

**[Sunday] 17 November 1991:** I am always struggling for individuality. No, I should say rather than in being an individual others struggle against me. Earlier I wrote on losing your individuality for the sake of saving another. Now, I extend to hopefully life in this idea, “the way of spiritual practice is not to ladle little capfuls into a life of individuality, but throwing the individual far out into the sea of divine life” [At some point before now (2011), I added “losing myself to the eternalness of nature”]. The lesson is clear: if I desire to gain my life, I must lose it. I now give my life to love, and try to follow therein, nothing will be so great as a life of love<sup>1</sup>.

I want to write down as a note an interesting view of Jesus’ “don’t cast your pearls before swine.” Don’t because they will think it is food. They try to eat it, but find it is like stones. Naturally they get angry at you and turn on you. It is no fault in the pigs, it is your fault for throwing them what they cannot eat. When I teach, high thoughts and philosophies are not necessary, just things that people can eat and that will lead to truth. Don’t give teachings that are too high and difficult for that time and place<sup>2</sup>.

Love always forgives, and is never angry but is always searching for ways to lead a person to the truth.

I should take no credit for my work. Why? Because it is heaven that gave me the strength. And I have no use for pride. For my hands are god’s hands, and God when he finishes his work, he steps back<sup>3</sup>.

“What you cannot do by your own power, [God’s compassion] will do for you, but that little which you can do, [God’s compassion] leaves for you out of courtesy, so that you have the joy of cooperating with the One who hears the cries of the whole world, and the distress of those who utter them<sup>4</sup>.”

“Create and cultivate a great love in yourself for what you are spiritually speaking, using the traditional forms that are given to you for that purpose. Know that the quiver of love in you is being met by a quiver of love from the Beyond. If there were no quiver of love there, you would feel no quiver of love here<sup>5</sup> . . .”

Empathy and seeing myself as others do is a great step in my path towards God.

**[Monday] 18 November 1991:** The Bible contains many unbelievable things. Yet is also contains great truths. Same with other faiths. Search for these truths for they together are the truth.

Meditation is a concentrated earnestness upon an object.

“Be your concern with action alone, never with results.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Clearly, the tension between the living my life and not simply being an asshole to others have been a struggle of mine for many years. I think too often I have swung in the direction of being an ass, of running roughshod over people’s feelings because I viewed their feelings as tools of manipulation. It’s a struggle for me. I have opened up more than I used to, by that I mean I have allowed others to affect me, to deeply matter to me. I am sometimes ashamed to think that the first creatures that I deeply loved, really loved were my two cats, Katta and Felix. From my learning to care for them, to be responsible for them, I learned to open up more to others.

<sup>2</sup> I really like this. Wow, this is one of the most profound things I have read in this so far. So often, it seems that I and others teach solely in order to impress ourselves. I really need to make sure I am giving fuel for fires, and not rocks my students can’t use. In teaching, the issue is not showing how much smarter I am, but in building a bridge from what I know to where my students are and inspiring them to cross it.

<sup>3</sup> This is a tough passage for me. I do think that there is some truth here, but I would phrase this quite differently. I think I can take credit for what I do, but I also think that we too often ignore that many things in our lives are the result of chance factors. For example, I think of the “Matthew effect.” In essence, the Matthew effect is that whenever there is an artificial age cutoff (e.g., those born after 1 January are in this year’s class), then those born just after the cutoff have an advantage. The bigger issue is that I think I used to insist I and I alone was responsible for my successes; these days I am more willing to admit that I’ve had help and didn’t do it all alone.

<sup>4</sup> I cannot find the origin of this quote.

<sup>5</sup> I cannot find the origin of this quote.

<sup>6</sup> I cannot find the origin of this quote. This is actually a major issue in ethics: intentionalism versus consequentalism. Basically, should we judge an action by the person’s intent or by the consequences. The truth is that both matter. There are many issues here that are worth an essay in themselves. Why do we say that someone is not moral if they are only acting for a particular goal? So, why do people say people aren’t moral if they are only acting a certain way in order to get into heaven?

**[Tuesday and Wednesday] 19 & 20 November 1991:** I was sick as a dog yesterday, so I didn't write. But, here are the thoughts for both days<sup>7</sup>.

War only destroys, it never creates. The library at Alexandria, lives, relationships, land, traditions, and creates an ill-will between contestants. Is anything, any idea, worth all this? Yes, one thing. The Tao of heaven sometimes uses war for peace. To be short,

Heaven uses fighting for its ends when ten-thousand people are oppressed by the wickedness of one man, and by killing the one man, the ten-thousand have a new life<sup>8</sup>.

Jokes which hurt should be left unsaid. A "just kidding" does little to make a person feel better.

If my heart's desire is my heart's desire, I should not give it up, for looking up is a lapse of concentration, or when I put my hand to the plow, I am not fit if I look back<sup>9</sup>.

How often do I take for granted the body I have. Two arms and legs that work, my eyes see, my ears hear, and rarely any pain. Thank you God for blessing me such, and for the occasional pain that reminds me how lucky I am<sup>10</sup>.

**[Thursday through Sunday] 21–24 November 1991:** I didn't write for the past several days for I was down at Loyola University<sup>11</sup> trying for a drama/speech scholarship. But still, I had thoughts.

About college itself. The whole institution. Do you not expect that a person in college, in a prestigious university no less would not have some basic intelligence? I'm lucky, I'm in that growing minority that can read and write, find major countries on a map, and recognize the Declaration of Independence. Where are we as a world headed if our young don't care?

Although I failed the last great test of it, I shall henceforth risk. Sounds simple. But, sometimes the fear of rejection is great, I need to overcome it<sup>12</sup>. It is only by risking that I grow, and only by trying the untried that the new is discovered. Fear should be accepted, then defeated. Fear does not exist in the present. To use the

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<sup>7</sup> Clearly, then, this was written on the 20<sup>th</sup>. I think I was sick because we had spent one of the prior days pulling the leaves off tobacco leaves. The Combs had some land that they grew tobacco on, and every year they would dry and pull the leaves to sell the tobacco to pay the tax on the land. I think I got a case of nicotine poisoning.

<sup>8</sup> I cannot find the origin of this quote.

<sup>9</sup> I have long believed this attitude. The real trick is in finding the thing that has heart.

<sup>10</sup> Various events have reminded me of how generally lucky I am. I have many friends who from childhood have lived with relatively constant pain, and others who have had injuries that have caused them pain. All in all, I have enjoyed good health most of my life. I have avoided many of the ailments that seem to have plagued friends of mine. During this time in Virginia, I still ran as I had in high school. I would run 3 miles or so several days a week. I don't know why I stopped, though I did shortly after I went to college. In college, I picked up racquetball in earnest (though Gregg had taught me the basic rules and I had played several times before then). All in all, however, I have avoided the bum knees, pain, and other ailments that many people I know live with. Indeed, if I were honest, most of my ailments are self-caused (e.g., from drinking too much).

<sup>11</sup> The story of my desire to go to Loyola in New Orleans is one of the big events in my life. I had initially been interested in Loyola because at the time I wanted to pursue a degree in drama therapy. I was accepted. All through the Fall, the Home where I lived was happy about my being accepted, because I was one of the first in the Home to be accepted to college. During the next spring, I visited Loyola with my friend John, who had also been accepted. While there, I fell head over heels for a girl I met there, Christina. During the spring break of my senior year, the Home had a change of heart and told me that they did not feel comfortable with me attending a Catholic school that cost more than some of the Home's donors could send their children to, and told me they would not help me pay for it. Well, once you combined someone trying to control my intellectual life with the attempted thwarting of the hormones of youth, my decision was made. The next few months at the Home were tense, and I left it a few days after I graduated high school. Sometime during the summer, my financial aid to Loyola was cut. The official reason was that I had said (on the Home's advice) that I was a ward of the court. While that was the closest to the truth for the forms (and I don't blame the Home for this), technically, that was not true. Since my parents had voluntarily placed me in the Home, I was not a ward of the court. This trip to Loyola was part of an attempt to cover the costs of attending the school through a drama scholarship. This was not so odd a choice, as I had done drama for many years, and had even attended a performing arts high school (Cobb County Center for Excellence in the Performing Arts, at Pebblebrook). If I am not mistaken, I was awarded a partial scholarship to Loyola.

<sup>12</sup> This has long been an issue of mine. I so often focus on what I lack rather than on what I have.

example, I wanted to ask Christina<sup>13</sup> out for a drink<sup>14</sup>, but the more I thought about it the more full of fear I became. If my thoughts and actions were one, fear and shame would disappear.

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<sup>13</sup> This is a good time to elaborate on Christina. As I said, I met her when I visited Loyola. We talked and then exchanged numbers and addresses. All in all, fairly normal stuff. She lived in Tampa and I lived in Smyrna. I remember she and I would talk on the phone, send letters, and mixed tapes. At some point, I invited her to my prom. To my great surprise, she accepted. Fast forward a few months, it's time for the prom. I didn't have a car, so I had asked my friend Gregg who had said yes, but then got worried. He offered to pay for my cab fare the whole night. Of course, being 17 and stupid, I rejected this. Ultimately, my brother Mike offered to drive us around. For the prom, I had made reservations at the Sundial restaurant, at the top of the Peachtree Plaza hotel in Atlanta. I had picked this place because when we were younger, and living in shelters and such in Atlanta, we used to go here to view the city, and I wanted a sort of symbolic evening where I could say, "I can now afford what used to be out of my reach." As it turns out, Christina's family was fairly wealthy. I only mention this because it will make what transpired all the worse. So, Mike's driving us around in his early 80s, bondo colored, Honda Civic, and then we go to the prom, dance a little, take pictures, and then leave for dinner. Well, Mike joins us for dinner. And proceeds to eat a ton of boiled shrimp and then leave the shells on the table. Suffice it to say, there was no romantic dinner to be had. Christina could have easily had so much more, and I failed with so much less. To my continued surprise, she still talked to me after. Well, my aid was cut, I felt embarrassed because I couldn't live up to what I thought she wanted or expected, and by this point I had clearly lost the nerve to talk to her. To her credit, I don't remember her making me feel this way. In the past year, she and I have re-connected, because I had used our prom picture in class and I had asked her about it. She's married and just had a kid and doing well in Atlanta. I wish her the greatest happiness.

<sup>14</sup> At the time, the drinking age in New Orleans was 18. Until I graduated with my PhD, I was never really much of a drinker.