

**Queer Quests, Weird Ways:  
A Playful Nowhere  
of Calls, Scribbles, and Meanderings**

by

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A Wandering Mountain Dog

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## **DEDICATION**

For all the Mountain Dogs hunting for Hope along the Way:

Keep faith in this shared Loving Struggle toward Freedom.



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## **Acknowledgments**

This collection of “wandering wonderment” contains thinkering that connects in some way to my dissertation but did not quite fit into the main body. At one time, I thought of having it as an appendix to that more formal work but then decided to make it an updatable electronic document for sharing with students in the courses I teach.

I want to thank my spouse, Christopher J. Peterson, for all the times they have steered me back onto the Path of my philosophizing. Teaching, writing, and thinkering would be nothing without them. I certainly would have no hope of completing my certification for PhD without them.

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I know I have forgotten too many who have kept me thinking—but I hope even those not mentioned know my profound appreciation for the time and energy shared with me.

## §0. Walking the line...

Look at all the lines written left to right, top to bottom; bottom to top, right to left.

So many things named and recorded. I have thousands of pages that I have scrawled over the last forty years across many dozens of notebooks and hundreds of e-texts.

And now, as I complete my “formal education” (at last!), I am asked to *name* my current research, to *record* my current thinking, to *perfect* a line of thought followable by others... All so that the great many outside my circle of friends can locate me as quickly as possible through the addition of a few letters to my linear name signifying, “The aforementioned understands MANY things (even if it is MANY about ONE): Keith “Maggie” Brown, *Ph.D.*

That is the point of all my labor since 2020... to bend my thinking to communicability. And it is more labor than work since linearity requires thinking to be *re-straightened* every time something queer, eerie, or weird—i.e. extraordinary—irrupts into academia’s ordinary environment.



*The human is the paradoxical being who is occupied by the thought of the immense and the immeasurable, who lives in the slipstream of the universe, in the shadow of death, in the toil of work, in the struggle for dominion, in the fragile happiness of love—and in play that portrays. Perhaps contemplating play is a thread that will not, indeed, lead me out of the labyrinth of questions, but deeper into them.<sup>1</sup>*



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<sup>1</sup> Eugen Fink, 2017, 70.

## §1 “Inward Egress”

Nowhere

beforehand...

I am at zero.

Go anywhere:

The first move makes objective advancement

no matter the direction.

Afterward...

all progress is subjective.

## §2 “System Warning”

The moral of *Foucault's Pendulum* by Umberto Eco:

***Don't let your metaphysics become your mechanics.***

### §3 “Frolicking intent”

How does play?

To play-along is call-and-response (improvisation).

To play-in is to introduce (prelude)

To play-between is to occupy (interlude)

To play-out is to run-the-time (postlude)

To play-off is to pretend ignorance (irony)

To play-around is to be promiscuous (openness)

To play-with is to manipulate (shapeability)

To play-against is to struggle (communication)

To play-for is to represent (involvement)

To play-to is to perform (persuasion)

#### §4 “Shadow march”

The weight of writing a book of essays, the burden of dissertating: breaking up my thinking against the rocks of other people’s ideas.

So here I am staring back and forth between my years of handwritten notebooks, my iPad with its library of thousands of pdfs and ebooks (all annotated), my bookcases filled with another two thousand books (some annotated), and my computer screen where I am laying out “my” thinking. Amid that back and forth I am tangled up in a theme: Meaningfulness on the margins.

How much does any meaning have to do with laying flat an object of study until there is no depth?

Or do a majority of meanings reside where some shadows allow for seeing above/below, within/without?

Or does the most-meaningful, the true fullness of sense-making, depend on a kind of *mindful emptiness* where language fails: A stumbling silence before the unnameable mystery that refuses to open; a sudden breaking-up of witnesses themselves alongside the crumbling ground where they stare into the fathomless abyss of TO-BE?

And where are the margins?

Do the margins consist as padding around the central text of society (“culture”) or as the boundary between self-and-other, order-and-chaos?

If margins are open space around the central narrative, can I become anything I desire so long as I am commenting on that myth?

If margins are boundaries between ordinary circumstances and extraordinary conditions, should I prefer flourishing in the extraordinary to merely getting-along in the ordinary?

Meaningfulness on the margins might be re-expressed as sensibility on the march: how does living make sense while constantly *being-on-the-way*?

Or possibly restated as a conceptual definability: Demarcating a notion redraws the basic limits where understanding can happen.

-----

*Considering all this, where do I stand? Between the locations I can make more “friendly” by queering the status quo and the situations I fully experience as my own through a “free” expression of wyrdness.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> I am spelling the familiar word weird in an older form to differentiate the everyday understanding as “strange” or “unfamiliar” with the older notion of “fate” or “destiny.” Hopefully, as the considerations progress, the choice will become clearer to the reader.

## §5 “Mixing metaphors”

Becoming like water ensures that the abilities to perceive, conceive, remember, judge, and imagine do not succumb to a static (absolute, stoney) view of TO-BE—the always already in-flux Encompassing. Howsoever problem solving may really work, surely it is weakened to the point of useless dogma when it becomes a frozen singular worldview.<sup>3</sup>

Beholding any situation as singular and unchanging from a particular perspective puts stumbling blocks in the way of comprehension, stumbling blocks called “answers.” Discourse among the perceivers allows that which is perceived—if it is dangerous, unhealthy, unaesthetic, or unethical—to be hidden by explanation until forgotten about. Yet this calls for human beings to look at the world as though continually climbing up and down a step ladder located in the vast ocean of reality. I seek some place to get a stable purchase where I communicates with the world, within the mind, and among other I’s. Can I?

-----

*Swimming against the wyrd stream of reality is not the same as gripping tightly to a ladder immersed in the swimming pool of culture.*

---

<sup>3</sup> D. Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology* (19??), ??. Ihde makes a distinction between monocular seeing and polyocular seeing.

## §6 “Getting oriented”

Thrown into a world already underway, I survive at first by orienting myself within the landscapes mapped by those who, in one sense, gifted me the world. I can adjust these circumstances and adapt to them. I can ignore certain points and fetishize other parts to the point of fanaticism.

Yet it is not until I recognize how the “world” I inherit can become otherwise by my own reflective response that I really become active in-the-world.<sup>4</sup> Until then, I am merely reactive, and my reflections are often too naïve to be authentically critical, especially when it comes to challenging an inherited basic assumption.

-----

*How does anyone assume from the base?*

---

<sup>4</sup> Besides Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger, check out Hannah Arendt, Albert Camus, Simone de Beauvoir, and Jean Paul Sartre concerning the active life.

### §7 “Let the cards fall...”

Why does a Tarot card have meaning that apparently goes beyond the significance of a regular playing card? In original circumstances, following the restrictions of a common game in late Renaissance Italy, it really does *not* have any more meaning than a “common” playing card.

How cards are drawn are totally coincidental. That does not mean “meaningless,” or without any sense. There is a circumstance needing reflection, I draw cards, and I analyze the draw. This coincides with uncertainty prompting the question toward an answer... but one that needs a great deal more interpretation than  $2+2=4$ .

Beforehand, there is the issue: The cards are not really alongside the issue before the tarotist<sup>5</sup> turns to them. Then on being picked-up, they are brought to stand within the circumstances. When I take-up these small works of art that are specifically made for determining meaning, the decision to consult the cards in-context brings them into and alongside a possible insight about these circumstances.<sup>6</sup>

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*In a sense, the issue befalls the cards rather than vice versa.*

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<sup>5</sup> Someone who reads Tarot cards, not a terrorist.

<sup>6</sup> Coincidence and/or synchronicity?

Latin CADERE—to fall, to befall<sup>7</sup>

Accident

Coincident

Escheat (antiquated; fall from [back to Crown])

Incident

Recidivism

Occident [Where the sun falls]

Chance

Decay

Decadence

Occasion

---

<sup>7</sup> \*kad- PIE root meaning “to fall” Online Etymology Dictionary [https://www.etymonline.com/word/\\*kad-](https://www.etymonline.com/word/*kad-) Accessed 28Sep2020.

## **§8 “(Re)Straining”**

Games as choreographed activity... improving control.

Playfulness as free expression... improvising ecstasy.

## §9 “Joyful traces”

Dionysiac as the groundless...

The Fool / the Idiot that leaps over the abyss.

St. Rocco. St. Francis. St. Clare.

Any Daoist or Zen madman.

The tricksters.

## §10 “Coincidence of opposites”

As I wandered among practitioners of the occult sciences and new age doctrines, one thing I noticed was how very much their workings never really broke free of a basic dualism, one all too familiar to me from my heteronormative Christian upbringing in Texas. Some highlighted the divine Feminine to make up for all the misogyny of the patriarchy. Some just imposed the need for the god and the goddess from a misunderstood biological “necessity” for anthropomorphic reproduction. If there was a place for Queer folx, it was gay men realizing the energy of the Divine Feminine and lesbians that of the Divine Masculine.

Academically, I came to understand this as a kind of Jungian experiment: actualizing the Anima (Fem) and Animus (Masc), respectively. But the vicious dualism showed-forth in how clear and distinct everything needed to be.

At first, I attributed this to learning how to properly manipulate the structures that empower me. Then I realized that it was, in fact, a *disempowerment*, a move that closed off all possibilities other than those favored by the binaries of oppression. Such moves found a way to accept queer folx so long as they were cisgender; even tolerate transgender so long as they believed in the essential distinction between the Feminine and the Masculine. But this really did not do much other than pivot normative Abrahamic concepts back to classically patriarchic Graeco-Roman or Nordo-Germanic deities.

How about non-binary folx?

How about gender-fluidity?

Why did everything need to be *split up* into a hard/soft, a slow/fast, or a rational/emotional dualism?

-----

*The notion of dyadic<sup>8</sup> fluidity shows up in all mythological frameworks. Nonetheless, the dyadic gets paid little heed despite the import of its recurring message: most differences are those of degree rather than those of kind.*

-----

The non-evolutionary view sees all things as separate and unchanging. It can have a great deal of subtlety. For instance, Aristotle for all that he gets piled-upon by contemporary thinkers, presented a subtle description of a world where each kind of thing has a nameable purpose<sup>9</sup> that can suffer accidental consequences which either help or hinder that entity from reaching its full flourishing.<sup>10</sup>

Or it can be rather straight forward—almost shallow: like the specific origin story for each little thing often discovered among the many tales in most regional mythologies.<sup>11</sup> This is not to fall into that dualism of “culture” between the advanced (high, sophisticated) and the primitive (low, savage). Rather, it is to council deeper searches into the circumstances of these narratives of understanding.

-----

*Aristotle’s subtlety masks how much he draws from Hesiod as well as Plato. And the shallowness of folktales, like Narcissus, hides how much folk expressed their understanding of interdependent (mutual) arising.*

---

<sup>8</sup> The dyad resolves the unfortunate problem of dualism. The dyad presents a singular aspect (event) in the life-world that always intends contraries as extreme limits rather than as distinct kinds. E.g. Yin/Yang, Night/Day, Up/Down, etc.

<sup>9</sup> Teleological essence: a why this is.

<sup>10</sup> Besides his more empirical work on biology, “The Categories” and the Metaphysics provide the logic and the source respectively for his original notions on accounting for how living things do life.

<sup>11</sup> Rather than civilizational or cultural I say “regional” because most are not familiar with how localized mythic tales were. While we have collected these folkstories under broader genera (Chinese, Indian, Greek, Roman, etc.), they are often quite specialized to the town, city, or region in which they originated.



## §11 “Creative evolution”

The evolutionary idea shows expressive power once I recognize that the ability to understand the world is very much tied up with how willing I am to be uncertain about things I see every day.

-----

*Inward evolutionary processes turn-out life; outward differentiated lives turn-in evolution.*

-----

It was in explorations of Indian and Chinese classical thinking that I first saw a more sustained struggle to communicate about beings as differences in degree along the spectrum of existential possibility. It is not because those ancient peoples are necessarily less patriarchal. I think that history more than demonstrates how often diverse Indian and Chinese customs categorized “essential” hierarchies to establish a lasting socio-cultural order. The point is that the Asian traditions differ enough from my own circumstances to help me locate habitual binary presuppositions.

-----

*Evolutionary diversity benefits organic life rather than mechanical entropy.<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>12</sup> I have dealt with this at more length in my work on synergies between ancient Daoism and contemporary Bergsonism. See Keith “Maggie” Brown, “The Dao of Bergson,” ????.

## §12 “Midway”

The heart of Dào<sup>13</sup>

Never moving;

Always beating.

How can this be?

Like this:

The Center is everywhere;

The Point is between.

---

<sup>13</sup> The Way

### §13 “Degrees”

There are not kinds of things—though I can still do a lot of profitable thinking in this milieu. Nonetheless, the arrangement of kinds as forever differentiated objects should not be used to explain the structure of reality. Rather, there are kinds of processes in which things—focal points—find their expression within a phenomenal cluster.

How would Transcendent-Being appear to someone who serves the dominant reductionism of the Being-World into a naïve system of binary oppositions?

Simple: Like Chaos; therefore, as something truly horrifying.

A very binary thinker like H. P. Lovecraft, who stands as a giant of white supremacist agony even among the heteronormative authors of the horror genre, would have to see these powers as terrifying. Is Cthulu and their ilk really so awful? Or, rather, are they awe-full because they break apart any faith in binary thinking?

Are the corners of a room doors to alternative realities of terror? Or rather, are corners where enclosures come together an intersectional affront of the Openness of Being-Itself, broken up—by a the fetish for absolute security—the encompassing reality that will always already be beyond my control.

## §14 “Circumstantial Masques”

The human condition stands-out as ambiguous.

Most of what tradition calls serious itself is a game of masks.<sup>14</sup> Serious play—taking playfulness seriously as an immersive experience<sup>15</sup>—has to be distinguished from the game (lie) of adult seriousness—playing-along as submersion in traditions of acceptable behavior.

As ambiguous, however, the human condition cannot lay claim to the outworn masks of human metaphysics: anthropocentrism; nearness to the apex of the chain of being; as thoroughly unique among all animals; as a historically singular people above all other peoples; etc et al.

I can claim that in the Fluidity of Being (the Encompassing), there is a flowing outward, a reaching forth with all the senses to make sense [Tentacularity].<sup>16</sup> This plays-out as being-in-the-world: humans gather with others in a world of proliferating relationships.

I and Not-I (Alter, Other) are always already in a nexus of connections I call circumstances. Among these are mind and body—the phenomenal focus of I think and I feel respectively. They are the closest circumstances to me; so close, I lose them as circumstances and treat one or both as somehow “I myself.”

The different ways in which I can reach out toward others demonstrates a collapse of mind/body into “objective I.” I am this substantial thing.

---

<sup>14</sup> De Beauvoir, 1948: 47-52.

<sup>15</sup> Gadamer, 2004: 102-104.

<sup>16</sup> The latest work of Donna Haraway is absolutely fascinating in how she makes use of Cthulhu to connect the tentacles of that dread god with simple string-play like Cat’s Cradle. In this regard, see also Joseph Campbell’s *Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* where he examines the Cat’s Cradle as inherited social play among Samoans.

Or, possibly more often, as the playing-off of one secure structure (mind *-or-* body) as the only one with any importance (idealism or materialism, respectively). This latter lies among the game of masks where fluidity pretends to be solidity or insecurities pretend to be certainties.

**§15 “Utterly detached”**

Finding the Encompassing,  
I lost my heart.

Gripping my heart’s desire,  
I let-go of the Encompassing.

Closed: full of empty things.

Opened: empty but fulfilled.



*In the context of the pivotal Buddhist insight that all things arise interdependently, cultivating wisdom is thus a process, first, of realizing that relationality is more basic than “things” that “are related,” and, second, that deepening wisdom is inseparable from expanding compassion. In other words, Buddhist wisdom is relational transformation.<sup>17</sup>*



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<sup>17</sup> Herschock 2014: “Zen Origins,” §1.

## §16 “It’s a mystery...”

Putting your thinking toward the world often bends expression to linearity for the sake of clear communication. The relation goes from a starting place to an ending place and leaves a trail to be followed back.

Maybe such relations make sense.

Just as important: Maybe they leave out something.

But even if speaking, it often must be done by way of lines and points to shape a notion that is graspable by another person. Some lines have hidden curves. Some lines have opaque backgrounds. But the linearization of a thought always disconnects me from the situation of the thinking. Possibly linearization allows the recorder and the witness to use or to relate important information .

For instance:  $2+2=4$  means the same as

2
+2
———
4

Either line makes sense; they are merely different preferences of recording the same phrase. The first is a simpler recording technique, especially for word processors. The second recalls how children are taught to do math. Both kinds of line work.

But each makes a point—confirms a notion—within the recorded line, a point that easily can be recalled and has less to do with the matter than with the form.

The point records a use of the *additive principle*.

Rethinking it:  $a+b=c$  means the same as

$$\begin{array}{r} a \\ +b \\ \hline c \end{array}$$

The line orients me toward the point using shorthand. The point is that one thing added to another equals a third thing. The “real” meaning is the *relational combinatory process*—additive principle—*not* the content per se. Such use becomes ever more mechanical the better experienced I am in doing arithmetic.

-----

*I have habitualized the disclosive form into a formulaic mechanism—apply, rinse, and repeat.*

-----

Most speaking and writing must be formulaic to a large degree so that what is related makes sense with as little difficulty as possible. Anything that can be related with very little loss of meaning has clarity, maybe even has a kind of certainty; rarely, however, does this have any profundity.<sup>18</sup>

That is not to say that formulaic pronouncements say *nothing*; instead, the opposite: They are the most meaningful when “fullness” of meaning has to do with *understandability* rather than *comprehension*.

Most people *understand* that Newton’s law of gravity offers some explication for motion; nonetheless, very few people actually *comprehend* gravity as a mysterious force. The very use of the term “mysterious” by the knowledge-makers in physics to describe gravity should make folk even more aware that *understanding does not mean comprehension*. While not a one-to-one simile, physicists achieve a kind of analogy to how theologians speak of understanding the doctrine of the Holy Trinity while admitting to not having a full comprehension of the mystery.

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<sup>18</sup> See Edmund Husserl’s discussion in “Philosophy as a Rigorous Science” on why the (empirical) sciences cannot be profound.

-----  
*The doctrine (teaching) has utility... does it need more?*  
-----

Here, mystery rightfully gets separated away from its common usage as an occurrence that just needs the right detective work to solve (know) “who/what done it.”

Rather, mystery is the *MYSTERION*, that which can be witnessed (seen, heard, touched, etc) yet never fully related, whether in speech or in writing. Experience of *MYSTERION*, then, situates me in my ignorance and breaks open certain locations that previously provided secure enclosures: traditions, habits, institutions, etc.

Fromward the *MYSTERION*, I am now/here caught up in wonder.

Fromward marveling, I doubt now/here my former security.

Unmoored from that steadfast security, I see better when/where I am: Within a strife-born sway, or as Karl Jaspers would name it, *forsakenness*.

Of course, it is not like I ever completely forget the strife-born sway. Yet the basic process can be forgotten in my ignorance like I see with those who understand so many things yet comprehend so very little.



*When one surrenders oneself to the ritual destruction of a cow,  
one destroys every notion to which the simple life  
has accustomed me.*<sup>19</sup>



*Kabbalists and Heidegger share the hermeneutical conviction,  
which is based on the aforementioned cosmological paradox, that  
there is no naked truth but only truth rendered visible via the  
cloak of invisibility.*<sup>20</sup>



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<sup>19</sup> Bataille 2004: 114.

<sup>20</sup> Wolfson 2019: 5.

## §17 “Inattentive conventions”

“Explicate” means to lay-flat-the-plies.<sup>21</sup> That which is laid-out can be grasped in one view, simply shared, rolled-up, and passed along with ease to the next person who wants to make use of the explanation. Even if they don’t quite “get-it,” the usefulness is there, nonetheless.

And yet... when it comes to even the simplest experience, while there can be a broad elucidation of the goings-on, no *complete* explication really follows. Something always refuses to be flattened out—it remains a curve or a hillock or a pool of enigmatic happening.

If I choose for explication, I have chosen for convenience. Or, better, I choose for CONVENTIONAL CONTROL. This attests to *value by utility*, even if only the utility of being-marked with the distinction of “knowing why” versus all these others who remain in ignorance.

Soon enough, the will to explanation inspires the fetishism of security and spreads toward the desire for control.

Even now, these words here must refuse to go any farther, to offer an expert flattening-out, else-wise they obscure whatever light shines-at.

---

<sup>21</sup> Etymonline reference here

§18 “Empty sky”

Bright sun; squinting eyes.

Blood buzzing, running around  
and throughout body

Walking away

From yesterday and tomorrow:

A quiet presence.

Wind blows strands of hair;

Bird chittering on pine branch.

Calm water, still clouds.

How great a distance

Must lay out between this and

That other? Where two

Appears, always an

Absence standing betwixt them...

Tempering the blade,

The smith immerses

steel in fire and water until

a good tool carries

the distance: harmonizing

hot—cold, hard—soft, skill—luck.

Cloudless...

Heaven nears.

## §19 “Appropriating utility”

Heidegger’s phenomenology<sup>22</sup> of things considers each kind of entity as having proper use: Tools especially have their “telos”<sup>23</sup> that can be comprehended by the worker so that such instruments can be picked-up and put-to-work. For this current consideration, like so many before me, I will set aside for the moment natural things that are alongside though not generated per se by humankind.<sup>24</sup> I will look at manufactured products. Importantly this is not to reach something categorical about these technical apparatuses. Rather, I seek to think my own presuppositions about tools so that I may, through a deeper dive into proper-use, bracket for a time relationships I normally take for granted. Such a taking-for-granted allows me to ignore the *else-wise* of things: both how things are more than their customary usage and how artificial things subsist in waiting for something/someone else.

The relationship between “I” and “it”<sup>25</sup> shapes the world as either sufficient or as necessary. I mean: when the relationship obtains forgotten until needed, it is sufficient that something useful is nearby (present). But upon being-needed, it is necessary that the relation allows both I and It to be put-to-work (readiness). Present here means merely alongside or *of-use but not in-use*. Readiness means *actively in-play*. Readiness does not have to be something of

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<sup>22</sup> A philosophical account of how things have meaning, of how things appear in the light of consciousness.

<sup>23</sup> Purpose, end, reason

<sup>24</sup> A more intense phenomenological consideration would be necessary to figure out how plant cultivars and animal breeds fit into the space between human instrumentality and natural kind.

<sup>25</sup> This-I and That-It???

which I have awareness. In fact, the more a relation to an It shapes a moment, the more likely the relation will be taken-for-granted so that presence implies readiness.

When awareness of a relation happens, it is easy to reduce the conjunction to mere utility and get back to ignoring it. In this regard, shape-ability—how I and It co-constitute as mutually there for each other<sup>26</sup>—goes beyond the moment to something more lasting.

Take a chair for instance.

The one I currently occupy is quite comfortable. Until I turn my attention to it, the chair becomes a part of the phenomenon “Maggie sits in a chair thinking about stuff.” The sitting is not separate from thinking—it allows for thinking; indeed, sitting-thinking is a kind of thinking. The chair comforts me in my thinking about stuff. That is, supports and fully participates in my thinking. Or, in a more clunky fashion, I-and-It work together in the project to understand proper-use. I depend upon the chair. Yet I could easily stand at my bedroom computer arranged for working while not sitting. But even here, I encounter the support of the floor. The chair and the floor uphold me, shaping me for particular works.

The taken-for-granted involves my body needing support so my mind can uphold thinking. When I am aware of the support being given, I am no longer supporting judgment so much as I am supporting perception, or better apperception, of my material circumstances. I am running/walking/standing/kneeling/sitting/lying supported by this stable thing. Note: my own mobility requires stationary ground. The diverse particularities of mobility in place or from here to there or around in circles always requires the relative buoyancy of the world. This is a give-and-take of interdependence.<sup>27</sup>

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*Power comes from how things (including my own I) obtain through mutually arising together: Existential conjunction.*<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> I will be drawing a great deal off of M. Hoły-Luczaj’s excellent considerations of Shapeability as an extension of Heidegger’s notions on the proper-use of things in *Being and Time* (2019: 402-426)..

<sup>27</sup> See bell hooks on healthy interdependence.

<sup>28</sup> Existential phenomenology—as Western philosophizing—comes closest to how Alan Watts and Stephen Batchelor talk about such concepts vis. Buddhist thinking.

Possibility procures more possibility until it does not any longer. Care must be taken, however, in such thinking—perishing as the death of the living body moves matter from composing life to decomposing corpse. That is always already a possibility. Saying, possibility procures more possibility generates ever new variations materially and even spiritually. And even though I as a self-aware entity will cease does not mean that possibility in the circumstantial senses (of body, mind, and world) has ceased.

Rather, “possibility procures more possibility until it does not” speaks to transcendence, to impossibility:

***Freedom.***

## §20 “Bastard labors”

For the wandering Cynics of Graeco-Roman world, Heracles (Rom. Hercules) was an archetype of the labors necessary to overcome my social habits and exercise my personal strength achieve freedom (Gr. *Eleutherios* / L. *Libertas*).<sup>29</sup> Among the famous twelve labors, the Hydra symbolizes struggling within a difficulty that both drains physical strength as well as dulls mental acuity. When Heracles finds himself in front of the multi-headed monster,<sup>30</sup> as soon as one head is cut off, it grows back as two heads. If all the hero does involves normal resistance tactics—cutting off the head of the beast—the original problem merely multiplies in intensity: i.e. becomes more *insistent*.

Instead, Heracles gets his cousin/nephew Ioealus to use a firebrand to cauterize each neck stump before the creature’s terrible physiognomy repairs itself. Heracles destroys an attacking head, the youth burns the stump closed. It is not until they can defeat all but one head that they near the goal of destroying the beast.

Folx should contemplate this metaphor when thinking about any superstructure issue like global warming, mass extinction, neoliberal capitalism, white supremacy, etc et al. As Latour notes, they are hybrids. But they are chimeras often of a *monstrous hybridity* that requires damming the figurative channels of influence that pump real poison into the life-world.

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*The back-and-forth cooperation of accomplices **transists** dehumanizing social limitations.*  
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<sup>29</sup> Navia, 1996: 15f, 20.

<sup>30</sup> Euripides, 1988: 35f (beginning with line 555).

After Heracles returns to the king who has been handing out his labors (under orders from Hera), the king decides that because the hero got help, that labor does not count. It is a fascinating scene that captures how those in/with power often move the goal posts on what they expect laborers/servants to provide them. Some scholars see this as the attempt in later Hellenic circles to square up a disagreement over whether there were original ten labors rather than twelve. That definitely reveals a material possibility. However, there is also a formal possibility: A narrative capturing how a Bastard Hero (uppity thing he is) having his contract re-written by Privileged Aristocrats (who hate those impertinent upstarts claiming to be just as good as them).<sup>31</sup>

I indicate here, then, the Superstructures of Control which really are the dwelling place of that multi-headed poisonous beast: the Hydra of Dehumanization.

Say one head used to be slavery. Cut that off. Now you have northern racism (red-lining) and southern racism (Jim Crow), both psychologically devastating even if the latter form often shows itself as more physically vicious.

Or maybe patriarchy. Cut it off and now you have the angry head of men's rights activism which over plays how men are "mistreated: alongside the defiant head of white feminism which does not in fact advance the cause of *all* women so much as those who were already privileged by virtue of being white, i.e. those women not being devoured by the new heads of Northern red-lining and Southern Jim Crow.

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<sup>31</sup> This is where Jacques Derrida's work *Of Hospitality* might be helpful in determining the crucial distinction between being-tolerant (an act of superiority) and being-hospitable (an act of equality).

## §21 “For realz though...”

Real hides within it the Latin word for thing (L. *Res*). To say “real thing” basically means the really real or the thingly thing.

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*To talk about the real thing is to be redundant.*

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Things themselves are thinkable, or thingable. If it is not thinkable, it is not real. That then does not mean the improbable or the as yet of undisclosed. It speaks more to the fabric of non-contradiction. A square circle is not really as thing (not thingly as reality) because the conditions are complete negations in most systems of ideal relationship.

To talk about the impossible in this way is to point toward the unthinkable precisely because all sufficient and necessary conditions stand in complete negation. However, to talk about the impossible in the sense of what goes beyond demonstrable knowledge and persuasive appeal—freedom, God, immortality, the usual suspects—does not fit into a complete contradiction. Rather, it is a consistent contrariness: Freedom - Servility, Thingness - Nothingness, etc.

*Maggie Malady*

A contrary explored far along the boundary between possibility and impossibility prepares the field wherein I discover the truths of self-actualization.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Existenz.

## §22. “Aeon: Cracking the Cosmic Egg”

There is only the cosmos: the beautiful order of Being—Everything, One, Nothing.

This does not intend that there is only one universe. The two concepts should be distinguished.

Cosmos is order in general, drawing together all possibilities, even those that cancel each other out. Universe is a particular format (*noema*) of order.

So I are both in the Cosmos-Overall and in this singular universe. In this sense, the Cosmos encompasses all possibilities of universe-presentation, while a universe encompasses all the logical possibilities of one expression: The Cosmos filled with multiverses.

The Cosmos—even though it can be “grasped” as one great Working—appears as a smorgasbord of happenings, sequences, and processes that can be analyzed to the point of never getting the Working back together again after I take it apart.

Within this universe upon my planet, contradictions and inconsistencies—once they are noted—are OF this universe in relation to the Cosmos. Being—as eternal—must have an endless number of permutations throughout all the multiverses. A contradiction in this universe could be a mere inconsistency with some other universe. An inconsistency in this world-system could be a complete contradiction with some other universe.

It is not the fracturing of the Whole (the Cosmos), the Part (Universe), or the processes (expressions of activity through, with, and in the infinity of entities). Rather, the fracturing arises from the breaking-up of the Source--Possible Existenz, the ground of self-aware possibility—through confusions of hyper-fortified “actualities” to be preferred in a time/place either with “the only” possibility or “absolute necessity.”

Think then of Cosmos as the COMPOSSIBILITY of every kind of possible universe. And each aspect (all of the multiverses on down to quarks and strings) always already stand in compossibility with actualities that might be

nothing less than the antithesis of this universe. Through the contemplation of these impossibilities that nonetheless are possible else-where and else-wise, transformation of this world should be doable by grasping thereafter from another world examples heretofore unknown in my own.

Think of Cosmos as an Eternal Encompassing Egg<sup>33</sup> filled with infinite yolks. The fecundity of such Transcendent-Being appears like glimpsing through cracks that open in the Order. Blinks of the eye see through the cracks (each universe) in the shell and their almost infinite fissures (each kind of being); in this grasping gesture, there is a kind of recognition not only of possibilities but also of impossibilities. That for which there is the power-to-grasp (possibility) in one universe may show no-power-to-grasp (impossibility) in another. Yet exploring the Cosmic EEE, those impossibilities make a gesture toward transformation of my own universe.

Science Fiction and fantasy are contemporary ways for me to explore possibilities that would otherwise go unexplored.

*Star Trek: Discovery* does interesting things with a long standing “parallel” universe theme in the myth-work originated by Gene Roddenberry: what would it be like if humans finally learned all their lessons and created a socio-political order that lived up to all the high ideals of the United Nations? A tad Utopian, but like so many texts—from Plato’s *Republic* to Bacon’s *New Atlantis*, Augustine’s *City of God* to Skinner’s *Walden 2*—it is fiction that allows for a rearrangement of facts to promote a “good life” and a “good world.”

The same could be said in terms of *Star Wars* that it acts as a myth-work contemplation; however, Lucas’ myth-work is not Utopian. It is rather a VERY thinly veiled critique of Capitalism while being among the most successfully capitalist entertainment products of the last five decades.<sup>34</sup> For Lucas’ original direction, neither the Republic, the Empire, the New Republic, nor the First Order ever interact per se with folx from a parallel universe like the Terrans in *Star Trek*. Rather than seeing what “I” would be like if I had not taken my Utopian turn, the presentation of Jedi v. Sith allows me to manifest possibilities from my reflections that could have gone unnoticed if I just kept using the historic names for factions that take on either Yin or Yang energies in socio-cultural arrangements.

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<sup>33</sup> EEE!

<sup>34</sup> Ironically, this might be the proof that it is actually anti-Capitalist: it so easily shows how markets of desire can be created out of thin air for a story that never actually happened. Kind of like what usually happens on Madison Ave.

Resistance in *Star Trek* is shown ultimately as something mechanistic: the threat of enemies like the Borg or the Dominion are not only stopped by humanoid ingenuity and spunk, but because of how Starfleet has the crucial distinction of being as much a scientific mission of discovery as a military defense (or offense, depending on how cynical you are). *Star Trek* is a bit more contemporary science establishment than *Star Wars*; George Lucas myth-work shows resistance within a much more massive CAPITALIST program. If the Lucasverse tends toward a more “spiritual” or “mystical” outlook than the Roddenberyverse, that is because Americans regularly mix up religion and economics (thank you Scottish Calvinism).

*Star Trek*, in a sense, by getting rid of pesky capitalism as a problem for the Federation, demonstrates how both religion and economics must be disentangled for scientific discovery to become more than novel war machines and profitable product launches. *Star Wars*, however—for all of its magic—has no utopian conceit. In fact, the “utopian” notion that the “good guys” can forever beat the “bad guys” becomes an active plot point for why the Jedi are blind to the Sith machinations of Chancellor Palpatine and are naïve about the Republic.

### **§23. “Frolicking in a Sacred Queering”**

Being-at-play between society and nature, humankind and divinity, dances within the chiasm of the Visible and the Invisible. This clearing offers a place to explore the human condition by queering privileged notions of ethnic, biological, and physical arrangements

## **§24. “Laboring, Working, Activating”**

The Formless Self as a Trinitarian process of laboring-beneath, working-toward, and activating-within.

I-Laboring as self-presentification beneath the restrictions of a particular circumstance.

I-Working as self-development toward authentic targets from my own situation.

I-Activating as self-opening within the interdependence of all entities themselves laboring, working, and/or activating.



*Coming together, then falling apart: these lend social timing a rhythm. Meetings are rhythmic structures. They take place in a double sense. They stand out, lending existence to things in the etymological meaning of the term. They belong to the flux but they also punctuate it.<sup>35</sup>*



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<sup>35</sup> Carter, 2010: 2.

## **§25. “Stalking the boundary”**

Relationships of ideas: relational patterns

Matters of fact: material connections

Stalking of two kinds:

Knowledge-gathering as preparing to stand on my own ground, bringing the other into my way of being. And,

Power-hunting as exploring to move within the else-wise, bringing myself into that way of being.

## **§26. “Unnecessary custom”**

While it is necessary that humans adopt customs among each other for the sake of living-together, there is no adopted custom that ever in-itself and from-itself will be a necessity.

## §27. “Selfism”

After so many “liberation” movements within the superstructure since 1945, how can I deny that established pairs (dyads) are best thought as temporary boundary markers where an array of possibilities begin to open-up? Yet, more than 75 years on from the “defeat of fascism” by the great representative democracies, these paired limits show-up as permanently closed-down object-markers an Either/Or reality with a wasteland between them.

For me, watching a lot of this from childhood in the late sixties and early seventies through the AIDS crisis of the 80’s on into a war on terror since 2001, there seems to be an embarrassment of rich diversity hiding between all these pseudo-dualisms promulgated as “actuality.” For instance, there is the use of the notion of typical versus atypical; maybe you have seen convergent versus divergent. The typical converges with the established norms. The atypical diverges from the established norms. The operant descriptor for “norms” here is “established.” As established practices, they have historic weight by how commonly they are put-to-use as the “correct” way to think about things. This is orthodoxy: holding the right-opinion as a member of a group. And since right and wrong can be treated as Either/Or, opinions that are correct must be strict, rigorous, absolute.

This is when you know you are no longer talking about nature. Rather, you are talking about the narrative that provides parameters for explaining things in terms of presupposed structures of order. When I speak about water typically being a liquid, thus typically being wet, I am not establishing any custom other than a common parlance. I would never say that ice or steam are atypical behaviors of water. There are kinds of water and kinds of states of water. Each has its place in natural processes. I accept certain “knowledge” for how I can use as well as talk about water. This is orthopraxy, the right application of human description to a natural process. Slowly but surely over time, this praxis becomes more refined but also redefining. Common knowledge is slower to develop sometimes

than the discoveries made by specialized scientific researchers. But as within those professions, the common way of thinking has the capacity to evolve so long as I remain open to the continued exploration of the world-system.

This is how noetics and pragmatics align with each other to mutually grow.

These are not established norms even as I am the ones coming up with the description.

There is the typical animal “human.” There is the typical society “human community.” There is the typical means of exchange “human language.” But there is no typical person, no typical grouping, no typical speech. I establish my customs by habit, I do not receive my rules from Nature or God. If humankind then has no typical, I could say that the most typical thing is to be atypical. And those who seemed to have conformed so greatly to customary presentations are simply closeted atypicals possibly unaware of how much their ‘typical’ performance shows-forth as a performance.

Ultimately, my culture inherits a pattern of generating paradigms that offer guidance for specific action and general direction. These can be called ideals and are often spoken about as archetypes. Such takes on the patina of “origin” and “goal.” I want typicality so badly that I latch on to any person who stands-out as “really creative” or “very beautiful” or “extremely brave” to make those folk models of expression, of aesthetics, of courage. This is a fundamental misunderstanding of archetype. The archetype is a broad horizon of exploration rather than a narrow confine to which I must conform. Grasping an archetype represents a fundamental ability to reflect on the importance of a circumstance by identifying the key differences between the actual experience and the imagined “best/worst outcome.” They are not prescriptions for how things SHOULD be; rather, they describe sufficient and necessary conditions for all thinking as comparing and contrasting.

Folk diagnosed as autistic for the longest time were put into sub-categories based on how well or how poorly they could “properly” function within social situations. High functioning meant they might not even appear at first to be autistic. Low functioning indicated these people might be so divergent from “normal” behaviors, they might not even be able to communicate with other people. Over the last two decades, advances in the study of this phenomenon have revealed—like all of the binaries that came out of Society of Discipline—a great disparity between the categorical assignment to and the lived experience of autistic people.

As in so many instances of non-conforming behavior, the central issue was that parents, teachers, and many fellow students simply could not imagine the “autistic’s” way of being-in-the-world had any kind of benefits. After all, such comportment so clearly painted a person as strange. The consequence of this, per force, was an even more

profound estrangement from caring community of those so diagnosed—all in the name of “proper” medical and pedagogical care.

## **§28. “The fruition of prophecy”**

Though left on the ropes for a bit in the 1960’s, white supremacy was able to muster itself across three generations to destroy public education.

Why?

To “prove” beyond a shadow of a doubt their widespread claim that *Brown v. Board of Education* would not only *legalize* the intermixing of white and black folks but also would thoroughly destroy American schooling.

## §29. “*Existenz* at the Intersections”

I want to say that the ultimate situations<sup>36</sup> that Jaspers talks about as well as the modes of the Encompassing that any person may-be actually show ways for re-thinking intersectionality at the existential level. Since intersectionality concerns the political and social prescriptions<sup>37</sup> in which people find themselves marginalized, existential elucidation of the ultimate situations can be an both a disclosure of imposed margins as well as an exploration of the authentic boundaries.<sup>38</sup>

The modes of the encompassing which I am<sup>39</sup> are the ways that I am both aware of the boundaries as well as able to work with in them, through them, and for my own freedom. The ultimate situations are the actions that I can take as being-in-the-world. Those actions make use of the modes of encompassing that I am. And the modes of the encompassing that I am find fulfillment in the possibilities of those ultimate situations.

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<sup>36</sup> The most basic aspects of the human condition: chance, suffering, struggle, guilt, and death. My dissertation deals with these in a more “positive” manner given tha the terms often give off a “negative” meaning to most people.

<sup>37</sup> An important notion from Freire 2000, 47f. The oppressors PRESCRIBE normative behaviors and acceptable identities.

<sup>38</sup> The former I would refer to as Knowledge-Gathering (collecting information about the usually unnoticed systemic controls) and the latter I would term Power-Hunting (seeking along the places where the human condition comes about).

<sup>39</sup> Everyday being-here (Dasein), Consciousness as the field of experiential meaning, Mindfulness as imaginative ideation, reason as the connecting strands among these and my own self-actualization (*Existenz*) in freedom (Transcendence).

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How I know them gets colored by my own personal history which also includes the place and the time into which I am born (sociocultural factors) as well as the places and the times through which I live my life. A good portion of systemic structures are meant to make folk fear any kind of profound self-reflection. The superstructure discourages seeking after the full freedom of being human.

Intersectionality is a way in which extra pressure is brought to bear on certain marginalized people for the benefit of those who do not have many if any intersections or who have, through the “fear of freedom” if they do have intersections, refuse to struggle for the freedom of all so long as they are themselves able to do what they want.

### §30. “Talking about my generations”

Something can be gained from understanding how diverse generations both live alongside each other and simultaneously dwell within different “world systems.” The purpose of such distinctions does not entail “explicating” the behaviors of solitary persons wholly on their placement within what are—*yes I know*—mostly arbitrary historical cohorts. And I am not sure that this applies to **EVERYONE**; it may better describe the generational distinctions within parts of American society profiting from the systematic structures of white supremacy. That is, it may only apply within the dominating culture of our highly multicultural society. For those living in the USA to whom these distinctions do not seem to “work,” I would suggest pondering them as a means for better understanding those who have benefitted the most from white, heteronormative patriarchy: the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) culture in America and anyone who allies with them.

GENERATION NAME	TIME FRAME	EARLY	LATE
Boomer	1946-1962	1946 to 1954ish	1955ish-1962
Boom-X	1963-1965	N/A	N/A
Gen-X	1966 - 1982	1966-1974ish	1975ish-1982
X-Mills	1983 - 1985	N/A	N/A
Millennials	1986 - 2002	1986 - 1994ish	1995ish - 2002
MillZooms	2003 - 2005	N/A	N/A
Zoomers	2006 - 2022	2006 - 2014ish	2015ish - 2022
ZoomAnnex	2023 - 2025	N/A	N/A
Annexers	2026 -		

### §31. “Stuffing bureaus, rearranging technicalities”

If I were to separate people into two groups right now in the United States of America, I would say they fall into being either bureaucrats or technocrats.

A bureaucrat is somebody that follows certain procedures and policies or rules that discipline people, places, and things to perform certain given tasks. *Bureaucrats are closed.*

A technocrat is somebody that manages systems or networks that control people, places, and things to accomplish certain (mostly) predictable reactions. *Technocrats are partially open.* The openness, unfortunately, is only toward the constant sustaining of incessant market modulations.

Most Americans probably do not consider either of these as the way to describe most average citizens. But I think that each term allows for me to see exactly how most people have picked up different prescriptions for behavior from proscriptive expectation. Generational differences can be marshaled to show the distinction.<sup>40</sup> Boomers (those born 1946-1962) are bureaucrats who expect certain rules of interaction that happen, almost like gameplay, within designated fields of activity. Zoomers (those born after 2005) have a full-blown technocracy which both provides there area of movement and situates them as always moving—hopefully upward to calmer channels.

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<sup>40</sup> My notion of generations finds Inspiration from Jose Ortega y Gasset’s *Hombre y Gente*. Many of those I follow on Black TikTok make great arguments about why most of these discussions of generational difference seem to be about white communities. They are not claiming that there are no generational differences in Black communities just that these distinctions have different variables and presentations.



I visualize this, the originary phenomenon of my being human: We are, as what we are, only through the community of mutual conscious understanding. There can be no human being who, as a solitary individual, is a human being.<sup>41</sup>



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<sup>41</sup> My translation. K. Jaspers, *Vernunft und Existenz*, (Munich: Piper, 1960), 59. <<Wir vergegenwärtigen dieses ursprüngliche Phänomen unseres Menschseins: wir sind, was wir sind, nur durch die Gemeinschaft gegenseitigen bewußten Verständlichwerdens. Es kann keinen Menschen geben, der für sich allein als bloß Einzelner ein Mensch wäre.>> Jaspers makes a point here repeated by G. Agamben, “Whatever,” *The Coming Community*, trans. M. Hardt (Stanford: Stanford Univ Press, 2000), 1-4.

### **§32. “On the Way to Community”**

Being-together as community entails the entanglement of four living tensions:

- 1) Personal life (self-awareness)
- 2) Collective life (mutual understanding)
- 3) Human life (mundane existence)
- 4) Material life (cosmic being).

No hard (impenetrable) border happens between these. Nor are they a series of nesting dolls the smallest held within the next bigger until all find themselves contained by the largest as some fundamental category. Such would make using the notions much more certain than they really can be. They contain each other; flow through, with, and in each other. They lift-up and press-down, embrace and reject each other. Their milieu is the surrounding environment of conditional nature (being determined) as well as the open horizon of unconditional transcendence (being free).

Personal failures, collective shortcomings, great errors repeated over human history, and the inability for complete control over nature gives rise to a desire to do differently. Nonetheless, in seeking to transform the situation in which folk find themselves, there must first be this comprehension of living tensions. Such existential entanglements can be found within any components making up experience. Some are more obvious than others. But the main point arises from a desire to change things for myself, in my group, among humankind, or about surrounding circumstances.

As with any entangling, knots arise binding aspects in ways that make them seem incapable of being differentiated. How are my actions my own and not merely a fastening from my associations that “pulls my strings”?

Has an activity been initiated for the purpose of “improving” self and/or personal situation? Or has an activity been initiated for the purpose of improvising within a dehumanizing situation? No matter how it gets turned,

improvement does not lead to transformation but merely reformation. Improvising, however, contains the seeds not only of transformative activity but also transcendent possibility.

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*Improvement in the 21st century reveals itself as merely aesthetic rearrangement.*

*Improvisation shines out as creative expression.*

### §33. “Imprecision”

In the 2021 Chinese series *Symphony's Romance*, a symphony conductor named Fei Si Xing attempts to advise Lin Qing Shang, one of the best violin students at a prestigious Chinese music conservatory. The youth has an incredibly precise style. However, they are so precise, their play is almost mechanical. While this shows an incredible amount of control on their part, Fei She Er does not believe it shows a complete immersion in Qing Shang's chosen art-form:

For beginners, precision is perfect. But for an artist, being precise isn't enough. It could even be dangerous. Child, arts include music, painting, drama. The most frightening thing is to limit oneself, tie oneself to the ground. Those so-called rules and precision will only limit you. They will make everything lose interest and creativity.<sup>42</sup>

At the earliest stages of learning, students need to develop the co-ordination of mind/body within a given skill frame. After the initial work building foundations, the novice turns to perfecting technique. Herein comes the need for precision. The more precision the novice achieves, the more their work does not require starting over from the beginning, making adjustments for errors mid-performance, or accepting an unsatisfactory outcome.

Nonetheless, precision like ignorance must be transcended to move from the beginnings of art-working to working-in-the-field. This period of transformation then is how the journeymyn, a person who works outside the purview of their master, on a regular basis goes sometimes a great distance to learn new techniques from other masters. Here, precision slowly gives way to variety.

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<sup>42</sup> LIU Jun Jie. Master Fei to Student Lin Qing Shang, *Symphony's Romance*. 2020. S01E18, 0:12:20-0:12:58. Chinese language drama.

The master then becomes that singular presence who knows how to immerse themselves in the currents of creativity, to leap forward imprecise wandering toward the clearing that appears between tradition and novelty, authority and exception.

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*Leisure gives way to discipline, thus, overcoming a particular kind of ignorance.*

*Novel discipline generates precision through specialization.*

*Trained specialization then gives way to varieties of new experiences.*

*Variation of practice generates a diversification of skills.*

*Diversity of skill leads to new connections as well as the need to refined assistance.*

*Refining novices and trading with journeymyn, the Master enacts the exceptional leisure of authority.*

### **§34. “Turned Around Inside Myself”**

So many things go on in my mind at any given time, so many directions that things go.

Momentary stops allow me to look at something for a second, but then suddenly I'm off again. On to the next place or notion or whatever. Sometimes I am talking to people who aren't here—not in a kind of delusional way, just simply, “Oh! The next time that I have a conversation with X, I want to be sure to mention this; or, the next time that I have a conversation with Y, I'm going to talk about that.

But very few of these ever actually happen. And I believe I know that I am not alone in the world almost entirely because if such conversations do occur, they never go anywhere in the direction I expected.

### **§35. “Sourcing order”**

As an anarchist, I spend a great deal of time thinking about whether anarchy means absolutely no established order or whether it means a constantly evolving order. The Greek roots intend No-Principle. At least that is the way that the term ARCHE usually gets translated: L. PRINCIPIUM, E. Principle. The Latin derivation gets the point but over centuries of use, the English begins to forget it. In fact, the ARCHE would be better translated into contemporary English as SOURCE with the added benefit of capturing the fluidity inherent to the concept. L. SUGGERE, the ancestor of source, basically intends “guidance from below.” This explains the usual connection to speaking about the headwaters of a river or the artesian caves of a well as a “source.”

The sources are many in nature. The I is source of personhood. The I is source of personal community. The nearby-land is source of me-dwelling. The far-away-beyond is source of abiding-nearby. The horizon-all-around is source of yonder-coming-and-going. The life-world is source of meaningful-limits. Nature is source of creative life. Cosmos is source of natural arrangements. The Big-Bang is source of cosmic being. The Singularity is the source of the Big-Bang. And To-Be is the source of singular manifestation. Everything-and-Nothing always already imply To-Be as ultimate source. The First, then, implies a well-spring for all else that occurs.

But the sources of society are few: the struggle involving different classifications of I and I which often appear as the disagreements of me and you, me and them. Ethics and politics in different fashions involve working to end such disagreements if not circumvent them altogether.

Thus, anarchy changes as applied. If I say “Nature is anarchic,” I mean that the Source always flows away: “Nature loves to hide.”

But if I say “Society is anarchic,” I intend that the Source of human interactivity never has absolute fixity.

Over the course of time, an arrangement of people among each other requires reassessment and probably rearrangement. Only the need for some kind of structure for exchange obtains. The particular expressions—habits, customs, traditions, and regulations—must go through review or risk maintaining for the sake of “historic continuity” what has become nothing less than a meaningless activity.

This is the application of my anarchy motto (§26) about no customs ever having such necessity that they would obtain without being propped up.

Some today see the Constitution of the United States, for instance, as a sacred object that has been endowed with the laws of nature for the good organization of citizens. This contradicts the other many claims that the text is a “living document,” i.e. an evolving mechanism for the sake of guaranteeing “the blessings of liberty to myself and my posterity.” In fact, the Constitution claims not to be the source of any of these things. The people are the well-spring of its power. This should automatically tell the reader that if the population greatly changes, the meaning of the “living document” requires a great deal of re-examination.

Yes, there are enough points in American history where I see good-faith attempts to make the political structures more equitable based upon changes in both citizen demographics as well as the latest scientific findings. This occurs a good deal in the courts but also from time to time with the legislature deciding to clarify old ideas or even “discover” new ones. Nonetheless, those who treat tradition as a natural expression of the “best order” find even the slowest kinds of changes to be an existential threat to American society.

The current trajectory of rules silencing discussion of race in public schools as well as those reaffirming control over the feminine body and the basic “communal” ownership of children. I mean by this last example that traditionalists will fall back on the need to “protect” children from their own parents if those same parents are actually attempting to evolve with the times by affirming their child’s gender performance or talking with their kids about how there are more loving arrangements than those recognized by the confines of heteronormativity.

Of course, this all happens at the place in the clearing between tradition/authority—novelty/exception. Every social issue right now is peeling away the gilded façade of my (customary) social arrangements to reveal them as human artifice held together with duck-tape. Once the gilding falls away to reveal dirty duck-tape, you know there is no natural connection between my lives as lived and my lives as ordered by a fetishism for security (certainty) at all costs.

This is the real impact of Galilean and Cartesian attempts to reduce the world to a mathematical matrix. At the time of their published investigations, they were still but journeymen thinkers. And they spent the last decades of

their lives attempting to defend the techniques of precision they had developed not recognizing the myriad ways in which life transcends precision. Probably this is because, like anyone else found guilty of discovering the clearing between order and chaos, there is always a punishment inherent to questioning the secure system.<sup>43</sup> As I know from the lives of both men, the fear of ending up like Bruno left a weeping wound that forced creative thinkers to favor a particular path in the world that, at the very least, would not bring on more of the pain they already had in sufficient quantities.

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<sup>43</sup> See bell hooks, "Theory as liberatory praxis," *Teaching to Transgress* (New York: ????, ?????), ?? . The critical pedagogy set forth by hooks offers both justification for some of Leo Straus' arguments about esoteric thinking while also undermining the Straussian concept. HOW SO???

### §36. “Attainment”

The World-System *detains* me within circumstances that mostly come about because of others’ actions. A sense arises that I must struggle—howsoever violently—to break free of these situations, *attain* to another way of being. Although not of my own making, I am also limited to how much I can shake-loose because of the intertwining of I and my circumstances. The question then becomes not how much I must abandon but how much can I *retain* without getting tangled-up again? The act of overcoming will never be a wholesale rejection of the situation which abides as starting place and as return destination after detachment. The difference means that before, I find myself *detained* within definitive albeit imperfect limits. Afterward, I *attain* to the ability for refining my own boundaries (*autonomy*) while *retaining* a dwelling in the World-System.

In the parallel Platonic/Buddhist notion that there are many parts or even many “selves” to my ownmostness, self-explorations can delimit areas of possible activity. Thus, as desirous-person I learn *to maintain* moderation less I succumb to gluttony, greed, and/or lust. Such maintaining of self brings a dynamic equilibrium between pleasure and satisfaction. As a passionate-person, I discover how *to sustain* courage less I get distracted by anger and/or envy. By this sustaining of self, honor grows around me and victory awaits only my decision to act. Finally, as reflective-person, I resolve *to obtain* wisdom, howsoever elusive, in order to avoid sloth and/or hubris. By such obtaining of self, I open paths to act with prudence no matter the novel problems that can arise while seeking after truth.

### **§37. “Important Scales of Time-Space”**

Current-World.

History-Place.

Then-There.

Now-Here.

Nowhere-Afterward

### §38. “Concentric Worlds”

The Esoteric doctrine of “As without, so within; as above, so below” captures the existential resonance between the multitude of worlds (without/above) and the multitude of selves (within/below).

*Dào Dé Jing* in its most ancient arrangements begins with an account of possible degeneration.<sup>44</sup>

I can begin on the Way, but should that not work, I at least have virtue. Yet If I am drawn away from virtue, I at least have my own good will. Should that falter, I have my own sense of righteousness. But again, If I lose sight of doing justice, there are at least customs from my society to keep things In order. Except, If I happen to find myself In a world where there Is only customs, there will be a lot of bickering. As Laozi formulates It, as soon as there Is disagreement over custom, everyone Involved “rolls up their sleeves” for a fight.

For me, comprehending the digressions from a flourishing path ultimately to stagnant bickering happens on two levels: the personal and the social. As much as there Is my own Way to follow there Is my Way and, furthermore, the human Way. My own virtue, my virtues, and human virtuosity. Etc et al. Always this self - collective - species. This reminds me of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Circles,” as each from Inner self to outer cosmos circumscribes an observable current of world-generation.

Situating I in the current-world prepares the way for existential elucidation, a descriptive exercise that explores both my past decisions alongside future possibilities through the reflective present. In my acts of self-comprehension, I pay heed to what shows-forth through reflection with a mind toward meaningful projects. Whenever examining the kinds of worlds disclosable from my experience, I will succeed best by carefully pointing

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<sup>44</sup> The oldest copies of the text that have been discovered in the last few decades begin with what has been labeled Poem 38. This puts the “Book of Dé” (38-81) before the “Book of Dào” (1-37). I Interpret this to mean get a handle on the circumstances around me before I begin contemplating the conditions that are beyond me.

fromward the world in which I find myself (perspective) toward the implications of the situation at the moment of reflection. Karl Jaspers refers to this as “world orientation.”<sup>45</sup>

How does the notion “world” mean?

It means transcendently everything as the infinity of possibilities—the vast expanse of the cosmos from Big Bang to Small Whimper and all that this might entail [BEING-WORLD]. Or it intends immanently everything—all the diversity of life as well as geological and atmospheric structures on earth that contribute the conditions for survival [NATURE-WORLD]. It denotes the realm of human history and activity where I live, work, and play [LIFE-WORLD]. It signifies the systems created by some to order nature for convenience and profit [SOCIAL-WORLD]. It indicates the community of interpersonal experience shared with others [MY-WORLD]. Also, it can mean the intersection of inner and outer experience where I find my ownmost self [MY-WORLD].

Are there more? Of course! But the examples suffice to make the point even as the list does not exhaust all meaning. Of more import than there being many others to discover is how the “world confines” overlap-onto—if not bleed-into—each other. This happens more often than they lay-out absolute separations. How this notion “world” has so much equivocality speaks as much to the essential sway of the concept as it does to the confusions that arise from seeking to situate I properly within reality.<sup>46</sup>

The point of understanding the facticity “I live within multiple intersecting worlds” as well as comprehending “I may not even be aware of all the worlds I Inhabit” revolves around the need for accomplishing a world orientation before I attempt to do any existential elucidation.

Every phenomenon can be analyzed; nonetheless, this must be done with the proviso that the analysis can do as much harm as good. The harm involves the delicacy of experiences called-back for reflection. The reflexive current flows fromward a fulfilled historicity (I did X): I am always already moving about as “I did that beforehand.” Simultaneously, the current flows toward an as-yet empty responsibility (I will do X): I am always already moving around as “I will do this afterward.”

Among the abiding intentional structures of this current I find points of analysis, parts that stand-out for orientation: the subject, the object, and the act that binds them as making-sense. These are the focal point of the current phenomenon. But they do not appear in a void. Indeed, the phenomenon becomes meaningless content without a foreground (context) against a background (contrast) all of which properly occurs within a surrounding

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<sup>45</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy I: World Orientation*, trans. E. B. Ashton (Chicago: Univ of Chicago, 1970).

<sup>46</sup> The same could be said of NATURE, LIFE, LOVE, etc.

horizon (world).<sup>47</sup> Consciousness of experience flows through, with, and in all of these. Take-away one constitutive part, and I do not have a viable, vibrant phenomenon but a flattened, dull image.<sup>48</sup>

World-orientation as developed by Jaspers then performs the function of what Edmund Husserl would term the *epoche*. Through world-orientation, I establish the brackets that can hold aside the flowing current of the now/here immediately all around me while bringing-forth alongside a phenomenon for reflection. The world of the now/here abides while I tarry with the phenomenon from another time/place. This purposefully accomplishes—willfully—what happens every time I get drawn away from my circumstances toward something that grabs my attention. The world of the moment falls away for what interests me, what holds me. Knowing I have that power, I can refine it. I can do it on purpose. Thus, the meaning of concentration: to center self and phenomenon together for deeper comprehension.

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<sup>47</sup> TO-BE discloses as the horizoning of all possible horizons.

<sup>48</sup> Plato's notion of the EIDOI or Forms probably has as much to do with attempting to not have a world of dull images take the place of vibrant ideas. Unfortunately, most people read Plato as doing the opposite.

### §39. “To see, therefore to know...”

Etymologies—which play a possibly oversized role in my philosophizing—do not tell a thinker more than the *probable* historical development of a word. While an age old move, probably ancient even in the days of Socrates, to bring a word back toward its historic origin gets more scientifically rigorous at the dawn of the research university. This begins as the specialty of philology, the love of words. The first bachelor degree to be offered *besides* philosophy at European colleges in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was philology.<sup>49</sup> From there, a kind of science of language got underway that evolved into the discipline now called linguistics.

Myths and folktales, as much as tragedies and philosophies, provided a wealth of material from which students of the evolution of languages could draw. The Brothers Grimm, who collected the fairy tales that have become staples in “childrens’ programming,” are progenitors of scientific linguistics. In fact, the method used to determine certain regular changes in Germanic language forms from region to region was developed by Jacob Grimm building off the work of figures like Rasmus Christian Rask.<sup>50</sup>

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*The archaeology of language provides the genealogy of words.*  
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<sup>49</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche’s university studies were in the philology of ancient Greek, and his single appointment as a professor at the University of Basel was in a chair of philology.

<sup>50</sup> For a quick overview, “Grimm’s Law,” in “Jakob Grimm,” Wikipedia. Website. Accessed 20Aug2022.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob\\_Grimm#Grimm's\\_law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_Grimm#Grimm's_law)

*Maggie Malady*

Grasping the evolution of speech plays an important part in comprehending the ebb and flow of intellectual history. Recalling that words are more than their contemporary uses encourages an investigation of even the most taken-for-granted concepts. For instance, “history” itself. The academic discipline present today in most university history departments formalizes the notion as a kind of social science.

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*Words reshape to fit into current circumstances, or they quit being used. Yet they always already contain the traces of their development. Therefore, every term carries explorable deposits of historic meaning.*

## §40. “Mountain Dogs”

I refer to my own thinking as the Mountain Dog School. As such self-stylings often go, it started off as a joke. I’m often accused of two things: wandering to the heights of abstraction and hunting for elusive truths. Since I am highly influenced by Daoism, Cynicism, and Anarchism, the picture of me as a big, fuzzy dog freely meandering about in the mountains sniffing for the Way struck me as a funny image.

My mountain remains the high hills of academia most of the time; the scratchy notes left behind by my mentor in the large library of philosophy books he gifted me provide the trails along which I sniff after truths.

A dog is not considered superior merely because it is good at barking; a man is not considered worthy merely because he is good at speaking. Much less, then, is he to be considered great. That which has become great does not think it worth trying to become great, much less to become virtuous. Nothing possesses a larger measure of greatness than Heaven and earth, yet when have they ever gone in search of greatness? He who understands what it means to possess greatness does not seek, does not lose, does not reject, and does not change himself for the sake of things. He returns to himself and finds the inexhaustible; he follows antiquity and discovers the imperishable—this is the sincerity of the Great Man.<sup>51</sup>

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Excerpt From  
The Complete Works of Zhuangzi  
Watson, Burton

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<sup>51</sup> Zhuangzi, *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, trans. B. Watson (New York: Columbia Univ Press, 2013), Ch24, §4, ¶14. iBook format.

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Plato thought that dogs made good examples for careful caretakers of a city-state.<sup>52</sup> Primarily, it was their innate ability to tell friend from foe, their demonstrated loyalty to their household, and their excellent capacity for learning.

The Cynic Diogenes called himself a dog: κύων (Kyon).<sup>53</sup> And they lived a bit like one, spending the night in abandoned wine vats, wandering around barking queries at strangers, and even eating scraps.

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<sup>52</sup> Plato, *Republic*, ¶375c.

<sup>53</sup> The Greek is evidence for PIE *\*kwon-*. This also gives us CANINE, KENNEL, HOUND, etc. *Etymonline*. Website. Accessed 03Sep2022. [https://www.etymonline.com/word/\\*kwon-?ref=etymonline\\_crossreference](https://www.etymonline.com/word/*kwon-?ref=etymonline_crossreference)

## §41. “French Exits”

When I was the research assistant to Richard Owsley early on in our relationship, I would often meet him at some gathering arranged by the university, college, or department. I would go over with a friend and the Owl would be there conversing with a colleague or a grad student. As I got more intoxicated, caught up in dialog with folks about Heidegger or whatever, I’d look around near the late evening and realize my mentor had dipped out of the festivities. I found out that he was famous for making these “French exits,”<sup>54</sup> quietly slipping away when nobody was watching. And very rarely did anybody know when he left nor through which door. It was quite amazing.

As we grew closer over the years, and it got harder for Owsley to get around without a driver, I began going with him to these assemblies. Thus, I pivoted to learning the tricks to help him get away without goodbyes. I am sworn to secrecy, of course, on revealing the method. I can share, nonetheless, how much much learning to leave a communion space taught me doing phenomenology.

A rigorous phenomenologist who follows the basic steps put forward by Edmund Husserl strives for what he called the *epoché*, a term derived from ancient Skeptic philosophizing. Usually referred to as “bracketing the world” or “setting aside the everyday,” this movement resolves to turn away from what is happening to me now/here and consider a previous experience.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, rather than focusing on the first order perceptions that are happening to

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<sup>54</sup> I disagree that it is the same as “ghosting,” but I do see the connection. [https://slang.net/meaning/french\\_exit](https://slang.net/meaning/french_exit)

<sup>55</sup> It could very well be that I take up an experience that happened in the last few minutes. Nevertheless, if I am focused on that happening, I am not focused on the world around me so much as the encounter of the world within me. (This formulation should not be read to imply that there is a reality outside of consciousness. It more about the focus of attention.)

me, I reflect on the second order phenomena possessed by me. Through this *epoché*, I ask the world to go about its busyness while I decide to silently float away into the mysteries of meaning.

As Maurice Merleau-Ponty points out, bracketing must be maintained.<sup>56</sup> And often, it must be re-obtained since, as Owsley liked to say, “Brown, it is very easy for the brackets to spring a leak.” Even the most rigorously engaged phenomenological analysis might begin having leakage if *epoché* does not get checked. As I go deeper into any philosophical consideration, I must re-detach (resolve) from the world-currently.

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<sup>56</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. ??? (New York: Routledge, 20??), ???.

## §42. “This way to the egress...”

Intellectual history comes in all varieties. Common notions recorded overtime showing the evolution of everyday beliefs. Systematic treatises on a particular issue’s development over time. While a good deal stays basically the same over the passage of time, a significant enough portion does not. The former that changes very little gets conserved, passed down, and taught again. The latter that demonstrates advancement becomes indicative of progress, taken-up for further investigation, and taught as new until it too becomes part of tradition.

The back-and-forth involves two contrary forces necessary to guard against stagnation or dissipation. Conserving respects time-honored authority. Progressing respects honoring today’s exceptions. I call these contraries because they have a dyadic tension. When either becomes contradictory, this may indicate capture by totalitarianism (conservative absolutism) or nihilism (progressive relativism).

Among the negative critiques aimed at philosophizing, “undermining tradition” and “going nowhere” probably indicate the most common complaints.

Philosophizing as a way of life concerns developing the skills of *careful egress*.

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## **Space for Notes**

The following pages are left blank to allow the reader to jot down notes while reading the text. Also, please feel free to contact the author with any questions or comments: [maggie@callmemaggie.com](mailto:maggie@callmemaggie.com) .

## **Notes**

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