

Teaching Poems

**A collection of resources
for the communication
of Spirit**

by

Gene W. Marshall

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Inquiry

Wordsmith

Understanding is my game.
I share what I see
about what we be.

I am focused sun rays,
I am the sharp slice of the correct word.

I am a clear bell.
When I ring,
simple piercing waves
vibrate the bones
and fill all space
with an echoing sound.

Alert

I am an alert deer.
Dread gets my attention
and I can move quickly
in many directions.
I am a surprise
and hard to predict.

A fear of real enemies
is the alertness of a deer,
While my alertness is
dread of a mysteriousness
no deer can know.

And I am unpredictable
in a manner
no deer can match.

Dread of the Unfathomable
is my essence.

Surprise
is my being.

Living Both Halves

Suffering is half of life; for
every security is surrounded by insecurity,
every pleasure is passing away,
every love is a companion of loneliness,
every knowledge is a widening of mystery,
every noble action is a suffering of rejection,
every good action is laced with guilt.

Authenticity means living both halves of life:
avoiding both safety and foolhardiness,
avoiding both indulgence and asceticism,
avoiding both enmeshment and isolation,
avoiding both dogmatism and foolishness,
avoiding both ambition and sloth,
avoiding both perfection and debauchery.

Authenticity means taking on both halves of life:
engaging both security and insecurity,
engaging both pleasure and pain,
engaging both love and loneliness,
engaging both knowledge and ignorance,
engaging both honor and rejection,
engaging both success and failure.

Living/Dying

Living and dying
do not characterize a rock.
It is only the living that are dying;
It is only the dying that are living.

Living is not a stable entity but a process.
Living is a countercurrent
swimming upstream
against the main current of the cosmos.

Living pushes on toward more living--
more consciousness of living.
But more is never all,
and next is never forever.

The destiny of living is dying,
and dying is the essence of living.
Each moment of living
vanishes into the abyss of nothingness.

Nevertheless, each moment of living
breathes in and breathes out
the energies of the entire fullness,
connecting each living moment with everythingness.

This awareness of nothingness and everythingness
is a state of living beyond all comprehension.
The capacity for such awareness is as mysterious
as the mysteriousness of nothingness/everythingness combined.

When we consent to live in this boundless land of mystery,
we also journey on great rivers of freedom,
climb great mountains of compassion,
and find the joy unspeakable.

Fear and Anger

Fear and anger,
like all feelings,
are part of the passing scenery.

When others mistreat you
you are angry.
When others might hurt you
you are afraid.

Fear and anger,
like all feelings,
arise as gifts from
the irresistible Source.

But thoughts and plans and actions
are your doing.
If you think or plot or do
revenge toward your enemies
it is all your doing.

And revenge does not honor
your feelings.
Revenge is an attempt to
get rid of fear and anger
rather than own them
as a good part of your life.

Revenge hopes to end, to stop,
to intimidate the enemy
into not being an enemy
who scares us, harms us,
frustrates us, infuriates us.

Yet revenge is futile
for revenge breeds
more revenge in return.
And even if the enemy
is utterly vanquished,
revenge does not replace
what is lost.
Revenge does not help
with your grief.

Revenge does not
even make you safe.

Revenge is an act of refusal
to have the life you have.
Revenge is a deed
that requires repentance.

So what is the opposite of revenge?
It is love,
but a strange love--not affection.
No one has affection for serious,
scary, infuriating enemies.
For true real enemies,
one has fear and anger.
So loving enemies means
loving the fear and the anger.

Love, that strange love
that loves enemies
is like a great space
in which my own fear and anger
are given room to be--
along with my enemies.

So love your fear:
eat it for breakfast.
Give thanks for those who scare you.
And love your anger.
Give thanks for those who infuriate you.

Yes, grind your teeth,
Yell out loud.
Stamp your feet.
Feel the wondrous energy
of your anger.

Then use that energy to love your neighbor--
who is always your friend
as well as your enemy--
who is always your enemy
as well as your friend.

If you insist on a life
with no fear and anger
you will be
eternally disappointed.

Authenticity Includes

Authenticity includes your reptilian brain:

- your hunger and thirst for food and drink,
- your desire for sexual union,
- your alertness to preserve your life.

Authenticity includes your mammalian brain:

- your awareness of the inner states of other beings,
- your, dreams, affections, bondings, loneliness and grief,
- your playfulness and your boredom.

Authenticity includes your image-using mind:

- your immediate processing of sights, sounds, touches, tastes, and smells.
- your sensory and emotional memories and anticipations.
- your coordinated, practical intelligence.

Authenticity includes your symbol-using mind:

- your fancy with abstract movements, words, and numbers,
- your facility with scientific exploration and contemplative wisdom,
- your rational overviews of meaning and your awareness of enigma.

Authenticity includes your habits of personal functioning:

- your childhood conditioning and your adult additions to it,
- your conventional behaviors and your quirky particularities,
- your dependabilities, talents, biases. prejudices, and addictions.

Authenticity includes your Spirit freedom:

- your capacity for detachment and engagement,
- your capacity for yes to this and no to that
- your capacity for equanimity, compassion, and a happy YES to ALL.

Authenticity even includes your temptation to live a NO to ALL

- your temptations to scorn your reptilian and mammalian brain,
- your temptations to deny your intelligence, hide your person, reject Spirit,
- your temptations to be unhappy.

Authenticity includes your power to overcome temptation

- your support by the forces of the living Here and Now
- your support by the gifts of Freedom and Compassion
- your support by the The Way Life Is.

Spirit
and
Religion

Inspiration

What is Spirit?

Lao Tzu says:

“Those who say don’t know,
and those who know don’t say.”

Buddha says:

“It is not this;
it is not that.

It is an emptiness
that is also freedom and compassion.”

The Bible says:

“It is like wind;
it blows where it wills;
no one knows where it comes from
or where it is going.”

We see a chair,
but no one is sitting upon it.
We see footprints in the mud
but we do not see the walker.
We see the tree under which he sat,
but we do not see the Buddha.
We see the tomb in which they put him,
but we do not see the Messiah.

It is said that words can speak
the WORD of TRUTH;
but words are not the WORD.
And the WORD is not words.
The WORD is SILENT,
yet every noise, every sound
screams with this SILENCE
to those who have ears
of Spirit.

So again, what is Spirit?
Let us never stop asking,
for then we think we know.
Asking means we do not know,
which is true.

When the mind of knowing
surrenders to freedom and compassion,
when the heart of longing
clings no more to this or that,
when the will of achieving
renounces both failure and success,
then Spirit is left
to know and do
its own un-self.

Soap and Water

Religion is like soap;
without water it won't wash.
Spirit is water;
it will wash without soap,
but it washes better with soap
if the soap is good soap.

Good religion catches Spirit.
Good religion,
if practiced in a disciplined fashion,
can intensify and mature
the living of Spirit.

But Spirit, like blood,
is the gift of God,
while religion is human-made,
subject to perversion
and obsolescence.

So let us never confuse
Spirit with religion.
Water is not soap,
and soap is not water.

Not a Private Matter

Religion is not a private matter.
Religion is a sociological process.

Spirit is not a sociological process.
Spirit is only known in the secret solitude
of singular persons.

Yet Spirit is not a private matter either.
For Spirit is expressed in public
through outward acts of
freedom and compassion.
Flight from Spirit is expressed in public
through outward acts of
despair, self absorption, and destruction.

If Spirit blows in you, you are the light of the world.
Do not put your lamp under a wash tub
but on a lamp stand
so it will illuminate the house.

Spirit is the same in every age,
but religion changes.
Religion is created by the human family.
Religion is part of human society.

Spirit is not a creation of the human mind or body.
Spirit is not an achievement of the human will.
Spirit is not a perfected personality.
Spirit is a gift from God like blood, like air.
Spirit is human authenticity
breathed by the Infinite Silence
into our finite processes of body and mind.

Bodies and minds do religion.
Spirit inspires bodies and minds.
Spirit fills the biological processes
of human beings.
Spirit is a bridge of relationship
between human biology and the Wholly Other
--the emptiness--the NO-THINGNESS from which
all things come and to which all things return.
--the fullness--the EVERY-THINGNESS in which
all things cohere.

Spirit is not a finite process.
Good religion is a finite process
that expresses Spirit.
Bad religion is a finite process
that only pretends to express Spirit

while providing means of escaping
from being and living Spirit.

Nevertheless, Spirit is inescapable,
even though escaping from Spirit
is the general condition of humanity.
And since escaping from the inescapable
is a futile journey,
humanity is not happy.
Indeed, despair is the general condition
of the human family.

The despairing only occasionally notice
that they are in despair,
for to notice despair
is the first step toward
moving away from despair.

To be stuck at this first step
of noticing despair
is intolerable.
So most noticers of despair
take a step backwards into hiding
despair from view
rather than a step forward
toward leaving behind the
understandings and commitments
that are causing the despair.

The unhappiness of despair
is rooted in some specific way
of not being willing to be Spirit.
Happiness is the state of willing to be
the Spirit relationship we are--
being that bridge between our wondrous biology
and the Wholly Other
--the emptiness--the NO-THINGNESS from which
all things come and to which all things return.
--the fullness--the EVERY-THINGNESS in which
all things cohere.

And all this is not a private matter.
Every leaf and every hair
of the biological world
is involved in this public act
of choosing to be the Spirit beings
that we are.

An Old, Old Friend

Inside, I have a large council of people who brood with me.
One man has moved to the front row.
He lived 12,000 years ago, before civilization, before agriculture.
He is dressed in earth colors with bits of red, yellow, and green.
He has a long wood staff.
He smiles warmly.
He has intense, very clear eyes.
He is slim--his bare chest is muscular but lean.
He has plenty of good food, close companions, meaningful work.

And he is a religious man.
He sees awe everywhere.
many trees, many animals, many birds, many caves and hills
are sacred to him.

("Sacred" means dreadful as well as fascinating.)

And he has a religious courage.
He eats dread and fascination for breakfast
and all through the day.
Dread and fascination hover over most experiences of his life.
He sometimes leaves the waking, practical world entirely
and drifts off into trance,
where dream figures swirl to inform him of something.
He returns from trance and talks excitedly about his visions
with his friends and elders
who listen and explore their meaning.

He lives in the present.
Yet his past is very deep, brought to the present
through the voices of the story tellers.
And his future is very stable, unfolding slowing a distant destiny.
He lives in the present.
He still lives in the present, in my present.

I am beginning to understand him
He does not understand me.

True Bliss

Seers advise: "Find your bliss,"
as if bliss were a far way off--
at the top of some mountain,
at the end of some arduous journey.

True bliss is, indeed, a lofty destination.
And it takes a journey to get there.
Yet "there" is not a far way off;
it is here and now.

The long, hard journey takes us
through our reluctance
to be here and to be now
what we always were, still are, and will be.

Bliss is not adding something
to my ordinary life.
It is taking something away:
my flight, my rebellion.

Who is the real me?
Underneath all the dross, I am:
Awesome liberty, compassion
trust, tranquility, and joy.

This real me is my bliss,
and this bliss is not far away,
though I may be far away
from my bliss.

Yet my case is not hopeless.
I can return to my bliss.
I can admit my waywardness.
I can accept my Welcome Home.

I can celebrate.
I can feast,
here and now,
at the table of forgiveness.

Eternal Union

We live in one realm
not two, not many.
There are no levels,
no planes,
no hierarchy of being.

Nor does a hierarchy exist
in our stages of development.
There is just encampment
in some partial consciousness
and then movement beyond it
to encamp in a more inclusive
partiality.

Tomorrow, or the next day
or next year
or next decade,
we may move once again,
not into a higher level
but, if we are fortunate,
into another
still more inclusive
partiality.

The everlasting,
the eternal
the final,
the endless,
is **not** coming.

Our hunger
to see,
to know,
to realize
the whole of allness
will have to chew on this:
more never becomes **all**,
next never becomes **last**.

The taste of eternity
allowed our species
is this:
to die to what we have been
and to rise from death
into what we have
never been
before.

The Other Shore

When Buddha led his monks
across the river
from the shore of the finite
to the shore of the Infinite,

They rowed hard for the other shore.
But when they arrived
there was no other shore
there was no river.

There was just the finite
And there was just the Infinite
blazing away
in and through the finite.

And no river separated
the finite from the Infinite:
no way from one to the other
existed.

Whatever it was
that separated the finite from the Infinite
had disappeared
forever.

God

The Infinite Silence Speaks

The Infinite Silence Speaks
through every rustle of tree leaves,
through every singing bird,
through every sound of any kind,
and through the silent spaces between the sounds.

The Infinite Silence is Void and Darkness
but also Fullness, a dazzling backlight that shines through
every gleaming tree, every shimmering squirrel
and surrounds every human being
with a halo

Genesis One

The Infinite Silence spoke
"Let there be light."
and the Black Abyss gleamed
with a single spot
of trillion degree illumination,

Expanding where-when
swirled into being a hundred billion
galaxies of fiery suns.
Then super suns exploded
into super novas of mega-brilliance,
assembling the elemental parts
of future planets.

And to the expanded consciousness
of future beings,
the Infinite Silence spoke again,
"All this is good;
it is very, very, very good."

Cascading rocks and ices
sphered themselves into a molten
plasma with gassy skin.
Cooling vapors rained down
oceans upon the rocks and sands
below the bluing skies.

And the Infinite Silence spoke yet again,
"All this is good;
it is very, very, very good."

Along the beaches of massive oceans,
swamps of thickening chemical soup
assembled the larger molecules
of self-responding beings.

Rods and circles of living substance
exploded into billions of life experiments
along the warmer shores of the waters
that surfaced this sphere of
gas-enveloped
metallic-cored rock.

And the Infinite Silence spoke yet again,
"All this is good;
it is very, very, very good."

Life had learned first to fire itself
with decaying complexity,
but soon expanded its grasp to basking in sun rays
and later to breathing in the oxygen-enriched air
which life itself had established.

Multicellular stems and trees of living growths
sprouted up in seas and spread to dry lands.
And as life learned to swim and crawl and fly,
water, land, and air were filled
with interacting forms of living action.

And the Infinite Silence spoke yet again,
"All this is good;
it is very, very, very good."

Deep, deep into the calendar of time,
life became aware of being alive,
aware of the destiny of all living beings
the destiny to soon become unalive
and to return again
to the gassy, watery dust.

Self-aware life gazed into the Infinite Silence
into the Dark Abyss,
into the Blazing Fullness of vast and busy interaction,
and self-aware life, filled with dread and fascination,
embraced the courage to hear the Infinite Silence
say once again,

"All this is good;
it is very, very, very good."

Ode To Wittgenstein

Words cannot say how words say anything
Words can only point to REALITY beyond words
"Reality" is itself a word.
a word which points to what is not a word.

And yet, since the word "reality" is itself
part of REALITY,
there has to be a relationship between
"reality" the word
and REALITY which is not a word.

"Can this relationship," the philosopher asks,
"be expressed in words."
"NO!" is the answer.

In other words, REALITY is a MYSTERY
not reducible to words,
And the relationship between words and MYSTERY
is itself a mystery beyond words.

The logic of words is not, no, never,
the "LOGIC"
of MYSTERIOUS REALITY.
"Logic," when applied to REALITY,
is a metaphor
stolen from the experience of
human languages and mathematics.

The world of rational understanding
is a world of made not a world of born.
Trees, squirrels, birds, rainfall, grass,
are a world of born gleaming there
quite beyond our mind-made world of words.

So thinkers, let us think
about these matters that humble all thinkers,
that render us mere children at play,
children who play with words
who play with REALITY
who play with the relationship between
words and REALITY.

I asked REALITY, this morning,
if what I am saying in words is correct,
and SHE said it is very close.

The Voice of God

A fat squirrel
scampers up the oak tree
a red-beaked bird
alights on the bird feeder

I view these actions as speech,
the Speech of the Infinite Silence.

The full moon
large and orange
rises in the east
turns white
and shines through
the leaves lighting
my path in the forest.

I view these actions as speech,
the Speech of the Infinite Silence.

At four in the morning
an owl hoots for its mate
and coyotes meet
in the field to howl
and chatter.

I view these actions as speech,
the Speech of the Infinite Silence.

Years ago one particular spermatozoa
met one particular egg
and initiated my unlikely birth.

The Speech of the Infinite Silence.

A billion forces conspired
to awaken me to consciousness.

The Speech of the Infinite Silence.

Untold possibilities yawn before me
calling forth my freedom.

The Speech of the Infinite Silence.

Many voices chatter in my head:
"If you want to be worth
something, make good
grades, get a job,
earn some money,

work hard, play hard
make something of yourself.”.

“If you can’t say something nice
don’t say anything at all.”

“Of course the multinational
corporations rule the world,
but they know how to do that
better than you.”

To such voices I prefer the Infinite Silence.

Some voices in my head
say that death is evil,
as well as insecurity
frustration
loneliness
ignorance
failure
and guilt.

These same voices
say that life is good
meaning by “life” security
fulfillment
love
knowledge
success
and merit.

“Life and death” says the Infinite Silence,
“are two parts of each living being.
A rock neither dies nor lives.
With one wing, there is no flight.
Life and death are two wings
on the same bird.”

Seeing God

In the year that king Uzziah died,
I saw God."
So Isaiah said.

Awe-messengers cried out,
the religious foundations shook
and smoke filled the worship places.

Isaiah cried out,
"Woe is me! I am undone
for I am a religious teacher with dirty lips
and I dwell among a people with dirty lips;
nevertheless with my own eyes
I have seen God."

To see God is to see the Truth.
not the truth of your religious body,
not the truth of your cultural consensus,
not the truth of your mass media,
the Truth that shakes the foundations
and fills your temples with smoke
and makes plain to you
that you
and your entire culture
are LYING.

To see God in the twenty-first Century
means to see that your mass media
and your politicians
and your religious teachers
and you yourself
are not looking Reality
squarely in the face.

When the Titanic is heading
toward the ice berg,
it is not appropriate to focus
on the personal appeal
of the candidates.

The parties of unrestrained development
claim that the ecologists are crazy.
"There is no planetary crisis,"
they say, "we will make a few
modifications that do not
slow in any way our progress."

We lie, we deny, we live as if we did not know

that life cannot go on this way--
the way we have lived for hundreds of years--
the only way we know.
We do not want to see that the way we live
is no longer the way, cannot be the way,
is in fact the way to doom.

So we lie, everyone lies,
the newscaster lies,
the newspapers lie,
the news magazines lie
the preachers lie,
the theologians lie,
you lie, I lie.
We all have dirty lips.

And if, nevertheless, we do see the Truth,
we will feel the foundations shake.
We will see smoke fill the classrooms
and sanctuaries of our culture.
"Woe is me! I am undone," we will say,
"I am a speaker with dirty lips,
and I dwell among a people with dirty lips."

Seeing God means seeing
the sort of Truth
we seldom wish to see.

Isaiah did not claim that he was righteous
and everyone else deluded.
Isaiah knew that he was part of the whole
which whole was in delusion.
When the Truth broke for Isaiah,
he saw his own delusion
and the horror of living among the deluded.

So the next step for Isaiah
was repentance,
was cleaning up his lips,
was forgiveness and a fresh start.

The Awe-messengers
touched Isaiah's lips with hot coals
and said to him,
"your iniquity is removed,
your sin is wiped away."

We, the ecologists.
the prophets of our hour,
are not guiltless.
We are just those among the guilty
who see our guilt.

We are called to be the pioneers
in confession and repentance.
We require the fiery coals
of forgiveness like everyone else.

Without this confession and this forgiveness
we are useless servants of our hour.
We must share with others
the shaking of our lives
and the awareness of our forgiveness --
not our righteous indignation,
not our smugness,
not our cynicism.

We all have dirty lips.
We are all still learning
to speak cleanly
and courageously.
We are all still learning
how not to step back
into half-truths that hide
the Truth.

Nevertheless,
fragile and tentative though we are,
we, like Isaiah, can see the Truth--
can see the Infinite Silence
speaking to the actuality of our times.
And we can hear this call to respond:
"Whom shall I send?
Who will go for me?"

Isaiah answered,
"Here am I, send me."

And the Infinite Silence
spoke with unmistakable
LOUDNESS:

GO!

Miracle

I see extraordinary things as miraculous.
But also miraculous to me
is the ongoing, dependable ordinariness
within which the extraordinary happens.

Indeed, we might say
that everything is miraculous,
for no being is fully ordinary,
and no event is without mystery.

We might also say
that nothing is miraculous,
for the extraordinary is only
something we do not understand.

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
and of Moses, the prophets, and Jesus
is surely the giver of the ordinary
as well as the giver of the extraordinary.

Extraordinary events
simply illuminate
what is happening
in every ordinary moment.

There are moments of Exodus
which shock us to profound awareness.
Yet every moment is a potential moment of Exodus
that can carry us forward to greater freedom.

There are moments of ego-oblivion and Spirit emergence
which make our lives quite new.
Yet every moment is a potential moment of redemption
that can carry us forward into greater aliveness.

The supernatural, properly understood, is really quite natural.
And the natural is likewise penetrated at every point by the supernatural.
The natural is supernatural and the supernatural is natural.
This paradox is my radical monotheism.

The Reappearance of God

Sometime last century, or was it the century before,
all Supreme Beings died.
The whole realm of super-ordinary goings-on died.
Only the ordinary lived on.

But human beings,
uncomfortable with changes of this magnitude,
reinvented Supreme Beings,
knowing that they did so,
knowing that Supreme Beings
were a human invention.

Unconsciously, as unconsciously as possible,
human beings knew they were worshiping
their own inventions,
but they did not care.
Human beings wanted to worship themselves anyhow.

Meanwhile, GOD, who is not a Supreme Being,
who is not a human invention,
who is not human in any way whatsoever,
who is not even known or knowable by human beings.
became known again by human beings,
known as the unknown,
the real unknown,
the UNKNOWN, UNKNOWN.

GOD, not standing above, but shining through
every natural being,
every space-time event,
every cosmological transformation,
every personal transformation,
every social transformation,
GOD became visible once again.

Visible but not known.
Seen but not understood.
Present but not controlled.
Unavoidable but not named.

Humanity, those who faced this fully,
found themselves affirmed by this,
ennobled by this,
healed by this,
refreshed by this,
enabled to be themselves by this.

Humanity was
Oh Yes,
brought down
but brought down from an uncomfortable
high horse
brought down
to be a completely ordinary organism--
vulnerable, dependent, passing--
and yet,
nevertheless,
being conscious
of the SHINING THROUGH
of GOD.

Ethical Considerations

Flowing

Life today
is a fast-moving river of change.
So don't hold to the river bank
or try to swim up-stream.

Take your place in the center of the river.
Assemble a raft of floating wood.
Open your eyes to things
you have never seen before.

Take into your being all
the experiences that come your way.
And make them into music or poems
or life for your grandchildren.

What is the Purpose?

“The purpose of life,”
some theologian said,
“is to trust the Mystery
and to enjoy Mystery forever.”

Some sage in the East put it this way,
“Those who say what the purpose of life is
don’t know,
And those who know what the purpose of life is
don’t say.”

The Infinite seems to be silent on the subject.

So I say, “The purpose of life is to ask
what the purpose of life is continually,
but to never know or expect to know –
indeed to know
that the purpose of life is
not to know
what the purpose of life is.

So let us choose in freedom
some finite purpose for our lives,
knowing that we have chosen it
and that we can choose again
when its limitations appear.

Wrong Choice

When, in the distant Garden of our past,
human beings desired to be Eternal,
shame entered the cosmos.

Sensuality became shameful.
Ugliness became shameful.
Weakness became shameful.
Ignorance became shameful.
Our crummy childhoods became shameful.
Our lop-sided cultures became shameful.
Our deaths became shameful.
Our desires became shameful.
Our feelings became shameful.
Our thoughts became shameful.

Yes, when we chose to be wise, like God,
everything that was not God-like
became shameful.

My cat knows no shame.

Domestication Hurts

Domestication hurts!

A wild creature follows its inner being.
A domesticated creature follows the voice of its domesticator.

There is something wondrous about a snake,
it is never really domesticated, I think.
Alligators too, are never tame;
they seem to move with a determination all their own.
Even cats domesticate on their own terms;
a grudging and strategic adaptation seems to speak their
ever present wildness.
Dogs, best friends, O yes, but they too
reserve some rights:
they bark at their own visions, I think.

But when humans domesticate humans,
wildness hides in a dark cave.

So bring out the drum,
and beckon wildness to return, because

Domestication hurts!

Humility

Humility means
not waiting for a clone of
Gwyneth Paltrow to ask me
to marry her, but rather
approaching myself
some more pedestrian goddess
who might consent to live
with pedestrian me.

Humility means
not waiting for the perfect
job to call me on the phone,
but rather beating the
bushes for a way to make
my livelihood in a manner
that fits my talents and
does not violate my honest
passion to make a contribution.

Humility means singing songs,
making speeches, organizing events
and other terrifying things
that I cannot do perfectly.
Poor, mediocre, and fairly well
is plenty good enough
to avoid self-incrimination.

Humility also means admitting
my true excellences and
near genius potentialities.
Pretending to be less than
I am is an avoidance of
appropriate responsibility
and an indulgence in
cowardly modesty.

Humility is not so easy,
but then again it takes far more effort
to be arrogant.

Kill The King

Kill the King, I say.
Let anarchy reign.
Kill all moral principles.
Bury them in the Earth
and let them rot.

If you feel grief
for any kingly principle
or any principled king,
EXPRESS it emotionally &
honestly & passionately.

EXAMINE your loss carefully
to see what feelings
these principles have been suppressing
to see what spiritual freedom
they have encrusted.

In place of the King,
assemble a COUNCIL,
a council in your mind.
Seat men & women --
the best five or twelve you know
-- best at expressing their feelings
and thinking clearly.

Place yourself in the circle with them.
Ask them each to speak
on your agenda,
on what you shall do with your life,
on how you shall become wiser,
on how you shall find and express
your heart,
on how you shall commit yourself
to action.

LISTEN!
Let their words sink into your heart.
Say no words in response.
Think no critical thoughts.
LISTEN
for what you have never heard before.
Ask the next to speak
and the next.

When all have spoken,
now you may speak.
Do not begin with evaluation
of what the others have said.
Say what wisdom you have heard.
Say what feelings rise in your heart
or chill your bones.
When this is thoroughly done,
then allow yourself to sort out
the best your council said
from the dross.

If any kingly principle rises
to frustrate this process,
command it to return to the abyss.
Let fresh and fragile principles,
guidelines really,
be formed by you
to order your practical living.

Do not take your guidelines seriously.
Live from your heart.
Let spirit freedom reign.
Principles are your servants,
not your masters.

The King is dead.
Long live LIBERTY
your COUNCIL
and YOU.

Synergy

The passionate critic of evil
joined in marriage with
the objective framer of truth.

At her best she could locate the key issue
in a single feelingful sentence.
At his best he could frame immensity
in one thoughtful essay.

At his worst he was
feelingless verbosity
or paranoid defensiveness

At her worst she was
bitter judge
or compliant woose.

A few years into their marriage
it was touch and go
whether they would kill each other
or become a viable team.

In the end, they came to trust
each other greatly
smile at their weaknesses
and revel in their strengths.

Their interaction
was electrifying
and fruitful.

I Love Politics

Ronald Reagan was wrong
to make "regulation" a curse word
and create disdain for government,
politics, and politicians.

I say, let us love politics
and piss on the private sector.

Let us make business obey the rules.
and let us create better rules--
stricter rules--and enforce them
immaculately.

If any business persists in
believing that it has "no limits,"
let us take away its incorporation.
Let us outlaw its very existence.

If billionaires insist on doing
whatever they like with the
billions that we earned for them,
let us tax them into millionaires.

And welfare?
Let us put everyone in society
on welfare.
Let us build everyone parks
and common facilities
and schools, and environmentally
clean places, and fresh air,
and fresh water, and sound ground
and nutritious food,
and safe products of every sort.

Yes, let us put everyone on welfare
by giving everyone a minimal safety net,
for all may fall, at any moment,
in this fast changing era,
into dire needs.

Yes, let us assure everyone
of a minimum of elemental support
whether they wish to work or not
whether they can work or not
whether they are sane or not
drunk or not
children or not
elderly or not

Let us decide together
county by county
what that minimum support
shall be,
and let us take pleasure
(those of us who have
more than the minimum)
in sharing our more
with those who have
less than the minimum.

And let us also honor work,
socially meaningful work.
Let us spread the privilege of work,
and let each of us be properly
rewarded for our meaningful work.
Let those who work receive more
than the minimum of social support.

But as we work for our proper remuneration,
let us not lose sight
of the truth that good work is fun,
that good work is a privilege,
the privilege of serving
our sister and brother humans
and our sister and brother living beings
with contributions
that are meaningful
to them
and therefore to us.

Work is not a curse
or a necessary evil
the not doing of which
makes us unworthy--
unworthy of social support,
unworthy of basic esteem.

Our existence alone
makes us worthy of support.
Work, meaningful work is a privilege
and meaningful work needs
to be economically supported
so we can keep on doing
this meaningful work.

If our work is not meaningful,
if it is destructive or unnecessary,
let us refuse to do it.
Let us starve;
let us go homeless;
yes, let us even walk, rather than ride,

before we do meaningless work.

But more than that, let all of us
who have the privilege of meaningful work
make certain that no one starves
that no one goes homeless
that no one is denied the minimum
of transportation, health care
cultural enrichment, and meaningful work.

Yes, that is my politics:
PUT ALL OF US ON WELFARE,
for each of us may need it.
And let us make this welfare
an affirmation of our existence
not a disgraceful condition
or a temptation to
lazy indulgence.

And let us admit that all of us are lazy
that all of us are indulgent
the billionaire as well as
the impoverished dope head
roaming the streets
in a daze.

Let us admit that the
billionaire is also in a daze
the daze of having no limits.
Let us cure the billionaire
of this daze
by assisting him or her
to support the minimum
needs of everyone who exists,
as well as the needs of the Whole-Earth dynamic
that makes serving human needs
(and frog needs)
possible.

Let us convince
the billionaires
and even the millionaires
that only a small part
of their wealth is their very own
to do with whatever they like.
The rest of their wealth
is a public trust
a pool of public, not private, possibilities
which they must work out
with the rest of us.

Indeed, let us move toward

the realization that all
accumulations of wealth
are a public achievement
and a public trust
with which to serve the public
and to serve the public
as the public itself
chooses to be served.

Yes, let us piss on the private sector,
to whatever extent the private sector
does not voluntarily
abolish its private omnipotence
in public
service.

A Shocking Sight

This very century, we saw
a European herd of civilized citizens
became so cocky
that six millions of
"those other folk"
were calmly organized
into
the final solution
of
extermination.

Adolf Hitler said
he took his inspiration
from North Americans
dealing with their Indians.
He praised these superior people
for eliminating,
with systematic determination,
20 million inferiors from
"their" continent.

Earlier still,
nine million
independent thinking women
were put to death as witches
for threatening somehow
the truth as seen
by the hierarchy
of "true Christian faith."

We have seen this same
killing madness
erupt again
on Cambodian streets,
where anyone wearing glasses
was considered too bright
to be loyal to the herd.

We have seen
"ethnic cleansing."
in Yugoslavian places
and genocidal slaughter
in African places.

We have seen
husbands beat
and murder
their own wives.

We have seen
one desperate mother

drown in a lake
her own
children
and then claim
they were kidnapped.

We have seen
one despairing grandmother
set fire to herself, her house,
and her own grandchildren.

We can see right now, if we wish to look,
millions of humans,
so resenting their quite natural limitations,
that they:

Strive to become boundlessly wealthy
at the expense of others becoming gruesomely poor.
Strive to become limitlessly powerful
at the expense of exhausting a living planet of its life.
Strive to become endlessly secure
at the expense of holocaustic threats to every living form.

Yes, if we dare to look,
we see right now, this very day,
a billion humans who do not know
if they will eat supper,
while another billion
contemplate buying
their third television set,
their second car,
their bigger house
their faster boat.

Meanwhile, the other, not so rich
not so poor, four billion humans
lust hopefully
for boundless indulgence
and fret anxiously over
whether they will join
instead
the appalling poverty
of the homeless and hungry.

And dare we speak frankly about our
gloriously praised economic system
moving six Marshall Plans of wealth
each decade from those who have little
to those who have more than they need?

Do we dare to disagree with
these "Robin-Hood-in-reverse"
managers of our herd-minds
when they ask us to believe

that all will prosper if all
six billion atomistic individuals
greedily seek
their own infinite indulgence
through being mechanically organized
into ever-increasing
ECONOMIC GROWTH?

Do we dare to question
those who pompously maintain
that anything good for business
(which, we are told, provides our jobs)
is more important than
the inconvenient fact
that ECONOMIC GROWTH
is devastating
the only living planet
we will ever know?

Do we know or care to know
that our mechanical laboring
for infinite indulgence
turns us into spiritless robots
who have no time left to be human ---
 whatever that might mean
 to anyone who has time
 to care about such ethereal things?

Do we know or care to know
that our six billion member organism
is still acquiescing
to becoming 12 billion,
or 25 billion
greedy atoms
of unfulfilled,
mechanical,
spiritless
impoverishment?

Yes, and do we know or care to know
that we are being constantly lied to
and that we are thoughtlessly
acquiescing to these familiar
and comfortable lies
rather than experiencing
some truly awful, dreadful,
and unpopular
truths?

Oh my,
humanity--capable of such SIN--
Of what else is humanity capable?
Something better?

Something still worse?
Is SIN all there is?

Well now,
there is
an awakening
question!

II. Still Further Shocking Sights:

Strange as it may seem,
We would not be seeing sin at all
if we were not also innocent
at some deeper level
of our being.

A fish cannot notice water
until it is out of water.
So it is with us.
We notice sin
because we are also
out of sin.

If sin were all there was
there would be no sin.
there would just be
who we always are.

And this means that our vision of sin
is at the same time
a vision into an
even more dreadful fact:
there is no excuse
for sin.

Sin is human-made.
Each human being makes it--
makes it over in his or her
own way
using the examples
of the centuries.

Sin is an entanglement so deep
that none of us is beyond its grasp
yet, in addition to our sin, each of us is also
what each of us was made to be:
innocent.

The first response of innocence
is to acknowledge sin--
to admit that I, though innocent,
am also unclean
and that my uncleanness
is not less than the uncleanness
of those among whom I dwell.

Perhaps I did not kill the bodies
of six million Jews.
Perhaps I only killed with my disrespect
the spirits of six hundred youth.
Perhaps I only killed with my pompous ignorance
the emotional being of sixty women.

Sin is sin.
Estrangement is estrangement.
If I am not innocent, I am not innocent.

Furthermore, I am not simply
an atomistic individual:
I am the human species.
By my acts, I bring sin to the race
The race, by its acts, brings sin to me.
So all that the race is guilty for,
I am guilty for as well.
And all the sin which I added to my life,
I have passed on,
I have added my sin to the life of all others.
We are in this together.

Confessing all this
is the first act of innocence.

The second act of innocence
is the realization of forgiveness.
I am forgiven.
All are forgiven.
Not excused, forgiven.
Only the seriously guilty
can know forgiveness.

Forgiven by whom?
Forgiven by WHATSOEVER
made our innocence.
We are Welcomed Home
to that very innocence
from which we have departed.
And this is not a special magic
All are forgiven.
All always were forgiven.
All always will be forgiven
Being forgiven is part of the innocence
from which we have departed.

The third act of innocence
is accepting the fact that
we, that I, that you, are innocent.
innocent in spite of all our estrangements.
From this toe-hold in innocence
we can begin,

step by step,
to heal all our estrangements.

Estrangement is a fragile thing:
it is an excursion into unreality.
When the Real appears,
unreality simply vanishes.

One last sobering point:
if we wish for unreality to vanish,
we do need to
turn loose
of it.

Recent Poems

Hallelujah

Happiness is vigorous:
not one, not two,
but three hallelujahs.

Don't hold back!
Take the whole moment!
Let it fill with life!

Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!

HAL

LE

LU

JAH!

Boring

Life is never boring.
It is I who produce the boredom.
It is I who bore life.

I need not do something
in order to cure my boredom.
Life is full of challenges.
Life is full of excitements.
No jazzing up is needed.

Rather let me inquire into what bores me.
Let me look through this boredom
to the wonder, yes excitement,
in the very condition I find boring.

Rest

I need not act in order to find rest.
Rather let me rest in order to act restfully.

And I need not rest up for action.
Rather let me act in order to share my rest
with the rest of this all too busy world.

First

Seek ye first the joy of doing well something that needs to be done,
and monetary support will follow.

Seek first monetary support,
and your life will become a rat-race of doing what you don't want to do
in order to rapidly get places you don't want to go.

Seek first safety from all risk,
and you will miss all of your best opportunities.

Seek first the gratification of your addictions and childhood habits,
and your life will descend into the lower realms of unnecessary suffering.

But seek ye first attention to all your feelings and all your reflections and all your challenges
in the moment you are actually living,
and unachieved glory will flow into you in boundless abundance.

Stillness

She talks so loudly,
she plays so madly,
she works so brashly,
the peace that passes understanding
is eclipsed.

So much storm rages
on the surface of the sea
that the deep stillness
is not noticed.

Why strive to be alive,
when aliveness is already
present in all its quiet power?

Why remain irritated
that happiness does not come,
when happiness lies in wait,
waiting to be simply noticed?

Why indeed?
Why not part with old habits
that go nowhere,
except into the well-plowed ruts
of substitute living?

Ah!
Death!
Death to all busy habits!
How restful is thy sternness.

Ah!
Void!
Void of boundless unachievement!
How sweet is thy stillness!

Ah!
Stillness!
Stillness that drowns out all noise.
How satisfying is thy aliveness!

Independence

He would not dance
except to his own music.
He would not read
except his own theory.
He would not act
except in his own good time.

Such independence may mask deep hurt.
Perhaps some caretaker of his innocent child
refused to celebrate his essential independence.
Perhaps now he labors
to defend obsolete habits of
self-constructed independence.

Though unintended,
self-constructed independence is slavery.
True independence
is open to truth
wherever, whatever, whenever
it appears.

Ah!
Death!
Death to all achieved and defended habits!
How liberating is thy sternness.

Ah!
Void!
Void of boundless unachievement
How strengthening is thy presence!

Ah!
Strength!
Strength supplied by the Ultimate Supplier
How satisfying is thy aliveness!

The Hole

Some time recently a hole appeared
in who I thought I was.

I looked into that hole and I saw nothing.
I saw blackness.
I saw the darkest of all dark nights.

And I feel deficient.
There is a hole in who I thought I was.
I am not intact but fractured.

I do not know who I am anymore.
I feel strange; I feel lost.
The familiar landmarks have vanished.

I am uncentered.
I don't know what to do.
I have no motivation to do anything.

I am disoriented.
I don't know where I am.
I don't know what direction to take.

I have lost my purpose in life.
I am going nowhere.
Everything is futile.

My life has no real importance.
I am insignificant.
I don't matter.

I feel worthless.
My self esteem is gone.
I am of no account.

Nothing has any meaning.
I am not involved in my own life.
I just don't care.

I feel scattered.
My life has no point.
I am an old egg shell, broken and useless.

Some time recently a hole appeared
in who I thought I was.

I looked into that hole and I saw nothing.
I saw blackness.
I saw the darkest of all dark nights.

As I walked into that hole
I looked back and saw my deficient self.
I saw that "he" was not me.

I am larger than I thought.
I am not the me with a hole.
I am spaciousness, vastness.

Being this vast person is my focus.
This is my life.
This is my calling.

Living the here and now
of my vast actuality
is my direction.

Being my vast being
is my purpose.
I need not cling to passing purposes.

Nothing is more important than my vast being.
My self-constructed selves are but shells
that cannot contain me.

I have no need for value added to my life.
I am value.
I am filled with wonder.

Everything I touch has meaning
because it is I who touch it.
I make meaning wherever I go.

This is the point of my existence:
to shed all self-made selves and
to be the being I am being be-ed to be.

Pay Attention!

I opened my Bible
and found to my surprise
that the words were gone.

Every page contained the same phrase,
"Pay Attention!"

I searched other scriptures
and they were all the same.
Every page said,
"Pay Attention!"

"Pay attention to what?" I inquired.
Every page said back,
"The content will be provided
Pay attention to
paying attention."

"But where shall I look?" I inquired.
"Look anywhere.
Look everywhere—
pain and pleasure
death and life
failure and success
written and unwritten
nature and history.
Just pay attention!"

"Is it helpful to ask questions? I inquired.
"Your questions can be excuses
for not paying attention.
But paying attention can include questions—
questions that admit your ignorance
questions that are curious inquiry.
Such questions are paying attention.
So do you have any more questions?"

"Thousands" I replied.

"What are they?"

"Well, I don't know.
I want to know
what my best questions are?"

"Pay attention!
and you will know."

Being Trust

There is One Truth:
Forgiveness.

And Truth is One:
Forgiveness.

The righteous and the wicked
both vanish into one
overall humiliation:
Forgiveness.

The friend and the enemy
both melt into one
all encompassing affirmation:
Forgiveness.

The best and the worst
play their roles
in one grand drama:
Forgiveness.

Blaming someone,
blaming one's self,
blaming something,
blaming everything,
is not the Truth.

There is one Truth:
Forgiveness.

When the Truth of forgiveness dawns
all life philosophies crumble
like a tall building
into a heap of dust.

The Truth of forgiveness
is a scandal to the moralist
and sheer foolishness to the thinker.

But whoever steps off the cliff
of moral and intellectual certitude
into trusting the Truth of forgiveness
becomes mighty and golden,
becomes enlightened royalty
and dedicated servant,
dependable leader and wise follower,
seeing the whole picture
with compassion for all.

Salvation by Enlightenment

The darkness cannot choose to become enlightened.

Only the light can illuminate the darkness.

So if you are struggling to become enlightened,
it is your darkness that is struggling.

The light does not struggle;
it just shines.

If you are struggling to live in the present,
it is your darkness that is struggling
with its own enchantment with the past.

The light does not struggle to live in the present;
the light is the present.

If you are struggling to be free,
it is your darkness that is struggling
with its own refusal of freedom

The light does not struggle to be free;
the light is freedom.

If you are struggling to love all beings
it is your darkness that is struggling
with its own clinging, greed, malice, and revenge

The light does not struggle to love;
the light is love.

So is there nothing I can do to be enlightened?

Yes, you can become more aware of your darkness.

At midnight the light will shine.

God Is

God is not a being,
and God has no form,
neither personal nor impersonal.
There can be no model of God
in which God is contained,
for God contains all
and is the Source of all.

Yet God can be experienced
by human consciousness.
Human consciousness might be
imaged as a string
stretched between God
and the biological being of
each conscious human.
God is the far end of the string.
As the string of consciousness
becomes conscious of consciousness,
it becomes conscious of God.

God is the Stillness
in which all motions move.
God is the Silence
in which all sounds resound.
God is the Peace
in which all conflicts transpire.
God is the Nonbeing
in which all beings be.
God is the Emptiness
in which all filling fills
God is the Mystery
in which all knowing knows
God is the Unmanifest
in which all manifestation manifests

God is the Immensity
in which all parts partake.
God is the Solidity
through which all there-ness is there.
God is the Fullness
with which all fulfillment is filled.
God is the Intimate Presence
to which all secretes are exposed.
God is the Inescapable
from which all fleeing flees.
God is the Home
to which all returning returns.
God is the Welcome
into which all estrangement is received.
God is the Is
within which all is is.

A Religious Nation?

"Satan sucks" it says
on the front of her T-shirt.
"God is cool" it says
on the back.

Such sloganeered garb
is selling fast
in shops filled with
"Jesus is our man"
"Christian is keen"
and other embarrassing
trivialities.

And shall we offer prayers at our football games
or before the start of governmental ponderings?
Shall we force praying
in the name of God and Jesus
upon groups who do not know
that true prayer is too deep for words
or that the true nature of divinity
is a name too holy to be said out loud?

Instead of pop religion
perhaps we prefer the quaint dignity
of a sea of red-draped celibate males
selecting one of their number
to be king of the preservation
of an obsolete set of practices
relatively relevant during the Middle Ages.

With six billion humans and growing,
do we really need to breed more Catholics
or more customers for the economic system
or more cheap labor for corporate profiteers?

Perhaps we prefer First Methodist
or Trinity Presbyterian on Easter Morning
after walking down church-school hallways
filled with smiling bunnies and colored eggs
to vast sanctuaries where mild-mannered
pew dwellers are told that their sorry egos
will live forever because two thousand years ago
a corpse which resided three days in a tomb
rose and walked the planet.

Anyone for the Virgin Birth of Jesus?
The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin?
Have we not superstitions enough
with the Tooth Fairy, Santa Claus,
trust in Economic Growth,
and a wild hope for the nonexistence
of Global Warming?

"In times like these
a person has to believe in something,"
said the girl in the religious T-shirt.

An Ode to Kirkegaard

The soul of a human being
is a relationship between
time and Eternity.

The soul is not an aspect of the Eternal
lost in a temporal body.

The soul is not an aspect of the temporal
futilely seeking the Eternal.

The soul is not a combination of
time and Eternity.

The soul is a relationship
between time and Eternity
which relationship
has the power to relate to itself.
and in doing so grounds itself
transparently in the power that posits
the whole relationship.

If the self is aware of being
this relationship and is willing
to be it, that condition
is called "faith."

If the self is unaware of being
this relationship or is aware
but is passively or actively
unwilling to be this relationship,
that condition is called "despair."