previous line, this is either an obstacle or crossing influence. Here it is outright stated as an obstacle, perhaps suggesting that attachment to external knowledge is hindering personal growth. Considering the Swamp (next passage), the argument seems to hold that the Seeker is looking too much on the outside for answers the Seeker already has. We will see this again at the end of this passage.
- 462-464 The blank card is the Mystery Card, indicating emptiness or the unknown. On the surface it could mean absolutely nothing, or that the particular item is obscured. It could also mean, due to the rest of the cards and position, a higher state of being found in the emptiness. The reader takes this as an unknown and decides to move forward to get a better understanding of the potential meanings.
- 466 The Hermit is Key IX, representing a messianic figure, a solitary seeker, a teacher, a leader; in Buddhist terms, perhaps a Bodhisattva. This position represents the history of the querent, what they have to build upon.
- 468 The Zenith is 9 of Pentacles/Manifestation. It is the penultimate physical accomplishment and ultimate passion. This position is obstacles overcome, in this case overcoming animalistic desires.
- 470 Great Works is 10 of Pentacles/Manifestation. It is the ultimate physical accomplishment. This is coming in the near future, indicating the perfection of physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional states.
- 471-472 The Wheel of Fortune is Key 10. The position is of recommended action or the psychological state of the querent. The card itself suggests randomness or uncertainty. Perhaps a more appropriate view is the principle of action and inaction of Taoism. In other words, act appropriately under the given conditions. The reader is also right in observing that uncertainty is an obstacle to the Seeker's wisdom.
- 473 The Hanged Man (Key XII) represents a rebellion against social norms, and is otherwise very much like the Hermit as a messianic figure, a teacher. This position represents the querent's environmental influences.
- 474 Temperance (Key XIV) means balance, and in this position the balance is applied to hopes and fears. Given the rest of the reading, it is no wonder the reader shudders when she draws Key 21 (The Universe or World) for the ultimate outcome, as this indicates the ultimate accomplishment. In most cases this ultimate accomplishment is minor in comparison. In this

- case, however, due to the rest of the layout the reader is led to question if this is the ultimate ascension.
- 475-476 Clearly a reference to the previous dreams.
- 477 The Seeker's dreams are of the captain and the sea directly. All the dreams, including this one, are of the primary seeker in the narrative: the Poet.
- 479 The greatness could be Buddhahood, especially since she dares not utter it directly. She also does not dare to describe it, especially since she is far from it, nor declare it an accomplishment because it isn't. Buddhahood is an event, and were she to utter more she could potentially knock the Seeker from the path, and that is not for the reader to do.
- 481-508 The swamp is a living hell built on the illusion of knowledge. Floating around unaffected are buddhas, who are probably more bodhisattvas than buddhas (Gautama used the term Bodhisattva to describe himself when he was seeking enlightenment. The Mahayana school of Buddhism uses this term to identify those who have attained bodhi, but chose not to enter nirvana and become a Buddha. Instead, they vow to provide salvation for every living thing, "every blade of grass"). Some thrive in the hell of the swamp and are unaffected by the illusion. Other creatures struggle with the illusion and are thus trapped and drown in it. Some escape by evaporation, returning to the clouds that can release them anywhere, hence beginning their cycle again.
- 482 You know your path. The Seeker becomes a clear personification of the Poet, which is true of all the characters in the dreams. This may suggest seeing past lives or infiltrating and absorbing the essence of other lives to help push along the path.
- 485-487 Society's knowledge and beliefs are likened here to a swamp.
- 488-493 Like a smooth surface, buddhas pass through society easily, unhindered, and nothing can stick to them.
- 494-496 This could be an image of water lilies (the trumpets dangle). This alludes to the temptations of society (e.g. wealth, prosperity, social relationships, status).
- 497-502 Those who are tempted get caught, struggle and are eventually submersed and destroyed by society.
- 503-508 Great desire causing continuation of Samsara.
- 504 Not to insinuate destruction but transmigration.
- 505 Leaving hardened clay—their stiff bodies.
- 507 In the clouds, thereby restarting Samsara.
- 509-600 This section of the passage starts with a standard description of the character Manjusri, including stating who he is, what he represents, and what he does. Since the Poet is traveling on an "astral" level, the aura of Manjusri alone introduces him, which saves further introduction. The Poet asks a series of questions, most of which are answered in a haiku-like fashion. All of the answers, though they sound absurd or out of place are actually correct, even pointing directly to insignificant issues within Zen; but the Poet fails to see the truth. As a consequence the Poet laughs declaring the conversation as nonsense. Most of the answers contain a lot of historical facts laced with zennist profane humor. Te (Virtue/Power), Tao (The Way), Earth, and T'ien (Heaven) are definitive answers from a Taoist perspective, given because the Poet is asking related metaphysical questions better answered from a Taoist perspective. We also see one answer (Learning Zen) that reveals much of the true nature of Zen study and the zennist perspective on knowledge. Note: knowledge was acquired first, but to succeed it had to be "unlearned".
- 509-511 Mondo is probably being used here in place of dokusan or sanzen: A period of interaction between a Zen student and a Zen teacher, which is done according to a regular schedule. This is a personal encounter, in which the teacher is able to probe and stimulate the student's understanding, and the student is able to ask questions directly related to practice. Since everything is Zen practice, questions can be asked about anything. This is different from a mondo only slightly, because this involves an individual and a mondo can be done in a group. Mondo is similar enough that it is often used. Manjusri is the bodhisattva of meditation and supreme wisdom. He is usually depicted riding a lion, carrying the sword of wisdom, which is

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- supposed to cut through illusion. He is frequently the principal figure on the altar of a zendo. Notice that the lion is enflamed and flying to indicate spiritual power.
- 512 Bodhisattva: Gautama used this term to describe himself when he was seeking enlightenment. The Mahayana use this term to identify those who have attained bodhi, but chose not to enter nirvana and become a Buddha. Instead, they vow to provide salvation for every living thing, "every blade of grass."
- 514 "exorcising illusion" suggests that illusion is a demon that can be extracted.
- 515-517 Either the whole experience is a fantasy or this spiritual introduction is transcendental or both.
- 521 Tao-sheng was a Buddhist monk, who lived ca. 360-434 C.E. He is credited with founding Ch'an (Zen).
- 523 Bodhidharma: (Daruma in Japanese) is credited with popularizing Ch'an (Chinese for Zen) during the early sixth century C.E. (Common Era). He is also the first truly eccentric Zen master. Some researchers credit Bodhidharma as the founder of Zen.
- 525 Achievement in human, social, or spiritual terms? We cannot be certain. This could also be the Poet's misconception that buddhahood is achievable.
- 528-531 This is a very iconoclastic, Zen approach—anti-zazen (sitting meditation) but pro every-moment-zen.
- 532 Zazen is sitting, formal meditation, the way the Poet began this odyssey.
- 534 We should note that in Zen, the arts include all activities. All arts may be mastered as meditations, hence the concept of every-moment-zen. This view does not appear to be taught by Bodhidharma but developed later.
- 535 Karate finds its origins in the South of India, where Bodhidharma originally came from.
- 536 Shaolin monks are in China.
- 537 This statement could stand true all by itself.
- 538 Enlightenment definitely cannot be attained by the use of force, or even the superficially passive force of seeking. Apprehension is incidental.
- 542-544 In other words: love, passion, hate, and war are energies and values, and thus a part of nature. These lines are fairly definitive of Te (Deh).
- 548-551 Action and inaction (wei wu wei) in accordance with the ways of individual things. This is also definitive of Tao (Dow). Note: inaction means to allow things to occur naturally, to act naturally without personal thought.
- 555 Sight, sound, touch, taste, smell, mind (Hindu philosophy). Mind is further divisible into Aristotle's logos (logic), pathos (passion), and ethos (ethics or values).
- 556 This is the old Chinese way (see Tao Te Ching) of referring to everything.
- 557 Hence all paradoxes.
- 558 Pū is an uncarved, natural piece of wood. This is a common symbol in Taoism to indicate one's true, untainted nature. In Buddhism this is equivalent to the concept of buddha-nature.
- 560 T'ien is equivalent to Heaven in Western society, but not exactly the same. Chinese thought does not look on T'ien as a place where a divine being is, or a place where "good" souls go upon death.
- 569-580 This description is so typically Zen—like the Hanged Man (see line 473), in total opposition to the norms of human society.
- 581-583 The Poet is clearly confused about right understanding (ref. the Eightfold Path) and the concept of discarding knowledge.
- 584-587 Wudi was the emperor of China who had done all these activities in hopes to build good karma. When he learned Bodhidharma had come he went and asked if his efforts had any merit. Bodhidharma flatly said no. On one hand this answer is correct, but unfortunately the ignorant masses do not understand that to have merit one acts for the action's sake and not for personal gain. Since the question was asked, then there was desire in the action. The ignorant masses, as a consequence, are misled to believe that ignorance is the path.
- 588-590 The Poet is still confused but trying to hide it.
- 591-594 This is in reference to the first "transmission of the lamp" to Mahakasyapa (Great Kasyapa). The story goes that Buddha, advanced in age, was asked to give a sermon summarizing and

- clarifying his teachings. Along the way someone gave him a bouquet of flowers. He took one with him, and for his sermon merely presented the flower. Kasyapa, understanding the message, laughed out loud, and was thereafter called Mahakasyapa. This is probably the most important of Buddha's teachings to the Zen tradition.
- 597-598 Like a demon surfacing. Remember, this is an exorcism!
- 599-600 The Poet's ignorance has peaked. The demon is ready for extraction.
- 601-621 The first part of Manjusri's answer is a quote from the Tao Te Ching (verse 41). Then he praises the Poet for the out-of-body experience and cuts him calling him a fool. This culminates in a koan: the slap. When Manjusri leaves, the Poet is so shocked by the slap that attention is refocused to nothing (without object), allowing the next transition into the Atman.
- 602-607 This is quoted from the Tao Te Ching.
- 605 Some translators render this as, "he takes some and leaves some."
- 607 Some translators add extra text to the effect: "If the fool did not laugh/ it would not be the Tao."
- 608-609 Manjusri complements the Poet, taking the demon off-guard.
- 610 Manjusri then exposes the demon.
- 612 The demon is extracted.
- 613-614 Manjusri's work is done.
- 615 This is like recovering from an illness.
- 616 This line is pivotal. This is the last mention of the Poet. The text itself speaks volumes. In terms of the meditation we observe that the object is now lost. The meditation is now optimized into what the Japanese call Mushotoku: The optimum state for Zen practice, in which there is no goal or object, no intention for self gain or profit.
- 617-618 The Mystery Card (see lines 462-464) is partly filled. Certainly the Great Works (see line 470) has been attained.
- 619 Selflessness, egolessness attained; hence the absence of reference to the Poet anymore.
- 620 Like the Buddhas (see lines 488-493)...
- 621 ...on the lotus way.
- 622-677 The Atman in Hinduism is the self, the soul. "An" means to breath, an association frequently made with soul in religious traditions. We see what appears to be a little dialog, but the speakers are not directly identified because in the Atman there is no self. The entire dialog is dedicated to the rapid elimination of dualism to allow for passage into singularity, one-ness in the Brahma.
- 622 We should note this part appears to be the thoughts or utterances of something outside. Although it is tempting to reference the Poet here, we must be cautious, as soon even the loosest association seems lost. Atman in Hinduism is the self, the soul. "An" means to breath, an association frequently made with soul in religious traditions. This passage and the Brahma Ocean passage are defiant of any type of analysis. As such only non-English words are defined.
- 623 Buddha: The awakened; forever enlightened. Buddha Gautama did not claim to be the first Buddha nor the last. He frequently mentioned previous Buddha's. These have never been proven to historically exist, and were probably made up by Gautama just to make his point. Gautama did not wish to be worshipped. Many Buddhist sects believe that Buddhas come periodically much as Western faiths think of messiahs.
- 637 Maya is both the name of Gautama's mother and a term meaning illusion (Four Noble Truths).
- 678-710 The Brahma is the cosmic ocean where the soul (atman) is dissolved upon death. This ocean is the cosmic soul in Hindu tradition. The Hindu perspective is taken in this passage, going further include absolutely everything because of universal interconnectivity.
- 678 We should note first that the vague distinction between communicators in the previous passage is now lost entirely. Brahma is the cosmic ocean, where the soul (atman) is dissolved upon death. This ocean is the cosmic soul in Hindu tradition.
- 710 Action without action is another way of saying wei wu-wei (action inaction) of Taoism.

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- 711-719 The Last Dream is the final destruction of dualism. While it initially appears that sleep is coming, we realize that enlightenment has taken over. The Poet and the meditation have become one. There is no longer a distinction between sleeping and waking, simply permanent awareness. There is no more duality, no more ego (the last use of I was line 661, last use of Poet was line 616). We could argue on a superficial and academic level that buddhahood is attained, but such would violate underlying messages elsewhere in the epic.
- 711 The eyes here are physical.
- 712 Losing the physical in place of the spiritual.
- 713 The inner Eye.
- 714-716 The simplest way to appraise this is as buddhahood (Buddha being forever awakened), however...
- 717-719 ...such would be a judgment and potentially also an understatement of something numinous (beyond words).
- 720-729 This is clearly a continuation of the first passage, but there are no more references to the Poet. This, like the lack of reflection, is a consequence of losing all attachments, including most obviously the ego (lost in the Atman, line 661). The answer: "Find your own wall!" is clearly enlightened. As with Buddha's teaching, in the end each must find their own paths.
- 720 We notice immediately a difference between this passage and the first passage. The Poet is missing. We thought it was difficult without pronouns, now we have no stated subject. Then again, considering line 729...
- 723 In other words, "Find your own path." This is not a learned response. We know this because of everything else surrounding the answer, and by the actions that follow.
- 724-726 Zazen is no longer necessary because the meditation is now everything.
- 727-729 The pool represents the Brahma Ocean. The description fits Paranirvana, the state of absolute escape from the cycle. It is tempting to say non-existence, but such carries the idea that something existed.