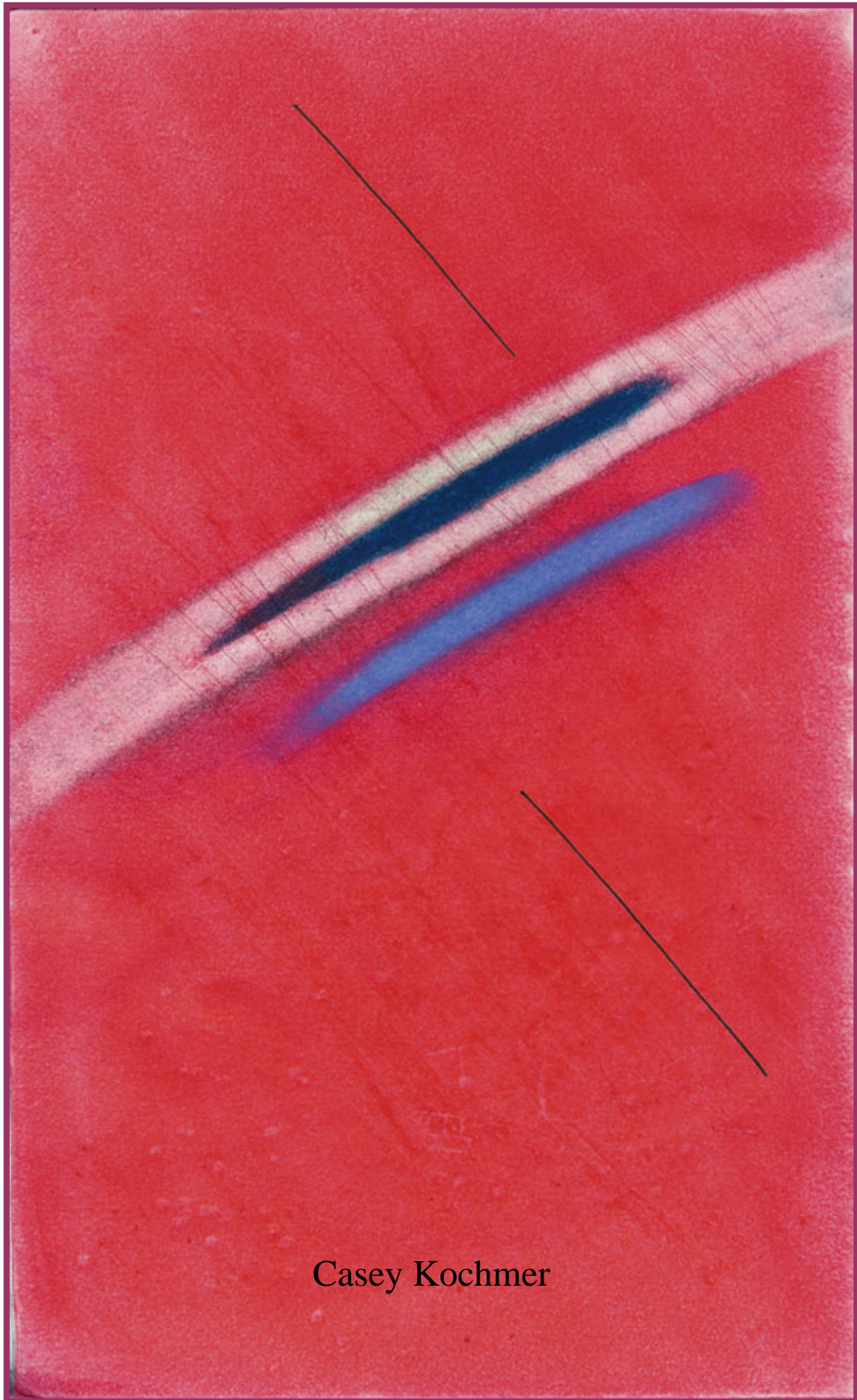
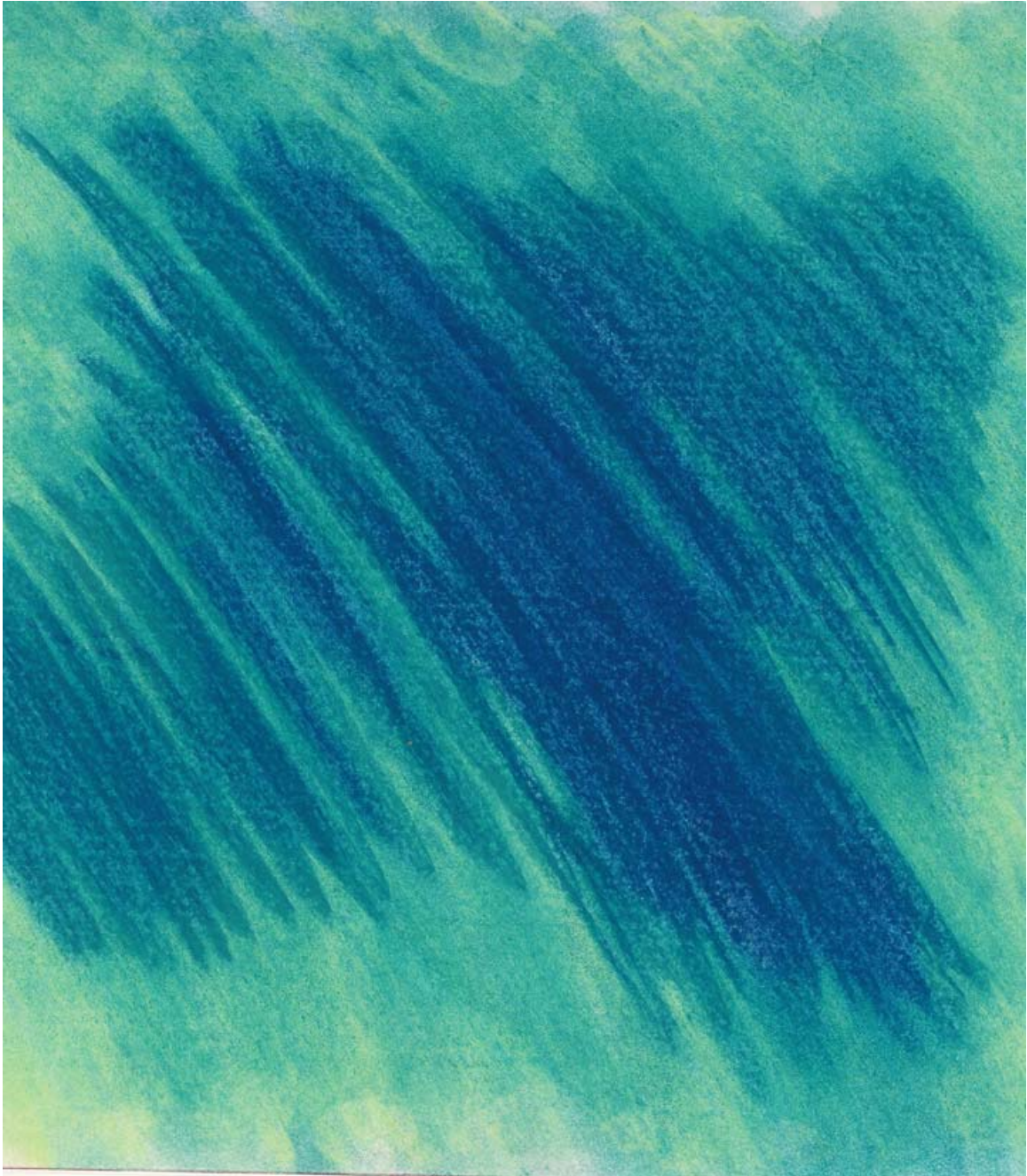


# A Personal Tao



Casey Kochmer





Raven: Julie Alessio – 2005

# A Personal Tao

## Online Edition

<http://www.personaltao.com>



*Casey Kochmer*  
PO Box 12690  
Olympia WA, 98508

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Kochmer, Casey, 1964-  
A Personal Tao / Casey Kochmer  
Library of Congress Control Number: 2005905211

Print Copy ISBN: 0-9769674-2-1

E-Book ISBN: 0-9769674-0-5

© 2005 Casey Kochmer

### **Version History:**

Finalized First Edition	v1.0	September 2006
Online 4 <sup>th</sup> Release	v0.4	January 2006
Online 3 <sup>rd</sup> Edition	v0.3	December 2005
Online 2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition	v0.2	September 2005
Online 1 <sup>st</sup> Release	v0.1	July 2005
First Draft		April 2005
Conceptual Notes		May 2001-March 2005

Editors: Julie Alessio & Kristopher Hicks-Green

**Amberjack Software LLC**  
**Olympia, WA**



Photo by Brandi Eide 2005

## **Dedication**

Julie for pure love and acceptance, ever the morning star  
Erica for the kick into dreams  
Kendall and Clay growing  
Bob for being bob  
Jonathon as someone to look up to  
Dad, because of your true heart  
Mom letting me be free  
Jennifer within first love  
Rhonda's cascading friendship  
Jayson for balance  
Mars and Joseph in spoken word  
Clifford and Gerald opening worlds  
Bonnie (and yes Regina) for wit  
Jay embracing an inner child  
Shari for painting sunsets on the wall and my life  
TLar for the sword battles  
Vicky the bestest neighbor  
Sky for hope awakening  
Bryan as a wise ass  
Chris & Lynne as family  
Sequoia and Susan fellow magicians of life  
Buddy for the monkey poetry  
Wren for wisdom  
John for his laughter  
Brisamina as my dancing ninja evening star  
And an unknown stranger long long ago for a smile

So many threads loving in and out of what we each become  
Fraying, reweaving, experiencing daily renewal  
Ever living

Truth and Peace to all

## Prologue

**The Personal Tao *Online Edition* is free.**

Download at: <http://www.personaltao.com>

Please pass it on!

To support the free online version of the book, I am counting on your recommendation to help distribute the book. I believe we can make a difference by reaching out. The goal is to improve society, not by changing the world, but simply in helping people discover their own nature.

---

For readers interested in printed material I do sell several hand bound limited editions of this work. These books are sold as handcrafted works of art. The price varies on each order due to the hand customization within each copy. Each art edition copy of the book is unique.

Purchase or information requests can be sent to:

[PersonalTao@gmail.com](mailto:PersonalTao@gmail.com)

**Or**

Casey Kochmer  
PO Box 12690  
Olympia, WA 98508



## ***What's in it for us?***

A Personal Tao is about freedom to be yourself.

Six years ago I began an exploration of how to make a positive difference in the world. During this time, several health issues came up to force a process of self examination. My reaching out to aid others, while inwardly healing myself, revealed that the deepest healing is the process of self acceptance.

This has also been a time of intense political turmoil. Mixing these last few years together as a jambalaya of life, led to a simple insight and the foundation for a Personal Tao:

Accepting oneself without judgment is the starting point for personal liberty.

### **How can we change the world?**

Culture reflects our personal and social interchanges. To be yourself includes the practice of advocating your nature in society. Taoism takes this concept further to state that the best political system is one that allows people to be themselves without hindrance.

Speak and **act** to your nature. Your actions dictate society.

As a reflection of the people, society also exerts a pressure onto each person to conform to its representation of the many. In a culture of mass communication, society exerts an unusually large influence to change people. Modern culture has sculpted a large portion of the population to the point where many individuals cannot separate their lives from a lifestyle imposed upon them through societal pressure and law.

The feeling of being lost is often due to a person not really living his or her life. This is the influence of acting outside one's nature, by living the ***American Dream*** instead of one's own **personal dream**.

A Personal Tao provides the power to stand up against **any** form of dictatorship. This is strength arising from inner peace to follow what feels right. Voting by one's actions to make a statement about, or change, how the world should be.

We can help others find peace simply by having our own peace first. This is the message that Martin Luther King, Jesus, Gandhi and others of spiritual strength have shown us. Who am I to think I can express this truth any differently? I am just a father holding out my hand, lifting others by passing on a smile. Revealing hope that someone is out there to toss us back up into the air, if even for a moment, to be as a child again, to fly.

Being an angel:        Means ---- having no wings.  
                              Means lifting up to their feet  
                              those who have fallen off the beat.

What the great teachers of the past would say today...

Isn't for them to say

It has been handed to us now: here and now,  
To stand up and make our way into truth.

Because we don't have wings, yet we can help each other fly.

A Personal Tao can be a gift to make a difference.  
The gift to simply say: “*Hey, just be yourself :)*”.

It's enough to make one fly.  
It's enough to change the world.

*Namaste*



*Casey Kochmer*



<b>A PERSONAL TAO.....</b>	<b>3</b>
REFLECTIONS .....	10
LAYOUT.....	11
TAO .....	14
CONNECTIONS .....	16
<i>Notes from my journal</i> .....	17
THE WAY .....	23
TIDES.....	25
NATURE.....	27
ACCEPTANCE AND LOVE .....	29
WU-WEI.....	34
<i>p.s.</i> .....	34
SMILE .....	36
SNAPSHOTS .....	38
LAND, WELLSPRINGS, LAYERS.....	39
RULES .....	41
PRACTICES .....	42
PRACTICAL LIMITS .....	44
DANCE.....	45
WAKING .....	46
POETS, MADMEN AND FEAR.....	49
WORK.....	50
PAPER AIRPLANES .....	55
ZEN GARDENS .....	57
SWIRLING .....	63
A JOB TO BE DONE .....	64
A PAPER SPITTOON .....	66
THE SAGE.....	70
<i>Mid-Life Revelations</i> .....	71
MOVEMENT OF WATER .....	73
DEATH.....	74
IMMORTALITY .....	79
SPIRIT AND SOUL.....	82
DEFINITIONS.....	88
HUMAN WAVES.....	89
FLOW .....	92
RELIGION.....	93
LIVING GUIDELINES .....	98
JASMINE .....	103
???.....	105
ANIMALS .....	106
EXPECTATIONS .....	107
CUTTINGS .....	112
SPEAKING OUT .....	113
MANTRA.....	115
ILLUMINATING THE EMPTY SPACE .....	117
PERSONAL CLOSINGS .....	119
ENDINGS.....	120

## **Reflections**

In the days  
We find time  
Time like clouds  
moving on by.

In ourselves  
We find life  
Life as a river  
flowing to the sea.

But time and life  
on their own  
have no measure.

In others we find noitcelfer | reflection  
reflection like ourselves  
gives us m-e-a-s-u-r-e.

From each other  
we find poetry.  
Poems like our souls,  
holding secrets only a few may share.

I have known many people  
perhaps your smiles can become poems to share  
I have seen many reflections  
maybe yours will become clear to me.

Time moves, measured in heart beats.  
Within this rhythm,  
discovering the mysteries of the world.

## **Layout**

This work purposely breaks rules. So follow suit, meandering to whatever calls. This will allow for a more natural form of exploration.

Reveal the Tao at the pace of your own life,  
rather than the metered speed of written words.

Each section limits itself as a small self-contained topic. While it would be possible to write an entire book on each topic, the goal is simplicity. Long, detailed writings would actually hinder the process of learning, as it introduces too many tangents to the central theme:

Taoism is simply the process of living to one's own nature.

To illustrate the Tao, the text mirrors human nature by becoming a mixture of Poetry, Art, Literature and Spoken Word.

===== Paths =====

The Tao isn't a path; the path is our lives meandered.

In life I have discovered finding my way has at times been a difficult undertaking. The path sections are lessons learned from my own wanderings as a Taoist.

I also contradict myself at times. This is part of the process of understanding ourselves and the Tao. Contradictions are often found when looking at something from a different perspective. Experience is based purely on perspective. Contradictions within a person are an indicator that he or she has traveled several distinct paths within life, incorporating different viewpoints and truths.

A contradiction is the starting point to a more complete understanding.

===== Thoughts =====

To help make this a living book you are encouraged to add feedback. Write down what comes to mind. No self restrictions. All too often while reading, something important comes to mind, only to slip past as we continue to read. Let ideas run freely; mix the moisture of your own inspiration to this work.

Everything here is meant to inspire self expression.

Write, draw, paint, splash out some of your own spirit and release something new onto these pages. This in turn releases you from the bindings of traditional books so that this becomes a more personal learning experience.

**Simply put:**

**Write openly of yourself to be yourself.**

Let loose spirit to reveal soul.

Freedom is rooted within sharing expression...



A blank canvas  
White page  
Devoid of meaning

Could be many things, this page, my life...  
I could be obtuse,  
Could list to the side three other things

But let's be direct  
My life is blank at times

I could tell all the reasons it isn't so  
The Mona Lisa smile of my love  
The ... .... wait,  
no side tracking  
no trying to explain... away.

Feeling blank  
means being empty.

Face it

Crumble the page  
Dirty it up  
Write something down  
Dash the ink about

The page is mine to do with as I desire

Crumple it, tear it, burn it,  
leave it blank, walking away  
maybe doodle or  
build  
origami cranes,  
paper airplanes

or

simply write the day away

Always a choice on how to

Use the page

Looking back  
this time  
The choice was to write.

## **Tao**

Science is fact

Religion is faith

Magic is perception

Know these boundaries to discover what lies beyond.

---

### **What is Tao?**

The Tao cannot be described, yet a person will express it simply by being alive.

It is possible to list definitions from the dictionary, from various documents. Each definition: a set of words echoing reality. Living to the Tao is not a summarization found within the mathematics of word play. Poetry, philosophy, literature all offer only helpful guidance but never the actual Tao. A simple analogy would be swimming under the water. It's possible to read about snorkeling or diving, but until diving under the water, feeling the pressure, experiencing undersea life, having lungs squeeze outside-in yet feeling inside-out from pushing down as deeply as you can dive, only to resurface to feel a sudden gasp of wet air... all of this is an idea approximated by a reader but only grasped by the experienter. When the last line was read by a friend of mine, she said: *"but when you snorkel the pressure doesn't feel like that"*. Surprised, I asked her if she ever dove to about 25 feet while snorkeling, she said no, at which moment we both realized how personal the experience becomes due to differences in the path taken. This example touches why discovering the Tao is a personal, living experience.

The key for writing and reading this comes down to the following chain of thought: Words are never about the Tao, words are always about us. Sometimes to understand ourselves, we need to write aloud a personal truth as it is human nature and hence the Tao to do so. Reflections in this document become one possible outline to help myself be... myself, while giving others a chance to comment and contemplate their own personal situation. This then becomes a circular process between author, reader and everyone involved to help define and discover their own Personal Tao.

So

Move, tumble, stumble, spin poetry, swirl, dance

**The Personal Tao is about *self discovery*.**

Footnote:

The Tao is pronounced several different ways.  
Yet Tao is most often pronounced as “Dow”.

The Tao has several different spellings.  
Most commonly it appears either as Dao or Tao.

## **Connections**

...

### **Connect the dots...**

A strong desire exists for people to find connections. This in turn becomes patterns, literature and music. Think about music for a moment, in life, as life.

The moments are notes  
Strung together, this becomes a song of life  
Our consciousness the melody  
The tempo, is the heart beating.

#### **As an aside, it could be said:**

The 20th century tempo has been replaced by alarms and seconds of a time clock.  
    compared to the previous clock of the farmer's seasons  
        compared to the previous clock of various tides  
            compared to the previous clock of ....  
Seemingly always a clock somewhere  
<!-- To be blatant: the key word is "seemingly" -->

Melody is a rhythmic succession or arrangement of sound: similarly our life is a rhythmic succession or arrangement of moments. Humans love melody since humans have the capability to flow with the melody. The melody's very nature permits reflective discovery. Similarly: if life can be considered to be a melody, it becomes possible to self discover and harmonize with our own lives.

The problem within this analogy: many people try too hard. It's tempting to treat life as sheet music: looking for the notes to be handed to us, to be read. Rather, we must be receptive, listening to our lives. Over time, it becomes possible to learn various patterns of our nature. Relax, don't "over anticipate". The song of life is about change. In time, with time, learn to flow with your song<sup>1</sup> as it happens.

The first step: learn to accept the individual notes of life a moment at a time.

1) Much like improv Jazz



## ***Notes from my journal...***

- A single dot:

At times you have to hold onto sorrow  
as if it were the only thing.  
At times you have to release song  
as it becomes all you are.

- A single dot:

Jasmine scent, sneaks underneath summer heat.

Summer heat not too thick  
yet  
thick enough to feel fingers  
slightly sweaty fingers  
conducting across moist glistening skin.

First day of summer.  
What note, tempo, beat, harmonic  
is worth reaching for: under a siesta sun?

Leading back to chords of Jasmine  
Tying scents of rhapsody  
Not all music is of melody.

- A single dot:

Overhearing a conversation she said:  
“I can’t have anything without faith, but I can’t have faith without anything.”

- A single dot:

Another style of discovery is to explore the opposite side of one's nature.

If it's in our nature to be a pattern, to connect the dots, then flip this around. Stand disconnected for a moment. Do nothing, or the unexpected... relax into being truly different to uncover your own nature.

- A single **long** dot:

Time, this is a time:

Where mindless machines are built, to scour the heavens, touch the planets, fueling dreams of those wishing to reach the stars. While humanity touches the dead gods with machines of steel and gold. Robotic eyes spinning around fleet Mercury, or probes to prod the Titan of Saturn.

Where philosophers and magicians rely on sleight of hand showing those sleeping that "Magic" still exists. While scientists practice another slight of hand to permit horses to birth a zebra, genetically paint day-glo / glow-in-the-dark tropical fish and dream of bringing to life dinosaurs from the stones of fossils.

**... It's hard not to connect the dots at times ...**  
*... As connections just appear out of nowhere...*

Did you know one day we will resurrect Ludwig van Beethoven? As he translated his soul into music, a day will come when science might "reverse-engineer" him from those very same notes.

Where religion anchors souls down on the ground rather than in flight

Stained glass bleeds light down, down as  
blurred colors brushed against gray pillars to heaven

Which is the path?  
one to the altar  
or  
one back up within rays of light

While candle flames lift to the sky  
blessings as landing pads to saints  
coming back down to those tied to earth.  
The smell of mothballs comes forth from the opening of a holy book  
like my mother's Greek Orthodox mother's linen closet  
yet now issuing out from the church altar.  
How many souls flew too high?  
Fumigated back down by the vapors of spoken words?

It's a time not different from any other point in human history: we are still very human. Still human despite attempts to digitize law and force behavior to match legislation written in zeros and ones.

- A single dot:

Imagine sitting down, beside an old maple tree.  
With eyes closed:  
Feel dappled sunlight, dancing on the skin,  
    Leaves eclipse stray beams  
    as shadows tango to the light across the body.  
Listen to leaves whisper...  
    joy as the wind tussles them  
    into the air.  
Smile as branches complain  
    in creaking strains  
    as younger leaves bounce in play.

Dots, Dots, Dots...

... Capture a dot, enwrite a moment on this page ...

Did you get stuck on the word enwrite?

Give it meaning by capturing a moment later.



Everything laid within these pages are simply dots, specks of writing. Some of which, a reader will connect to personal experience. Others are free-flowing, possibly to remain only as distinct questions or memories.

- A single dot:



Destination or Beginning?

A single dot:  
Dreamtime in Street Chalk



## ===== Paths =====

The path here is simple: In life moments will gather. Don't overly worry about connections. When a moment is just a moment, live it bracingly while letting it pass. Not everything needs to be connected into a larger meaning. Many experiences are best left alone. If the moment calls to be connected, then the overall balance of the world will make it clear to you without fuss.

It's always tempting to frame life within arbitrary points



Transform such points into stepping stones,  
revealing larger patterns beyond personal restrictions.

## ***The Way***

Tao is a Chinese term which translates literally as the “way”. The first written text to describe the Tao is the Tao-Te Ching, written by Lao-Tzu (The old master). The Tao-Te Ching is a series of poems that can be considered to be a work of philosophy, a treatise on how to run a government, a how-to book for achieving a balanced life, or a sage’s reflection of humanity and the universe. It is known to have been written over 2400 years ago but not much else is retained about the origins. Many fun stories abound about these origins; however, these are just that, stories<sup>1</sup>. What is important is that the Tao-Te Ching and its poetry survive, having had an impact on the course of human events over the past 2400 years. It’s an interesting book, worth skimming. I say “skim” because it is written in a light-hearted manner. If a reader stares too hard or takes the Tao-Te Ching too literally, the multiple intentions within the poetry will be lost.

Most interestingly, a person who never reads the Tao-Te Ching may be closer to the Tao than a person who reads the Tao-Te Ching a thousand times. The Tao is a personal truth unique to everyone. Personal truth is not found in another person’s writing: it’s found within us. Taoist sages and the Tao-Te Ching will only act as a guide; the actual discovery of truth is always performed through our own actions.

This creates an interesting problem: How to explain something which is unique to each person? A tack often taken is to use metaphors or similes such as:

Discovering the Tao is swimming in the deepest of rivers, where the more one examines the Tao, the deeper it becomes. A person starts off swimming with simple movement; this is the Tao. Our choices made in exploring the river means everyone meanders thru an entire *personal* universe, yet the entire *outer* universe has its own currents which buffet and influence each one of us - **completely**- back. This is the Tao. Finally, enlightenment occurs when a person awakens upon the other shore of the river, where both the river and their clothes are gone, leaving one naked in the sand. This is also the Tao.

Metaphors / similes, while powerful, often leave people thinking: “**Huh?**” as they fail to provide a direct answer. The point is to invoke a person’s consideration of their own experiences. This process of self reflection is the tool used to describe the Tao. However, this approach often has the problem of being confusing or even useless as we all have very different experiences.

The other common Taoist tact is to only use indirect references and “‘not’ logic” to define the Tao. “Not” logic works since the Tao seems in large part outside of our overall experience. It’s a similar concept to infinity. Just when you have a number big enough to describe infinity, you add one, and the identity of infinity expands out yet again, to become different yet the same. The Tao represents the other side of infinity as the fundamental absolute.

1) Some of these stories could be true, and some could be fables. As a Taoist, the point is to learn from the mixing of our reactions to the tales. Veracity is best left to history; time will change “truth” for each generation.

Using these basics, anyone can seemingly become a Taoist master and easily assemble standard mystical answers about the Tao. For example:

Knowing of the Tao should not change anything. But it does, just as knowing yourself really shouldn't change who you are, but does. It's the difference between being material or the reflection in the mirror. When the answer is we are both, more and less..... The Tao is every contradiction, every truth and each of the standard circular Yoda Yoga style answers... leaving us trying to hold flowing water in a single *hand*. Try to grasp it, and it's gone, yet our *hands* are wet. Accept the fact that we are each a contradiction. This is the truth being described when answers are bantered about: using one impossible statement to prove another impossible statement...

**Forget these endless answers. *Instead Relax***

A reality is: the Tao's definition always changes. The nature of change is illustrated from one simple question: how constant is your definition of self? If you were a rock, you would pretty much know what you were, over time getting eroded into sand then to become dust. But humans lead interestingly convoluted transformative lives before becoming dust! The beauty and complexity of the Tao comes from the constant changing in the way we live and in turn the attempt to describe our own path.

The Tao is a crux and a puzzle which becomes the lever to help one lead a more balanced life. The reason is simple: humans have limits, yet our aspirations are limitless. The goal is to touch and embrace these limitless possibilities. Within these aspirations one can find the Tao waiting for them as a reward. The reward we seek isn't the destination, but the path itself. This means finding the Tao is attainable within ourselves simply by living. Hence we always have access to our Personal Tao.





## Tides

Tide of emotions  
Joy to sadness to Joy  
These tides sweep  
body mind spirit  
Where thoughts ache and relax  
to pinpricks of pure joy  
wrapping caresses of absolute sadness

Being alive ejaculates in being awashed  
It's unpredictable tumbling  
of ever-receding waves  
Feelings mixed to chaotic elements of  
sand, air, water, fire of life, tumult... and ... strangely, calmness

A moment between the tides  
Finding peace not within the calm  
rather within the tumult to come

To be awashed in joy  
is so simple  
the answer being...

Have to go now  
not to embrace, rather to go ...  
dancing sleepingly  
dancing in thoughts  
Chasing waves not to catch  
in fingers to only feel passing moments  
Chasing in tumbling swirling and moving in time

To feel the tumult  
To be the tide

===== A path paved over thoughts =====

What is the tide? It isn't an object in itself. Give it a name: Tide, and it becomes distinct due to the name. The tide is not a thing. The tide is an effect: felt but when grasped only the water touches us back. The true nature of a tide isn't the water, it's a mixture of processes related within a dance. It's the moon and earth swinging. It's the sun adding tempo with storms and wind. The water merely flows with the pulling and pushing of gravity, piling up in the beat of what we call the "Tide".

The Tao is a tide of tides.

Harmony with the Tao means flowing with all the various forces connecting everything seemingly invisible yet still measurable in relative effects.

Whenever describing the Tao, I have discovered the need to use different terms for each person. Every one is awash in their own tumult. Even for myself, I developed a personal language which helps me come to terms with my nature. I spent years creating journals, poetry and art, all to document my experiences. Once capturing snapshots of living within my writing, it became possible to step out and recognize my own nature, to witness my own stumbling, swirling and tumbling-about from event to event.

I have been a Taoist my entire life; however, the ironic twist was I didn't understand the Tao until coming full circle to accept myself first. Over time, I learned to flow with the ups and downs of life, to embrace both the sad and happy moments. This became a lesson: that living itself was a tide of emotions sweeping thru my own blood. Once accepting this ever shifting beat of my nature, it became possible to understand more than myself.

Some points to consider:

- The first step in touching the Tao is very simple: It's accepting we are connected within a larger web of the world.
- Understanding a single thing as an item, as a name is knowledge. Knowledge in this form, as a static definition, will be subjected to the erosion of time.
- Understanding the nature of something is not a matter of knowledge, but a process of embracing and releasing in cycles. The embracing itself is a tidal process, ever the same, yet ever shifting.
- Our understanding is never perfect; it will flow in and out. This is very important; trying to hold on to one single understanding leaves only fossils. Understanding must evolve to change with the meanderings of a life.
- Understanding the larger world begins with flowing with the natural patterns of your own life.

The process of living creates a world of change. Know the Tao, as the tide of tides, unexpectedly shuffles everyone around with change. Hence, a Personal Tao starts with the acceptance of a tidal balance between our inner and outer worlds.

## **Nature**



How Humanity views nature

How Nature views humanity



These images are not about childhood, garbage or society. They're a comparison illuminating the nature of nature. Look closely and discover that the two images are actually the **same**.

Look again: it's just the perspective that's different. Just as humans clamor over nature as we grow, nature will clamor over us in its growth.

Mother Nature and our nature are each an expression of growth.

Again think of tides, found within this movement of life.

Look at the second picture; it's a wave of leaves crashing upon and over the truck.

## Acceptance and Love

Dancing around  
gentle swaying air  
under the sun  
a flower.

~\*

So simple  
so complicated deeper,  
looking ultraviolet  
discover faint intricate tracteries  
new patterns of attraction, landing pads  
networks of lives coming, going, feeding into pollination  
frenzied frenzied life beats, becoming seeds  
waiting towards bursting futures  
all this and more...  
as  
a simple waiting flower.

Love

Why does love get placed under a microscope?

It's so tempting:

Tasting apple bits, bites, connections, attractions, happenings  
rational examinations, complicated dissections  
conducted with steel scissors and tools.

To place the flower into: a vase...  
so we can watch it die, in agony.

Acceptance and understanding  
are not the same thing.

Let's together stand under  
the sun, washing rains  
dancing swaying air  
accepting our natures  
being the flower.

\*~

===== Thoughts =====

Understanding: a snapshot of knowledge

Acceptance is knowledge that something is as it is, *is as it will be*, **is as it was**,  
**is** is, is, as its nature, not defined by outside observation.

Love is entangling acceptance

Love is acceptance with relationship...

Love, such a dangerous word,

Misused, overloaded, misunderstood, overused, overthrown, head over heels  
and over and over, tumbling as so many attempt to force it down,  
into a deeply split apart crack within the soul as an ultimate salve.

Love a mixture of actions.

Seemingly so simple, yet so often confused within passion, sex, lust, power,  
control, commitment, submission, absolute release, surrendering....

As for some, love does enwrap such various combinations.

Love is an expanding reality: personal in nature; simmering down to the mixing of  
needs in "how" each of us combines their very essence with the larger world.

Love: the active acceptance of an outside  
relationship. The *act of*, the *process*  
*involving*, the *connection* between oneself  
and another is love.

How do you define love?

This expression of connection: of love → is  
vastly unique from person to person. Each  
person reaching out to meld themselves into  
something that stands more completely to the  
larger world. For some this is something dark  
indeed, a need to be torn down or to tear down,  
as a means to bring up and forth their inner  
aspects which require healing. For others, love  
is a fulfilling experience in the building upon  
positive aspects of themselves. Between these  
two extremes discover the spectrum of  
variations through relationships. It's an ever-  
shifting experience:

as life bounces against life:  
as one love changes another love:  
onward and onward  
in the interweaving of souls.

Love is the one area of humanity where people  
consistently flail in an attempt to find  
completeness. So many lonely souls trying to  
find refuge in another; when completion must  
*start* within the self first and then grow outward  
to the warmth of another.

Some people are earthquakes to the soul  
What depth, degree, place  
can someone shake you down  
tumbling senses  
rumbling confusion  
to deepest marrow

Some people are wind to the spirit  
What height, direction, place  
can someone spin you around  
lifting you up  
easing burdens  
to highest points of spirit

No matter what sundering upon an earthquake  
No matter how far the wind travels away  
Love never leaves  
unless love was never there

To love, is sharing of center  
Briefly touching that...  
Which cannot be described outside the moment  
If described fully, not obliquely,  
then was it truly love?  
Yet, moments move as passing connections  
Leaving names piling up as pointless lists...  
No list ever gets written upon the soul  
yet love is weaved within the soul  
Threading our changes within the warp  
Leaving it impossible to untangle

So roll into every seismic event  
Let the wind and breeze entangle  
Embrace earthquakes down to the core  
Unearth the depths  
Roil, live, breathe within shuddering passions  
To the benefit of...  
Revealing within love  
Tumbling of the senses  
Lifting acceptance of the soul



===== Paths =====

Love should not be confused with the approach taken to find love. Nor should love be thought as a final destination. Rather love is a continuous process, thru which we become a little more than our previous states of being.

**Finding true love is not the same as discovering harmony with a Personal Tao.**

However, discovering love enables one to access additional resources and perspectives, which in time leads to discovering deeper truths about our own nature.

A personal peace exposes self truth; a personal love exposes truth gained from joining to the outside. The two seem so close that people confuse their search of personal peace with the completion of discovering love. Love is not a way to find self-peace. Remove an object of love, to discover how quickly one loses a personal peace based on such outside connections. Love is a way to discover harmony to what is outside oneself.

The importance of love comes from its ability to aid a person to do ever so much more than they could do alone. For these reasons love should be embraced fully and deeply. However, personal peace, as it is personal, must come from the inside of ourselves to be true. Those we love might *help* us find truth in ourselves, yet in the end, embracing the peace of a Personal Tao must in large part come from our own inner self.

While discovering love usually will not help a person find a true personal peace, the reverse is often true. Finding a Personal Tao, coming to peace with oneself, permits a person to discover harmony and love much more easily. Usually I find most people look for love first, and then try to find a personal peace. This is the harder path. Why would this be the case? It's the case simply because once you have inner peace; it becomes possible to accept love as a *relationship*. If a person doesn't have personal peace, then much of the energy of love isn't going into a balanced relationship, it's going into shoring up, trying to keep an inner peace alive. This would be a one-sided relationship and often times these relationships burn up.

How often does anyone ever truly teach us how to love? How can it be taught, when love's definition is personal in nature? Our true teachers within love are those who we entwine with love. Teaching is a process of expression found within love itself. By default we teach ourselves much of what we need in love (as we are part of the entwining). If we cannot accept ourselves within love, then we lose half of the equation.

Many people I have watch spend time imitating others and basing love by example. No wonder so much time ends up in the maze of love. Instead of following our nature, we attempt to follow the nature of others. We lose our own nature in the process of pretending to be something we are not.

This also explains another aspect of love; many individuals tend to bounce between love and discovering personal truth. Yet because they don't understand what is happening, it becomes a very drawn-out process of repeating past mistakes as they redefine themselves.

So little  
very little  
almost nothing  
do I truly care about

But of what I do care for:  
Love of you, love of family, love of myself  
It's my entire world  
nothing more

Finding  
without your love  
I feel as if I were nothing

Is this suffering as Buddhists talk about  
Is this agony of hell  
¿ Is this sane ?  
Is it real  
Is this... what is it, to be in love  
Wanting to vomit out entire souls

When at times criss crossing  
Lover's anger flays indiscriminately about

Doesn't make sense... At all  
Love  
It's a melding of souls  
and at times  
ripping of souls

screaming for velcro

In time tearing heals  
Makes stronger  
The puzzles of who we are  
Together

Anyone going through this will understand the \*sigh\* at this point. Turn the \*sigh\* into a smile, as we are who we are. It's a process of expanding ever softly outward to joining to a larger world.

To discover love:  
Embrace your own nature.  
Following needs,  
to dispel needs.  
Love is always a mixing and matching  
to what feels right.

It's self destructive to become someone else in the process of love. Accept your nature and add upon the qualities which reinforce/support your nature.

Love is an important aspect of human life. To reject it, is to reject a part of humanity. The path of love is a way of reaching out to a larger world. Treat the overall process as love, each lover as its own separate lesson and your life will grow accordingly.



===== Stories =====

So much to say  
                    Seeking touch  
So much to hear  
                    Seeking convergence

To feel your hand on my face  
To feel whispers of a moan  
forever spiral within dreams  
Yet awakening to discover: dream and reality touching  
                    to a blurring of one

Briefly...            without words,  
Lost...  within emotions  
Smiling knowing your touch indeed  
Did make dusty bones spring and grow  
As saplings embracing rays of the sun

You touch me in whispers, encased in warmth  
Unfurling and growing  
I am entranced within your gaze  
your eyes saying everything

All memories forever sweetly trapped  
within the amber  
of embracing gazes

Your giving merely brief seconds  
                                    yet lasting forever within me

Amber within amber  
Two saplings reaching, entwining, growing  
becoming more beautiful than any poem  
I could write for you

## **Wu-Wei**

To anyone looking for this text to rehash many of the basic terms of Taoism, then I suggest be-bopping over to the *expectations* section.

No one person can know or represent the vast amounts of literature covering Taoism. Attempting to do so is counter-productive to accepting the Tao. As a result the core version of this book does not discuss directly the Yin and Yang, Chi, Wu-Wei, Zhenren or ten thousand other possible Taoist topics. Very few direct references to traditional Taoist terms are used in this book. Spending energy to associate old names and trying to understand how it all relates would make the “**process**” of learning more important than just relaxing and being yourself.

To some: this approach will be an incentive to explore the additional wonders of the older texts. For others: this style will make the discovery of the Tao a very simple process.

Taoism has no requirements of degrees, exceptional backgrounds or previous knowledge.

Touching the Tao takes only a single breath.

Learning the Tao is simply

Moving  
with Heart

Tracing the Spirit

**p.s.**

**Nothing is ever missing**

## ===== Finding Answers =====

Between here and there in time, in the about now, it becomes time to answer the questions about Taoist terms such as Wu-Wei.

Since when does the world flow according to our statements of fact?

Wu-Wei means “*not doing*”, means “*action thru inaction*”, means “*Spontaneity*”, means “*action without directed intention*”, means... I have read pages upon pages on what Wu-Wei means, what it might mean, how the meaning varies upon scholar or parrot,

and...

Now know...

Moving backwards

... it means: **nothing**.

Now after telling you,

other questions pop up: “*how does that relate to Tao?*”, “*how do I not act, and get something done?*”, and, and... And questions upon questions then pile up, each question taking a person one additional question further away from understanding the Tao.

Re-wind time: if I don't define Wu-Wei, the reverse happens, bringing it all one step closer as the directed action has been removed. Instead within an ongoing gradual conversation between you and I, spread across the pages is a more natural way of discovering Wu-Wei; as in reality, Wu-Wei is weaved throughout the entire book.

Hence by the end of the book you will fully understand Wu-Wei without having to know its Wu-Wei<sup>1</sup> and to the Taoist that's the ultimate in Wu-Wei.

(1) It makes sense as when you stop trying, becomes the point Wu-Wei kicks in and everything typically comes together as if it all were planned, yet the only planning is common sense .

## Smile

Spin on a dancing atom  
Dare to split reality

Cut between / slash trash dash all perceptions you might have \ here and now

Be a superhero  
Just by reaching out  
By  
Looking into sullen eyes  
Tipping a hat  
Moving along  
Helping someone

To...  
smile  
As in  
once upon a time

I was walking in Harlem, in desperate need  
not knowing the dangers upon my soul

She swooped down from nowhere.  
Well she was really merely passing by...  
Another unknown spirit reached out  
She touched out in saying: "Smile Damn-It Smile"  
Then she continued to pass on by

Leaving me so shocked as to open my smile

Time passes time  
Never saw her again  
Yet in time,  
forever she is with me  
forever sharing a smile  
She saved a life  
with a brash 5 New York seconds  
in "Smile Damn-It Smile"

To be a superhero all it takes is...

Reaching out... finding we are all: < together >  
No matter how far ---- apart ---- we seem  
At some point it is always possible  
to -->touch|hcuot<-- ot  
to --> help|pleh <-- ot  
If you are only willing to try...  
All it takes is...

A most simple enlightenment  
...enlivened by a smile...

## ===== Thoughts =====

Being alive is the very definition of having possibility.

A smile is acceptance, a joining with something larger than oneself. It's recognition (*often an initiation*) of intention to explore an opportunity.

A frown is rejection, a lessening of self by removing available options.

## ===== Paths =====

A smile is an intersection between a hidden inner self and the larger world.

The connection works both ways: reaching out to help another with a smile can reflect back in a balancing, uplifting manner. For this reason, when most depressed I will often make someone else smile.

Why a poem?

There is no why while weaving words  
to make another person smile.

At times, we all need a random smile. :)

Pack this away, let life meander  
Discovering at the strangest darkest times:

It's not about changing the world  
It's just about being alive  
recognized in a  
smile  
:)

## ===== Exercise =====

The act of smiling is a very powerful exercise in itself. In Qigong yoga an integral part of the practice is to smile.



1) Of course at times, at times it pays better to be grumpy.

## Snapshots

As we explore life, it's easy to be distracted by the obvious, while only catching glimpses of the shadows and reflections we cast, missing the larger patterns in which we participate. We might appear as a human body and mind, but a greater form extends out as a larger reality. Take the time to stop → examine a reflection → trace back a shadow → reach to touch the world as the day's surf shuffles everything around our path.



Mind, body, spirit and so much more hidden in our unrealized reflections & shadows. As example: in Norse knowledge, our physical body and mind are very small parts of a larger complex in each single life.

**Soul (sal):** represents the results of our lives which touch both others and the world after we leave. A soul would be a footprint in the sand, left behind, that still influences the world.

**Mind (hugr, minni, odhr, ek) :** The mind isn't a single entity but rather a combination of several distinct elements of memory, reason, ecstasy, and self.

**Fetch:** The union of our opposites in the world, as well as a touching to our personal godheads.

**Body: (hamr, lik):** Actually 3 elements of a shape, appearance & a physical body.

**Spirit: (ond):** The vital breath of life. Another term would be Indian "Prana".

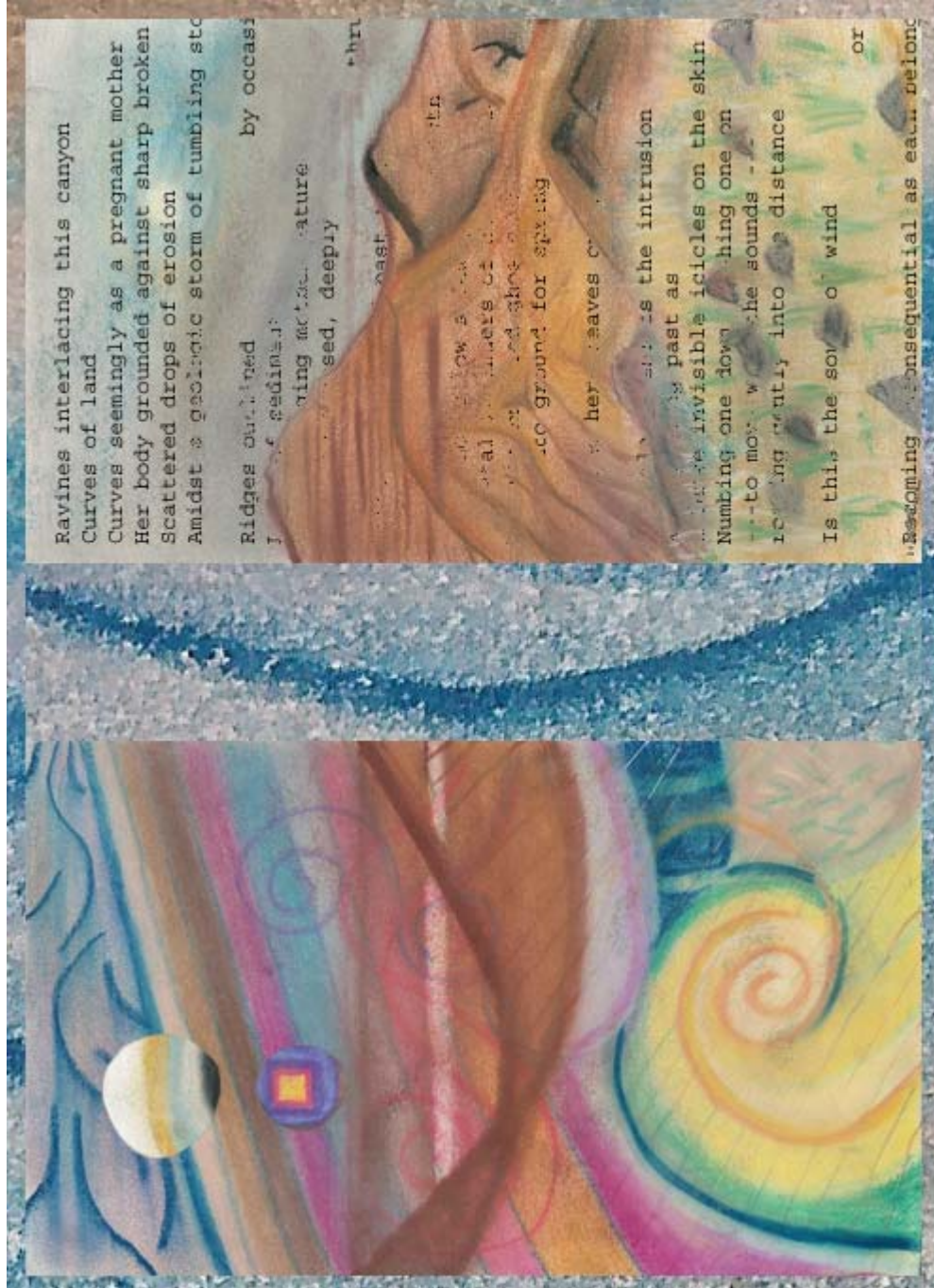
**Hamingja:** The overall power of our life.

I bring up the Norse example for two reasons. First, it illustrates how other cultures have a rich and complex view of a person's existence beyond just a mind running a body. I believe that modern western society, in an over-reliance of reason and material strength, has lost touch to the more subtle and hidden aspects of humanity. Many cultures have rich, deep traditional wisdom gathered upon human nature that doesn't appear in the general western culture of 2005. Secondly, I want to tease you to explore your own nature from another cultural viewpoint. I could not within this book begin to list all the important ideas from Indian, Norse, Aboriginal or any of the thousand other cultures around the world. Yet it is possible to discover more of one's self by learning<sup>1</sup> an alternative cultural understanding of humanity.

1) Learning from another culture has the strength of removing many assumptions we inherit from our default culture. It's hard to leave the comfort of what is known, yet doing so increases many fold what can be learned thru new perspectives. Many amazing figures in history (Gandhi, Attila the Hun, Moses, etc) are those who have been raised cross-culturally. An incredible strength of presence can be achieved in this path.



## **Land, Wellsprings, Layers**





Ravines interlacing this canyon  
Curves of land  
Curves seemingly as a pregnant mother  
Her body grounded against sharp broken rocks  
Scattered drops of erosion  
Amidst a geologic storm of tumbling stone

Ridges outlined by occasional lone pine  
Lines of sediment  
Lines of aging mother nature  
Her body exposed, deeply  
thru the layers  
Revealing years of past times

Land covered over with old growth  
Buffeted yellow straw grass  
Skeletal reminders of summer gold  
Leaving expelled ghosts of seeds  
Gone into ground for spring

Standing here leaves one strangely out of body

This place resists the intrusion  
Wind peeling past as  
Intense invisible icicles on the skin  
Numbing one down, pushing one on  
---to move with the sounds ---  
roaring gently into the distance

Is this the sound of wind  
or river from below?

Becoming inconsequential as each belongs to movement  
Which takes all back to time  
Whether of land, stone, grass or body  
As time always comes, eventually to move us each on by



# ===== Side Excursions =====

Like the land, this section only shows a surface of a topic. To move in pace with the geology of our life, we need to let time erode deeper aspects of our hidden self into view. Personal knowledge, discovery, self revelations: each comes in stages, exposed by the whims of the wind of passing happenstance.



## **Rules**

Living to rules.  
Living to a heart beat. Living to a breath. Living to our inner nature.  
Rules  
Society piles rules, rules upon rules to live by.  
The rules of society are not the rules of living  
Despite society's unwritten rule declaring you must believe otherwise  
Society is not nature  
Society is human nature  
Our actions declare the rules of society  
Not the other way around

Which side will you choose?

Debate, musing, arguing fine points	
Paralysis from Legal fine print...	
Drafted to fight someone else's war	A nap in the grass under the sun
Homes built as iron maidens of propriety	
Fences defining good neighbors	

Talk	or	Action
------	----	--------

Sides?  
There are no sides to choose from!  
Sides are built out of social rules used within lines of control.

Just be yourself,	Discover there are no sides
	Rules pretend to be walls
	A convenient place to perch at times,
	to watch the craziness of the society from.
	A place to hide behind when not wanting to be noticed
	Rules are illusions;
	Be careful of the arbitrary ways people inflict their rules.

A Taoist's path walks thru rules while breaking none  
A Taoist is true to the heart, free-flowing within a life without walls

## **Practices**

Now repeat after me,  
Repeat a thousand times the following exercise. Say it out loud:  
“Remember *practice* makes perfect”...

Ahhh. That’s a clue: “Perfection”

Do we practice something in order to become perfect? Wow, now that’s something to consider isn’t it? Consider the desire people have to reach perfection, the absolute dedication that some people show in the practicing of a talent to achieve perfection.

Perfection is boring.

The secret to a practice is achieving a balance. Now mix in the mistaken belief that achieving perfection also will be a balanced state. Perfection is a very fleeting achievement: once a person practices their way to the top, nature and society practices kicking them back down.

Balance is challenging.

In Taoism, the goal isn’t a practice to achieve mastery. Taoism instead concentrates upon a personal set of practices which together move with harmony to achieve balance within a person’s life. This is a fine difference. Western culture is most definitely into being the best. Being the best is all about practice. Taoism is about balance. Learning balance often comes from a practice teaching stability. Being the best isn’t a very stable position to be within, as the process of becoming the best tends to come at the price of limiting personal development of other important traits.

I have a personal mantra that we are a balance of Body, Mind and Spirit. But I also believe we are actually more than this trinity. For practical purposes summarizing it as Body, Mind and Spirit helps make it easier to maintain a balanced lifestyle. This translates to a set of practices which aid in maintaining a Personal Tao. Typically these practices are a combination of activities which support the Body, Mind and Spirit equally.

A Personal Tao is not a set of practices you maintain. A healthy set of practices are merely activities a person uses to focus / flow smoothly to their own nature. The two are related, but practices are not required to achieve or find a Personal Tao. Practices are a very important tool for a Taoist to use, yet too much reliance on a single practice will at times blind a person to discovering their Personal Tao. A hammer is an awesome tool, but you can’t work with screws very well with a hammer. Likewise, a Taoist will meditate to open up an inner eye, but you still need your normal physical senses to interact with the world.

My personal practice seems simple to me, as it's something that has evolved over many years. Anyone else looking at my practice would be confused by the seemingly random way I skip between activities: Poetry, massage (giving and receiving), Jujutsu, Yoga (3 different styles), Patterning<sup>1</sup>, Wandering, Mediation, Meditation, Love, Pastel Drawing, Dancing, Reading, Day Dreaming, Chi-Gung<sup>2</sup> and finally Listening. I have only really mastered three of these practices and within the rest I am just a novice or have only a very basic level of skill. The goal<sup>3</sup> isn't to become a master. The goal is to flow with needs of life. If my body is feeling out of shape, I ramp up the Yoga and Jujutsu. If my body is extra sore I get some massage. If I can't stop thinking, then I write poetry or meditate. If I have an excess of positive energy "Chi" then I will help heal someone by giving a massage or perform some patterning. As the real world interferes unexpectedly every day, it means having access to a range of different activities permitting flexibility by matching a practice to my current needs.

I had no plan to learn so many different skills. Instead, over time, one skill led to another. Life kept introducing new skills due to traveling, having to balance work situations, or just sharing life experiences with other people. Interestingly enough, each practice in itself led to other practices. So the process of learning rapidly expands out in time. A person may only have a few skills until reaching a critical point and it all suddenly flashes over into many new areas at once.

#### ===== Paths =====

Taoists take a "buffet" approach to living a practical lifestyle. Typically a Taoist will explore and try many different practices. Over time a collection of tools and ideas are gathered to keep everything exercised and in shape. There isn't a rush to learn something new: instead we learn practices that fit with both our personal style and needs.

As our bodies, mind and spirit change over time, these practices also flow and change over time for an individual.

- 1) Patterning is a term I coined for describing the practice of using a combination of patterns found in our lives to help unlock truth or ideas. Many different types of patterning exist. For example: Psychology is a form of patterning based on human mental processes. Feng Shui is patterning based on human nature, artistry and older lore. Divination is another form of patterning using I-Ching, Tarot cards or Rune stones to predict possible future events. I developed the term patterning as I discovered that my practice combines aspects of each of these different forms of traditional systems into a more comprehensive system. Patterning is a more generic name, which doesn't get tied down to preconceptions of a single existing practice.
- 2) I highly recommend the spin-cycle-washing-machine-slap-your-kidneys movement in Chi-Gung. (Ok, I purposely forget the movement's name) You learn so many things across the various practices: like how working your kidneys and liver with certain movements aids in solving allergy issues. This in turn helps relieve the stress on the body, which in turn helps reach a moment of peace, which in turn relaxes you to a point of realization of "hey I like this path I am living" which in turn helps a person discover a Personal Tao, rather than being in fight for survival mode as the allergies won't let me sleep, which interferes.... anyway, you can continue the run-on sentences with examples from your life.
- 3) The goal is never a goal; the purpose of any practice is supporting your essence with tools fitting the needs of the moment.

## **Practical Limits**

And legal fine print

To always follow your own body's limits and nature.

Taoist yoga practice offers a simple piece of advice:

Exercise at roughly a 70 percent effort.

Working out under a 50% effort ensures the losing of abilities. The body and mind require at least a 50% level of effort to just sustain itself; anything less translates into losing tone and capabilities. Setting a workout pace harder than 80% effort typically ensures wearing out the body or creates an opportunity for a more serious unhealable accident to occur. Working at a 100% effort quickly results in a 100% chance of breakdown. "Giving it your all" is an impractical way to live.

A 70% effort is a rule of thumb. It's a hard enough pace to keep a person growing in strength. It's a point where a person can stay slightly on the edge, keeping a feeling of change present. Life is change, so feeling change is a required part of our health. A 70% effort isn't too much to overload a person or to cause injury. It's an exercise load from which a person can back away when a problem does arise, allowing time to correct oneself within the practice. This also allows room to shift gears and to adjust for the unexpected moments of life. This effort level is based upon the conditions of the moment and not past achievements or future expectations.

This simple rule of thumb applies to most areas of life (not just exercise) including love, relationships or trying to govern a population. This is a simple starting point for learning how to live a balanced life.

===== Feeling the Edge =====

Getting hurt is part of living. The human body and mind evolved to handle occasional injuries and rejection (for isn't a rejection in love also an injury?); as a result, never getting hurt in living is also an unhealthy lifestyle<sup>1</sup>. Humans have a need to overcome problems, letting the body and mind use their internal healing mechanisms. Experiencing problems is part of the process for healthy human development.

When I first started martial arts and yoga, I couldn't understand why my body actually enjoyed the occasional physical pain it received in the practice. It made sense once I understood that my body and mind actually were rejoicing in the process of healing itself.

This is not a statement that a person should seek injury or problems. Instead it's an acknowledgment that the process of healthy living isn't to be static; it's to change along with the challenges of life. A balance exists between **caution** tempering reckless action for safety and **bold actions** removing fear that hinders our growth. Living is in part permitting the mind and body to accept and then resolve minor problems. In embracing the small mistakes it becomes possible to learn how to safely navigate around larger unhealable mishaps.

1) One example can be found in the German medical studies indicating some allergies might be the result of growing up and living in conditions that are too sterile.

## **Dance**

Would you like to dance?  
Dance not with swirling feet...  
But in dazzling words  
Would you like to dance under the stars?  
Not hidden by the clouds...  
But shining in our dreams.



Isabella - Christian Ethan Mosconi Dec 2005

## **Waking**

A window  
 Sarong draped across  
 Air slips, flutters into the room  
 Cool cool air slinking around  
 Mixing into breath  
 Coolness merging into  
 Morning

Light filters thru  
 Green, purple, blue fabric  
 Playing across, stirring into first sight  
 Coolness of colors merging to  
 Day, waking, becoming...  
 Alive once again

Are we always alive?  
 Or is it an inspiration, upon each waking  
 Each day  
 A Doorway

===== Thoughts =====

Every morning, every waking, is a new birth into our selves. Yet, so many chains, chains of our own making, limit what we *think* is possible. These chains are forged from a desire to simplify everything to binary rules (*yes/no, black/white, good/bad*) or by limiting life to definable labels.

Taoism offers a third path.

It's the option

to be yourself,  
 to toss away irrelevant questions,  
 to change rules as rules are arbitrary,  
 to discover color after seeing everything in black or white.

Physics shows us an object is there or not there... or when not measured the object is indeterminate, as it could be in any state. Taoism adds the extra option that the measured state of our life doesn't matter. Every day just before waking our life is indeterminate. Instead of measuring life against the morning light, open up the day to the possibility you are free to become what you aspire to be.

***What we are*** is always a choice on how we meander into the future.



## ===== Paths =====

Depression is when the fire dims within life. It is a calling to join back with the universe. Everyone merges into the earth. Mother earth will merge back into the stars. At some point the stars tumble down, exploding into stardust that someday again merges into something new. Knowing this cycle of change, Taoism reminds me that life is a haven and time to be brightly alive. As a Taoist I have embraced depression to experience it, yet Taoism also gives a perspective to live thru the worst times of my depression.

Years ago I wondered why Jung and Freud explored spiritualism. Ten years later I came to an understanding that our consciousness comes out of the movement of our spirit. For instance, performing Yoga and Jujutsu both enliven the body which then stokes up the spirit to brightly burn depression away. Writing, laughing or perking the mind, has similar effects to dispel the depression. Anything that affects the spirit directly impacts our minds, our bodies, the very way we flow thru life. These relationships are related and mutual.

A few times when my spiritual spark has been the dimmest I have considered ending my life. Once after work, while driving home, I had a thought that it would be so much easier to slam the car at 80 miles per hour into the highway wall. It would have been a quick and simple death. Yet, at that moment Taoist beliefs kicked in and I shook my head realizing: if things were that bad I could just walk away from the problem. The next morning I started the process to close down the work project I was on. Then each day, in a journey seven years long, I moved each morning into a new life. It was a process of weaving seven years of aspirations and dozens of distinct changes together as a whole to recreate myself. Yes, it would have been quicker and easier to end my life, a matter of a mere seven seconds as compared to seven years, but my life will end eventually so why rush into it? I look forward to the time when I will fade. However, until then, I enjoy life, hug the sadness, celebrate the happiness, circle and embrace all aspects of being alive.

At the moment of this story, the choice to walk away was the harder decision over staying on a path of life that was diminishing me. This now brings up an interesting point in Taoism. Some people think that to go with the flow, to be with the Tao, is to do what is easiest.

***To go with the flow doesn't mean to do what is easiest;  
it means to be true to your nature.***

We often have to deal with rough times and a more difficult path to be true to our nature.

Hanging on  
to that which is right  
at the price of life  
cannot truly be right

A choice in paths

To cut free and move  
to where heart  
to where spirit  
may grow

or

To dangle feeling  
last kisses of the wind  
upon swinging toes  
wrapped around a fading sigh.

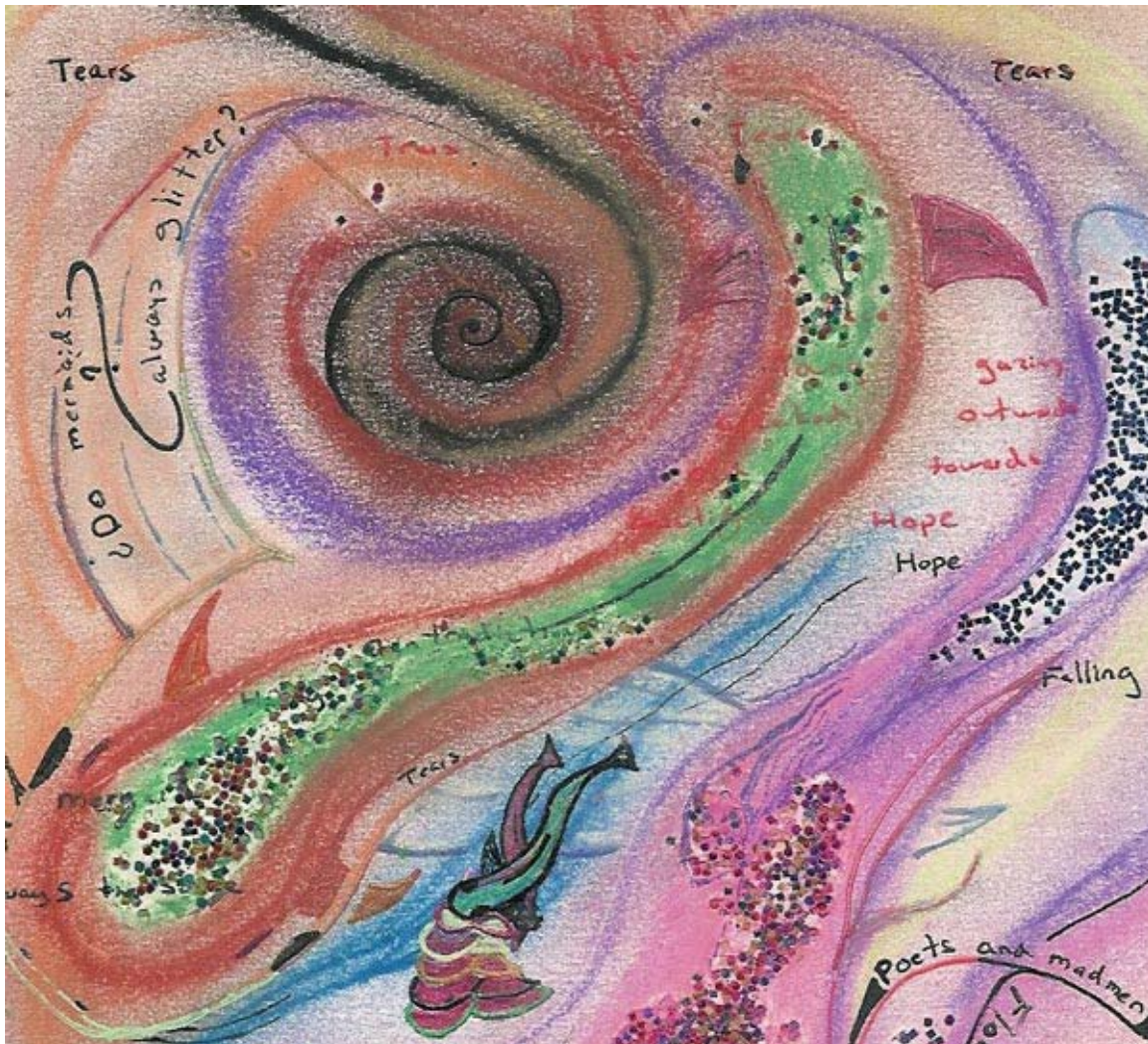
My choice has always been: life

Moving on is true when it's in sync the spirit's spark<sup>1</sup>. Why speed life along by killing oneself with bad living habits? Ending the fire of life prematurely doesn't lessen depression; as life, soul and the expression of spirit are eternal. We aren't going anywhere afterwards except back into our own eternal expression of life. Discover the living fire, our spirit to be alive, means exploring fully the entirety of each breath.

- 1) Be careful not to confuse someone else's movement to be direction of your own spirit. This mistake at times can be a deadly trap leading your spirit to move against your true nature.



## **Poets, Madmen and Fear**



Is it Madness

Expressing yourself truly?

Or

Hiding from what others think?

**It is madness to live in fear**

It is de-humanizing to be ruled by fear.

Living to fear means not living as yourself.

How can a person discover a Personal Tao if they cannot be themselves?

## Work

go                      march                      beat  
to work ...              to timing ...              to industry...  
Orders,                      Tasks,                      Working

For others, to others, as others  
Clamor forward in demand, quotas to complete  
People presiding to the beat of quotas  
Each and every person a drum  
Sounding to rapid fire consumption  
everyone the same drum, trying to be unique  
Buying into uniqueness of sameness  
in mass produced colorful tidbits  
It's economic growth, expanding  
Building every desire – duplicating  
again and again and again and again  
carbon dazed dizzy copies  
Industrial fruit of the loins  
Overflowing as rubber chickens in every pot  
Leaving us dying upon diets of more, ever more plastic

a-washed over by peacock worker bots  
only the drab raven stands out

Ask about caring  
in-moving in-difference in-pushing towards  
day's end, to earning yet some more cash  
not cash, but blood, our blood  
blood type denominations of 10's and 50's  
This isn't about being a worker  
It's about life, working to live

So, why don't we live while we work?

Unexpectedly this is a story, a whole story of the workers.  
We are all authors collaborating a work of Shakespeare made from 6 billion random people.  
Repeating another monkey-slapped-typed mundane job well done.

Amid raucous peacocks  
A black feather raven shall become king  
That too is just a job

===== Thoughts =====

Working as a Taoist in the United States has been a challenge. At first, I went with the flow: having a career which would have been labeled an ideal lifestyle as shown thru parents, friends, the educational system and general culture. Yet in time I rejected a cash flow work ethic where companies and workers rush about to maximize profit. The basic dilemma I came across is: how does a person support themselves and family, stay true to personal values/needs while working in environments that strip them of those same values? Many angles exist to this topic.

This section will only focus on the following aspect: How people define their personal nature to work itself.

Two questions: Listen carefully for the difference:

Question 1: What do you do?

Question 2: What do you do?

To most people these questions are the same. For instance: I can answer to question one:

What do you do? I am an author.

Compared to the vastly different question:

What do you do? I am a poet.

Seemingly the difference is the answer, yet no, the basic difference is in the two questions: The first question asks a person what is their job, the second question asks how one lives life.

An author is a person who writes to earn cash, with all sorts of job-related issues of publishing, royalties and other such yada. An “author” is a job. It’s about cash flow.

A “poet” refers to a life style. A poet lives in happiness & sadness, mixes & explores the world thru living and at times expresses commentary within poetry as an attempt to understand the daily grind of what is called life. Being a poet is not about cash, as much as about experiencing life.

This distinction is very important. Defining a person as a job will end up defining that person’s life as the job. This is the ultimate in de-humanization, I am not a person. Nope! I am only a worker: all I do and **will** do suddenly gets forced by that one statement.

Many very basic examples exist of this defining of our nature to a job. Look at the many generations of last names carrying a tradition in labeling people to their work. Smith, Carpenter, Koch (cook), Mason. Showing this is something which isn't unique to the modern age. While last names rarely shift much today (children aren't labeled John Programmer) identifications to work still happen at the earliest ages: "Oh, you want to be a Doctor when you grow up!"

People tend to automatically identity themselves to a job.

What do you do?

I am an electronic radiation shielding specialist, hair beautician.

Of course this is logical, as on average a person spends more time at work than even with family. Work is a very important aspect of human society, and always has been. Nothing new here except the refinement of the high art of modern business economics.

Where does this leave us?

First and foremost, let's go back to the two questions: What do you do? This should be truly two separate questions: 1) What trade do you perform, and 2) Who are you. Western culture merges the questions together. The "who are you" question tends to get dropped as knowing our nature typically takes a lifetime in learning. It's easier just to label oneself as a "Job" and not worry about life's trickier and often unanswerable questions in small talk.

It's very important to untangle these questions with a change in understanding.

We are not a job! Work is performed as a method to survive in society. Now here is the change in understanding: A wise man once taught me sometimes you just need to change the question you are answering. In this case the question should be shifted to:

Why do we work?

The main reasons to list could be the following

For survival  
For consuming  
For serving  
For passion/belief  
For the work itself

While no classification is perfect or will cover all possibilities. These five categories are an excellent starting point to help understand the relationship between ourselves and the reason for working. In exploring these with friends, an interesting fact became clear: when people work for reasons that matched their nature, they tended to be content. When people work for reasons against their nature, they tended to be discontent. The job itself wasn't as important as the reasons for working.



A few examples:

- Some people don't like to work, they only work to survive. These individuals, to be happy, will work just enough to cover what they consider basic needs and then live appropriately for their survival.
- If a person is a true consumer, who enjoys living life as an expression of consumption, then a person's job should be geared to support consumption. If you live to ski, then work in such a way so you can ski. Nothing is inherently wrong in being a consumer, life is a fire, we burn to live, we consume, and it's a natural state. However, consumption has limits, so a balance needs to exist lest we turn the planet and ourselves to ash, but life is as we live it.
- A direct example from my life working in the drug abuse treatment field: I know many social workers with a passion to help addicts recover from drugs. Without the passion to help others, this job burns out most people in the first few months.

All this might seem terribly basic. However, how often is the question seriously posed, "Why do I work?" with an attempt to then try to find a balance between the job and life. Usually people are chasing dollars or expectations of rewards. Or more tragically and universally true: they need to take any job possible as they are starving, supporting a family and have no outside support. Yet know, understanding why we work is more important than the job choice itself. Once we understand our nature, in why we work, then it becomes much easier to find work, a job, which fits your lifestyle and needs. Of course when people are taught to think the job is more important than the reason for work, then people will cling to or be attracted to jobs which will continually cause discontentment, as they will be working cross purposes to their own needs.

The point simmers down to: people are not a job. We have lives and work is an important aspect of life. Yet work and life shouldn't be thought as meaning the same thing. Attempting to separate our identities and work can be very complicated, since the two can become very entangled in day to day life. To help find answers it becomes necessary to change the question slightly to first understand why you work. Once understanding why you work, it becomes possible to balance work and lifestyle in a more acceptable nature.

===== Paths =====

To work as a Taoist means to live fully as a person. To work means working to your nature, to support your nature.

Part of the problem is we think a job is a path to walk down in life. Work is not a path. The actual path is living life. Work is merely an activity within life. The second someone substitutes "a path of living" to be "a career path", often becomes the moment of ~~birth~~ *creation* of a cog in the uncaring machinery of a working society.

Are we a job or are we living humans? We are always the latter, work is always an activity to support our lives. This is one key to finding a balance in work and life.

===== Pondering Area for Frustrated Workers =====

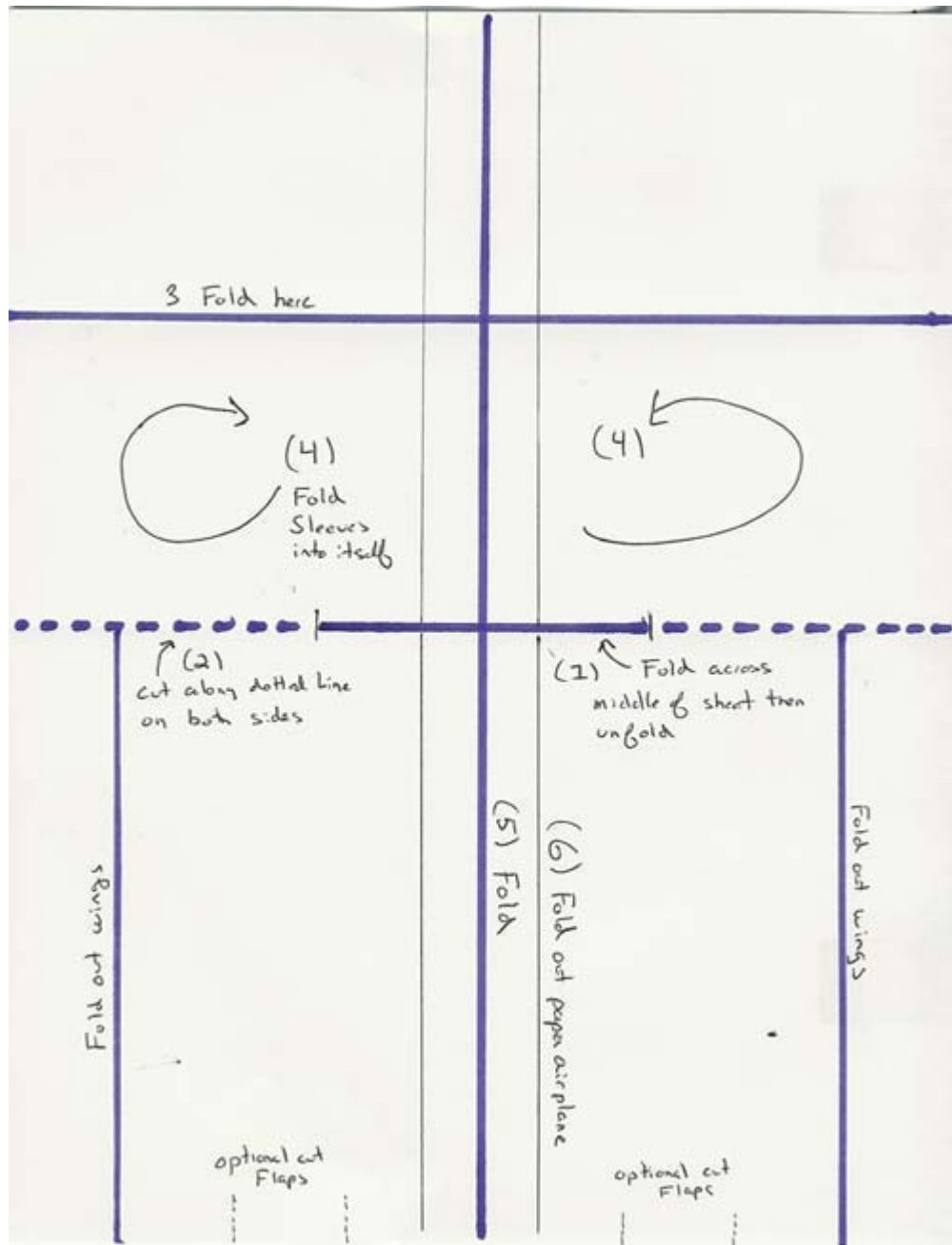
Why do you work?

Go ahead list the reasons here:

What is important for your own expression of your own humanity?

Don't worry about connecting the two questions here. Just let the two different questions simmer after writing down initial answers. Opportunities typically present themselves, provided a person opens their awareness to the larger world while beginning the process of understanding their nature.

## Paper Airplanes



Once, back in 1985, I was an engineering student. For some odd reason I wanted to design the perfect paper airplane. I did just that<sup>1</sup>. Perhaps someone else has built the same paper airplane, I don't know. I just know that in 1985 a single design of mine summarized all the concepts which were learned over 21 years of living. The important aspect of the experience was the need to express creativity, like a poem, except within the physical folding of paper.

1) Perfect is a relative term: as I haven't needed to design another paper airplane, I consider it perfect for my needs.



I knew the proper design needed to have balance, for a key in flight is weight distribution. The other point was it had to be simple, no glue, no staples; I wanted the plane to be only a sheet of paper along with basic cuts.

The first thing I discovered was that a plane might work fine inside, but outside, in the winds, most designs failed. Our minds make a good initial test bench, a safe walled room makes a good stepping stone, yet, in the end, you need to throw something into the larger world to discover how well it works. I would test in my room, and then once that worked, I would take test planes to the top of a ten story building I lived within, and throw it off the roof. So for 3 nights I folded and folded and folded, until the third night, I came across this most elegant design.

It's supremely simple. It has a blunt nose, so you can reuse it over and over; as it doesn't get damaged upon a crash or slamming into the wall. If you cut wing flaps it becomes a stunt plane. If you leave it with no flaps, it will fly smoothly like a ripple over a calm pond.

The night of testing, I took it to the roof. On the first throw, it floated, smoothly went straight, and forward, and forward, getting smaller, and smaller, never losing height. It flew until I lost it in the darkness, long out of my vision. Perhaps it is still flying today. I have this wonderful memory, of a paper airplane floating out → out → out... over Riverside park, slowly fading into the unknown darkness of night. The moment was perfect, breathless in unfolding of amazement as the plane flew out of sight.

Over my life, I have had similar experiences, people slowly leaving out of my life, events moving into distant points. Like my paper airplane; events, other lives and endeavors coming into focus and then later moving out into the distance to be gone.

Funny thing, that paper airplane and myself are still on the roof, and indeed it is still flying, still floating high over Riverside Park.

===== Paths =====

Moving on often means letting go, watching what was in our lives move on  
to its own destiny without us.

Instructions on how to build the Tao Glider can be found here:

<http://www.personaltao.com/tao/paperairplane.htm>

## **Zen Gardens**



Discovering life is not  
a word, a paragraph, nor historical footnote



Above, behind  
A spider, web, strands  
She rides high above  
Seemingly part of sky

It's tempting to stitch over a heart with barbed wire and blue skies...

Just by saying: I am fine.



Remove these accumulated "fine" layers of archeological debris  
Discovering

The heart is the center of a Taoist Zen Garden



To freely grow from the ember inside...

Diving into the world  
Divining beats of truth amidst  
Footfalls, heart, song  
Turning stones to reveal springs  
Unfolding from inner wellsprings of the soul.  
Who I am, is more than what I say  
Stepping out into ...

Life...





## **Swirling**

some days are a blur

some times I am a blur

all the time  
all the same  
all a blur

bblluurrrryy eyed me

Swirl what is swirl?

Swirl is a state of ...

Feeling the wind, the sun on your skin

~ taking the moment ~

~ as eyes close to soak feelings ~

Skipping for no reason... (Well I skip to feel flight)

Long breaths of expression from inside out

Making someone laugh

Acting to whim, to dreams

Within a plan

That can freely shift

Personally for myself "to Swirl" is my Personal Tao

The world is merely the world

I am merely human, gently passing others

In passing, imparting momentum, helping a world to spin

Each person is their own prayer wheel: Swirling ourselves to being alive.

## **A Job to be Done**

Coal mines  
harshness  
broken bones    of those before me  
                    of those working  
                    underneath

Taking the raw energy  
Infusing the coal  
with the miners raw energy  
which burns

Living in coal mines  
---- of my mind ----  
Living in jobs  
This is a coal mind  
Breathing industrial fallout  
of our own labor  
keeping us in labor  
which burns

Whether working in deep mines or your own mind, avoid burning away as meaningless labor. Burn as an engaging flame of life: even when toiling. Living doesn't stop with a job; living stops when you accept labor as being meaningless.

### **----- Looking from another angle-----**

A person can work having their labor taken away,  
so the world can burn brightly.

**--- or ---**

A person can work and assume their labor,  
to personally burn brightly.

It's the same job both times, yet the result ends up being vastly different depending on the perspective of each person.

Taoism drifts towards the third path:

Just be yourself

===== Paths =====

At times, work can become meaningless, repetitive or empty. When this happens make it something different: At this point, it can become a mantra to aid the process of reflection.

To illustrate this: Once my job had become dismal and the general attitudes of co-workers desperate (some were literally in tears over the daily problems). The experience crescendo-ing into my nearly resigning at exactly 1:12 pm in the afternoon. My mind switched into a calmer mood, pushed over a boundary, thinking about leaving the job, doing the math of all the debts and responsibilities, accepting that tomorrow I would deal with each problem, one at a time, to rebuild a new life. While starting to write a resignation letter, something else filled my mind. In that moment, I happened to look out of the 11<sup>th</sup> floor window: everything was crisper, the buildings in the view appeared as if each were a stone. The buildings moonlighting as black mountains, outlining an empty space 3 city blocks in size. In that moment, a seagull drifted thru the empty space between the manmade stone-skyscrapers. The bird flew in curves, defined by invisible hills and valleys of wind and air. The bird knew this terrain, its flight thru, illuminated an entire empty space, showing me something as a man myself I could only feel in sharing with a seagull. In that moment, the entire space became a Zen Garden, illuminating the empty space of my own personal frustration with a job. The stones of skyscrapers, a pebble of a bird, the lines of flight, the simplicity of a vista... left me at one with the whole moment. I didn't leave the job, as any other corporate job would have been the same, but within this job I had found, within a most crazy situation, a time of reflection and peace in a personal Zen garden which had manifested itself.

Now this last paragraph reads as rambling run on sentence. ***Shift the experience. Change the angle by reading it out loud as a story.*** A simple shift in approach modifies everything. Similarly simple alterations in work style can change a long tedious job into a poetic experience (- to a point -).

Life and work aren't packaged in neat sentences; they run on for us to experience.

Many monasteries use hard repetitive work, such as constant cleaning and maintenance of the monastery, as a form of meditation. A job doesn't have to be just a job. It can be the source of more than just cash if we are willing to be awake to other possibilities. Even the most mundane job can open realizations within ourselves. The key isn't to lose our personal identity to the control of something else!

I have a goal to help meld the spiritual practice of meditation within the western work environment. At times all jobs are empty, hard, boring or meaningless → yet with a slight shift of the mind, the same emptiness can illuminate a whole new vista of self discovery.

## **A Paper Spittoon**

This is a holding area for items removed from other areas of the book. These items are kept here until another point of time when it feels right to expand or merge them into something more complete.

These are raw and unedited...seeds for future writings. If something catches your eye, expand it or maybe add something of your own. Comment on images that these ideas bring forth...

### **Impossibility**

Adults rarely test reality. How often do you try to do things which are impossible? Everyday I still try to fly, walk thru walls, teleport or some other whim which tests the universe. Children do this all the time. Yet so many adults lose this trait. If you try the impossible on a frequent basis, then consider your fortune as being pretty unique. In my informal survey of asking people, I found it to be a rare trait outside of artists, madmen and children.

### **A Conversation with Julie**

Is it easier to destroy than to create? Yes, but why? I believe it has to do with the combination of data, required materials and required patterns to establish something. In thought, it layers down as:

- It's easiest to do nothing
- Next easiest just go with the flow
- Then to destroy
- Then to create

**8/10/2005**

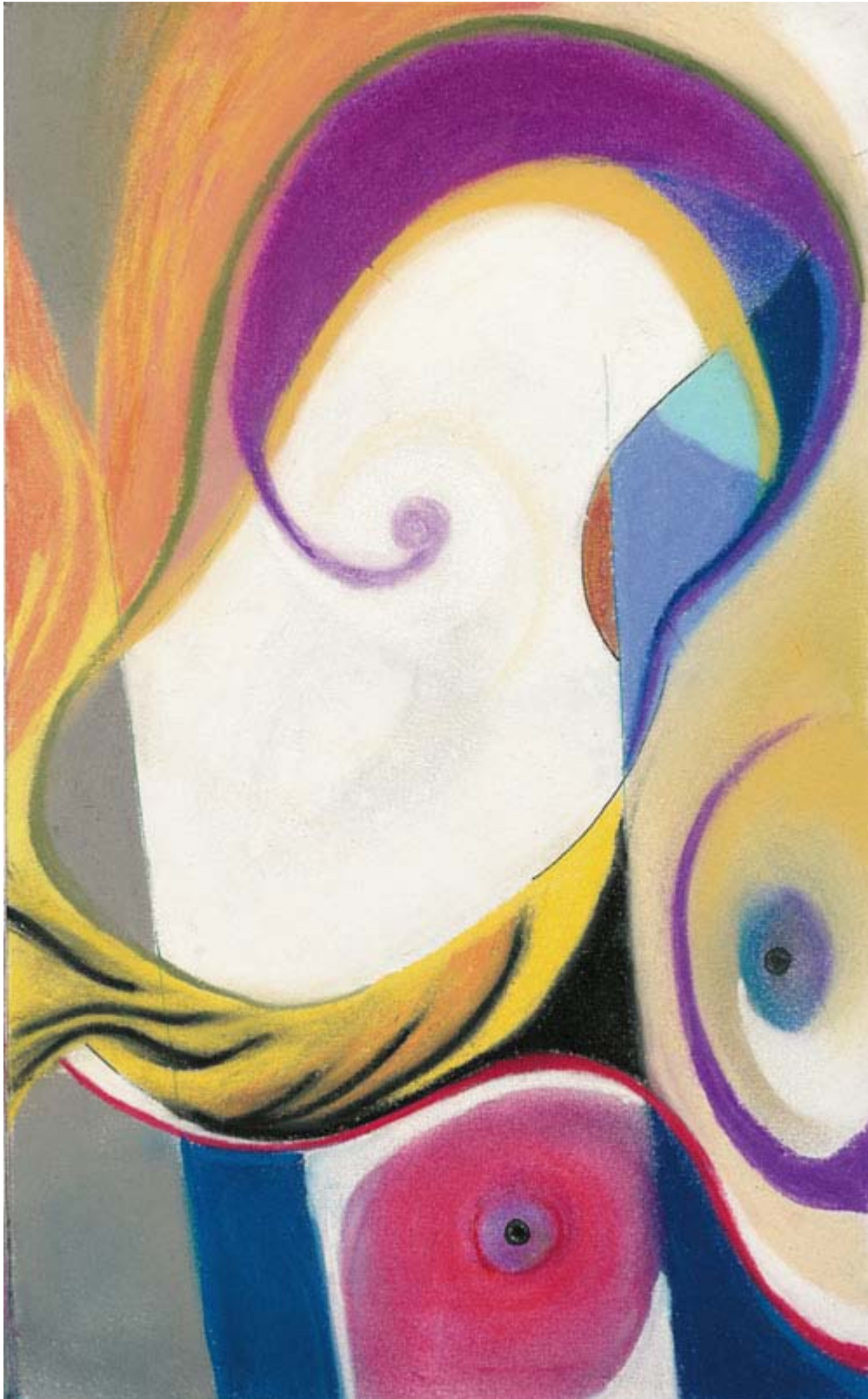
This question was posed within the Google group "Minds Eye". Within this conversation I liked the conclusion that creation and destruction are the same thing: change. To create is to also destroy, and conversely to destroy was to create.

### **Word Math**

Written language is a powerful / useful tool. Words are useful in the same manner that physics uses math to model the universe. However, both words and math are only abstract modeling mediums.

Language permits the binding of a community in the present time. Written language connects a community across the past into the future, in a stronger fashion.

## **Portraits**



The empty mind

Performing magic is to fill in... the empty spaces.



### *A waste of time*

"A waste of time" is an interesting statement. If life is time, then to waste time is to waste life. But if life is eternal, then we can never truly waste time. More interestingly: the saying "time is money". If again life is time, seemingly the economic systems can then place a value upon life down to the seconds we live. But if life is eternal, then a second becomes valueless amid the eternity of our life. If people were to accept their eternal nature, it could collapse the entire modern world economic structure! Shhhhh, don't tell anyone! I don't want the World Bank boycotting this book. I need the revenue ;^) to buy me some of those seconds they are trying to sell me.

### *Words*

Words are shallow.

Orality: Morality without the 'm',  
Speaking out human nature.

It's too easy, to become a preacher.

This in any style: Poetry, street savior, sermons

Becomes a hollow sound: The classic noise of one hand  
slapping another person down

### *Walking*

Ever watch people walk? I am sitting in the café right now, watching:

- Striding laid back, kawl to an angle
- Stiff, pulling each leg forward
- Plodding
- As if he owned the ground
- As if she owned him
- In-different
- Bouncing
- Heavy steps pounding into the ground the bad day
- Planting heels, one heel at a time to step ahead

So much of who we are projects forth in our walking.

### **Mind Body Spirit**

A balance in a physical practice is important. I wonder if acting outside of our nature, is partially responsible for causing feelings of dimming / depression to occur?

### **Actions**

We can't always have a teacher, or guide.

So don't wait or hesitate; when something feels right, move to it, explore, make mistakes and grow.

Trees grow strong in the wind, and weak with inaction.

### **Reflections of Ourselves In the World at Large**

The world is not  
Fair, moral, just, any other human value  
The world is just the world

### **Permissions**

**Even if you don't own this book, freely write within!**

## **The Sage**

Speaking out  
 the tree was talking  
     in the voice of a hundred starlings  
 the tree was chanting  
     in hush de-ter-mine-rince of the wind

so much discussed in overtones beyond this tongue  
 speaking with nature as nature arises in itself  
 as scents burgeon to pollen  
 roots pulling earth to sky  
 breaking winter to spring  
 in awakening converse

as such

words will never record  
 sunlight green overtones of a conversation  
 of my silence and talkative, chittering, rustling leaves

===== Thoughts =====

One tradition of Chinese Taoism upon getting older, is to walk away from mainstream society: to go back into the woods, into nature, to discover the Tao. In Hindu culture a person can become "sanyasis", handing off previous responsibilities, cast off their caste, return into nature to discover spiritual connections with an inner self and the larger universe. This casting off process is a common pattern across many cultures. The western world often labels this time of life as a "*mid-life crisis*"<sup>1</sup>. Instead of being a "*crisis*", it should be understood as a transformative time when a person is seeking personal growth and enlightenment into something new. This is the path to becoming a sage. The process is like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly, complete with changes on all levels of a person's makeup.

Human conversation is an over-powering activity. Humans spend an extraordinary amount of energy making and listening to our expressions of life. They live amidst a cacophony of humanity. One aspect within the transformation into the sage typically includes walking away from that cacophony. This permits a person to hear the more subtle conversations between the inner self and the natural world.

- 1) I find it interesting that western culture subverts this time of change into a consumer event. Instead of being a time of self discovery, mass culture labels it as the time to buy a red sports car or to have a fling. However, by the time the car gets paid off or the fling ends the chance to discover real change within oneself has often passed on by.

## Mid-Life Revelations

Risking everything that I am  
to become myself.

Juggling balls of fire  
fire of my own spirit.

Transformation is never easy  
Watching who you are crumble  
While growing into the wonder of something new.

===== Paths =====

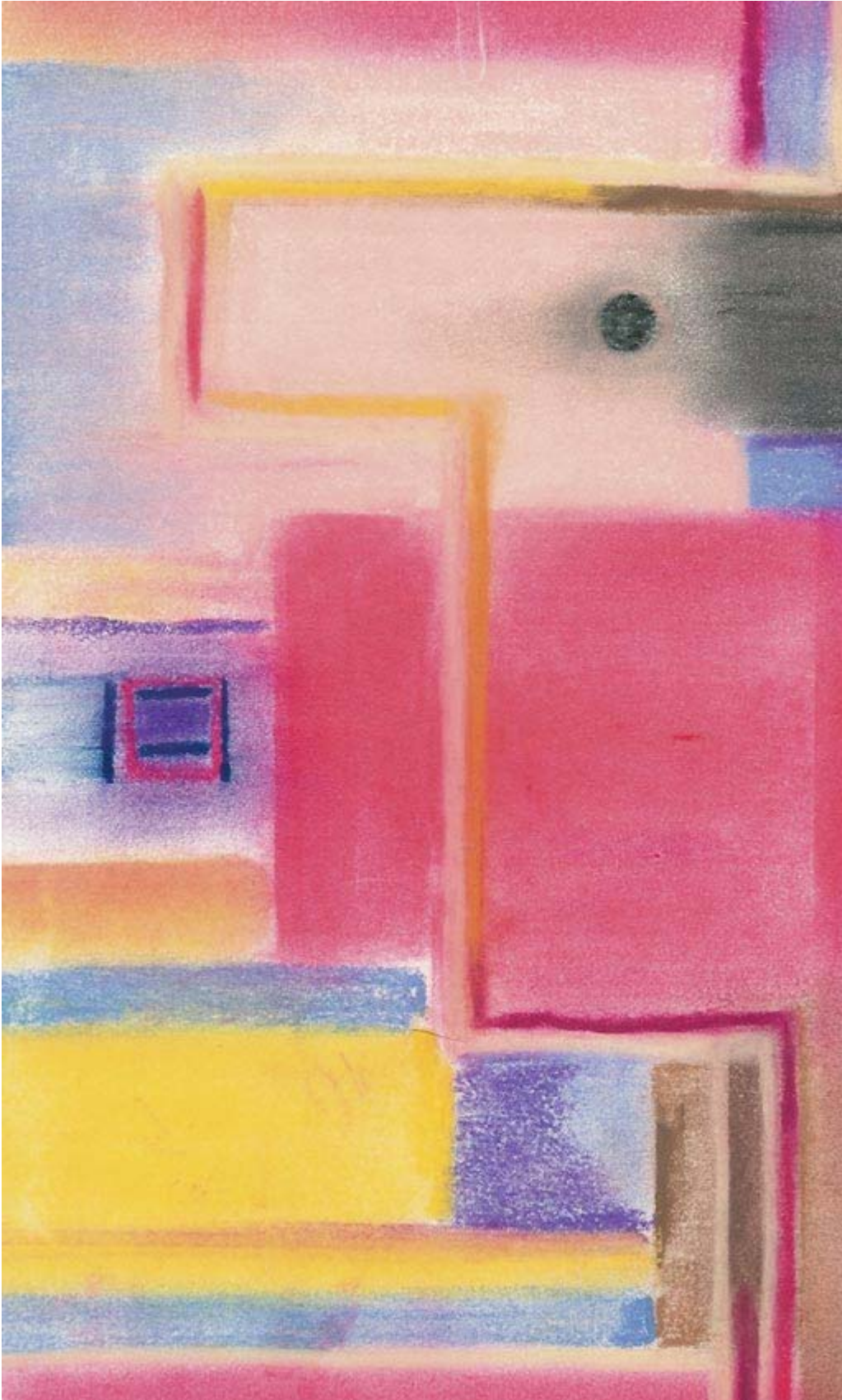
Twenty years ago I worked with Boris the engineer. Boris was in his early forties and one day he stopped working. Instead, Boris spent the entire day at his desk drawing abstract art. He would shuffle colors around for hours until at the end of the day he proclaimed it a masterpiece. It was nice art, but I didn't understand then why he stopped all work in order to make the drawing. It was clear that Boris was connecting to somewhere that I didn't have the same perspective to view.

Two years ago, at age 39, I found myself drawing. I talked to other people going thru similar bursts of expression upon reaching mid life. The common thread: the art is a probing into deeper levels of oneself. At age twenty my exploration was about reality and how it related to my direct experiences. At age forty this flipped around to the aspects of my life which are indirectly assessable. The drawings now made sense, as tools of expression at an emotional level. The whole goal is to stir into feelings the things that the 5 primary senses cannot directly discern. This emotional response acts as a lens to get a closer view of our hidden nature. For myself, this artistic process was the starting point of a mid-life transformation.

Having gone thru a mid-life transformation, I am surprised by how little our culture understands the process or supports this *inner revolution*. Western culture is more concerned with maintaining status quo. A mid-life transformation is a time of breaking one's personal status quo. This process of transformation takes time and is about a person changing & growing into themselves.

My other observation is it's very painful to be within the state of dramatic change too long. Typically it seems if the change isn't completed within several years' time social pressures and / or personal pain force people to revert to old patterns. Most people I have met never complete the transformation process for this reason.

I recommend growing into new aspects of life. To anyone going thru this process I encourage you to stay true to change. It's hard, risky and unpredictable. However, once completed the change opens up whole new aspects of living and whole new worlds to explore.



## **Movement of Water**

At the start of the day:  
What's important for the end of the day?

Answers can be *analyzed* down to:  
--- Nothing ---

Nothing is a starting point.  
Spring into --- following yourself.  
Then match and choose something else.  
Letting it all fall into place one moment at a time.

This is the way:  
Nothing becomes one  
and one becomes two  
and two become the 10,000 things...  
This is the Tao.

===== Thoughts =====

My nine year old son Clayton replied when reading this,  
"Feeding the animals is important at the end of the day."

It was an automatic answer to the question. No fuss or worries, at the end of the day  
dad we need to feed the animals that depend on us.

Children are of the Tao, because children tend towards actions that *feel* right, without  
hesitation. Each action springs forth and we live in the dance of those actions.

===== Paths =====

The Tao:	As an example, is a river.
A person:	A single eddy, in motion with the water, moments of swirling, reflecting when still swept quickly other times upon the currents.

But all within a river which flows.

Where the river isn't only a river, rather, it's a cycle within larger cycles. The  
movement of water is part of a much larger river of moving patterns.

From spring to stream to river to sea to cloud to rain to earth to spring.

Now unfold and repeat until grasping that each point in this cycle is the *same moment* amidst the many which form the Tao. This is the most elemental truth of  
how the interconnections harmonize between everything in nature.



## Death

What is death?  
Mixing shades of black  
Awash black tie-die rolling of the bones

Emotions all in-tide-en-tangled  
Down to? Stopping - still: Stopping to

Something described as sleep?  
Passing back to... black? Inking the before time.

Time is calling

Soon to be soon to be myself fully realized...as fully into... a calling back into oneself

Tired of acting  
Awakening to self

It's:  
Some say heaven  
Others say hell  
Still others say nothingness

I have died  
Know the truth  
of nothing, more or less

So know  
It's no longer pretending to be something  
you are not

===== Thoughts =====  
Kurt Vonnegut once wrote: "You have to be very careful what you pretend to be,  
because you might wake up to find that's what you have become."

In life we pretend to be many things. It's imagination in action as living.

Death is the time for us to return to our true nature, when a person no longer pretends  
to be anything other than themselves.

Death isn't an ending of our paths. The moment of death is timeless and the turning  
point of consciousness; it's when consciousness can touch the entirety of life. In  
touching our entire nature we can stop pretending and \*sigh\* into the Tao.

===== Paths =====

Death is an experience which tempers the ego. Many myths have a person going into the land of the dead to learn. Even the Gods (Odin as example) would die in order to gain wisdom. I think it's true; one does gain wisdom from death, whether from personal experience or through experiences dealing with death naturally as it occurs in our lives.

Experiencing death within one aspect of our nature, ripples across our entire being. So experiencing a spiritual death is as real as experiencing a physical death. I have briefly touched upon both, and will share a brief story of my path and observations.

It was death  
I found the passport  
Indeed custom's rubber stamp  
marked the departure

Death and memories did co mingle  
I found a snapshot  
Indeed a black and white image  
recorded the event

Leading to a discovery

No time passed, no time existed  
A day, a month, a second, a year  
were all the same in the passport

Time is the key

People think death is eternal  
Instead know  
Death is moment-less, only life is eternal

Life mixes to: seconds, years, months, days.  
As jumbled glimmering glances tumbling amidst  
jostling  
Moving to a beat...  
As a spring sun beats down  
Warming life, my life, growing again as a weed

Amidst the seconds that rain

As time is felt  
and time is life  
and life is time.

When I was a child I constantly tested how high my sneakers could bounce me. One day the sneakers *might* bounce me high enough to touch a cloud. The day I did touch the sky was without sneakers as an ocean wave slapped me backwards into drowning. No one knew I was drowning, that my body was quitting, my mind had switched over and everything was shutting down and, well, I was over the world; I could touch and hold Earth in my hands as I looked over the Earth in my moment of death. I didn't know to be afraid; instead I explored the nature of my life. *In one moment, I touched my entirety.*

Then my brother pulled me out, back into: Breath! Wonderful breath burst back into my lungs. As a child, I knew one moment I was dying, and in the next moment I was living again. Both moments were wonderful! I was truly living in the moment. After recapturing my breath, after gaining bearings again, I went straight back to playing in the water and had a great day in the ocean surf. Years later, when I asked my brother about that day, he didn't even realize he saved my life! He just pulled his silly brother out of the water when his little brother was under the water a little too long. He had no idea my spirit was packing up to go bounce around into another cycle of my life.

**Ironic to find immortality within death itself  
The secret, the truth, the path of immortality  
Is simply to live in the moment**

## The secret of children

when we feel we can never die

Is the difference between being an adult and a child  
All simply being within the moment and not outside

# The moment is eternity

The moment is life everlasting

Within the moment a smile can be found

## To enliven the spirit

To fire the blood back to pounding

## Back into the beat

Of ever flowing life.

## What happens when a boundary isn't a real boundary?

Adults assume a death boundary exists based upon pretty strong circumstantial evidence: everyone dies, no one comes back (or very few). I believe this evidence produces a purely one-sided model of death. A view comparable to saying the world is flat, complete with waterfalls into space, based just by looking out to sea and seeing a “*boundary*” of a horizon. My experiences of *living*, of passing thru the transitional time of death has led me to conclude that my “*expression of life*” is instead constantly moving thru, circulating thru all the possibilities of what we call life. Death isn’t a boundary; it’s a transition back into other expressions of our self.



Now when I tell people about my experience of drowning: almost every adult responds, “Oh my god! Drowning is the most terrible death”. I lose my words as I personally know drowning and indeed dying, can be a most wonderful experience. How do you convey an experience to a person who is so in fear of any death? I want to ask “*Do you worry about sleep, when the consciousness magically fades into the black for a few hours?*” I know the answer will be: “No: Because I wake up and remember myself”. The analogy will break down at this point, as dying, doesn’t bring you back the next day. Death brings one back into another expression of their own life, but it doesn’t normally round trip a person back into the same body the next day.

So where does this leave me in explanation?  
What is my path concerning death?

We feel most alive when young  
when every second is an eternity.  
So no surprise people try to re-capture life  
as once before  
bouncing childlike between the moments.  
.... Oh, it helps.....  
But it isn't the answer.  
How can it be when: we are not children anymore?

If you look to me for answers...  
I can only admit to not having any  
Perhaps in time I will have some

Matters not

As I go outside, lifting my face to the sky  
feel sun, breeze, time: rain down on me  
a second at a time

Many paths exist; start with the core of life

Living in the moment is the simplest to attain...  
just by being in the moment.

No guru or tricks are required: It takes only patient self-exploration.

===== Stories =====

What would you do in a meeting  
mixed with death, an ever nameless man and yourself?

Would you jump away?

Would you reach out?

Would you pray?

Would you ignore?

Would you discover poetry?

I am a poet, discovering poetry to be:  
The end of one journey, and... The start of the next

I am a man  
Once giving passing rites to another man  
Now writing words meant to help those living  
So others can discover

We never die alone

## **Immortality**

It's said Taoists know the secret to immortality. This is true.

Do you desire to live forever? Taoists<sup>1</sup> in the "know", (not that there is a "know"), would chuckle at immortality; skeptics will always scoff, and those afraid of death will always cling to the hope of immortality.

Over the years quite a bit of mythology has accumulated regarding Taoism and immortality, so let's straighten a few curves of this mythology. Taoists have a history of long lives due to lifestyle. The ideals of Wu Wei remove stress, dietary traditions ensure healthy eating habits and daily rituals foster harmony between physical and meditative practices to establish fitness. The Taoist lifestyle creates a delicate balance promoting a long peaceful life. Taoists practice longevity, not immortality.

Immortality isn't defined by physical time.

A body will not last forever; the very nature of the body is to observe time in its limits. Even in the best conditions eventually accidents, disease, entropy or crazed weapon-swinging humans will mark an ending to a body's time. The whims of a larger universe dictate finite final bounds for a given lifespan<sup>2</sup>.

A mind will not last forever. A limit exists to how much of the "self" can reside in a mind. Memories fade. In living, a person transcends through an experience of many minds. Aging itself is the process of change that shifts the mind around. A person might have a fundamental core perception of self, yet the manifestation of self changes throughout a life. I personally have lived at least eight<sup>3</sup> distinctly different lives. How can the mind be immortal, when it shifts so readily into new life?

It's possible to approach a steady state in mind, body and spirit to live quite a long time indeed. Yet the distinct limits of the mind and body also dictate the nature of immortality to be quite different than what most expect.

- 1) As with any group of people, Taoism has many different schools of thought. Some Taoist's do seek physical immortality. However, immortality of the body has never been something outlined within the Tao-Te Ching.
- 2) In math terms the limit of a sequence of events in a life span is convergent. Now to those interested in math analogies I ask: does a series of life events add up as being conditionally convergent (free will) or does life converge absolutely (predetermined)? A Taoist will answer only with laughter, because it's both, and then forgets the whole question to go enjoy basking in the sun.
- 3) The lives I have lived so far are: infant, child, teenager, young adult, father, questor and sage.



Immortality isn't outside of our existence.

A person is an expression of **our** lives, **our** mind, **our** body, **our** spirit, **our** ego, **our** fetch, **our** being, **our** soul, **our** multiple forms... once leaving all the “**ours**” a person isn't anymore. Instead all the “our” building blocks return to the larger nature of the universe, to continue onward in a different cycle<sup>1</sup>. Heaven and other forms of an ultimate personal expression exist: within the “ours”.

Everyone is immortal in the expression of how they live.

Make of your life that which you want to be eternal.  
Immortality is within our *existence*.

Immortality isn't after death and afterlife isn't an accurate statement. The problem is one of orientation. The ego is so geared to looking forward, that before death, the ego assumes the vast vista of an immortal existence is likewise always ahead<sup>2</sup>. Discover it's in the now within life that immortality exists.

If a life is limited in time, then how is living within your life immortal?

Each moment is timeless...

Living is an expression of all our possibilities...

Reincarnation isn't after life: reincarnation is experiencing each life possibility...

Time is an illusion of consciousness...

Consciousness is the wave of our existence  
flowing forever through the collection of one's lives...

All moments are interconnected throughout *yourself*, throughout every expression of ever continuous lives...

It's possible to bounce within life. All moments are accessible. Our consciousness appears linear, yet with meditation, with practice, it's possible to touch our overall existence, or to re-experience individual moments...

Personally I find it easiest to just relax and actively embrace my experiences, making this life worth living. Searching for proof could be endless, or simply can be summarized as one's life. Between the choices, it makes most sense to live the current life with enjoyment and peace.

1) Some would say that heaven is this rejoining to the larger universe. To a Taoist, this is also an acceptable view point. Heaven indeed is a mixing of the stars as much as to mixing to our lives. Like the Tao, heaven is something that isn't explainable in a single term definition: as it's outside the ego. As a side note: the Tao is not heaven, as the Tao crosses both life and heaven.

2) It's like stepping out of the subway station, and then getting confused in your directions.

Now back to death: a vantage point within our cycles of life. It's the moment when ego stops its movement. Death is just the point when a person's consciousness fully lets go<sup>1</sup>. Without ego in the way, the clarity of self examination and acceptance of life becomes an unprecedented experience. At this juncture it becomes possible to embrace one's entirety without any hesitation. Once a person relaxes fully within death to embrace this entirety, the consciousness rebounds back into one of the countless possibilities which defines each personal existence. In this cycle of existence a person is both immortal and mortal. Embrace your nature as both, live your mortal existence in peace, to have heaven in your immortal existence as well.

1) It's interesting as from the Buddhist point of view, this would be the point at which a Buddha suppresses the consciousness on a permanent basis ending, in effect, the Buddha's immortal existence.

#### ===== Proofs =====

The view I have stated is my own, based upon life experiences, visions, perceptions and faith within my own nature.

Belief of my statements, proofs based upon my life are meaningless for anyone else. Likewise having others believe in me, has no meaning back onto myself. The belief game, the proof game, the miracle game are shams. Tricks of the light used to prop ourselves to stand tall, until realizing each ray of light was merely a flickering shadow.

Discovery of a Personal Tao is to cross the line to accept views based, not upon the outside world or others, but instead upon oneself. Much of what people seek on the deepest level within a "*universal truth*" cannot be proven, will have contradictions, and will not even make sense when one has the correct answers. This is unavoidable due to the incomplete nature of each person relative to a larger universe. Yet, and here is the contradiction, we are complete within our own personal nature. It is within this finite absolute limit of being alive, that I can find my eternal nature as I am completely and always myself.

I am eternal within my own nature. I rejoice within this.

## **Spirit and Soul**

Years ago, I met a special woman. She asked me the following question:

"If you had to take an animal, a force of nature, and a mythical reference:  
How would you write a sentence to describe yourself?"

I answered:

"A breeze wrapped around a dragon who is a cat sleeping in the sun."

After looking at the answer, I discovered many aspects which were true and informative about my nature. Since then, I often ask this of other people. So I ask you now as the reader to spend some time and try it out. It might take a day or two. Mythical references could be anything: I have known people who were only unicorn horns, or various aspects of a myth such the eternal slumber of an enchantment. It's beautiful how creative people can be.

Write it out below after figuring out something you like.

I also discovered people are surprisingly honest in the answers given. Look closely at your answer: it reveals quite a bit about your ego, spirit and soul. This leads into the next question.

What is the difference between soul and spirit?

Heart of the matter  
Essence of a question  
Uncover, Discover, Recover  
Ego, Soul, Spirit  
Let eyes wander to the skies  
Revealing  
Dragonfly, Butterfly, Fireflies

Before reading the rest of the section, try to answer this question. Again, as before, take several days even. Come back at a later time. Be aware that the definition of soul and spirit varies quite a bit between cultures. In fact these two words are overloaded with countless meanings, making it harder to tease out a personal answer.

What is the difference between soul and spirit?

***Soul is what we are***

Connection of mind, heart, body  
Reflection showing echoes of nature: our nature  
Amidst Mother Nature  
Everything has a soul  
The nature of being something: to be as it is...  
is the soul  
Soul is simply one's nature.  
  
Soul silently proclaims, always openly revealing  
hidden truths  
stars in the palm  
rock steady  
looking up and back  
Soul stands out clearly to be seen  
not noticed  
amid  
Explosions of life  
colors, growth, egos, movements, distractions  
Consciousness ever distracted  
by beauty, by motion, by fire, by life  
Soul the centering of what we are

***Spirit is Soul in motion***

Feel the beat instead  
touch the heat  
Feel  
Fire in the belly  
Fire  
Worlds are ever changing, always blurring,  
blurring... burning  
Life ever fleeting by very nature  
Life is change, We are life  
This is Life  
Fire in the Belly  
  
Embracing movement of expression  
Spirit touches -ever brushes- passing as  
consciousness -- faith -- acceptance  
of oneself within the fire  
the fire in the belly  
that tides to life

As a mathematician, on one level I think of spirit as the integral of the soul.

I discovered something interesting when asking myself the question: “Ego” kept bouncing its way into my answers. So this left me with the problem of also answering what ego was all about.

***Ego is the sheepdog of the spirit, keeping our form.***

Pulling “You” back down is Ego  
An ever dancing trickster  
Ego always checking the math, bottling fireflies,  
pinning the butterfly  
Asking what is a noun, verb or adjective  
Ego is all about  
Resisting, throwing confusion to the e-y-I-y-e's  
Impishly ego devilishly tries to control your soul  
Its trick lies in YOUR nature  
feel ego's ploy  
A rope of pronouns  
lashes of colorful self deception

Ego is a very small part of our overall nature, yet it seems to command an overly large presence.

Why does Ego try to steal the show?

Ego is the herding dog, the trickster, the ringmaster keeping us together. Without ego, it would be simple to just accept ourselves as part of the larger universe and fade back into being one with the universe. Yet ego steps in, keeping a person together, an individual's static cling to the spirit, binding it all together just long enough to form an expression of our individual self.

Dragonfly: Ego always fights to make you more.  
Fireflies: Spirit burning ever so to proclaim: *alive*  
Butterflies: Soul of our nature

All flickering flirting, flitting  
Weaving together  
different view points of our form  
into a single expression  
of self



===== Thoughts =====

As a child I was taught  
To be as rock  
I am not  
- I am fire, which is life -  
To be myself  
Means cracking rock apart to spark

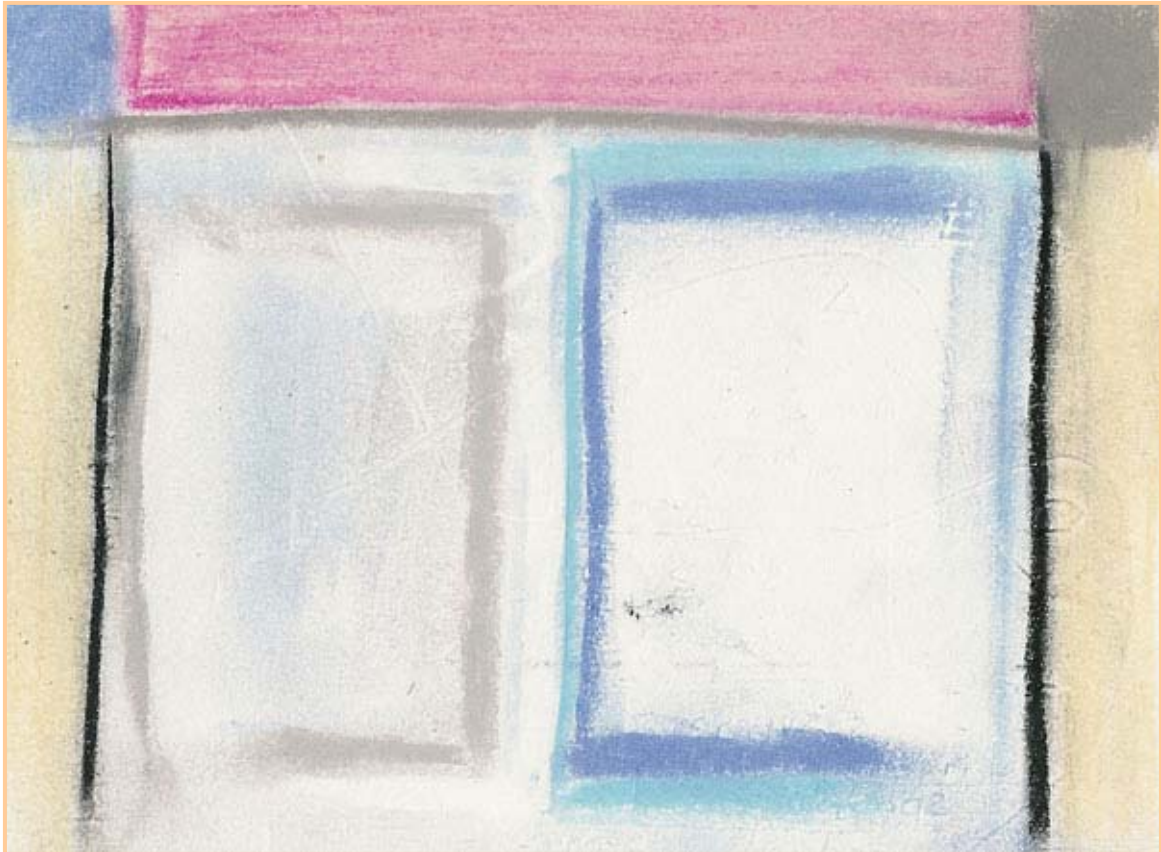
Sisyphus discovered immortality has a price  
but not all rock is made of stone  
When defying the gods  
Burdens of life become our own.

In time all rock wears away  
But the spark, life itself, is an everlasting fountain of flame  
Leaping from peak to peak to burn on  
Against the storms  
To defiantly burn - brightly - is "My" burden

Gods come and go,  
It's the nature of creation.

But "My" nature is to live, move on, burn burn brightly

My nature is to Be Fire of Life.



Open windows within life  
Discover  
Your soul

## **Definitions**

People insist on definitions  
 tell Me what it Is!  
 What's the Color? What's the Taste? What's the ...  
 All this adds up and up and up  
   to being a box,  
   within which a person is buried.  
 The box decays into the Tao.

Future and Past are definitions  
   as  
   definitions come and go.  
 Now  
   We are always as we are  
   as is the Tao.

past, Now, future: What time do you live within?

===== Thoughts =====

A definition could be based on the future, in which case it's a pattern. A definition of the past is a memory. In the “*now*” we are alive where all "definitions" are meaningless until the moment passes. The act of later adding value to the “*now*” would be called intro / retro - spection for the past and expectation for the future. Each of which is an organized method of "lying" to oneself.

An ability of humanity is storing memories in order to build up patterns. This summarizes down to the basis of being "I". We as living creatures constantly recompile our own terms of existence relative to terms of the past and future. Our behavior/actions are then directly related to how much of the future and past we mix together to form the “I”. An infant of 1 isn't an "I" or "Me" yet: how can the child be so when not yet having the time to compile the concept of self relative to a past / future combination? For this reason an infant is always one with the Tao.

Remembering the past and predicting the future are both powerful tools we possess. To a Taoist: life is defined as it happens not by the tools used in life.

===== Water =====

Does water predict where it will flow? Does it remember where it has been? Water just flows to its nature. In doing so, it shapes the world, flies as vapor, cascades in rain and is the basis of all life on Earth. Hence Taoists always refer to water in examples of how to be one with the Tao.

## **Human Waves**

How I am alone?  
 Every day I touch 233,623 other people.  
 People in ever increasing numbers  
 ---- Inter-connecting out our stories-----

Witnessing feet: in a pair of Nike sneakers walking upon...  
 The spirit of 7 Indonesian children, unable to buy the shoes they sew.  
     Picking up and eating a peach, while holding...  
     Hands of 52 Migrant farmers harvesting the crop.  
 Typing poetry upon a computer as the hard drive spins...  
 235 souls turning as cogs assembling more computers.

Add up the numbers, discover a surprise  
 How quickly these connections trace around **our** planet  
 Everyone, each of whom likewise, reaching, reaching out  
 Caught in a vast web of economic dependencies  
     Till as a group we are all:  
 6 billion hungry people: eating a planet to bedrock  
     Showing that yes, each of us matters  
     That two feet are indeed the crest  
         of a wave 467,246 feet tall  
     In wave after wave after wave  
     Grinding Earth down  
     Wearing it down  
 To sand, within a pair of sneakers.

.....  
 ...  
 .

===== Thoughts =====

This was written in an exaggerated poetic flourish to illustrate that economically and realistically our footsteps do add up to much more than two feet. Action and lifestyle do matter; even seemingly small choices as buying a pair of shoes are reflected across an entire planet. The friction of these actions burn the very Earth: Earth is on fire. Look at the pictures from space, our little planet burns with the light of our own living fires!

To be alive is to be within this chain of life. Life pushes life about; life jostles; Life consumes, life devours life...

*Is it wrong to kill? ...*

The ideas of right and wrong are moral choices, subject to the whims of each individual life. Life consumes energy and life is energy, so its no surprise the chain of life reuses itself in consumption of expression.

... *Or wrong to change the world?*

Each and every life changes the world. Life is fire, to burn by action means to consume and change the surrounding world. The importance in Taoism is to understand when changing the world all actions of change echo back into ourselves.

The modern material culture is not in balance with nature. It might be economically cheap to use a slash and burn style of manufacturing<sup>1</sup>, yet the hidden overhead price will be a burden of waste and disease. Adding to the problem is humanities habit of creating vast estates of toxic dumping grounds: simply by tossing trash<sup>2</sup> about. Unfortunately we are seeing the effects of this in our health today as it reflects back to create toxic human bodies. The roots of our cancer are directly tied to the lack of respect people show to the world and life around us.

Know nature always has a balance.  
Nature's accountants never use dollars in its balance sheet.  
Nature's currency is life itself.

For this reason all life is equal.

It's possible to find a balance (even in a material culture), but without respect, humans live no differently than bacteria<sup>3</sup> trapped in a Petri dish: doomed to consume all resources and then perish within the waste by-products. So know the choice isn't life itself, but our choice is one of lifestyle, expressing ourselves with or without respect.

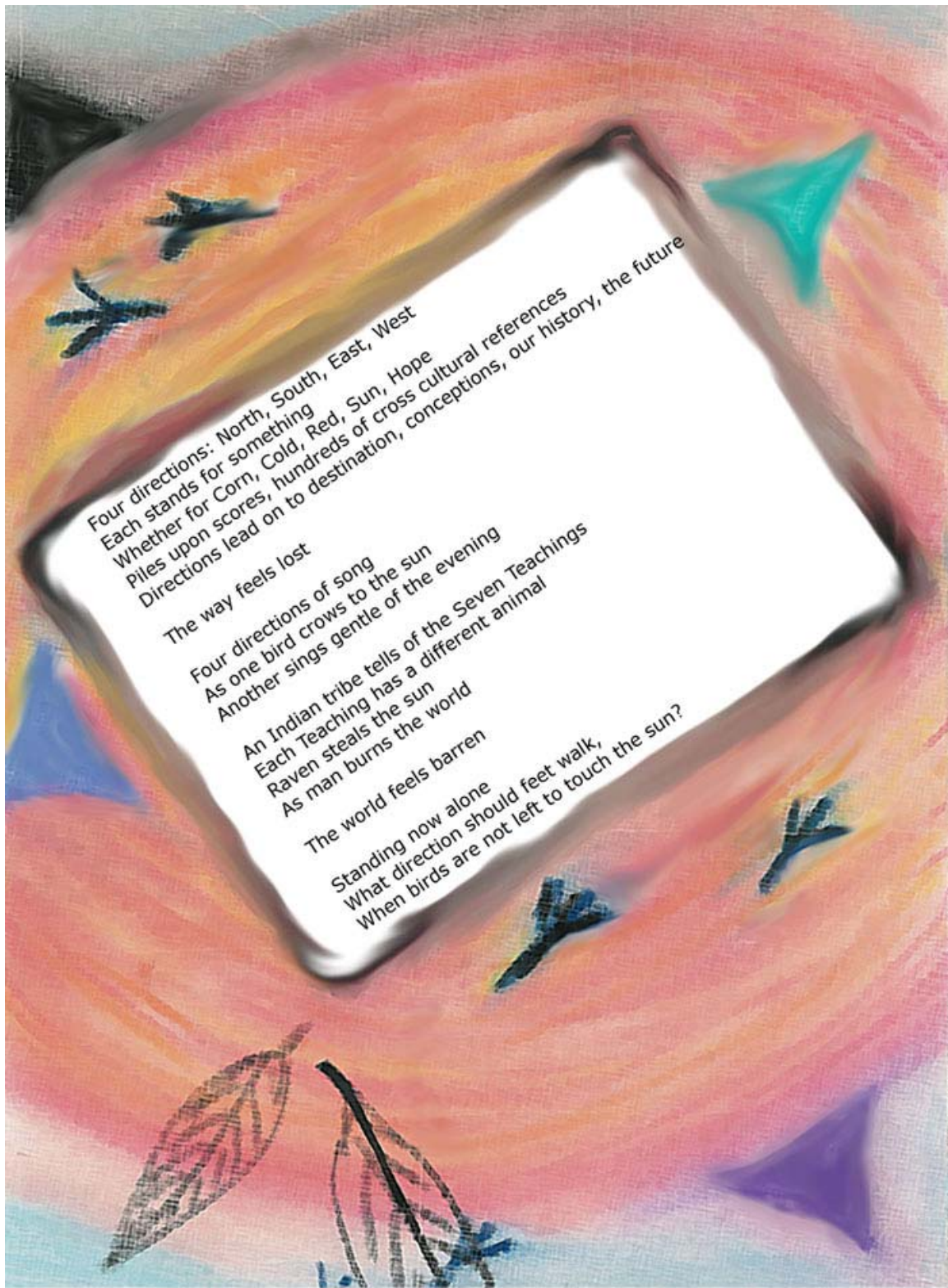
To be alive means accepting involvement within the web of life. Removing ourselves from this web removes us from the basic interconnections which form our fundamental physical natures.

===== Paths =====

In the near future the most powerful will be those able to live simply.

- 1) Modern natural resource management: mines, strip mines, clear cutting, when you take something out of the land, the disturbance ripples out and affects *all the life* in the surrounding area. Each and every product a consumer buys will result in the death of some life somewhere on Earth, this is part of the price of getting that consumer product built and delivered for personal use. This statement is neither right nor wrong, it's simply fact. We are all consumers, life touches life, life consumes to be alive and often times it's harsh.
- 2) This habit is an expression of power, or marking territory. A person littering: throwing a bottle out over the river is saying I have the power to throw my trash over you. Humans and trash are of a similar nature as a wolf piss marking a tree.
- 3) Humans are animals, and the second a person thinks humanity is higher than other life, becomes the defining point for a person to lose parts of their own human nature. Sadly bacteria tend to live in more natural harmony than the average human, which is why bacteria tend to kick our butts around when we get sick.







## **Flow**

Autumn Again  
Leaves as words flowing down  
Ground, paper, leaves, words  
Mixing together statements  
Drifting expressions  
Tracing skeletons bare  
to what we were.

Leaves letting loose to be free  
to swirl and dance upon the wind.  
Once upon a summer  
They tried so hard, reaching in growth to crack the sky.  
Imagine the joy upon colorful bursting to release  
Spiraling finally to be free  
with this last dance to the ground.

Why is it so hard to turn the book about and then read the second poem?  
Changing perceptions and the patterns we live by is never easy.

## **Religion**

Being a Taoist doesn't tie a person down to a religion. It's very possible to be a Christian and a Taoist, or indeed to mix any religion with Taoism.

What is a religion? I define religion as:

A system of belief, attitudes and practices set towards the service and worship of a God or the supernatural.

The Tao is not God, and the Tao is not supernatural. As such Taoism is not a religion; it's simply living to your nature with harmony relative to the Tao.

To confuse the issue people have taken Taoism and have converted it to a religion. So while Taoism is not a religion, a religion called Taoism does exist. On one level, these Taoist religions are simply a set of practices that help a person achieve balance within life. The "religious" forms of Taoism take a slightly Buddhist approach in elevating to a "deity" level wise immortal Taoist elders, each acting as guides in understanding the Tao. These Taoist religions are heavily influenced by the works of earlier Taoist sages.

Typically westerners separate Taoism as a "philosophy" and as Taoism a "religion". This style of separation has been very misleading, as this limits the way westerners think of Taoism. Labeling leads to missing a whole range of subtleties within Taoism by starting with narrowed, predefined concepts of a Taoist practice.

To further complicate everything Taoism has influenced and changed religions such as Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. At times it can be confusing to understand the distinctions between some Buddhist teachings and Taoism itself.

So what would Taoism say about religion in general?

Taoism doesn't say anything about religion.

My personal view is that all religions are true to the faith which fosters the belief. God, or all gods, are true and are of the Tao, when a person's belief is true to his or her faith. This flows into a concept that all Gods / God are of a personal nature, even when being shared through an organized religion. No single religion represents the entirety of humanity, as humanity itself is a spectrum of faith. This overall spectrum blends together to create a representation of humanity which is then within and at one with the Tao.

As a result, Taoists aren't necessarily religious, but typically blend aspects of their religious upbringings and cultures with their personal practices.

Taoism is **more** than just a “philosophy” or a “religion”. A Personal Tao shouldn’t be confused with the concept of a personal god. A Personal Tao rises out of all the different concepts of Taoism and should be understood as being:

A system of belief, attitudes and practices set towards the service and living to a person’s own nature.

===== The Question of God =====

For many, the issues of Religion and God are co-mingled to the point of being simmered down to the question: Does God exist? Many phrase this as a black or white question with definite answers: God either does or doesn’t exist. If you are an atheist, then God doesn’t exist; if you practice a religion, then God exists relative to your belief structure.

Taoism offers the third path: Skip the question! The question of God’s existence is **irrelevant**. God could or could not exist, and either state doesn’t change the way we lead our lives. Our lives are expressions of action between ourselves and the universe. To respect our surrounding environment is a furthering of respect to ourselves. This manner of living doesn’t change regardless of the nature of God.

This doesn’t make a Taoist Godless; rather a Taoist considers God a wonderful question to meditate against (***much like sharpening a knife against a rock***) but to put to the side when dealing with daily concerns. This is where the Personal Tao steps into the equation. If a person has faith in a higher being (***if they know the expression of their life matters relative to this belief***) then it’s acceptable to live to those beliefs. The point where belief becomes unacceptable is upon forcing faith unto someone else or even oneself. Forcing a view typically comes out of an unsurity of faith. Forcing belief is the attempt to keep faith thru a process of action and subjugation. Such actions flow against finding a true Personal Tao.

Humanity was given free will

While gods and devils  
never turned away  
how could they?  
never having freedom  
always chained  
to choices made in the rolling of the bones  
our bones  
which we toss down  
every day

The only gods, the only devils  
are those found in mirrors  
dogged to our own whims

In prayer  
An Iraqi woman cries  
as her son is dead  
under the stones of bombs  
"Where is God!"

Where is God?

God is the dice of our very own bones  
being rolled over everyone's graves

We roll the bones of each other  
in games of free choice  
Which tumble the fates about  
with each and every life,  
thrown away,  
every day

What choices have you made?  
Who's grave have you rolled over today?

## ===== Paths =====

You cannot be handed the Tao-Te Ching and magically discover a doctrine of belief. This offers a real problem for a Taoist, as each Taoist must find a personal path and acceptance of inner faith. While Taoist texts will offer hints for living wisely, they will not open up the universe's door with a set of SUV keys to 4-wheel-drive thru bramble patches. Instead these books speak in metaphors: *"Flow as a river undercutting around the bramble bush and have a nice day."* Taoist texts will often elaborate telling you: *"When falling off a cliff directly into the brambles, consider how amazing and flexible the brambles are in their nature, helping in part to break your fall, then with calmness, let gravity tumble you clear of the brambles"*. At this point most readers stop and wonder what the hell they just read. Some people actually prefer to be told or taught directly how to live, which many organized religions happily try to do. This means many religious texts will just say *"Thou shalt not jump in the bramble bush"*. Taoism instead encourages a person to just be themselves and explore the brambles.

The problem I have with many religions is being told directly what faith should be, which ends up as someone else's version of faith. This, in turn, means people are left to break tenets of their religious background or belief system, in order to be themselves. This creates an internal battle between their nature and an imposed outside vision. Everyone has some variation in their being; it's part of our humanity. Taoism has the advantage of always being practiced to your own faith, as you actively pursue what feels right instead of what has been labeled as right. Nothing is more natural than being a Taoist. It's being true to the self. The bigger problem is discovering your nature and what inner faith holds true for you.

My upbringing was Taoist, yet my parents didn't practice Taoism. My father was an atheist, my mother an animist, and my friends were various Christian denominations. Strangely, my parents and other adults never tried too hard to impose any of their own nature onto my soul. Instead, I was left alone to wander to the whims of my nature. Some days I would just meander along a river all day, some days I would just talk to different people listening to their life stories, some days I would play with the trees, and other days I would explore and mix into the streets of New York City. Since I didn't cause too many problems, I was returned the courtesy of unhampered freedom. In this wandering, I discovered myself and later realized it was also called Taoism. The path was surprisingly simple. When coming across something that made sense, I tried it. Over time I discarded items which didn't feel right, discovering the wisdom of newer truths, all the while always permitting myself to just be myself.

I discovered that truth is ever shifting, based mainly upon perception; living recommends a path of shifting along. Truth breaks when a person doesn't flow with the reality of the world. At this point it should be mentioned that we have inner truth and outer truths. Overall truth is the balance between these inner and outer truths. In searching for truth, at some point a person will encounter religion. No matter how much one searches the outside world, at some point, inner personal questions surface which cannot be resolved by simple observation or interaction with the outer world. Religion is one of many tools which can be used to help find answers to difficult questions.

If you are secure and know yourself truly, and know your faith is true, then skip the rest of this section. Your path is true, and that is wonderful and indeed you are finding your own Personal Tao.

If you are wondering and have doubts: seemingly can't find answers that make sense with religions you encounter. Many other people have the same problem. I watch people who try so hard to find a religion that fits them. Looking, trying on churches like clothes, reading different spiritual texts, trying out recommendations of others... looking some more, and then some more and more and more: All the searching becomes "evermores"... Each act of reaching out is like a fly, flies buzzing around, which end up being distractions that we swat away. The buzz isn't about finding a religion; it's a search to establish a firm acceptance of ourselves and the larger universe. The goal is a "surety of self" within the tumbling tide of life.

Religions come with a pre-packaged set of practices to help guide one into that surety of self. Of course seemingly countless religious packages exist. Typically, people make due with something which feels close to the mark or with the religion that was handed to them at the start of their lives. Living like this, just making due, can leave one with constant doubt, anxiety and feeling lost.

Finding self doesn't have to be a process of discovering religion (or scientific facts). Religions (and Science) are both a path for discovering how a person fits in with the world. So to those having problems trying to find something which feels right, the solution is simple: Flip the spiritual quest around and instead spend some time with yourself. Begin writing a journal, which in turn will become a set of personal scriptures to help discover how to be yourself. A person needs only to accept themselves, to find their place within the larger world. It's accepting the bad -the absolution- which is often the greatest gift of a religion. This absolution is the gift of acceptance. A beautiful event within religion is when a clergy member takes the time to truly accept you first; this makes it easier in turn to accept yourself later. It's a spiritual trick to aid someone to learn how to accept themselves. So the spiritual practice of any religion can be understood as accepting yourself for your own nature, which becomes wondrous upon the acceptance. Religions teach this from the outside while Taoism teaches this from our inner selves. Both paths are options; it's just a question of how to reach the goal.



## **Living Guidelines**

Creating a personal map<sup>1</sup> to the soul offers both insight and direction to clear away many obstacles we encounter within life. The first step is to list the principles behind our actions. Writing such a list was a critical milestone in my spiritual growth. It opened my life to be lived rather than just passing the time. I am in no way stating other people should live to these guidelines. Instead this is the process I used to come to terms, with my own personal acceptance of living. These “guidelines” shift with the movement of my life.

Realistically, guidelines don't determine how I live;  
instead by living I will express who I am.

With care, I aid those who are extended expressions of my nature.

My children, partners, parents, friends, pets, any spirit who lives within my essence: are all extensions of my own nature. I must take the time to care appropriately for those who are dependant upon my own nature. This is an ever changing and shifting balance. Blind co-dependence is not something I encourage, as it subtracts from my nature. However, mutual sharing of spirit is very beneficial as it enhances my nature. Caring for the ones I love thusly fulfills a major part of my own essence.

Be true to myself

If I cannot be true to myself, I end up destroying myself. I cannot aid another by destroying myself. Even if it means disappointing others, it's important to take care of my very own nature.

To those in my heart, it's better to disappoint than to disappear.  
To those outside of my spirit its better to disappear than disappoint.

I cannot give away my soul to another, as to do so would destroy that nature. My spirit can freely entangle with others, but our nature is always uniquely our own. Giving your soul away is to not be true to yourself.

Connect to the world as I want to be treated.

My actions reflect back to me on every level.

While I can act as I please, I also have no desire for people to treat me without respect. I will almost always try to treat others with respect and patience. At times, I will act outside this rule, since to gain respect sometimes means responding to people using their own rules which can be quite different than mine.

1) Many different maps exist. One of my favorites is the mandala. Navajo and Buddhist traditions use the mandala to create a visual map to our spiritual world. Not every principle can be expressed in words, many times the best way to reveal something is art itself.

Connect to those outside my nature with decisive action.

It subtracts from my nature to give mixed signals to others. When connecting to something or someone outside me, the way I represent myself reinforces my own nature. When dealing with those outside of my spirit, I will be decisive and clear in my actions.

I have learned part of acting decisively is to base actions clearly on my own nature.

To those unwilling to accept me for my true nature, I will then reflect them.

To some this means I am a chameleon, blending in. To others I will seem to be a fool. In either case it's a waste of time trying to convince people about who I am. I am always myself. But it's foolish to not accept each person as uniquely themselves. To those unwilling to accept me I often will reflect them. In most cases it typically means I become the fool. Perhaps I do this to protect myself, at times I do this in the hopes I will shatter a tarnished mirror. But I act the fool when, {as quite simply}, I just wish to be left alone. Most people (even those who once loved you) leave fools blissfully alone.

Now to illustrate why these are living guidelines

Having been the chameleon for many years, and having played the part of the fool, I have come to the conclusion that either role, while a quite safe place, is no longer a place I wish to hide.

This rule has changed recently to become:

To those unwilling to accept me for my true nature, no action is required: just silently let them be themselves as I remain myself.

Once in my life I was a chameleon and a fool. Those were part of my nature, to protect myself as I needed time to develop and grow in a culture which almost crushed my spirit. Now that I have fully and truly accepted my nature I can shed these aspects, safely becoming myself. I am grateful for the time within the protection of those two roles and a chance to try out the many different aspects the role of chameleon and fool permitted me to experience. But for now I have settled into a more reflective role. In time I will change again.

I own nothing: I am merely a passing custodian of items outside of my nature.

I pretty much share everything. Thinking I own something is an illusion. I might hold control over something, but possession is not ownership. The moment I believe I own something is the moment I am no longer free to be my own nature. I openly share what I have with **those who show respect to the items and myself**. A custodian has a responsibility of respect; a person who shares with me, has the responsibility of returning some respect back. When multiple people become a custodian of an item, I am more careful on how openly the item gets shared as I must also respect and consider the other custodians.

I have found these guidelines have been a way to live unselfishly: helping others freely and openly is a direct result of being true to my nature.

This is a very nice way to live. It leads to a balance of becoming part of an ever growing community of those I love and connect to within life.

===== Paths =====

Here are two stories from my path as samples of the guiding principles within my life.

Example of caring for those whom I love, while being true to myself.

Olympia is a special place; unfortunately the Pacific Northwest is the source of a few pretty serious allergies which cause me quite a bit of pain. For health reasons, I would have long ago meandered to Central America or other warmer climates better suited to my nature. However, after my divorce I didn't want to leave my two children. That left me in a terrible position. Stay somewhere which was literally tearing my mind and shredding my body (severe allergies can really mess a person up I discovered), or to leave which would have consequences for my children. Several additional factors in the situation left me at a point of internal conflict.

I decided to stay in Olympia for my children, but I also decided the reason to stay in Olympia should be to support my nature. I had a need to understand the depression, and as it later turned out the allergies which were the source of that depression. I decided my staying in Olympia needed to be the time to understand why it felt like the Pacific Northwest was driving me away. The reason to stay was to discover more about myself. The solution took years to uncover. I had to stop and examine my nature. I spent time to understand my needs thru activities such as spoken word poetry to closely examine my mind and spirit. I learned more about my body, beginning to seriously explore yoga and martial arts which healed my physical self, and in turn strengthened my overall system to better resist the allergies. I spent time to determine what foods I should or shouldn't eat, as it turned out food also played a role in the allergies. I then discovered how the body works internally, so I could perform deep internal exercises to aid my liver and kidneys, which in turn helped purify the body of the allergens. All these activities led me to discover interconnections between mind, body and spirit. Over 5 years I took the time to understand myself so I could also support those I love. As a result of this hard work, patience and time I was able to be true to myself and care for my children.

Many times staying and not running is the hardest thing a person can do

Everyday, I lie to myself  
"I can leave whenever I wish"

Everyday I say this. Everyday I stay  
Beaten bruises should push me away  
I stay  
Hiding tears, pain, truth  
Hide it in lies, smiles and fantasy

It doesn't matter  
Everyday losing something more of myself  
Everyday laying a little longer,  
picking myself off the ground, slowly, to continue this play

Every night I lie to myself.  
Going to sleep, it feels so easy  
Maybe the gray, the midnight dark will stay, keep the day away

It doesn't, it never does.

Leaving me to morning, another day  
Saying: "I can leave whenever I wish"

Could have, should have, would have left  
Living, living free, not beaten, to be true to life, is who you are  
Is what calls, howls in my dreams

**No!**

As much as I want to flee  
Truth, true to my life, means to love others...  
It's returning love in my children's eyes  
It's helping friends beaten to the ground  
with my hand so they may walk again.

Silently unknowingly:  
These loved ones pick me up off the ground everyday.

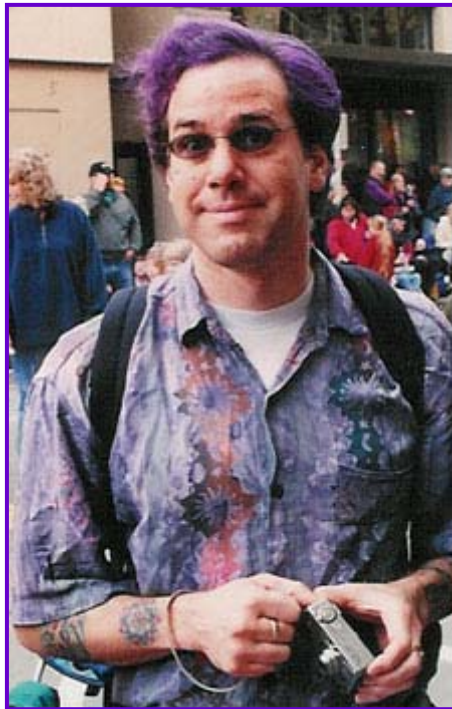
I won't lie  
I will leave someday  
It just won't be today

Allow time to discover yourself, a process that spans an entire lifetime.

Story of connecting to those outside my nature with decisive action.

One evening, Julie and I were walking home. Along the way, a pitbull attacked us. In that moment I acted decisively. I became my full self and demanded directly to the dog to stand down. The dog and I sized each other up in one of those perfect seconds that last a little longer than a second. The dog reacted as if I would have taken it down completely<sup>1</sup> because I knew and decisively told the dog as much with my full expression of self. Then the pitbull walked away. If I didn't act as myself, if I had any mixed emotions, doubts or fear, the pitbull would have then had doubt about my nature, and it would have attacked me, since a pitbull's nature is to attack when in doubt. Instead Julie and I walked away 5 seconds later with no harm to anyone. While this is an extreme example, in some aspects, it shows the truth of clearly communicating with decisiveness.

1) Just because I am a Taoist and peaceful 99% of the time doesn't mean I am always passive. Being a Taoist means always living relative to your nature and the situation you are within. If a situation requires forceful actions then you need to be prepared to use forceful actions with full commitment.



Procession of the Species Olympia WA, 2003  
Photo by Kris Hicks-Green

Me

Poet, Sage (not all sages have grey hair),  
Father, Lover, Casey, Former Fool,  
Boy, Man, Patterner, Author, Chameleon,  
Wind, Dragon, Sun, Cat,  
Once upon a time even a Purple Jester  
Joyful  
Countless  
nouns and adjectives  
- trying and defining one a day -

Explorer

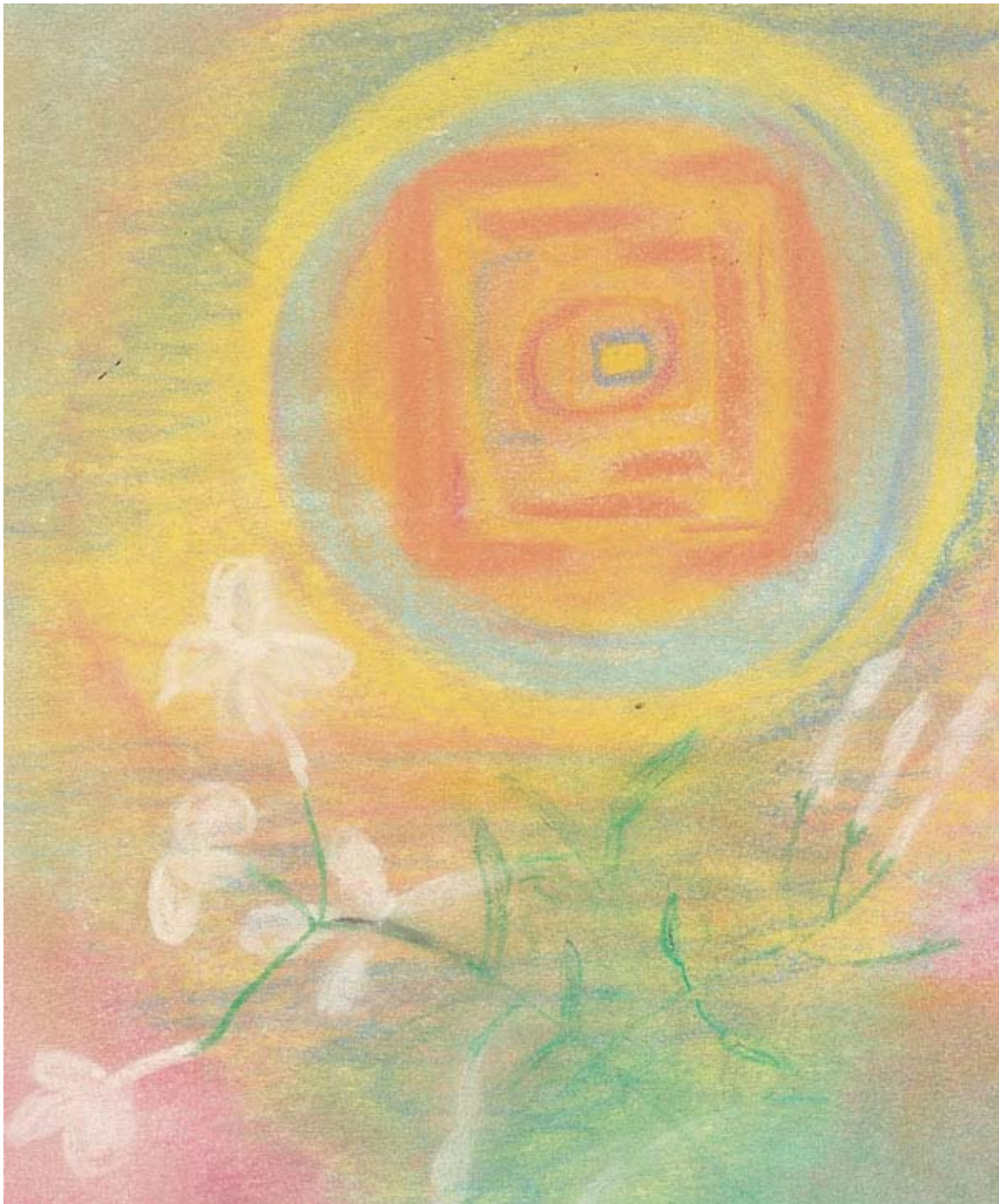
Always myself  
NO matter what appearance<sup>1</sup> is playing<sup>2</sup>

We are what we are, be true to your own guidelines  
ever following the tumbling stars strewn along the way

- 1) Don't underestimate appearance. While it's a shell, we still gain strength and protection from our appearance. It's a powerful form of magic being a shape shifter and controlling your appearance.
- 2) Be warned appearance is often a shell game of ego. There is no power, only deception, in these shell games.



## **Jasmine**



Time is meaningless  
Touching across time: Connecting back to Summer Jasmine



Exhale 2005



JA 05

what might/have be/en

---

Mixing in the mind,  
life like fantasies:  
dreaming of what might have been.  
In so many different ways  
at so many different times,  
looking to the past, clearly seen -are-  
countless choices, countless possibilities

--- Yet, only one happens. ---

----- Flip perspective. -----

Looking to the future.  
Looking towards  
Fortune tellers, Astrological charts and Soothsayers  
As if  
only one choice  
only one possibility  
existed

Cruxes and puzzles  
Looking to the past, desiring so many changes.  
While  
Looking to the future, wishing only one option.

In this perspective  
So many ways, So many people  
Living backwards.

Simpler just swirling  
Watching, embracing, acting out  
As leaves tumbling to the wind, as they may  
As our lives: happen regardlessly  
mixing with the wind

Should this be written about something missing in your life? Why? Life is filled with everything you make it to be. Ignore the blame games<sup>1</sup>, ignore what might be, even empower yourself to say “fuck it” to the past. What do you really want, here and now? Go, go now, only you can write the directions for this path. The directions are embedded in your feet. No one else will give you the car keys: in fact, there is no car. Just walk and go.

===== Paths =====  
 a period is a fiction, nothing stops, don't stop, even if by doing nothing,  
 Just Go

## **Animals**

My cat Ishtar knows kung-fu. I have watched her perform spinning back flip kicks against me in the middle of the night to initiate play. We then get into these sumo wrestling matches. This interaction with Ishtar makes me think about how we connect with animals. Humans have a special talent for empathy, to feel and touch the experience of other life. How would it change society if humanity embraced the value of empathy as much as cash?

### **Note**

I removed roughly one page of material here... Ishtar couldn't make out a single word I was writing...

It's all too easy for us to get lost within our words. Ishtar reminds me living is never a matter of words.

Ishtar is a cat  
A very rare cat  
Who knows physics.

To the world  
The ever crazy world  
Ishtar is merely a blur.

However,  
Ishtar never moves  
Ishtar never flinches  
Ishtar knows relativity  
It's all a matter of sitting  
The world dancing in a blur.

It is easy  
to play all day  
It is easy  
to be as velcro  
to a curtain  
or even  
the occasional human.

All it takes is the simple use  
of claws and physics

A wise cat  
only needs to sit  
letting the world  
spin around the paws.

Yes  
Ishtar is a cat  
A very rare cat  
who knows physics  
in space & time  
is merely a matter of  
paws and claws

===== Paths =====

When possible, Ishtar and I siesta under the sun. When required, we hunt for our needs. When bored, we kick out to stir up the wonder of the world.

Life is not about complexities or simplicity.  
Living instead flows to the beat of needs and feelings.

And empathy?  
Living to feelings includes  
Coming to harmony within a surrounding emotional ocean.

## **Expectations**

When asked what Taoism is, I often respond: Having no expectations.

Stop here and pause: for a few seconds, think about the following:  
What are *your* expectations in life? What do **you** expect from reading this?

Ok... I will doodle to the side, while you ponder the questions ~\* ^-^ { @ } :^)

In this doodle time, as the author I begin to wonder: What are *my* expectations right now... and fuck! ¿What am I thinking... my expectations about writing on expectations? This is just an imprisoning feedback loop of pondering expectations... it's ludicrous. I am typing this, at this very very moment and I am also looking out the door seeing a rain, a rain of cherry petals, mixing out of the open doorway, in the front yard, spinning in the air as snow, in pinkish leaves, down, down to the grass, mixing to dark green grass... an ocean of wind, whisking floating waves as clouds adding their persistence as wind rolling against the earth, a cool nipping, mixing to the raining of softest petals.

Part of me now is still thinking as an engineer: my thoughts  
{*build a map, determine past and future expectations, list the changes, chart patterns of unfulfilled expectations...*}

The same moment, the poet side of my nature slaps me to the curb telling me  
just to stop

Don't do anything, stop for a moment  
Feel the breath, touching fingers, feeling soft lips pushing a deep breath,  
Break free not in thinking, but in action  
Eyes close down... - - , and then, I walked away from this



...

{To outside of here}

Right **now I am** typing, **now** 10 minutes ago I was just under a cherry tree, witnessing flower petals dancing upon the wind.

**Right now** you are reading this in my distant future....

These moments are connected  
All these **nows**, tied together as the very same moment, all the same, we are together, because there are **no** expectations, **Right now** we aren't boxing ourselves into manmade boundaries. Instead we are flowing to a larger world, pushing us up and out of chairs, mixing in with spring's scent of lilac highlighted to the sound of the wind hopping between trees.



**Right now**, I am stopping every expectation of writing, to instead skip into a flow, inviting you now, by merely sharing this page, to experience spring with me.

Discovery isn't forced thru narrow expectations. Instead join in with this barefooted walking away from trying to define limits. Feel an Olympian touch of spring as a collection of fallen petals just collected are now drying upon this very keyboard I am typing upon, becoming part of living in the here and now.



If people live in a culture where personal value is based upon expectation,  
what happens when discovering life  
exceeds any bounds of expectation.

Is your nature enough to fulfill yourself?  
Or  
Will you limit your nature upon expectation?

## ===== Thoughts =====

An expectation isn't reality. It's a hope of things to be, a useful tool in a fortune telling sort of way, charting a course of action.

Expectations: a package deal, bundled down with an emotional ribbon of attachment. It's the attachment which forms the core problem of expectation. The advantage of attachment is that a person gains additional strength by personalizing a process. However, the counterbalancing issue: life constantly changes, or we encounter other people with attachments to plans opposite of our own intention<sup>1</sup>.

I have personally discovered that very rarely do I meet my expectations. For this reason I personally ignore expectations most of the time. It takes too much energy to attach and then un-attach myself constantly, trying to fit to the whimsy of the world. I have chucked the expectation routine out the door. Much like the intro to this section, discovering the world presents constant opportunities: to change, try alternative paths, find smoother answers to your goals. It makes life less stressful, when living openly in this manner.

I have also discovered that with enough will and enough determination many impossible things become real, yet in this path the world will push back, cracking our soul, aging us till we fit properly within a newer balance. Force always reacts back with an equal force.

So in this, I have found it to be a truer path by flowing actions with the world. Let the world itself assist you in the endeavor of your plans. This way, when the world uses force against you, then ironically that force can be redirected back to empower your actions.

In the end, I still *plan* all the time, but the trick is not getting overly attached to those plans. This permits a flowing process of change from plan to plan or from plan to happenstance, or happenstance to plan: life and I just shift along. At times I still get attached to a few plans, but I have learned to pick and choose those times carefully to match the needs of my spirit.

1) Often times, since we misunderstand our own intentions, we ourselves end up in direct opposition of our own expectations. Our own conflicting expectations often cancel out, causing personal failures in overly forced actions.



While living to your expectations doesn't go against the Tao per se, it is as opposite to the Tao as I can define. Expectations are a methodology to force the world to fit to your mold, compared to the typical Taoist response of accepting / flowing along with the world as it happens. Yet each Personal Tao is unique, meaning for some, it's in their nature to hammer the world into an expectation. Typically I have noticed these individuals tend to be the most amazingly fantastic builders/creators equally counter-balanced with discontentment over the products of their life. These are the individuals constantly on the move to hammer down yet another outstanding flaw or problem, never to discover completion, as their contentment comes from the chase of perfection itself. This, in turn, ends up being their Personal Tao.

Living to expectation limits the nature of the Tao, to self imagination. Imagination is powerful, but we have definite limits. As much as I can imagine, or as much as a single person could express, an infinitely larger realm exists outside of how we each define life. Living to expectations, limits a person to a very small slice of what is available to live. Even worse, people lead ever diminishing lives when basing personal self worth upon their expectations. Is "*self worth*" a unit of production?<sup>1</sup> If expectations are rarely met, how does it reflect within our personal self value or upon our relationships based purely upon expectation? Living to expectation ends up leaving quite a few people unfulfilled, leading very limited lives.

1) The consumer society has an interesting twist to this expectation puzzle. The consumer society manages expectations by teaching people that contentment is something purchased at wholesale. The majority of the United States' economy is based on a pyramid scheme of expectations within an "*American dream*" to be materially well off and comfortable.

## ===== Paths =====

I am often asked how can one live free of expectations.

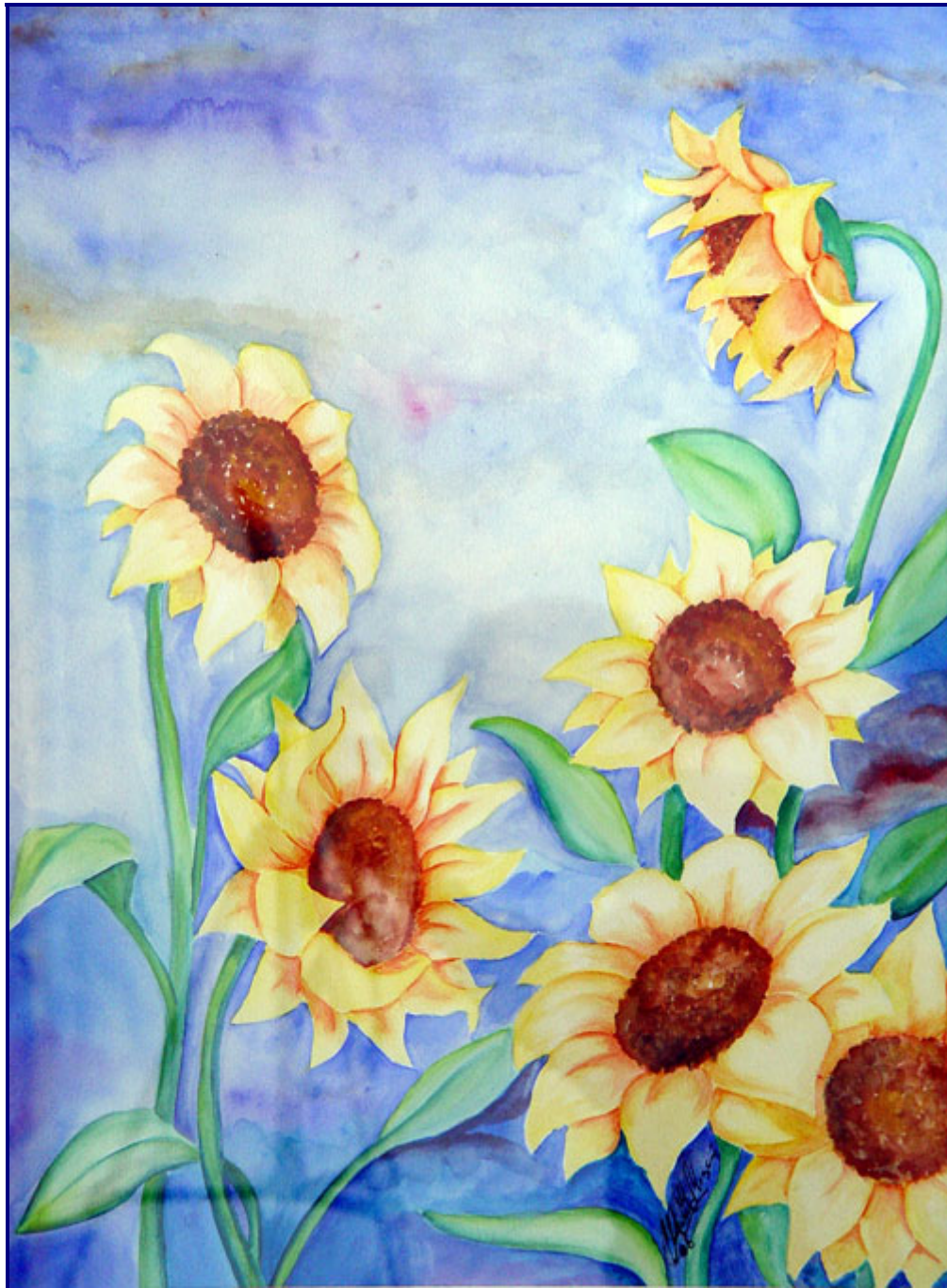
The answer is to dream a thousand dreams. I reveal these dreams to myself and over time to others. This confuses people as they mistake these dreams as statements of action, as something I will do. I suppose the dreams are presented to others in a matter of fact form, a proto plan, like placing a seed into the soil to grow. Dreams and seeds are very similar. Dreams require a mixture of your own essence and outside reality to germinate. In this sense, your soul is the soil, and speaking the dream aloud is to blow a spark of life that others help fertilize. These are the conditions to germinate a strong dream. Many dreams will not grow, but some will reach for the sky, and those end up as the bean stalks upon which legends are fed.

Some would say this is setting intention, but closer to the mark, this is placing your spirit truthfully into the dream. As many dreams strangely become a reality for myself, people seemingly expect this is who I am, that the dream was my path, my expected destination. Not the case! As dreams shift, no dream can be a whole statement; in fact they almost always shift in time, randomly, meaning I end up doing something other than the original idea or dream itself. I haven't changed, nothing has changed; I merely unfolded with the plan, with the dream as it happened. Yet the expectations that others had of my life were broken, since it didn't follow a pre-determined course of action. How could it? It started as dream, which got bounced around by others, layering additional dimensions. The world buffets it around, then suddenly everything is placed in a position where another dream is a closer fit, and the whole process starts again taking everyone wonderfully along for the ride.

Most of the time, as the world knows of my dreams, the world and my friends help some of these dreams become true. More often the case, dreams remain a dream and it passes quickly by as a pleasant daydream. Other times old dreams reawaken and become reality, simply because everything takes a while to align. Having had the dreams, having told others, allows a long lever of time, of the years, to work in my favor; it permits me to notice when everything is right. Then when it all feels right, to then leap the dream into reality.

This is a question of style. Some of us are built out of brick and mortar; solid engineered perfection. Others of us float to our dreams; ever shifting to the whims, the currents, the clouds. The challenge is to avoid getting trapped by expectations while permitting plans and dreams to flow freely to your needs.

## **Cuttings**



Sunflowers - Christian Ethan Mosconi 2005

Not all flowers bloom, lying on the cutting room floor.  
A person will not touch a Personal Tao by cutting oneself down.

## **Speaking Out**

This isn't poetry of the page  
 This is... is this?. This is...  
 Me reaching out to gently touch you

I have been looking for my voice

In their voice my voice stuttering, other voices merging to  
       shouts uttering muttering confusion  
       jamming my words  
       leaving world noise crashing into me  
       It shuts me down

Everyone pretends  
 to be something else  
 People trying to be: loudest, sweetest, prettiest, smartest  
                               est est est, always est  
                               pretending to be est

I have been looking for my voice  
       to get attention  
       my voice trying to be someone else  
 Being taught to make noise is to feel alive  
 Pretending to be  
                               est, smoothest, est coolest, est est est  
 Those est actions might speak louder than words  
 but they aren't me

I don't want  
                               noise  
 I want,                              to float  
 Words like wind,                  to move,                  just to move  
  
 I need my voice to reach out...                  as me

To find my voice  
 I will change the rules  
 shift the world  
 with gentle words  
 lift the world  
 so you might hear what I have to say

I have been looking for my voice  
 Because without it  
 I am alone

I am not alone  
 Speaking now quietly  
 It becomes possible to hear... you  
 Its hearing you...  
 You hearing me...  
 In sharing  
 That alone goes away

In sharing...  
 I found my voice

## ===== Paths =====

## Why live pretending to be someone else?

To learn of myself, I explored spoken word<sup>1</sup> poetry. On one level, becoming a spoken word poet was an interesting choice, as later I remembered, oh yah: I have this lisp. I know I have a lisp, but it doesn't define me to me. Over the years the lisp has relaxed quite a bit, to be very minimal, but it's a part of me and while I never hear my lisp, at times I remember and smile knowing it's there to distinctly mark me. It's funny, I remember being eight years old and purposely making the decision to keep the lisp. I knew it was wrong to have others tell me how I should define myself.

The importance of my becoming a spoken word artist was to learn how to focus an experience into a coherent topic for direct communication with others<sup>2</sup>. My written-word poetry in comparison was turned inward for self communication. Over time my poetry has merged into combining aspects of both spoken word and written word. The spoken word poetry tends to expose my actions and feelings to the world (body and spirit), while the written poetry moves with the spinning of my mind. Combining these two forms helps me discover a more complete expression of my own nature.

The lesson I learned from being both a spoken and written word artist is how we are each a poem of our own personal expression. Our portraits glimmer from many different angles of expression. Finding ourselves is as much a matter of speaking out loud, as to think and accept what we feel inside. We have to speak to be heard, for silent we only take upon our internal meaning, and the corresponding nature that others will assign to us.

Read the poems in the book aloud and within your mind and you will discover different meanings in each poem. The poem in this section especially calls out to be read aloud to a mirror, to an audience. Discover that your own nature calls out to be spoken for.

- 1) Spoken word poetry is quite different than written poetry. The word choices and grammar are changed entirely for verbal impact. When spoken, the poet mixes in body language for additional meaning. The words tend to be very exposing while nuances are carried thru voice tone. Another difference is that the mental medium is quite different: a listening mind interprets language differently than the mind which reads a poem. Overall the spoken word style is a very vibrant, dynamic performance art which reveals our humanity in raw and cutting angles. Performing spoken word becomes a disturbingly honest opening of one's soul revealed for all to see and hear. When done to form, it isn't acting; it's performance art of a very personal nature.
- 2) If someone else cannot understand my writing, then it is often true that I don't truly understand my poetry.

## **Mantra**

The sound of our soul, echo's in our breath.

===== Thoughts =====

A mantra is a simple harmony. Mantras are statements, sounding out of ourselves, repeated, repeating, spun outward into vibration, repeating ever again until a connection to understanding occurs.

***Right now you are working upon a mantra.***

The greatest mantra is one we all have, each and every day, hundreds, upon thousands of countless statements, which we call...

### **Breath**

Breath itself is the personal mantra of our life. 20,000 times day, a person tells the world in whispers, sighs, shouts, words, gasps, breathing in and out: the mantra of their life, twenty thousand times a day:

### **Breath**

This mantra is our nature:

Do you take a breath, a deep breath to relax within?

In road rage, do you shout slapping breaths of "Fuck you"?

Ever hit yourself in a sharp intake of breath?

What is the beat of your breath when pushing yourself?

Do you taste the scent of spring upon an inhalation?

Each instance, each breath is our personal mantra expressing our nature. To reveal yourself, pay attention to this personal mantra. More powerfully make it a practice, learning to work with your breath; improving and actually experiencing the statement of your life. Many practices exist to help a person focus in how breath moves life along. Practices of breathing might surprise you; it isn't all Yoga and Taoist ways. As an example, I discovered becoming a spoken word artist was also my personal mantra of how to express and live within the breath of speaking aloud my nature. You can be your own guide, in learning to live within breath.

The start of any breathing practice is simple: understand that your breath is with you at this very moment. Take the first step in, *feel*, knowing life moves relative to the inner metronome tempo that's within breath itself.





===== Paths =====

It doesn't take the last breath of life to discover your personal mantra.  
Why do people express wishes upon a dying breath....  
When within life, we each have 20,000 chances a day to make those wishes true?

For some, 20,000 chances a day is a bit overwhelming to ponder. So my path is simple: It only takes one breath, one action timed within the breath, to make a wish come true. Take the time to notice and act upon a breath once a day, once a month, once in a while: all these actions do add up to make a difference.

It just means not using your last breath to do so.

## **Illuminating the Empty Space**

We are the light of our own empty space.

===== What is the Empty Space? =====

Take some clay. Feel it in your hands. Now spin it upon a potter's wheel. What is shaped? A bowl comes out. However, the bowl is defined by an empty space, a space enclosed by the bowl's very form. The empty space holds the water, fulfilling the purpose of the bowl. The actual physical form of the bowl is reflected by the empty space it projects. The final use and form of the bowl is determined in the moment of artistry used to spin out the shape.

In this example the bowl is made from clay. The clay forms the body, but the actual bowl projects out as more than a clay shell; it must include the "empty space" in its definition. In fact a bowl is more about the "empty space" than the materials comprising the bowl.

In living, we each have a physical form which is mirrored by an empty space. The process of shaping this space is the very definition of a person's free will.

Free will is the ability to express the very nature of the empty space. Free will is the whim of the moment, the place before the dream, the moment of shaping.

In part, our initial empty space is formed by parents, elders, teachers, culture, our bodies and tendencies of the mind. Yet each person has an incredible degree of freedom to shape his or her own empty space. At certain times this process is more dramatic than others, such as being a teenager, or experiencing a mid-life crisis. These moments stand out as a time to question earlier frameworks that shaped our forms. These times can be difficult due to the twisting of our core shape and beliefs: a time when our very nature is in flux. Often a person reshapes their empty space without the benefit of outside perspective, adding to the frustration and chances of something "breaking". A person never truly breaks, but radically changing one's own empty space reflects out to form a vastly different person after the experience.

===== Consciousness =====

Consciousness is the awareness of one's empty space.

To fill the empty space painters splash out art, poets weave words, scientists document facts, parents embrace children, prophets preach, couch potatoes watch television... and the list goes on. The point is: being conscious, people feel a need to fill this space.

As the physical form is an accessible part of our being, some conclude that the empty space must likewise be filled with something physical, something tangible. Others feel the mind should provide a definable label for their reflected nature. This is the very search for the meaning of life: a person trying to figure out what to place within their empty space.

The meaning of life isn't something that fills the empty space.

Perhaps this is why people have such a hard time defining the soul. We know the soul includes the empty space. For some the soul takes on the ethereal aspects of the empty space as the indefinable qualities of life. A Taoist knows the soul is always at hand. To be an artist is to touch and reveal the empty space of the soul.

The meaning of life is the artistry to craft the empty space.

===== Paths =====

It's time to come full circle in the book.

Another definition of the Tao is that it's the empty space.

A Personal Tao could be described as the process of defining one's empty space. It's the expression of free will to have a hand in shaping your own empty space. Free will means no single, predefined final form to this empty space is forced upon a person. The empty space is defined only upon using and completely living life. Yes a limit exists to the number of destinations that are available, yet living is the freedom of action to shape our life.

Instead of worrying about the shape of life, follow Wu-Wei, flow to what feels right without thought: express the empty space with peace, love and exploration. Such action becomes true artistry upon one's soul.

The only limit being the imagination itself.  
Be free, be yourself.

## **Personal Closings**

Within time, i shall fade away  
closing eyes merging so

Within time, i shall fly away  
closing eyes to softly go

Within time, i shall be free  
closing myself; tasting fiery darkness

Within time, everything clears  
closing eyes slowly opening

Within time: beginning to ending  
opening senses enfold completeness

Within time, i shall be newly born  
opening myself, revealing me

Within myself, becoming eternal  
{ merging softly to darkness}  
opening completely  
revealing me

...

This is an intensely personal poem of self reflection<sup>1</sup>. For me, the poem corresponds to events in my life: fading with depression, watching damselflies, catching fireflies, discovering personal awareness, flowing with personal acceptance, awakening in renewal and a final surrendering to my nature. The poem combines with the following story:

As a child I would close my eyes  
Discovering a place of no thought, no action, no feeling  
Into the empty place of completeness and nothingness  
... Revealing the Tao ...  
As an adult I close my eyes  
Having the sun enwrap me in a breeze of peace  
Touching  
Life across time: of all moments, which touch upon me.  
Touching upon a larger eternal nature  
Discovering freedom to be what I am.

I can merge this into a vocalization of feelings:

***... Acceptance mixing with wonder ...***

Of understanding ***my*** Personal Tao ...

**To be alive touches upon the creation of my own swirling path.**

...

1) This page is a personal ending purely for me ☺ , coming to closure with my Personal Tao.

## ***Endings***

Writing the book's first ending, ***Closings***, was a major, life-changing moment: I had finally managed to grasp a Personal Tao. After finishing it, I had others review the work. One friend cried upon reading it, while another read the last section and crossed it out. The range of response surprised me but illustrates how personal the Tao is for each of us.

This book has been a guide; opening paths of discovery into the empty space of living. I have gone as far as I can, literally to the edge of my own pattern. A Personal Tao continues within the journals of your life; as a time of exploration, action and freedom. Beyond this is a realm of revelations: the uncovering of secrets to fill your empty space. This becomes a work we all contribute towards. Each person testing the world, jotting down notes to consider, taking the time to be alive: discovering a Personal Tao...

Over time I will post ***Closings*** from others upon the [Personal Tao](http://www.personaltao.com) web site.

I sincerely hope this book is of some assistance to you, as it has been for me.

...

/ A gentle bow \

**Peace on your journey.**

**Namaste**