

Selected Snippets

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Some humor

The Unacknowledged Cousin of Tai Chi Chuan (*Taijiquan*)

Tai Chi Chuan (so named in the mid-1800s) is a martial art practiced for health and longevity and as a “moving meditation.” Some sources say its roots go back to the 3rd century AD. Although Wikipedia reports five traditional *t'ai chi* schools, a search of the Internet will convince you there are *many* training forms ranging from 24 postures (or “exercises” or “moves”) to more than 100. The set I practice has 108 moves including many repetitions.

But there is a much maligned form that has only six postures! It is *No Name T'ai Chi*, sometimes called *Anonymous T'ai Chi*. Without disclosing any of the form's ancient secrets (mainly because I don't know any), I publically listed the *No Name T'ai Chi* set of postures for the first time on the Internet.

Like many martial arts, the *No Name* set of moves has been developed from observing nature or watching the world of human activity, so posture names reflect this. The set begins with the relatively easy move of “French Kiss Monkey” but that is followed by the much more difficult “Give Tiger Enema” posture. Equally hard is the third move, “Pick Raging Rhino Nose.” The somewhat easier fourth move, “Private Moment in Bushes,” leads to the most difficult posture of “Save Gorilla from Choking.” The set gracefully ends with “Moon the Mayor” followed by the simple traditional “Bow to Sun,” which technically speaking is not a *No Name Tai Chi* posture. Still, some would say there are seven moves, not six. Ah well.

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A Guy's Sacred Stuff

I no longer have a spouse, which has some distinct disadvantages, for example, insurance company and other actuaries who know about such things say I will not live as

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long as my brethren who are married. Also, I miss out on certain advantages offered by the Internal Revenue Service to married couples and, of course, I don't have a "standing" Saturday night date. I have to do all my own householder chores, such as cleaning, grocery shopping, watering the plants, getting the laundry done (I drop it off at an excellent local laundry and let *them* do it) and remembering important dates like children's and grandchildren's birthdays and when to renew my driver's license.

But my situation is not all that dire: I can protect my sacred stuff from being spirited away for destruction or donation to charity. In particular, I have a ratty, tattered ancient red sweatshirt that is threadbare and, according to others who know not its significance and history, has become "disreputable looking." A spouse would no doubt persistently advise me to "get rid of that old thing" and, eventually, take matters into her own hands and toss it or hide it in her bag of rags (!) used for cleaning. (She might even replace it with a brand new sweatshirt, which misses the point, of course.)

Even though I don't have to protect my special sweatshirt from a spouse, I still have to be vigilant: The laundry owner asked me once, "Is this old rag part of your laundry? I've never seen it before."

You can't be too careful.

Did I mention I have several pairs of old running shoes?

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Cats!

Part 1 (from many decades ago)

Cats have no consciences and, therefore, cannot be owned. For the years I was imprisoned by Guilt, I disliked cats. Cats responded by ignoring me. Now that I'm on Parole, I think cats and I are on better terms (although they still ignore me).

Part 2 (only a couple of decades ago)

When I discovered a half-eaten dead mouse on my prayer rug or a butchered bird under my computer desk, I was plenty disgusted with our household cat (but he came with my dear spouse, so what could I do?). Eventually I learned he was bringing me "gifts" and, from his point of view, *splendid* gifts at that. (I was never sure if I was supposed to join him in eating the remains he so generously left for me.) So, I gradually became fond of him. . . well, perhaps that *is* overstating things a bit.

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Part 3 (nowadays)

Now, when I take my daily morning walks, I carry a bag of “Feline Greenies” cat treats in my pocket for the several cat friends I have made along my way. When I meow, they come out to greet me and, if they’re not *too* unkempt, I pet them a bit and I always give them some treats whilst I purr. (I actually have learned to speak Cat fairly well, including passable purring.)

Friends have suggested I get a cat of my own, especially since I convinced a neighbor to adopt an abandoned cat friend of mine. But there are limits to my rehabilitation. . . .

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Some observations and comments

The Perfect American Presidents

Here's a partial list of recent perfect American Presidents (in alphabetic order): John Anderson, Barry Goldwater, John McCain, Ralph Nader, Ross Perot and George Wallace. The reason they are perfect is *none of them got elected* to the office. But those who *have* been elected President of the United States have been far from perfect and we Americans are always quick to point out and to complain about the real and perceived shortcomings of our nation's chief executive.

This bad-mouthing is almost certainly done without ever carefully considering *how incredibly difficult it is to be President*. The backbiting begins immediately after national election results are confirmed and continues throughout the term(s) of the person elected President. Those who most enjoy this pastime are often quick to mention their Constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech which allows (some of them would say *insists*) that they carp and carp and carp and carp.

None that I have listened to ever seem to consider the damage their continuous negative stream of words does to themselves, to those around them, to those working to make the country better, to those who take on difficult leadership responsibilities such as the Presidency. Ah well, it *is* their right under the Constitution. Fortunately for those who enjoy continuously finding fault, the Constitution does *not* require citizens to work at making a better, more peaceful America.

Wait! Are not candid informed critics essential to a democracy? Yes indeed! And their persistent disagreement may often be heroic and may ultimately be quite beneficial to our democracy, which is of course a work-in-progress. But can't we be more civil in our discourse, more effectively compromising in our solutions, more focused on the common good than is now the case in American politics? Well, we *can*—that is, are *able*—but we may not have the will or generosity of spirit.

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Comments on humor

Humor has its roots deep in incongruity and, frequently, surprise. It is nourished by unexpected confrontations with truth that make us laugh—at ourselves. If humor occasionally does us a disservice, it is when it veils too heavily the fact that we are laughing at ourselves, at our own condition, at our own ridiculousness. Humor can be thought of as small sugar-coated doses of honesty.

Where there is love, there is also laughter. If there is no laughter, there is no love; there may be dialogue, or duty, even passion; there may be respect or awe, there may be intensity, or dependence or high-minded contracts; but if laughter isn't present, neither will love be found.

Humor *has* to come from laughing at ourselves because *that's where the joke is*: We are God's game of God playing not-God. And each time God (with our eyes) sees through the charade, what necessarily ensues is laughter. Tragedy is the most effective disguise of the game because we most sincerely believe it to be real.

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Comments on reconciliation

We venture the Unknown and risk "failure" [Death, or, little deaths . . . ego deaths] by stretching, stretching self . . . and adding, in small bits, to our faith in **Self**. And then comes surprise in the revelation of That which is hidden in us all (like leaven in bread). We come closer to Knowledge, that is, the knowing of our**Selves**. The surprise of this "new" knowledge leads us one step closer to Reconciliation of our self with our**Self**.

Risk followed by revelation followed by reconciliation. The lifelong awakening process.

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Comments on the virtues of love, courage and honesty

Neither Love nor Courage nor Honesty are as I thought them to be when I was young. Now, I might describe them thus: Love is being whole, being Who-You-Are, the God-Within-You; Courage is doing the necessary thing, in spite of tumult and shouting, whether outside of you or inside of you; Honesty is being a true mirror, neither grasping nor retaining but faithfully reflecting, without distortion. At the center of the lotus

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flower of virtues is Love, the Mother of all things, the Source of the “ten thousand things.”

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Comments on the question “why”

“Why” is a double-bladed sword that, once having cleaved, must cleave again and again. After the first division, half of the half must be cleaved, then half of the half of the half, and so on; but the heart of the matter, the essence, is never to be found, despite repeated cleaving. Because (to use the sword against itself) the essence is never wholly explicit. Although valuable in understanding *form*, the conscious intellect—the asker of “why”—cannot comprehend *essence*. That requires the insight and intelligence of the heart.

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There is no one from whom I cannot learn

It has long been my understanding that there is no one from whom I cannot learn. When I find myself resisting an opportunity to learn whose time has come in my life, I ask what cherished belief or what pride or what conditioning am I clinging to at the expense of growing freer, of growing closer to Truth.

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Metaphysical and philosophical stuff

Always keep your peace. . .

(From my online posting)

Always keep your peace. This is more important than anything you will achieve or acquire. This peace—the peace that passes the understanding of the intellect—is your greatest gift . . . the jewel within your heart. Cherish it more than even your Earthly life. It is the Light into which you leap at the end of your journey in this lifetime.

(From *Only a Leaf*)

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“Love does not insist on its own way.” What can this mean?

(From my online posting)

The Source (insert the word of your choosing) of all-that-is is Love. The Source continuously and unconditionally provides to all an endless supply of what I shall call “life force,” *without judgment of outcomes*. We continuously take in this life force, even as we continuously draw breath, and shape it into our own creations with thought, intention, and will. There is no payment required for the gift of life force. There are no requirements at all. So, we each may create our own path, our own way.

Our temporary condition in physical form does not mean we are not creative. *We are all of the Source and reflect the creativity of the Source*. And the Source does not constrain us. It does not “insist on its own way.” The Source *invites* us. *Love* invites. We are invited to “paint” as we will on the “canvas” of our lifetime.

I have described some of my story in *Only a Leaf*. Some of the images and words I use understandably reflect my “Judeo-Christian” background. A similar story told by Muslim or a Hindu or a Buddhist or a Spiritualist or a New Age individual will have a different “flavor,” use different images and words. Everyone’s story is unique.

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So, do I insist that you to accept my story as the “truth” for you? I do not. Find *your own truth* and, if you choose, tell *your* story. Do I insist you follow my path? I do not. Such is not possible. Create and follow *your own* path! I simply offer my story for your consideration. If you find something of value in it, well and good. If not, set it aside, perhaps for another time.

How may I know when I am not acting from Love? When I insist on my own way by judging, manipulating, coercing, categorizing, labeling, rejecting, fearing you. If I act from Love, I do not insist you be other than Who-You-Are having your unique adventure in this lifetime (or, if you prefer, this and other lifetimes). More than this, I also respect and celebrate you and salute the Source within you.

Namasté

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Book Burnings, Authority and the “Pointing Finger”

(From my online posting)

In March 2011, a *Qur’an* was burned by some Christians in Florida. Demonstrations and protests ensued—some of them violent and even deadly—in Afghanistan and other countries where Islam is the dominant religion. Muslims and followers of other religions hold their revered texts to be the word of God (use your own term here, if you like), usually the literal and inviolate word of God, despite many transcriptions, additions, changes, deletions and translations over many centuries. So, a sacrilegious act such as burning the *Qur’an* or other texts held to be holy scripture is perceived as extremely disrespectful, to say the least.

Most religions have their sacred texts, or, at least, their sacred stories and traditions, which often revolve around the spiritual experiences of *others*, for example, Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullāh for Islam, Joshua bar-Joseph or Yeshua bar Yosef or Jesus (the Greek form of the Hebrew name) of Nazareth for Christianity and Siddhārtha Gautama for Buddhism. These others (that is, their *personas*) become the centers of attention and sometimes of worship and are often venerated as prophets or otherwise specially blessed human beings. Some religions are also replete with “lesser saints” who, by virtue of stories of *their* spiritual experiences, are also venerable, for example, the Roman Catholic Saint Teresa of Ávila or the more recent Hindu saint, Gadadhar Chattopadhyay, popularly known as Ramakrishna Paramhansa. Followers rely on the spiritual experiences of these others, for inspiration, guidance and, in some cases, the expiation of sins and ultimately for salvation.

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Scriptures and sacred writings of religions *can* be inspiring and *can* open up minds and hearts. *The Bhagavad Gita* is a favorite of mine, as is the *Tao Te Ching*. I do not judge those who hold on dearly to their sacred texts. But there is another authority beyond words in books (however ancient and revered) and beyond the assertions of religious leaders, gurus, seers, psychics, “channels,” New Age prophets, et al.

My experience teaches me there is but one unnamable Source of all that is and we humans are aspects or “members” of this Source, as is everything else. The Source (the Spirit) is within each of us and within all that we encounter in our everyday lives. *No intercessor is needed to commune with our Source*. Our personal Inner Truth comes from this Source and may be trusted. Gurus and teachers, channeled information from others, books and scriptures all can be helpful on our spiritual paths but we can communicate with and know our Creator without them.

Further, my understanding is communication from our Creator Spirit within *transcends* communications from all other voices or “authorities.” This Inner Authority is always available to all who in silence will open their hearts. This Authority is the touchstone for Truth against which all other guidance, advice and information—channeled or otherwise—may be tested, *including what is written in the pages of my book [Only a Leaf]*.

Ultimately, each person chooses for herself or himself which spiritual way to follow (or create) and how to live. In matters of someone’s spiritual path, comparisons must be put aside and serious and sincere efforts respected, regardless of their “flavor.” Tell of your adventure. Listen to others. Rejoice in all.

Each may speak by the authority of her or his unique personal experience with the Author of his or her existence. *This is the same authority each human being has*. It is *the highest authority* in spiritual matters. No external authority can validate *or gainsay* anyone’s life adventures and experience with the Author of their being. *Validation comes from within*.

No word, no concept, nothing now formed or yet to be formed can express the Source of all that is. Many religions and their scriptures, numerous belief systems, countless philosophies and myriad musings of human intellects have in vain attempted to define or “name” the One many call God. But none of these efforts, however laudatory, uplifting or illuminating, can contain the Creator Spirit of this and all other universes. The Living Word cannot be named by human intellects but may be *experienced* by human hearts—by each of us in our own unique way.

Huineng, the Sixth and Last Patriarch of Chán Buddhism: “Truth has nothing to do with words. Truth can be likened to the bright moon in the sky. Words, in this case, can be likened to a finger. The finger can point to the moon’s location. However, the finger is not the moon. To look at the moon, it is necessary to gaze beyond the finger. . . .”

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I recognize religions are tightly intertwined with family, upbringing and education, social and economic systems, and one's culture in general. Hence, it often is best for those who have what we might call intimate ("mystical") experiences with the Spirit to remain very quiet about them lest their lives be turned upside down and they suffer considerable pain of various kinds, including banishment. Yet I am convinced (so far) religions *at best* are "launching pads" sending us on our own unique spiritual paths and *at worst* are prisons which seek to deny communion with the Source. Religions and their scriptures are "pointing fingers." Once you are in communion with the Spirit Within, you have seen the Moon and no longer need the pointing finger.

We can know Truth. All we read, think and feel, hear and see, or experience may be tested against the Truth already in our hearts. We need just be still and listen.

Love and Light to All!

The End