

AN ALLEGORICAL GUIDE
TO
PHILOSOPHICAL REHABILITATION

(Life As An Alternative)

by

William H. Harger

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Approved by the Master's Project Committee


Chairman


Approved by the Graduate Dean

DEDICATION

To a little, green fellow...thank you!

You know more than you'll ever know.

PROLOGUE

"Strange, you say".....yoda

This a different project; it is a straightforward device for confronting some of the more difficult issues in what can only be called "moral education." The social sciences have been remiss in their prophetic vocation and this paper is a beginning notion in the direction of framing the question. It is written metaphorically so that the predominant tendency and language of "social scientists" is avoided.

One is invited by Bill Harger to be teased, cajoled, annoyed, relaxed, or tickled into a different sort of awareness or confrontation with certain social realities. In this allegorical setting the reader is a spectator, a teacher, a student, or a critic. It is meant to be enjoyed and savored.

I write this for my friend, Bill, so that the reader knows that this is a shared journey...an open experience which can be responded to as one pleases. Enjoy the trip.

John Gai
Professor, Social Work
Humboldt State University

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FOREWORD

Compared to its full potential for humankind, communication is still only a seedling. Perfect communication would equate to perfect sharing or communion. Since this has been difficult, if not impossible, to achieve in human relationships it would seem such a definition of perfect communication is flawed by the very idealism it proposes. A cursory glance at the world at large demonstrates that what we refer to as "communication" is usually little more than a synthesization of symbols representing the creation of an idea and a subsequent reaction to an impulse in someone's mind which is transmitted in some manner with the almost naive hope that another mind will have an appropriate impulse to assimilate that energy, will have complete knowledge of the other's system of symbols, and will end up with the identical idea intact. This is probably an impossibility when one considers the variables which accompany attempts at communication: education, environment, emotions, acculturation, socialization, spirituality, desire and so on. It begins to look like communication is only a shotgun approach to communion with idealism being the only redeeming energy in the effort. Of course, much has been said on the subject and, since it is not my purpose to do any more than acquaint my reader with my personal biases in order to facilitate greater understanding of the texture of the writings which follow, I will try to direct my words more closely to the point I eventually hope to make.

One might ask, since I appear to have little faith in the accurate transmission of words, why have I taken any time at all to risk a waste of my energy in this effort of communication? My direct answer is that I am going to attempt to relax my reader. I wish to bolster my reader's spirit. My priorities pertain more to feelings than they do to information, although a mix of both is certainly intended. To accomplish this I do not require that my readers understand what I have written so much as I desire that they gain some spiritual potential and come to understand how this might be beneficial to our world. To be very concise, I am interested only in moving the reader's spirit in a positive way. Different people will assimilate my literal meaning to varying degrees but, and this is my own brand of idealism showing, will perhaps assimilate the positivity in these writings to an even greater degree. If I can accomplish this then what I have written will be more effective to its purpose than any attempt towards an accurate interpretation of my words might have been.

I derive this odd dialogue from my interpretation of the teachings of Carl Rogers, eminent psychologist and educator, which suggests that words written upon a page have no chance whatever of getting into the head of a reader with the same meaning that they had when they were placed upon that page from the head of the writer. His concept goes on to suggest to me, however, that the polarity of the spirit and the power of the spirit behind the effort of those writings will have some effect upon the spirit of the reader and, more than likely, it will be more proportionately powerful and with a much higher degree of polarity than one might

expect for the accuracy of the interpretation of the original meaning of the words.

If this is true, and since I believe that it is, then I should be able to take my readers on a journey to little different understanding of some of the delights, problems, and conditions which surround us and, perhaps, effect some positive cosmic disposition in the hearts of a few more of the inhabitants of our besieged planet.

In a word, the focus of this book is life. Prior and current attempts to define this thing, life, are presently underway with varying degrees of success. On the other hand, living it, feeling it, and enjoying it are also presently underway with, likewise, varying degrees of success. It seems to me that there exists a potential resource for development in these themes and it is the purpose of these writings to explore them further. The power of the living over the defining is incredible by comparison and somehow reinforces the context of the discussion so far. But it may be that it only seems so...we will have ample opportunity to judge for ourselves as we continue.

I believe that an understanding of life, rather than a definition of same, can render all beings more potent toward the solution of some of our world's more trying dilemmas. "Our" world is meant to refer to the surroundings in which we perceive that we live and to whatever degree they extend rather than it does to ownership. I utilize allegory, induction of a fictional character to express truths or generalizations about human existence, in order to transmit my message to readers of mixed ages and

stratification. A subtle ruse, perhaps, but my spirit is in the right place.

My allegorical friend, who I will soon introduce to you, has such an understanding of life that some of our greater social and global problems can be seen as resolvable rather than terminal, and with some rather refreshingly simple insights. These problems run a gamut of subjects: diminishing quality of living and of the environment, increasing and normative divorce rates, education and illiteracy, spiritual decay, ethical malaise, shifting values, crime, its prevention, and rehabilitation, just to name a very, very few. Although I may appear to have given my fictional friend great license to speculate, one should not lose sight of the powerful potential in the poetry of his philosophy. To paraphrase Thomas Merton: even if we do not control our destiny, we can still believe, as our fathers did, that a mysterious blend of wisdom and love guides us and imbues us with the power to always draw the greatest good out of the greatest evil. Merton said, "but one thing is certain, if the contemplative, the monk, the priest, and the poet merely forsake their vestiges of wisdom and join in the triumphant, empty-headed crowing of advertising men and engineers of opinion, then there is nothing left in store for us but total madness." Pitirim Sorokin, a great believer in the power of intuition, offered that the "founders of great religions, sages, seers and prophets, giants of philosophy and ethics,great scientists, artists, moral leaders, and other eminent creators in all fields of culture....unanimously testify the fact that their discoveries or the creation of their masterpeices has been started

and then guided by the grace of...intuition..."

Later, I will address a small number of our problems from the perspective of one who aligns with the life-view in the allegory forthcoming. The purpose of this will simply be to demonstrate how people who think this way might see things rather than to attempt to explain why they see things that way or how they came to think that way. I will add here that the spirit which drives this thinking is probably positive by nature, if not a little idealistic. Idealism, by the way, is a particularly appropriate word to my goals and to our discussion thus far. Idealism refers to perfection at the same time that it refers to impracticable or unattainable; it refers to the utopian at the same time that it refers to divine myth. I can live with that. We all can.

Come with me now on an idealistic journey to meet my friend,
Old Toad....

TOAD TALK

The stream chortled as it rounded the soft bend and washed at the stones along its banks. Old Toad sat in the moss, invisible to any but the most humble eye, and blinked the grey lid over his own with sleepy effort. His other eye, covered now with a green lid grown permanently shut, still housed the copper shot gifted him twelve springs before by young explorers up his creek. The sun sprinkled through the leaves above and mottled the stones and the moss and the ferns and the elephant ears growing along the streamside with a warm shimmer. A tiny, winged bug buzzed by Old Toad's nose and turned out towards the water again when, suddenly, he disappeared right into thin air as though he had never been. The single eye blinked again.

"Today is a most important day", Old Toad thought to himself, "today I will be valuable." With those thoughts still awhirl in his fine, amphibian mind, he shuffled around and crawled out into the sunshine at the edge of the little glen which bordered his favorite meditation spot. He hardly ever hopped anymore as it took great effort to hurl himself into the air and those hard blops to the ground upset his stomach full of tiny, winged bugs. When he arrived at the predetermined meeting place he sought out a comfortable, mossy stone and settled down to review his presentation while he waited for his visitors. But the short journey from the stream to the glen had tired him a bit and he drifted into sleep.

When he awoke, they were assembled before him, peaceful and smiling, because Old Toad had that effect on beings. A living

being spoke, "Yo! Old Toad, thank you for allowing us to come here today, to your holy place. Thank you for accepting our invitation to talk with us." Other living beings nodded their approval while some dormant beings appeared to move a little. The first being spoke again, "And it is the best of all days, don't you think?" Old Toad smiled, although you could hardly tell because toads have a perpetual smile on their green faces anyway.

HE LOOKS ALONE
A LOT
BUT HE 'S NOT....
HE 'S GOT NATURE
IN HIS EYES,
THE EARTH
BENEATH HIS FEET,
AND SOME KIND OF POWER
IN HIS SOUL.
YES,
HE LOOKS ALONE
A LOT
BUT HE 'S NOT....

HE 'S TAKEN LIFE
FOR HIS WIFE.

Old Toad never thought such a thing could ever happen to him. Just imagine, all these beings have congregated in his glen just to hear him talk about things he always thought, in his little green mind, were elementary. Why, he was always of the opinion that it was he, Toad, who was deficient because he was bewildered by the clever ideas and faddish preoccupations which seemed to delight all those beings he had observed from afar. Things like ERST and Transcontinental Mediocrity and Lifesponge and Lime Okay-Orange Okay always made Toad think he might be a might retarded. Never mind..it was time to begin.

His first words were shy. "I'm so glad you are here with me today," he whispered. From the group assembled came, "Please speak up, dear Old Toad, we love you and we need to hear you." Old Toad blushed a wonderful, deep green and raised a webbed forelimb to his lips. He coughed politely to clear his throat. A tiny wing shot out into the space between Toad and his listeners and flutter-whirled to the ground, exhibiting iridescence in the sunlight as it did so.

LIFE SCREAMS
FROM THE OPEN BLUE....
SEEMS
TO CENTER AROUND YOU
WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT.
I DON'T KNOW WHY
IT SOUNDS SO FINE,
PULSES
THIS HEART OF MINE,
EXCEPT IT
MUST BE SOME DIVINE GIFT
WE CANNOT FIND
UNLESS
WE ARE NOT SEEKING.

"Tell us about life," a wide-eyed being implored softly as the rest of the group of living and dormant beings settled into the sweet grass.

"Life...is a fountain...a beautiful fountain," he began again with the spark of an old imp in his eye.

"Booooh, Toad," exclaimed a rather formal looking penguin sitting right up in front of the group, "we've heard that one. We're quite serious, you know. We really want to hear you, Old Toad. Some of us have come a long way to be here on this day in this place. It is no wonder you cannot easily take us seriously, after how we've treated you all of these years, but the time is

nigh that we all hear your simple wisdom and quite wonderful views on life and our reason for being and stuff like that." Heads and things nodded in unison as the penguin continued, "And I'm certain I speak for all when I say we're all ears."

"We are?", the corn asked itself, a little confused.

Old Mr. Toad didn't mean to be disrespectful, really. He just didn't look at things so seriously. Oh, sure! He knew the reason for their being together on this day was important but there was plenty of time to get around to wisdom. The sun felt so good on his warty back and it was so peaceful in the little glen. "After all," he thought, "our lack of patience is one of our greatest problems."

TOAD FINALLY TALKS

Old Mr. Toad began, "There is only one thing happening among all of the things we think are happening. Nothing else is happening except this one thing. And it happens with such power that it will never die, or be stopped, or be redirected, or be altered, or be denied. It just flows and flows and flows in every direction there is, even in directions there isn't. And it does this for its very own purpose...a purpose that we can only guess about but never completely know. We can argue against these things but it is futile to do so because we can never know all that there is to be known about this happening and what we will never know would win the argument against us."

Toad rolled his eye upward, furrowed his brow and thought, "I've got to keep this simple."

LIFE
DOESN'T FOLLOW OUR INSTRUCTIONS
VERY WELL.
SHE HAS HER VERY OWN FEELINGS
ABOUT WHAT FUN IS
AND HOW THINGS SHOULD GO
AND SHE REALLY DOESN'T CARE
TO SHARE HER PLAN
WITH ANYONE.
LIFE
JUST FLOWS
AND FLOWS
AND WE CAN EITHER HITCH A RIDE
OR
STAND OFF TO THE SIDE
AND LOSE HER....
SHE WON'T CARE.
SHE'S THE MOST SELF-CENTERED LOVER
A BEING CAN HAVE
BUT
THE MOST GENEROUS AS WELL....
SHE'S THE BEST,
THE ONLY ONE WE REALLY WANT,
AND
WE CAN HAVE ALL WE CAN TAKE
JUST SO LONG
AS WE DON'T ASK FOR ANYTHING.

"This power," he continued, "has no opposite because it is all that there is. It is all consuming, all encompassing, all meaningful, all important, and all of the other 'alls' there are. This power is life."

"They knew I was going to say that," he thought. But he sat there all puffed up anyway.

His audience was awake, aware, and awlirl. Only the professor in the back of the group was awry but he was smiling.

Pleased, Old Toad continued, "And life is a positive power. There is nothing negative in anything that life does. And, since life is a positive power only and because everything in life is

caused by **life** and has a purpose only onto **life**, all things we see happening as the result of **life** are positive as well."

The professor's head spun forward but the owl beat him to the punch, "Then, what is negative?"

Toad took a deep breath, as though this was going to be a difficult question to answer. It was a technique he had developed to make others feel more adequate, especially frogs. Of course, the answer was simple.

"Negative isn't," he said, "except in our minds."

The professor beat the owl this time, "The ramifications of this cosmic impertinence will rebound for eons in the ruminations of the quite limited cerebrums of the contingency of this obsequious forum unless I query, with all due respect, the rationale with which you so inappropriately disregard certain obvious aspects of electricity, mathematics, and losers. I frame that as a question, Toad."

Toad smiled at him. The professor was a nice man, really.

"Those things are all products of the mind," he said with a soft voice. "I'll try to explain it this way...I was speaking of what **life** does. It just so happens you have found, quite intelligently I might add, the single thing that **life** does not have complete dominion over...the minds of humankind. A quirk, I think. Maybe even a purposeful indulgence, maybe for absurdity. These are questions we will not answer. But minds and their products do entertain aspects of negativity. And your bringing it up will give me a chance to offer some very important things to consider. Thank you, Professor, very much."

The professor smiled and looked around.

NEGATIVITY

We must not forget that Mr. Old Toad is only an amphibian. He is a simple being who is trying to do good with his current understanding of life. He does not rank with others who hold more saintly credentials, although they would probably say he does. He is attempting to impart a feeling of life and living to his listeners rather than a definition of life and living; a feeling of goodness and wisdom rather than of knowledge and power. Let us turn back to him and his visitors, now, and see what he has to say about negativity.

Toad said, "Nothing is negative except that thinking makes it so!"

The professor wondered to himself if Shakespeare was a toad.

Toad went on, "Life is only positive. Things are usually thought of as being negative because of the discomfort caused by them. But, in reality, they are positive acts in life. Some of us put ourselves ahead of life in importance and have taken to judging life and her activities by the pleasures or discomforts we feel as the result. We call the weather bad when it keeps us from playing. But, it is good. Weather cannot be bad. It does too many good things. That's just one example. Rattlesnakes are good too!"

A slight rustle among the group of beings caused Old Toad to pause for a moment. He would have to go over this again, later, he thought to himself. After all, he had been considering these things for a number of years and had come to be quite comfortable

with them. His listeners, on the other hand, were neophytes to this simple manner of speech and might find it confusing. Toad always thought that it was more difficult to be simple and more easy to be difficult but others seldom understood these ideas from his little green mind because it was too difficult for them to see how simple it was.

Toad looked up at the sky. "What a beautiful day," he thought, again. If he ever paused to remember he would recall that he had never, in his entire life, ever believed any day was not among the most beautiful ever seen. All was silent but for a light breeze in the leaves and the soft chortle of the stream. His collection of beings seemed comfortable but a little anxious. He decided to remain silent just a while longer...someone might ask a question. Given enough time, someone always asks a question. It is so difficult for some beings to remain silent for very long. Toad opined that silence must appear to be a hole, to these beings, requiring to be filled with sound. Oh well, he preferred questions anyway. Answering questions was always more comfortable for Toad than to speak out on his own. The nature of questions had a random quality of the unknown which made life more exciting. And he often amazed himself with what he came up with. In fact, some of his best statements would have never been made but for the asking of a question by someone. Questions were often keys to little treasure trunks of information which seemed to be stuffed about in the attic of his mind.

"What about the sniffles?" asked a tiny being who sniffled when finished.

"Sniffles?" Toad did not understand. He had forgot what they were talking about. His little green brain was like that. Another delight.

"Yes, the sniffles," the voice sniffled again, "aren't the sniffles something bad?"

"Oh! The sniffles," Toad's deep voice cracked happily, "yes, yes, yes, the sniffles. The sniffles are a message that you have not taken good care of yourself and will catch a cold or something worse if you don't begin taking better care."

"Well then, what about worse things like colds and the flu and pain and death and stuff like that? Wouldn't they be bad?" asked the sniffer again.

Old Toad should have figured it wasn't going to be all peaches and cream, this chat in the glen.

"Pain causes us to move away from pain," he began again, "and that means we will be going to a better place. A better place is simply a place one space removed from the place we were just in and is necessary to achieve if we are to remain productive in the process of living life. But pain is not bad. Remember, life knows all; we never will. Our purpose for being is to live and to grow and to move with life. We actually belong to life before we belong to ourselves. And we CERTAINLY," he emphasized for many other benefits than for just this conversation, "do not belong to ANYBODY else! Pain is simply the fuel which motivates us. Some beings require it and some do not."

"What about death?" the sniffer added to her progression of questions.

Toad really wanted to get into another area. Sometimes even toads would rather make a point than answer questions all day. The professor would understand that. But toads are very patient and benevolent and wise and Old Toad loved his collection of beings.

DEATH

"Death does not exist," Toad began again, "It cannot if life is all that there is. We said that, didn't we...life is all that there is? I have actually never been certain that I have seen death. Things look dead, according to some definition we came up with once, but if we looked more closely, like through a microscope, would things be perfectly still or impotent? I don't think so. If you find me death, I'll eat it with a spoon." Toad blanched at the thought but he said things like that sometimes. He was rather good at it.

He thought he would wax philosophic for a minute or so, just to pave the way for some of the more open minds. He would get back to basics later.

He continued about death, "Besides, if death did exist then one could imagine either life or death winning out over the other sooner or later. It is impossible for life not to be, either sooner or later, and so it is impossible for death to be, at least in the quite final terms we usually think of it. When we discuss stones you will have a better understanding of what I mean," he assured them. "Actually, it is only human beings that worry about death and they do that because of things called egos. Some human

beings see life as having a beginning and an end. Their egos always seemed to be worried about death and force them to seek out ways to live forever. But the earth would soon have no room on it if this occurred. On the other hand, some human beings see life as just another stage of awareness in the flow of their spirits through time. They are more comfortable with life and she is more comfortable with them. She can flow through them more easily. They are more open.

I KNOW A NUMBER OF PEOPLE
WHO HAVE COME TO KNOW
THEY ARE DYING
AND SO
THEY SMILE
AND WORK
AND SHARE
AND ARE REALLY TRYING
TO GET EVERY MINUTE OUT OF LIFE.
THEY EACH HAVE SO VERY MUCH
TO BE THANKFUL FOR
AND NOTHING
TO REGRET.
BUT....
THEIR NUMBERS
DO NOT COMPARE
WITH THOSE WHOM I KNOW
ARE ALREADY DEAD
AND DON'T KNOW IT YET.

Human beings, as are we all, are simply vessels through which life can flow and that is what life likes to do the very most of all. This is why I like to say that we are simply the result of life's indulgence in herself. The ego being, however, can only live during this stage of their passing through time and spends much of life being contrary because the ego does not want to die. It is probably the only thing in the whole universe that does not want to die. Everything else simply lives...forever. But," and

at this point Old Toad took in a deep breath, "we are actually much better off without egos anyway, at least big ones. Egos know they will not live forever but they just keep trying to bluff some unfortunate beings into believing that they will be the first to pull it off."

A giant question mark hung above the silent group assembled before that beloved, big, old toad perched upon his favorite stone in his very most favorite place.

"For those who worry about such things, life should be considered a gift, no matter how long one lives. Only the ego compares the lengths of lives...only the ego requires to live longer than another. The gift of life, however, is as valuable to a being living for three days as it is to a being living three months or seventeen years or eighty years or fifteen hundred years because it is, after all, a gift...not a burden.

I'M SURELY
OVER HALF-WAY
THROUGH MY LIFE
AND YET
I'M FASCINATED
BY HOW VERY OFTEN
I SUSPECT
MY LIFE
IS JUST BEGINNING.

And the joy of the flowing of life through us is part of that gift. It is the status quo of life. Some of us do not enjoy the status quo when we allow our minds to complain about things that our minds have invented and may not even really exist, except in our minds. We call this negative, though, when we have actually only fallen out of step with the status quo of the joys one can

feel by simply living life. This is when we appear as a vessel closed to life, and she just naturally flows someplace else like a river flowing around a log. Remember, I said earlier that life finds her joy in flowing through us. If we are closed, she will not even bother to try. The loss will be ours and we can only blame ourselves. Examples of this are all around us; we need only open our eyes to see. I know that I am beginning to sound a little soapbox but it will become more clear to those who do not completely understand when we discuss stones, like I mentioned earlier. Maybe we'd better just get to that rather than putting it off any longer and you will see what I mean," Old Toad hoped, with a deep, lingering sense of frustration at having gotten so intense there, for a while.

STONES

"Besides sunshine and water, stones are some of the most important things in life. Even more important than beings like us," as he made a broad sweep with his foreleg, "and, especially, more important than most human beings."

A few heads turned to the professor, now thoughtfully engaged in packing his pipe with tobacco.

Toad continued, "Do you remember when I said earlier that all things were good, even rattlesnakes?"

He did not wait for acknowledgement but he did spy a big, fat, old snake with an extensive set of buttons on his tail, all stretched out on the large boulder off to the side of the glen, shift his position in the sun. He had not seen him 'til now, probably because he was on Toad's blind side. A field mouse

sitting next to the buzz-tail's big stone, and who had not noticed him either, grabbed at her heart as she fell backwards in sudden terror. A soft titter of giggles and other little noises rose from the group of living and dormant beings as some of them assisted the tiny rodent to comfort again...this time over by a big, yellow spider. The snake, quite near-sighted, did not even notice the drama he initiated as he waited in the sunshine for Toad's next words. All of this stuff Toad was espousing had occurred to him too, but never in the same words, and he was intensely interested.

Toad had to begin again, "Do you remember when I said earlier that all things in life were good, even," and at this point he cleared his throat, "bad weather? Even lightning and thunder and earthquakes? Gophers and black-widow spiders and maggots and mosquitoes and hyenas and poison ivy and buzzards and termites and eels, sharks, pimples, slivers, rats, weasels, and frost are all good too!"

"Here, here," came a voice from the back of the group and, then, a coyote stepped from the shadows and into the sunshine with the others.

"All of the events and things I have mentioned have a positive purpose in life and in nature. They all have a specific design in both form and intent and serve to accomplish deeds or conditions which contribute to the ease and totality of life's flow. There is absolutely nothing in existence which does not serve life in this completely positive way. I know I have said this before," he apologized, "but it is so important and means so

much to what I am about to say, I thought I should tell you again."

Old Toad paused again for the frogs to catch up. "Poor things," he thought to himself, "their tiny brains are designed to specialize in tongue-sticking small, dark, moving objects and for very little else." But Toad was a sympathetic amphibian and, as noted before, very patient besides. He would wait for the lights to return to the frog's eyes before he continued this thoughtful journey with his beloved group of living and dormant beings.

The sun hung overhead, a giant orange in a vast, blue canvas framed by the green tips of attentive trees surrounding the peaceful, electric glen.

"And some of the most frightening and powerful happenings are the very most positive things in life, even though we often think of them as the very worst...human beings think of them as the very most negative," and he glanced at the professor who was sort of listening but who was also engaged in the activity of trying to persuade a large butterfly and a couple of ants to remove themselves from the bowl of his pipe so he could fire it up. They had good seats, however, and weren't going to be easy.

"And those things thought to be the very most negative, like earthquakes, volcanoes and floods and tornadoes and freezes and winds and stuff like that," he took a deep breath, "are actually some of the very most positive of the enormous energies of life. The surprising thing is that these powers seem to be totally dedicated to one simple and very important family of things...stones. I've given this odd idea a lot of thought and

have finally determined the reason for life's preoccupation with stones; because without them there would not be any living things. In fact," and he pointed out over the group with his little, green foot, "all things become stone, sooner or later, and stone becomes all things, sooner or later. This could mean that life's primary purpose is toward the production of stone and all other activities, either real or supposed, are mere extras. This sure makes life a lot more easy for me to understand. I hope it does the same for you," he implored, a little hopefully.

"Boy, I hope I'm not getting too cosmic for these beings," the old toad thought to himself, "and I sure hope the professor doesn't think to ask me for any references."

But, the professor didn't even hear Toad's last words, being quite preoccupied with yet another butterfly who had perched on his glasses. The professor was beginning to take on the look of a large, animated bouquet of colorful, little flowers.

"Let's try to envision it this way and maybe it will make more sense..." Toad offered softly and went on, "earthquakes and volcanoes bring stones to the surface of the earth. When they get cold, the sun causes them to expand and crack. Rain gets in the cracks and splits pieces off when the water freezes. Winds and erosion and streams and floods carry the decomposed stone to lowlands where the new material enriches the soils with new dirt and sand and minerals. The vegetation grows lush from all of this nourishment and feeds others until they complete their purpose and fall back into the earth and eventually get compressed into stone again while the entire cycle has been continuing in the meantime."

"Is that confusing?" Toad asked.

"Is that what you meant when you told us that there is no such thing as death?" asked a very large, old bear from over under the maple tree.

"Yes," and the old toad smiled at the old bear. "It means that life is a continuum with no ending."

LIFE
IS THE LAVENDER THREAD
THAT CONNECTS THE CAT IN THE CORNER
TO ME
AND THEN PASSES THROUGH ME
TO THREE YOUNGSTERS
PLAYING ON A BEACH IN CHINA
AND THEN
THROUGH THEM
TO AN OLD MAN
ILL
AND DYING ALL ALONE
ON A HOSPITAL BED
AND THROUGH HIM
TO A STONE IN GREENLAND
AND THEN TO A BUG
AND THEN TO A FROG
AND THEN TO A LEAF
AND THEN TO A GROUP OF DOPERS
IN NEW YORK
AND TO A LADY IN SPAIN
AND IT CONTINUES WEAVING
AROUND AND AROUND THE GLOBE
PASSING THROUGH EVERY LIVING
AND DORMANT BEING,
AN ENDLESS LAVENDER THREAD,
AND THEN RETURNS
TO MY ROOM AGAIN
TO RECONNECT
WITH ITS OTHER END
RIGHT WHERE IT BEGAN
AT THE OTHER SIDE
OF THE KITTY CAT'S HEAD.

"We can only imagine endings with thinking and maybe this is why thinking is the only thing that has an ending. But, then again," and Toad tapped on his nose with a green digit as he

rolled a pensive look at the sky, "maybe even thinking goes on in some other form after we think we have stopped thinking. For example, I cannot think of many things right now that were ever imagined and did not eventually come into being. I'll have to give that a bit more thought."

This was too much for the bear and she tilted her head and looked at the toad with a quizzical look on her face. A little skunk had just curled up in the lap of the professor, who didn't even take notice as he was suddenly quite attentive to the subject being discussed.

Toad responded, always aware of where his beings were as they progressed along his path of wisdom, "I guess this has been a good example of how confusing things can get if we start thinking too much. Basically, things in life are simple and, if we could all just remember that, troubles and stuff might become more manageable if we kept this simple view...might even just go away."

"Mr. Toad," the professor had his hand in the air and wanted to speak.

"Yes, Mr. Professor," Old Toad responded with a smile, pleased that he had taken the bait but also dreading where the conversation might have to go for awhile.

But the professor had softened this day in the glen and simply asked, "Could you talk a little more about the relative merits of thinking? I'm particularly interested in certain aspects of the polarity of thinking you alluded to earlier in your discourse. And," he continued softly, "there was something else you just said about how thinking comes into being."

Toad was delighted with this nice turn in the nature of things and said so, "I'm delighted, professor. I believe you're speaking of creativity and that is one of my favorite subjects."

Old Toad was able to speak the last sentence in such softness that he could hardly be heard by some of the beings in the back of the group. As there seemed to be, at this time, a lull in the discussion, a colossal and quite corpulent crocodile, who was also a tiny bit hard of hearing, took the opportunity to rise up out of the leaves back by the maple tree and waddle forth. Right through the center of the group assembled, he did, and straight up to the very stone upon which the old toad sat. He then settled back down, kind of like the way a hen wiggles her way into a nest, half turned to the suddenly paled collection of beings, and grinned in obvious support of his warty cousin. A young ferret, abruptly aware that he was not seated upon some nice, old log, clung in fear to the bumps on the croc's back. His eyes had become enormous, white marbles during his ride to the front of the group and he was making a courageous attempt at pulling himself back together because he thought every being was looking at him. But they were not. They were all awaiting Toad's next words.

THINKING

"It has been said," Toad began, "that nothing is good or bad except that thinking makes it so!"

"Shakespeare," the professor intoned, gently.

With a glance of recognition, Toad continued, "For those of us who can think, it is possible to recognize positive and

negative thinking. Some thinkers do not let it stop there, however, and let negative thoughts become. Usually it is the ego we spoke of earlier which determines when thoughts should become or not. The ego does this for self-agrandizement. Blue-ribbon stuff. Power. Gratification. I guess we could say that the ego lives in the mind of the thinker and has powers over the thinker which are inversely proportional to their understanding and appreciation of the true nature of life."

Toad was addressing himself directly to the professor, now, as few of the other of the beings present would be able to completely understand, except for the owl, perhaps, but that was speculative and probably only hearsay. In any event, all other beings appeared to be content with the two of them hashing a few things out. A chance for some of them to even take a little doze in the warm sun of this passing afternoon. The professor was leaning back against a tree and was absolutely festooned with butterflies and little birds, assorted rodents, insects, harvestmen, dandelion puffs, and a quiescent skunk. The professor had become very comfortable in more ways than just one. Life was wearing on him very well.

THE FINEST FREEDOM
IS THE FREEDOM OF TWO SOULS
LOOSED TOGETHER
IN THE SKIES
OF EACH OTHER'S MIND
AND
THE MOST FIERCE PRISON,
THE DARKEST CELL
ONE MIGHT SUPPOSE,
IS A FREE SOUL
FLAPPING AROUND
IN A MIND THAT IS CLOSED.

Toad continued his discourse, "I guess , what I am saying, is that the ego prevents pure thinking from pure becoming. Thinking becomes in many ways...speech, actions, creations, and stored thoughts among other things. But when the insides of us think, the ego gets a hold on it and monitors how it will appear to the outside world we thought it up for. This means we seldom offer pure thought for consumption by others because we are so sensitive to how it will be accepted or to what will be thought of us as the result. About the only time thinking gets out of the mind in a pure form is when creativity is celebrated by the thinker. Sometimes, I am sure you have noticed," Toad was still directing his speech mainly to the professor, "original thoughts and original creations do not go over very well with others and only those who are secure with their 'selves' have the strength to endure the disdain some might have for the offerings of their internal workings and go on to offer more. This is as close as thinking can get to nature and it is the main thing which sets thinkers apart from all of the other beings in nature's kingdom. All beings in nature create, but only thinkers can create by the act of thinking. And, as I said before, it is only in thinking that bad can occur. And, unfortunately, it occurs much of the time."

The professor asked, "How does this relate to truth?"

"Well," and the old toad rolled his one good eye heavenward, very happy with the professor's question, "if all beings told the truth and nothing but the truth there would be no bad. Bad is caused by non-truths and reactions to them. But some thinkers are

not taught about truth and the many enemies of truth like the sin, pain, poverty, and pride...the ego."

"Please define truth for me, if you will, good toad," the professor asked.

TRUTH

"Truth IS! What IS is truth, what is not is not truth. It is just that simple. The difficulty is with how we get desires, feelings and interpretations confused with what appears to be or feels like rather than with what really IS! Life is truth. What we really are is truth. If our prides did not get in the way, we could transmit truth back and forth all of the time, which would save a lot of time and make life far more enjoyable. But most thinkers care too much for what others think of them and, so, truth suffers. Some thinkers are so subtle they even invent ways to tell untruths in acceptable forms for other beings. They adopt acceptable customs and conforming modes of appearance and expression, they hide their true feelings about many things, and they experiment with various forms of diplomacy and tact. Rather than offer the gifts of their true inner selves, the only really original and personal gift they have to offer to life's flow, they choose instead to copy the content and form of others who have become acceptable to their public. And they do not mind being a counterfeit just so long as they are that which they have come to believe, or what others tell them, is happy. The world, my dear professor, suffers more pain from the products of this particular state of affairs than for any other force in nature."

Toad had said a great deal that might not be palatable to the professor and the world from which he came but, no matter, for if Old Toad was anything, he was a truth teller.

WE MIGHT NOT ALWAYS HEAR
WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR
BUT
THE TRUTH
IS ALWAYS THE SHORTEST DISTANCE
BETWEEN WHERE WE ARE
AND WHERE WE OUGHT TO BE.

The little green fellow's voice remained tranquil, no matter the words he spoke, and all over the little glen the varied assortment of living and dormant beings had been settled by his gentle sentences into numerous postures that none but the very most privileged would ever be able to record in art. Two hogs, with their necks crossed and legs intertwined, were staring vacantly at nothing with peaceful smiles on lips slightly parted by the thickness of the tips of pointed, pink tongues. A small bush with tiny blossoms offered a fragrance out over the glen for all to enjoy, shimmering in a visiting breeze as it did so. A green and yellow and black striped snake hung across the bushes inner branches, her obsidian eyes perfectly still and aware. A cougar and his three cubs lay on their backs in a tangle of tan, big-footed bodies with legs spread to the sky, leaving four furry bellies to the warmth of a waning sun. The rattlesnake stretched flat and wide and straight on his warm boulder, his tongue occasionally checking the locations of the beings about him with silent, quick flicks into the sweet air. Many sorts now shared his warm rock with him, without fear. All were at peace. The old

bear was now seated next to the professor and was beginning to look a little like him as well, with birds and butterflies settled into her thick, brown fur. And the toad? Well, he was beginning to slow a bit. He was ready for siesta but none of his visitors were sleeping, only at peace, and he was nearing the end of his talk with them.

"There are many beings on this earth who are not what they are," Old Toad began again. He enjoyed paradox. "They seem to enjoy their condition, as I mentioned before, but I often wonder if they are aware of the alternative....being their real selves. Life intended her gift to all beings to be fully indulged whenever possible. The limits to this freedom cannot be imagined by the most unfettered minds. It is by the imagining of these minds, however, that the deeds most counter to the flowing of life can come into being. If respect for life's flow could be taught to these minds then the wonderful feelings which can be gifted by the comprehension of the status quo of life would provide far greater enjoyment than any artificial means might offer. Life offers joy in many forms and provides many pathways to its attainment. Some beings have found shortcuts to these joys and enjoy short joys as the result. They misuse the gift of life. A good example of this is lying. Creativity is a fabulous gift, one which many beings cannot enjoy, but many of those who can will misuse the gift by creating untruths."

"You have mentioned creativity before but I am not certain what it is. Could you explain it to us?" asked the rattlesnake from his boulder.

Old Toad had manuevered the discussion into an area which was not entirely appropriate for the group assembled. He did that sometimes. The difficulty facing him now was to explain certain concepts, that even the human mind sometimes had some difficulty with, to a group comprised mainly of non-human beings. Undaunted, Toad began to poke around in his mind for an explanation of creativity. Shadows had recently begun to wash across the grass but it was still comfortable for the beings in attendance there, as might well be expected.

CREATIVITY

"I will explain it like this," he began, scratching the side of his peaceful smile with a green finger. "Suppose you were a chipmunk. What a wonderful gift, to be a chipmunk. Chipper, pretty, golden-brown and able to climb and jump and make nice, little noises in the forest. A chipmunk can do what a chipmunk is gifted by life to do better than any other thing else on the earth. Why, then, would a chipmunk decide to pretend to be a pidgeon or a cantelope? It would be laughable, would it not?" Toad asked, incredulously. "Besides, chipmunks know better! And, if they did not know better, they could not change anyway because they do not have the power of creativity. There are some beings, however, who do not know better and they do have the gift of creativity. They sometimes use this gift to imagine that they are even more creative than life. Thus they create an imaginary status for themselves and, in doing so, lose touch with the real blessing of their power. Now, some of these beings have fine minds, compared to most of us, but are lazy as well. Their minds

are wonderful and vast but often lay silent and useless, springing to action only when stimulated or reacting to an emergency. Emergency organs is what I like to call them, and when they do engage in the creative act it is not always along the lines life intended the gift to be used. I'm talking destructive, here," the little toad emphasized with a round sweep of both arms.

"Now, some of you may have already noticed that thinking and creativity sound very much like the same thing. That is not far from wrong. They are similar. Creativity is using the imagination to change things from what they are into something else never experienced before by the thinking being. It is an awesome power and often destructive to life and her intentions. It would be even more awesome if it were only used in cooperation with life's flow because the earth could then become perfect. I think life enjoys her flow through the channels of creativity more than through any other means except, perhaps, love. Now, don't get me wrong," he said with a concerned tone, "we all create. Its just that we can not all create with the use of an imagination. That is reserved for, shall we say, the highest order of being."

The rattlesnake would have blanched at that "highest order of being" stuff, had he an ego, but he did not and so was spared the discomfort.

"We are life's gift to ourselves. We are part of all that there is and all that there is is a part of us. If any part is changed from what it is, all other parts will change as the result. Our own beings are perfect unto ourselves and provide the perfect vessel life requires to flow through our beings in her own

celebration of self.

LIFE
IS THE STRAND WHICH TIES
ALL BEINGS
TOGETHER....
WE ARE ALL ONE....
EVERYTHING IS ONE....
LIFE IS ONE.

The fearless expression of one's creativity provides life with one of her most joyous channels for flowing. If we close those channels, we shut off life's flow and, subsequently, deny our very own selves the joy of being fully alive. If we attempt to change ourselves from what we perfectly are we will change the environment around us to some proportionate degree. We are each examples of life's indulgence in herself. We may enjoy it or not, the choice is our's. For some of us, anyway." he corrected himself. "Some us have no other choice but to totally enjoy life but that's only because we can't stop to think about it all of the time. And, life wants the real you to flow through...not a counterfeit. It is difficult to flow through anything that is not real. Some creative beings yearn for the rewards of the creative exercise but have lost touch with the real experience. They copy others rather than offer of themselves. This frustrates the flow of Life. Copying is not creating. And they, on the other hand, will never feel the joys they seek because they admit by their act of copying that pretense of being someone else is more meaningful to them than really being themselves. They deny their uniqueness. I don't believe any being is any more unique than another. But, I do think some life forms display their uniqueness more openly and

with less fear of indifference or rejection than others. When we compare our selves with the selves of others, we compare chipmunks with pidgeons. The only real contribution we each have to offer to the world and to the flow of life is what we really are and what we only have the power to give...our unique selves! I hope that answers your question about creativity, good snake," Toad said, ending his explanation.

THERE IS AN ELEMENT
IN LIVING
FAR MORE IMPORTANT
THAN LOVING
AND
THAT IS BEING
AND GIVING THAT BEING
TO THOSE ABOUT YOU
WHO CARE ABOUT YOU
AND WHO JUST COULDN'T IMAGINE
LIVING WITHOUT YOU
AND
THAT IS LOVING
AND THAT'S FAR MORE IMPORTANT
THAN JUST LIVING.

His brain was exhausted. Here he was, speaking of things he knew little about, and making complete sense to himself. Old Toad was truly at peace with Old Toad. Such a blessing. He was a humble toad, however, and would never presume to hypothesize for his friends. They trusted him and, for that reason, deserved to hear of his wisdom and not of his imagination, limited though it might be. On this day there still remained one question to be asked. The subject had surfaced at least a couple of times during this day in the glen and had even slipped by Toad even though, besides life, it may be the most powerful force on earth. Nevertheless, the question rose like a flower in blush from the

center of the group. It could have been a stick which asked. It could have been a bird. It did not matter. It was asked.

"What is love?"

WHAT IS LOVE?
IS IT A THING
WE MAY NOT DEFINE,
OR IS IT FOR ALL OF US
TO KNOW
AND TELL
AND PAINT SO WELL
THAT EVERYONE FEELS THE HONEY-PULSE?
WHAT IS LOVE?
IF I KNEW,
WOULD I BE REAL,
OR JUST A FAKE WITH BEAUTIFUL WORDS
TO ENCHANT
THE MANY WHO
WONDER ABOUT LOVE
AS I DO,
AND YOU.
WHAT IS LOVE?
WHO IS TO SAY?
NOT I....
YOU?
I DON'T THINK SO.
BUT,
THAT SHOULDN'T STOP US FROM DOING IT....
SHOULD IT?

Toad sighed. He patty-pawed his fat, little, green body about a half-inch counterclockwise and settled back down on his stone. Then, with a gentle and reverent voice, he gazed directly into his group and whispered, "I do not know. Love is a mystery. But, love is real. Perhaps it is the fluid of life, the blood of life. Perhaps it is the fuel behind the power of life. I just do not know." Then Old Toad held his two little, green arms open to his friends and asked, with a knowing twinkle in his single eye, "But, that shouldn't stop us from doing it, should it?"

Toad was finished. The ending to the discussion had designed

itself much in the way that life offers designs...at random. The day was not yet over so all would be able to return to their dens and nests and holes and homes in the light. But, not one of the assortment of living and non-living beings stirred. They were all turned towards Old Toad, watching him. Love was in the air. The lion's paws were crossed as he lay there, sphinx-like, his long tail flopped across the backs and laps of tiny fellows. The tail's tip was being chewed, gently, by a cub. A couple of small, red, frogs sat side by side, eyes blinking in unison. The maple tree, large and green and filled with life, cast its shadow into the glen's center, chilling not a being. At the maple's base, the old she-bear and the professor sat side by side also, two large mounds of butterflies, bugs, and little birds. At their feet and on their laps were a forest's supply of adult and baby skunks, all were quietly watching Old Toad. All, that is, but the professor. His head lay on the round shoulder of the bear and he was sound asleep. He had been asleep for some long time now.

INSIGHTS

It would suit my purpose most completely if others could attach the exact meaning I had assigned each of the preceding sentences and pages and if they could feel positive and content with that meaning as well. But, as I stated in the preface, it is not necessary that anyone either understand or agree with what I write so much as it is desired that their spirit be moved in a positive direction when they read them since I was motivated by positive feelings while I wrote. Since a major emphasis of this document concerns insights which will presumably unfold from the vantage or from considerations of a positive "spirit" and the recognition of some "spirit" of life, whatever that may indeed be, it would be most desirable if we each had some similar sense of where we were going even if we did not completely agree with where we had just been. We are, after all, quite different from one another, but we may indeed agree on problems while not agreeing on solutions.

People who have at least a little appreciation for what Old Toad was saying to his group in the glen may well, then, have the spiritual tools necessary to understand how one who thinks as Toad does would seek solutions to problems with the insights he might offer. If problems become more important than solutions then a collaboration between problem solvers is possible. If solutions remain most important then professional seperatism and competition are the result. This is a Copernican concept: solutions revolve about and attempt to fit with the problem rather than the problem

being forced to accept a solution that may not be proper. If problems were addressed in an ecological sense or from the simple and uncluttered vantage of one who aligns with the thinking of Toad it may be found that their solutions are quite obvious and quite attainable though, perhaps, not comfortable to those who would place more value upon material possessions rather than philosophical or spiritual comforts. It surely shouldn't be necessary for me to elaborate upon these values and processes to the degree that I have except that past experience and the world about me suggests that I do so. In this same vein, I am not purposely attempting to sell anyone on anything herein...I am not attempting to diminish the credibility of any system of belief to the advantage of another. Gains and losses are in some other system of measurement which is not appropriate to these writings.

Perhaps the question is being asked by some readers, "If the spirit is the only thing we are concerned about here, then why was the subject of Toad chosen instead of the subject of football or home economics?"

"What matter which subject, just so long as it is a proper vehicle for the transmission of a nature of feelings to another person," would be my response. For example, I once saw a book on a bookstore shelf which was entitled All I Have Ever Learned About Women. It was a half-inch thick and attractively covered. I couldn't resist it. When I opened to the center of the book, a practice of mine, I found nothing but empty pages. The entire book was empty. I was delighted, which is what I am certain the "author" had in mind, but I learned little. A very effective

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transmission of spirit and I agreed with nothing he didn't say.

It is my premise that, if I can transmit feelings through words, a spirit must exist in both me and my readers in order for these feelings to be felt. Some would take this premise to be primary knowledge, a wasted, infantile statement. If there are no others which would argue that "spirit" does not exist, there are certainly many others which seem to have sidestepped any personal responsibility to the very "spirit of life" which empowers them. I will not list the many examples in religion, industry, community, education, politics, law, and personal relations offered everyday in our newspapers and on our televisions and in our lives. The commonality of the spirit of life which empowers us is one of the most abused, ignored, and important of this globe's natural resources. I will soon return to this subject.

I am a synthetic being. So have been Nietzsche, Lawrence Kohlberg, Einstein, Kant, Eleanor Roosevelt, Marx, Freud, and Harry Truman. By being synthetic they were anything but artificial. Each was a genuine article...a product of the synthesis of their knowledge, experience, training, and insight just to name a very few ingredients. Their insights lead the way, in many instances, to new territories; in many other instances, to old stamping grounds via new trails. Insights may not declare anything...they may only suggest or tempt or enlighten a bit. It is my belief that insights are positive by nature and constructive as well. Insights can lead the way, though not always. Research may sometimes lead the way more effectively than insight but insight must not be discounted. Research can even lead to insight

and the reverse can occur. There may even occur a sympathetic leap-frogging between the two. On the basis of where we have come so far in this discussion I would suggest that there may also occur a synthetic leap-loading. Toad has insight.

I have to admit that I do not live my life in full alignment with the wisdom, or insights, provided by Old Toad. I am too egocentric and too collectivistic. I also do not really know whether there are toads which think. There have been much speculation and research on the subject of the practice of thinking processes in non-human beings and we could quibble over this for hours and only miss the point I am trying to make. Whatever Toad's talents may or may not be, his system of belief is positive and basic and suggests to me that we look at some of our society's directions from a little different slant than has shown to be common. He also suggests to me that I present this slant in a language that we all can understand. This pre-empts the use of jargonese and profession-specific terminology and has egalitarian overtones which Toad would heartily applaud.

Another area of speculation, which may derive from the prior tale, would pertain to Old Toad's particular frame of reference or intellectual orientation. For instance, is Toad an idealist, or a romanticist, or a transcendentalist, or an ecosophist, or a communist, or a psychologist? Is he an existentialist, a Baptist, a republican, or is he a plant by some subversive organization to take over the minds of our children? In response, I would suggest again that he is simply an integralist with humble beginnings and that he wouldn't waste his time with any discussion on the subject

other than to say, "If it helps us, I hope I am guilty; if it does not, I hope I will be forgiven." Any belief or suppositive paradigm can provide insights for a positively oriented being and that insight can lead the way to positive accomplishment in any field of endeavour, adequate or inadequate prior research notwithstanding. If Toad must be labeled, which is our damnable practice, then let us call him an insightful philosopher or a native-zen-American. And I wish to apply his insight to some of the conditions of our world and his world...the same world. Allow me to massage this premise for a while in the context and from the perspective of one who might believe as Old Toad does without further ado about why one comes to believe in this fashion or how one came to believe that way. Let me return, now, to the subject of spirit as a natural resource.

SPIRIT AS NATURAL RESOURCE

If Toad is correct, or if we simply pretend that he is, all beings on the earth, living and non-living, share a common tie which he has proposed is "LIFE." I believe he is correct and I know of many others who do as well but pretending, if we pretend well enough, can lead us down the same paths of insight. It will be easy if we simply agree that it will be easy.

I credit Mohammed with an essential insight to the equivalence of humans with nature and to the importance of relegating their egos to less achievement oriented priorities when he made his immortal statement pertaining to "the way":

"If the mountain will not come to Mohammed, then Mohammed will go to the mountain!"

A simple enough statement for a being as wise and as synthesized as Mohammed but can the western mind comprehend such simplicity? The mind of the anglo-American is, in many instances, its own love-object and incredibly ego oriented and the source of enormous influence over the way in which we direct our lives. The American mind, it too often seems, would be inclined to restate Mohammed's theme:

"If the mountain will not yield to my demands, I will come to own the mountain, to be the king of the mountain and, if the mountain does not please me where it is, I will move the damned thing to a place more suitable to me or even eliminate it for personal profit."

Would you suppose this is a prevailing western attitude or only the dominating one? Does the western mind have the ability to comprehend the wisdom of the eastern mind? Does the western mind have the ability to comprehend the wisdom of the toadly mind? Of course it does. Aldo Leopold, the recognized father of ecology of our country, offers another insight to the ties between human and nature when he suggests that we come to "think like the mountain" when we consider our place on the earth. What wisdom do we possess that would allow us to speak "for" the mountain?

These wise men suggest to me that if we could nest ourselves in the "realness" of life's purpose and flow we might achieve a wisdom which might reorient our association with our own prides so that they need not be shown so much but would instead be contributed to life's flowing. Their beings would move with life rather than trying to direct the flow of life.

These are all mysterious things and can not be explained. Otherwise they would not need to be explained so often by so many in so very many different ways. Liken it, if you will, to the feeling of the warmth of the sun on your face on a spring day, after a long winter, and attempt to put that to words. Liken it to the caress of a raccoon, a duck's underside, a stone, a tree, a child or a loved one and attempt to put that to words. Liken it to the awesome electricity of a magnificent view or of a peaceful silence and put that to words. Liken it to the situation of talking to your dog. Just who or what are you talking to? Put that to words. When we find those words we will have succeeded in the acquisition of the context of the "spirit of life" necessary to strike the minds of all those beings in control of the destiny of our children and of our globe. Until we find those words, we must be satisfied with metaphor.

Life is valued on this globe by a supreme benefactor. I believe that human life is also valued by that same benefactor, and, to the same degree. The major difficulty seems to me to be the lack of value that human beings put on life and thus, indirectly, upon their very own. Since life is a force in our discussion, and its own gift to any recipient as Toad pointed out, and since this may be a difficult concept for some of us to be comfortable with, I could call the supreme benefactor nature. In some circles this benefactor would be called the super-conscious or God. I will leave it to each group to transpose to whichever reference system they find comfortable. I believe the spirit of the message will remain the same...the supreme being on this

earth is not man! It is life! It is nature! It is God! But, it is not man! Man thinks too much.

I offer that in each of us resides spiritual potential which is available through our affective senses or centers of feeling. We all have these. Some to a much lesser demonstrated degree than others, even lesser "known" degree, but "in there" nevertheless. These feelings, or affective senses, are not explored or developed to any noticeable degree in our culture and those cultures in which they have been nurtured are falling prey to a world value system now dominated by materialistic thought which is, generation by generation, contaminating and diluting spiritualistic thought. I propose these spiritual centers are innate in humankind and relate directly and coincidentally with forces we no longer choose to recognize because we have found diversions in our "advancement" through time. The native-American Indian and certain other sects in our population provide noteworthy exceptions to prevailing mainstream tendencies and offer models for examination. In any event, it would behoove our nation to recenter in order to save ourselves from obvious diversions which might eventually lead to our total destruction.

If this document seems to have taken on an "environmentalistic" tone, it is not by design so much as it is because of the very nature of the interdependence of all life and non-life forms upon one another for their coexistence on our globe. A prevailing model in many professions has come to be the ecological model, and for good reason. The influence the western world now seems to have upon other nations and the courses they choose to

follow suggests to me that the "west" must lead the way to an environment of enlightenment and understanding of more spiritual goals; a spiritual rehabilitation, if you will allow a phrase-coining. Due to the familiarity that older cultures than our own have with the understanding of such concepts, the journey could be quite short in duration. While our lamp of world influence has any wattage remaining, however, we must attempt to lead all others, all mankind, all life forms, all dormancy away from our destructive activities and towards the "greater good."

If we viewed this journey from a generational perspective and arbitrarily chose a philosophical turn-around to occur in two or three generations from now, a little insight allows that we must view the children which will lead those generations as an important national resource. More insight allows that, short of the occurrence of a "fad", current adults will probably have to be allowed to live out what remains of their time on this earth in quite the same mode as hitherto. This generational "resource" perspective, then, identifies the spawn of generations as the greatest and most potent natural resource for the continuation of any generational spiritual wealth which can be established in the meantime. While I am targeting children it should also become quite obvious that it will be necessary to involve parents, teachers, institutions, and communities in this task.

This discussion offers up a paradox. We are discussing the need for greater recognition and nurturing of the spirit of the life which empowers each of us. We are proposing that, properly addressed, this is a positive endeavour which can only serve to

help the human condition and the earth upon which we dwell. Although nature has been mentioned, it is not necessarily the focus of this document, unless indirectly. Most arguments surrounding nature these days, however, center about the exploitation of natural resources to the degree that we will lose them forever, and ourselves in the process, even though this exploitation "serves" to satisfy mankind. Perhaps an answer for all of life lies in a great resource which cannot be consumed. In fact, grows with use! A resource never developed to any great degree in our culture but, when developed, becomes a link in the communication between all humankind and life. This resource lies in the natural spirit of humankind. We seem to have shown no fear in natural resource development and use. Why have we stopped short at man? Thus, the paradox: as there is a recognizable fear, these days, that too much development in nature will destroy both man and nature, there should be no fear whatever of too much development in man which would ultimately serve to save both man and nature. The spirit, the force, and the positive power of life should be embraced, understood, and be allowed to guide us away from the edge of the black hole called "gone."

ONTOLOGICAL REHABILITATION

Development of any natural resource demands first hand knowledge. We spend much of our monetary and temporal resources on research which often seems to reaffirm the wisdom of sayings, addages, moralisms, and the like. I have no powerful complaint about research except that I dislike having to wait for its

completion before accomplishing anything. In the engineering profession it is a well known phenomenon that research usually justifies original intent. This would suggest that the original thought is the power to be reckoned with and that vast sums of money are wasted on research. But we value human life. Research helps us to believe we are not putting human life in jeopardy with our manifestations. It doesn't always succeed.

There are ways to address problems without waiting for the science to evolve which has been determined to be "best suited" to ameliorate same. We can "sense" things. How often do we "sense" things and then back it up with facts, reference, or research that are never as effective proof as the obvious vision of what ever it was we originally "sensed?"

I sense there is something wrong with the way the world is going, at least insofar as the "human" world is going. Anthropocentrically speaking, we are getting more complicated with each day we administrate solutions with a system which can only be effectively fueled with money. There is no money in my brain. There is no money in my soul, in my spirit. How has money evolved from a barter convenience to a spiritual leader? And what are we doing to our children which cements the process toward a destruction of at least some magnitude in at least some aspect of our life-given potential for natural joys and nourishment?

I believe we can see some of the more apparent paths to solution in whatever it is which plagues our world when we look at prejudice. Perhaps then I will be able to make a more focused point. Of course, I intend to range far afield of prejudice in

my discussion because I "sense" there are more important concepts hidden in that darkness. Prejudice is opinion mired in blackness and negativity. Negativity, as Old Toad pointed out, is a function of the mind and not of living life. Prejudice is the negative celebration of differences and, being so, can only result in negative joys which must, by my definition, be perverse. The issue, then, is really differences and how we handle them...or how we don't handle them.

Of course prejudice exists! Of course there is oppression of minority groups, whether implicit or explicit and, certainly, pervasive! And, of course, masses of misdirected souls are involved in the misappropriation of power and its uses to the demeanment of otherwise gentle and authentic people! But there is another side to all of this and which falls into an area we cannot predict when dealing with the human animal.

I think the subject of prejudice finds new light when addressed from the standpoint of spirituality.

I do not mean to discount the immensity of the task and meaningfulness of the solutions to the problems we have undertaken thus far to assuage in our history, concerning prejudice, but seek to add a facet to the emerging jewel of our more humane potentials. We are idiots, we whites, in the area of spirituality! And, being so, we serve to destroy the spirituality which still does exist in humankind's cultures by emphasizing a nature of solutions to problems of discomfort or pathology in members of those cultures which do not enhance both the importance of their preserving certain spiritual aspects of living and, also,

passing them on to our culture for our possible enlightenment as well. The secret may lie in how we relate to being different. But those differences may be quite more than just appearances. It seems mainstream culture has lost its sense for differentness except where it might be faddish to "appear" to be an individual and, thus, to actually be the same as others. Differentness is a power which can hold the key to the expression of our inner selves and which expression we refrain from because we are members of a growing culture structure which requires that we acquiesce to "standards" of achievement and expression which tend to narrow our view rather than to broaden our view of life and her random potentials. As the result, the riches of minority cultures are not being appreciated because of their refusal by a much younger society which languishes in self-aggrandizement at the expense of wisdom and internal knowledge. If one takes an over-view of the natural and culturally grounded world one begins to get a feeling that the current course of things in mainstream society is quite unnatural and, perhaps, on an ominous track. It seems to me anglo-saxon culture offers little of value or substance when it supplants aspects of minority culture with more "efficient" ways of being.

Individualism and prejudice and spirituality and wisdom and imagination and unpredictability are all words which saladify in my vegetable patch of a mind in the form of a word....humanness. If we could only find more involvement in the processes of humanness and what it is to be one of those; a human. These processes could be taught in our schools to young people who will

one day be parents who can then pass these processes on to their young and, thus, it can become traditional in our nation to be human with an understanding of our implicit ties to the world into which we are graciously born. We can gain more insight to these processes by examination of some of the traits and traditions of minority groups and persons, and will do same in the following chapters.. by taking a little different slant when dealing with "minority persons."

We are all of the same earth. We all sprang into the same nature empowered with the same life-force. Our spirits belong to our ancestors and to our offspring and to duration more than they do to us, in a proportionate sense, and we suppress them for the sake of appearances during a miniscule blip in eternity. Because of this preoccupation with "appearances" we may be the only ones in time which do not take the opportunity to enjoy the magic which imbues us. We ignore our greatest resource except when crises demand that we do not...we ignore the gift of life and the power of our human spirit. This may be why I, for one, often feel more comfortable in minority groups than I do in mainstream culture; I seem to have more in common with the quite spiritual manner in which some minority persons direct their lives. This might explain why I have always felt that I stood just a little apart from my fellows and have sometimes felt derision. I used to call it, quite ego-centrally, "the curse of a fine mind." I believe I had a correct sense for the definitive but, now, I feel it would be better expressed as "prejudice against a fine mind." The "fine" I refer to is not necessarily brilliance so much as it

might be sparkle; not necessarily genius so much as it might be difference; not necessarily revolutionary so much as it might just plain and simply be spiritual! A nationally based program for the ontological rehabilitation of our goals and procedures and of the education of our children seems to me to be the most effective way remaining to turn mainstream thinking away from the materialistic to the spiritualistic if we are indeed sincere about finding solutions to the morass of problems we discuss.

BOYS AND GIRLS

We are as afraid of knowing and expressing our spirituality as we are afraid of knowing and expressing our love for one another. This brings me to another range of differences, another kind of prejudice... those concerning sexual differences. Perhaps this might be an area we can relate to, in this discussion, and where we might see how understandable biases become prejudice when they are not so understandable such as when we are viewing strangers or "different" people. If we can be seen to be prejudiced against our own kind then, perhaps, we will have a better sense for the power of difference.

Everyone starts life out as a nice little boy or a nice little girl and we can allow environment and ensuing social practices the burden of the credit, positive or negative, for how they turn out as adults. The roles for which we are socialized as boys and girls are influenced more by physical attributes than they are by who will end up with the power or how it will be shared. Little consideration is given to sameness; less yet to individual propensity. We are acculturated to regard power and control

highly, however, so these, then, become major foci for our emerging egos to embrace. If as much energy and devotion were dedicated to the preservation of the wonderment, the joy of being, the naivete, and the underlying goodness of little boys and girls as is to the molding, shaping, and preparation to meet this "hard" world head-on, the world might not be such a difficult place for them to live in when they grow up.

We are a shallow culture, with wonderful potential, of course, but currently regulated by shallow ideals, shallow practices and for shallow values. The more shallow of the institutions we endure while we "grow up" are those of learning....our schools. Among the strongest and most valuable are those of family. We are currently misdirecting the emphasis of the power of our values in our nation. Our institutions have taken control of our minds, at least superficially if one is unwilling to admit that anything has control over his or her mind other than themselves, and with insidious efficiency. For all of the concern we ostensibly express for equal rights among the peoples of our earth, it still appears that little boys and little girls are being taught to prepare for battle with one another. The great sadness is that for all of the time spent, with good intentions, by the teachers of our youth attempting to compensate by trying to find a happy middle ground we have allowed little time at all to be expended in any pursuits spiritual or, to put it more palatably, natural.

To be sure, there was something wrong with the way we were treating some of our fellows through time and, to be sure, it was

only fair to do something about it. But I feel the point has been well made and that now it is time to examine the humanity of continuing certain specific processes any further. I idealize that a shift, a change in direction, a new emphasis, another view is now in order. The war for which my eyes see we have been preparing will make all the loser. And, I want someone I can hold hands with.

I've known since I was a boy that girls could run as fast as I could, paint as well as I could, climb a tree, get good grades in school, train their dogs, ride a bike, be a friend, tell a story, find adventure, be fearless, and kiss....all as well as I could, if not a little better.

And, I like loyalty. So does everyone I know. Women do too! I like laughing. So does everyone I know. Women do too! But, do we all have to like each other? Of course not! We do not even have to like the same things but, since most of us probably prefer getting along with others, we should be able to get along with each other more than we do. So, just how are we different from one another, we boys and girls, we men and women? Do not little boys and little girls, just quite simply and basically, like loyalty and laughing and sharing and fun and justice and other important stuff. Why is there so much conflict between our beings that seems to betray the integrity of the things we profess to like?

As humankind resolves arguments to progress more peacefully into a lifetime together, do we ever wonder where these arguments come from? If we say we like peace, just naturally, why do the

arguments begin? Since we never succeed in the attainment of a peaceful coexistence with others by maintaining a combative stance, what real purpose does conflict serve? If we all like the same things, more or less, why do we argue about the things we like, more or less, and our right to like them? Just where do these arguments come from? Are they part of our culture, like baseball and corporate takeovers? Or do we fight for our rights simply because we are not entirely clear what our rights are? It is a certainty that materialistic institutions will take advantage of the profits to be made by the failure of our families and schools to teach our youth to get along, in life, with one another. Those institutions thrive in conditions where "you and him fight." There are many profits to be made during these diversions.

Any concept of equal rights asks that we consider whether we are equal or not. What are the biological possibilities that any two people might be exactly equal? What are the philosophical possibilities that we might all really wish we were equal? I even question our desires to have rights truly equal to another's. I have always supported equal rights for all people (and non-people) but I wonder if there is something in the title of the concept which rings the wrong bell in our psychic makeup? My abilities to articulate my ideals are not equal to another's and, also, do not have implicit authority to compell my listeners to embrace them and to fashion their future activities in dutiful compliance. This would be to destroy rights while imposing them. While my ideals may be similar to another's, my ability to articulate them

will differ from another's. Since others might not equal my efforts, they might not alter my stance. There is some element of inequality in this which casts a strange hue on the subject of rights. Often, when we argue, we only argue syntax. Since little boys and little girls have much the same ideals, there is more there to enjoy and share than there is to argue, and we have certainly lost sight of these.

NATURAL RIGHTS

Speaking of syntax, let us discuss "natural rights" as opposed to "equal rights". There is not enough education in our schools or in our homes about our natural rights. Natural rights are androgynous. How we enjoy them are sexually biased. How we discuss them is argumentative. That is to say, I may exercise my natural rights in a different way than might a little girl but the rights will remain the same. Because we are acculturated as little boys and little girls in service to some preconceived notions which serve to prepare us for our "roles", we find argumentation about these roles quite natural and we feel it is our "right" to do so. We have come to refer to these as our "equal rights." We argue "equal rights". But, I ask again, why do we argue? Why, when the gift of life is perfect unto itself? Why, when enjoyment of living is the most perfect goal for the expenditure of that gift? Why are we so wasteful of our wonderful gift of life?

Feminism encourages a world I think is a "natural" world. In today's world, though, even the word "feminism" can encourage

argumentation. I would like to call feminism naturalism and save argumentation but I doubt I would get very far with it. Nevertheless, little boys and little girls simply can't get enough nurturance, understanding, encouragement to be themselves, warmth, love, and gifts to esteem. That's what feminism asks and Toad would insist that is only natural. I believe we argue when these things are threatened and little boys are more strongly empowered by their socialization and acculturation to win those arguments, when they occur. Thus, little girls must work much harder just to stay even and they haven't yet succeeded. The irony I see is when little girls feel empowered to correct the imbalance they have suffered. They often seem to feel they must take them back from the little boys who seem to have them. Combat again. We are not taught to share, in our society, but are encouraged to control. So reattaining our natural rights often means we must now control the natural rights of certain others. We swing through the middle ground because of inertia. I wonder why we are not taught about the futility of ever entering into arguments over natural rights?

I believe these questions could be answered with a curriculum presented with an emphasis upon our natural rights rather than with the biases inherent in certain equal rights examinations and I offer "natural rights" in the spirit of Old Toad rather than in the context of either a male or female chauvinist. This is a difficult area for many of us and I beg your indulgence for this writer of words which can only hint at the spirit which drives them to these pages.

It may be more natural for boys and girls to giggle a little

as they notice differences (not our differentness) but we are not taught in this way. Our differences should come to be seen as differing perceptions of the very same natural needs and wants in each of us. We are better equipped to help when we are natural. Naturalism is not some clever new concept of one-upmanship or love therapy or stress release mechanism. It is to find and embrace that which is natural in you and then to share it with others in a quite natural way. We do not have to fix the lives of others in order to enjoy our world!

If we celebrated our sameness rather than argue to defend our differences, we could find we were much more alike than we suspected and, then, we could begin celebrating our differentness. It is, after all, the differentness between all of us that enriches the texture and colors of the tapestry of life which we weave with the threads of our sameness. The differentness between most of us is the function of many forces continuously at work in our blood streams, our mental workings, our physical attributes, and processes of personal choosing. These are apparent to observers of humanity. The sameness between us is the function of being human with the ability to imagine, to fear death, and to communicate with invented language certain human characteristics such as loving, loyalty, trusting, empathizing, nurturing, and so on. The compounding of our sameness with our differentness is how we cause the things we all desire or need to change and become better (or worse, allowing for pathology) but when those basic goodnesses we have been discussing are blessed with evolving differentness, the human world becomes a

much better place to live for both humans and non-humans. This is "naturalness". As it is, differences have become the ballpark of argumentation. The opposite of naturalness is to engage in processes which absorb any energy in the self-serving destruction of the physical or spiritual integrity of any living and dormant others as the inexcusable result of having differences.

I believe what I am asking for here is a change in the polarity of the processes we currently engage in the name of progress. Besides being quite idealistic, it will also be quite impossible to achieve in the lifetime of any of the current inhabitants on our earth. But we may soon begin to see the need that we embrace such thoughts for the benefit of the children of our bloodline somewhere in the future. This is why we must alter the framework or the bias of our thinking when in the company of the young. Our children must become acquainted with good people afoot, grounded, so they will not become frightened of the destiny the children of today fear so very much. Little boys and little girls must be given a fair chance to preserve the goodness they celebrate in youth and to be taught to share it with one another quite like the "mythical" families of the nineteen-fifties endorsed by their upbringing of their "mythical" young.

I, in no way, intend to impeach the positive results of the movements toward equal rights for all minorities and all people, be they ethnic, gender, or otherwise based. All such concerns are humanistic in nature and require further encouragement into even more productive areas of social reform. The difficulty I have with the current status of many such "movements", however, is

their nesting in vitriolic bastions from which subtle and intellectual darts can be propelled as to ensure the battle for freedom remains engaged. To be sure, there remains much to be accomplished in the struggle to achieve harmony amongst our beings (and non-beings) but a change in the manner in which we expect to encourage these accomplishments is now called for. The warriors of the battles prior should now begin to act as though they have succeeded somewhat in the achievement of their goals and demonstrate in themselves those changes or characteristics that they have been asking for in others...changes which will reflect some improvement in their own sense of equality. Otherwise, what was the war all about? Simply to change the polarity of the power base?

Natural rights, then, becomes yet another perspective. Differences previously framed by sexual and power/control biases can become a new area of understanding when we examine the needs which fuel them. Differences will begin to become similarities. Similarities will be expressed as desires for love, companionship, loyalty, trust, enjoyment, self-expression, freedom, peace, and a positive future. A "role" can become a gift or an honor people exchange as expressions of understanding and caring for one another. The non-human would be included in this transformation and a more "ecologically competent" life enterprise can ensue on this earth.

The current stereotypes for boys and girls, men and women, husbands and wives are confused and inconsistent with the intent of recent progress to dispell the notions of earlier

"unsatisfactory" stereotypes. What we are thought of as now is little improvement over what we were thought of as "then." I, for one, resent having to argue antiquated concepts when there is such a cornucopia of positive potential just waiting to be utilized. Education must change. Slowly, teachers who cannot achieve understanding of the need for textural improvements in curriculum must be purged from the system which educates our young. Given a chance, natural rights will prevail. Given no chance, they will prevail anyway....we simply will not enjoy the process.

INDIANS

Let me now present a more common subject for prejudice based upon differences which I will eventually propose are more socially redeeming to mankind as a whole than are those values embraced by the dominant "mainstream." Socially redeeming values which lead to greater moral understanding and spiritual guidance will be apparent.

The Native American has more than 2500 years of cultural history on this continent. One might say the reason they never bought in to "melting pot" processes is because it was their pot to begin with. They most certainly still feel that way. Indians, of course, encounter many of the same problems the rest of humanity suffers but many of the aspects of the quite spiritual way in which they relate to their ecology are not easily understood by the more linear and "individualistic" thinking of the representative mainstream anglo-saxon. That particular spirituality which engages the Native American is abstract and difficult for the western European mind to comprehend. For

instance, many Indians believe that they can be either good or evil, dependent upon the spirits they choose for themselves, and that these spirits come from the outside to the inside of their beings and not the reverse. They have a very strong sense of belonging to their places of origin and give those areas a "religious" significance. Indians believe words have particular powers. Anything merely uttered has power for the Native American; just a thought can cause creation but, once spoken, it becomes law for the universe. Of particular importance to the Native American is the belief that all dormant and living things have integrity in this universe...equivalence. Goodness is enhanced by this understanding and how well one achieves good in this time on earth will determine how close he will stand to "creator" at the time of death. As explained before, one can choose between the good and the evil spirits. However, the price for being evil and for becoming a "strong devil" is to lose the thing which means the very most to you in your life...the thing you love the very most. A most important aspect of the Indian's ability to spiritualize in an earth-sense is the belief that they come from the earth, actually rise up out of it. The white man thinks, appropriately for him, that he came from the sky.

Besides lacking enthusiasm for the mainstream time system and while being taught to be submissive and reticent, Indian children have also been told specific myths which guide them throughout their adult lives regardless of acculturation processes to the contrary. In Navaho lore, for an example, there is "the monster

who kills with his eyes." Indian children, then, will not engage the white culture practice of eye-to-eye contact and are often regarded as shifty as the result. They are also taught specific tenets regarding the virtue of sharing and, when caught taking things from the teachers desk drawer because it is appropriate for the older and the wise to share freely with the young in their culture, they are unjustly accused of stealing. This is, perhaps, an origin of an unsavory belief that all Indian children are "little thieves". Even more strange to mainstream culture is the belief the spirits inhabit the rocks and many an Indian child has been admonished for telling "tales" as "truths" to little white children when they have as much right to their belief system as anyone else. To the Indian child, everything is inclusive in the "circle of life" and they deal with their spirit rather than with their minds. If a form of genocide can be construed as canceling one's culture with replacement by another, mainstream materialistic tendencies, as well, insidiously attempts to destroy one of this continent's most valuable natural resources and a spiritual one at that. There exists, in fact, so much disparity between the way in which we instruct our young that young Indians are arbitrarily believed to have endemic discontinuities in particular which even render them pathological when judged according to standards commonly applied to white children. DSM3, for instance, would describe Indian youth as schizophrenic while they were only acting out the way they were taught when they don't make friends, don't relate well with others, and don't gather in groups. But some Indian children are taught specifically not to

play with children out of the immediate community and to concentrate play with siblings and cousins besides. This is not anti-social behaviour but is the base for the life-long development of familial respect and concern for extended family systems....a trait sadly lacking in current mainstream culture if increasing numbers of homeless and disenfranchised elderly are any indicator.

Remember, knowledge is a goal specific to western Europeans and wisdom is far more important a commodity to Indians. "Indian ways" characteristic of nearly all Indians should be appreciated. "Ways" such as tribal loyalty, respect for elders, reticence, humility, avoidance of personal glory and gain, living with as many as three generations of their own relatives in the same home, an abiding love of their own land, attributions of human characteristics to animals and nature, and strong spiritual beliefs are ways which have fallen out of favor with the "mainstream" way of life. These characteristics are often in direct conflict with a school system based upon competitiveness not humbleness, scientific research not social acceptance, and verbosity not reticence.

A more specific comparison of the values, traits and psychological characteristics of mainstream society with traditional American Indians and Hispanic Americans is now offered for the power they will provide to my continuing rationale. For instance, Latinos hold large families with mixed generations in very high regard...a trait sadly lacking in a mainstream society which tends to "put away" its senior citizens

once they can no longer fend for themselves or survive on Social Security, the fix-all legislation which "all Mexicans who have large families" have an honorable distaste for. Mainstream traits which contribute to these differences in humanity will be shown to be the very same as those which contribute to an ever increasing divorce rate, crime rate, number of homeless, and disenfranchised youth.

MAINSTREAM TRAITS

- a...mastery over nature predominates
- b...individual goals preferred over group goals
- c...science/technology orientation
- d...domination/power orientation
- e...stimulation preferred to tranquility
- f...economy/prudence preferred to giving and generosity
- g...hardness/toughness
- h...saving, hoarding, investing, flaunting wealth
- i...time, scheduling, and clock-watching culture specific
- j...don't mind prying into the business of others
- k...likes eye to eye contact as a demonstration of confidence
- l...trys to get rid of suffering in nearly any way possible
- m...hides information from family in show of independence
- n...high competition orientation
- o..."mainstream" credentials and titles have great value

HISPANIC AMERICAN TRAITS IN TRADITION

- a...church held in high esteem for both worship and support
- b...interdependence stressed over independence
- c...communality practiced
- d...personal ownership not stressed
- e...high degree of respect for elders and extended family
- f...machismo orientation to duty and responsibility important
- g...underlying desire for harmony and balance with all things
- h...love of tradition
- i...sense of responsibility to the future and the unborn
- j...preservation of Spanish language
- k...offended when family names are mispronounced
- l...children display task cooperation
- m...family unity and loyalty extremely important
- n...usually take a long time before asking for outside help
- o...folk medicine still sought for mental and physical disorders
- q...little distinction between "mental" and "physical" health
- r...religious leaders preferred for treatment of guilt, shame,
sense of sin, disrespect for elders and family values
- s...prefer closeness with body space
- t...show preference for touching

At this point I would like my readers to examine something. I hope it will be an enlightening experience for them. I have purposely arranged the traits for mainstream culture and native-american tradition in an order which would allow direct comparison of values. I believe Old Toad would deal with truths in this fashion. Compare, if you will and if you haven't already, a. with a., b. with b., and so forth on down the lists. I will tell you that the first time I did this I was proud to be "who" I was while, at the same time, a little ashamed to be "what" I was.

Although it is a simplistic example or method, it is in the spirit of a toad's mind and seems to reiterate that our "mainstream" culture is on the wrong track. As a matter of fact, this is an indictment which seems, to this writer at least, to prevail across-the-board where mainstream activities are concerned. Some of the very greatest difficulties of our "melting pot" society are encouraged by the goals set up by the ruling class and which goals can not be achieved effectively by any but a fortunate few. The establishment of the "goals" to which I allude has necessarily diminished traditional values which would rather direct individuals to a sense of community among human beings, a sense of harmony among all beings in nature, and a sense of spirituality between all of the forces of life in both an active and a dormant spectrum; values we all had in our history but which have been systematically purged from the reigning philosophy of materialism and conquest of all things...even one another. Further, these "goals", and the attendant educational system which propells our children towards them, steal from those very children

the sense of wonder and belonging and awe they possess as a natural trait in youth. In other words, we erase the good in our children and supplant it with a compulsion to either "succeed" or to feel guilty about not being able to "succeed" for the remainder of their lives. Often, we even feel guilty about our success.

There is a significant gap in the ostensive humanism practiced by mainstream professionals which seems to be inexcusable for its shortsightedness. There appears to be a pervasive attitude that minority persons can learn to adapt or to cope with dominant culture without being given any support to continue with their own beliefs for the expressed purpose of providing some enlightenment to the dominant culture. There is no attempt, apparently, to take advantage of the wonderful riches of the minority belief systems in order to alter the self-destructive course of an anglo-saxon prerogative which provides less and less opportunity for its future generations to enjoy the fruits of a positive and enriching traditional system of its own. It is ironic that such a kaleidoscope of cultures could be directed by otherwise "positive" philosophic forces towards the prospect of a national pot of stew, colorless and lumpy, rather than towards the prospect of a national salad; colorful, artistic, with individual integrity which adds to the total delight rather than blending all into anonymity.

The Black, Native, Hispanic, and natural rights cultures offer more to the national spiritualism than does current mainstream belief systems and, further, offers a sense of understanding and wonder for this globe we ALL live on which can

help to assure that future generations will have opportunity to love and share and integrate to the fullest natural potential.

If we were taught more than just to "cope" we could become artists of life rather than subjects in survival. An artistic example of living would be much more visible than would be a coping example and would have a far greater effect on other beings as well. It could become stylish for all to create together for the good of tradition and the earth. Rank idealism, to be sure, but it is this trait which has always had this writer standing just a little apart from the dominant culture and sympathetic with any being who has difficulty being understood when they think they are making perfectly good sense and defending what they believe to be the authentic tradition of their forefathers.

EDUCATION

With this point made, I would now like to journey into the world of education and see how our young are being influenced by what we have strived to offer as a "good education."

I have always felt that impressive vocabularies should be implemented in the processes of interpretation rather than the effectuation of verbose and inordinate communication. It is a delight to understand what is being written at "elete" levels of articulation and a gift to be able to reorder those collections of heady visions of alphabetical manipulation to dialogue more palatable to the common reader, be he uneducated, easily bored, easily scared off, or not willing to take the time to figure out what has been written even if it has some special redemption in store for him in particular. The Protestants of an earlier time

were correct in naming "printing" as the highest and extremist act of the grace of God if one is at all aligned with the concept of language, communication, and the associative symbology of words as one of the greatest acts of creativity in Nature's kingdom on this earth. If so, then writing is a more honorable act than singing, painting, riding the Muse, at least in-so-far as an act to be awarded a blue ribbon by Zeus. But Zeus, on the other hand, was ranchored to the limit with Prometheus when the latter gifted to mankind the combining of letters so just such (singing, muse, etc.) could be held in memory and thereby preventing their unfettered and eternal flowing to the pool of Mnemosyne.

Probably because of the elitist status historically given to letters and printing of same, we have come to believe that if it is written it must be so. At least, until recently, when Zeus was risen again in the form of the shredder. Maybe what goes around comes around; we just mix the forms of things. It does appear that we have overdone a good thing by allowing so many things to be printed without any good judgement being applied. This is a gift of freedom of speech...the only problem being that too many people get diverted for much too long periods of time when they attempt to digest diatribe.

I much prefer water to reading for the stimulation of my brain. I like where the sounds of water direct my thinking and I especially appreciate the effect of purification of my entire being, not only my mind. Of course, it never lasts very long, and this is perhaps why I try to spend long times with the water rather than make just short visits. It is no small wonder to me

that water has been named by so many as the most important item on the face of this earth. Toad tells us that stones rank up there somewhere as well. If water does indeed help us to think more clearly then perhaps we should only enter into the most significant agreements when in proximity to same. Giving one's word was once, and not so long ago, an honorable gesture with permanent overtones. Perhaps the "giving of our word" is a direct extension of when speaking and thinking were of a single thread which emerged from a "true" mind...it was a symbol of the insides of a man and he would be judged by all as he kept it and how he kept it.

But, literacy has become more important than feelings and self realization and simple truth and, consequently, encourages us to be confusing in our communications with each other, as well it allows us to build in escape hatches so we might "legally" violate our word and not be judged too harshly in the process. And, if we are not literate, we play as though we are which has the ultimate effect of placing some real constraints on our possibly pure interpersonal relationships.

This situation raises some important questions in the mind of one who sees curriculum reform as a viable means to construct a better world for future generations. If I believed that the power in moral education (this includes the morality of our environment, our children, our judicial system, our political system, our medical system, our insurance system, our taxation system, and on and on) lies in the hands of the national school system, which we may have in effect if not in reality, then I would have to say

that education system is in the process of failing us. I don't know who to blame for this circumstance, nor do I feel it necessary to find someone to blame. My question would remain, however, how do we effect a change in an otherwise failing system of education? It is not enough to teach mathematics. Math may help us to achieve a life style of comfort but what of the mind in the body which enjoys that comfort? What helps it to enjoy that comfort in a range of the potential of a like being to enjoy such things in a morally or spiritually or ethically productive way? In other words, there is more to quality in life than quality of life. One quality is cognitive and the other quality is affective. These considerations make one aware of the hazards awaiting any reform program designed for the enlightened education of our children.

It is left for the "revolutionary" to find the resources to invoke the programs or to propose how. In the process, I would suggest that something socially redeeming at a critical level result or we will be wasting our time. Now, what might that be? One might sample the tone of these writings to decide. Are they not humanistic? Are they not asking for more differentness and for greater responsibility to the integrity of the unique nature of all beings? Are they not asking for a softer and better prepared nation? It follows, that to accomodate to the complaints registered it would be desireable to put together a program which would find little difficulty succeeding in somewhat turning the deep rooted concepts of education over in our nation. There is some strength, here, in our tradition of individualism and for our

revulsion for people who utilize words for the advancement of their own ego trips, making it more and more difficult for the layman to understand, much less even want to. There is some strength here in whatever it is we wish for our children, even if the parents could never live in the world they might propose. There is some strength here in an emerging sense of environmentalism which pervades all of our institutions with a new understanding for importance of cooperation between all beings, living, dead, or dormant and how this might contribute to a yet better world than we ever dreamed possible when we were predisposed with conquest. Yes, we are a hedonistic society but hedonism can become a force which can fuel the machine which turns the mill. In simple terms, all we need do is create a fad and gather in the suckers. Who cares how it is done so long as the result is enlightened?

To be spiritually or naturally literate and to be encouraged to involve in affective growth are humanistic idealizations which would, however, be threatening to the ruling class of our society...a class which requires that we maintain aspirations of being in first place, in vogue, ever expanding, and gullible. We will never convince these to involve themselves and their resources to such enlightened endeavors until we can show them there is something good in it for them as well. Class conflicts will not be averted when the solution to the problems posed includes the subverting of the powers of the ruling class. It is also quite possible that the populace is, as it has been suggested, anomic and would rather watch television than upgrade

understanding of world events and directions and their possible influence over such matters.

A spiritually literate society, however, can turn even T.V. into a silk purse. One of the major terrors in any discussion where television begins to be discussed, even as an appropriate substitute for the classroom, occurs when we realize how quickly the child will begin to lose sight of when education stops and entertainment begins. Truth and fantasy, fact and fiction, humanity and inhumanity can become blurred in the mind of the child, no matter how well indoctrinated because no process is perfect. There are ways, however, to utilize television as an educating device even in the most disgusting consequences. It becomes the matter of the family of the child to discuss the content of viewing with an objective and educational purpose. In this way the television provides a focus for forum not ordinarily practiced within average families but which experience could result in our children growing to unusually well informed citizens as to the mores, culture, morals, ethics, and laws of their society. Television, then, could become a teaching tool...but the cooperation of family members would be required for this and it is doubtful that would ever come to pass. Potential, however, exists everywhere and even "television" can become positive in the spirit of Old Toad. He would explain that if we "think" it negative, it will be same...if we "think" it positive it will become same.

The questions becomes..."how might we improve our world?" rather than "how might we change our world to satisfy another

paradigm." In our case, the die has been cast. The power structure will protect that to the death of the nation. But there are openings to more creative self expression and more exciting forms of education and to the preservation of the cultural riches that comprise our country. I find I have to agree with the premise that current practices quietly erase our differences and I maintain that it is in these differences we will find a stronger and more enlightened nation for the future regardless of whether we agree with our current goal structure. We are, then, working against ourselves when we construct the minds of our peoples to be no more than emergency organs which react on crisis command exclusively and spend the remainder of the time in nation-supporting consumptive roles because, sooner or later, our practices will catch up with us and we will no longer be able to keep up with our inherent potential to accomplish anything at all. We work against ourselves when we attempt to replace the rich traditions resulting from 2000 to 3000 years of culture with a hot new tradition resulting from 200 to 300 years of enthusiastic land grabbing (which is easy in anybody's book) and youthful pee and vinegar (an adolescent quality, to say the very most). We work against ourselves when we spend too much time analyzing the repetitive ideas of people who trade remarks back and forth in the same field and do not expend the same energy to being creative in a popular context to offer a fresh idea to this peculiar, diatribe laden system of ours.

Somehow, mankind has replaced the importance of creativity with the importance of knowledge. Love will, one day, no longer

be a feeling but will be a definition. We may even be able to purchase faith in a pill much the same way we purchase it by sending money to the images we see on the television screen.

Just what is spirit? Do all men fear the same enemy? Is there a common tie, through spirit, into the primordial wishes for like qualities of the appreciation of life regardless of how those appreciations manifest themselves? In other words, do we all want the same essence from varied applications of labor? Is the joy one gains from the invention of something meaningless as good as the joy one gains from the invention of something meaningful?

"Do not seek and ye shall find," is the way it is said in Zen terms. Make a hole and it will eventually fill itself. Are we searching too hard? But why am I condemning literacy? And why is it, while condemning literacy, one has to be so damned literate to understand what I am espousing? Can't we begin to see how illiterate literacy is? A different kind of literacy would allow not only the identification of the essence of a problem's hue, but would allow more enlightenment at the core of the problem. Where is that kind of literacy in our honest explorations? Where is simplicity? If it were offered, by some author, that we could save the world from industrial impersonalization, who would listen and for how long?

Words are wonderful, written or otherwise. It's the hearts of men that motivate their application to form, much as it is not the gun which does the killing but the man who fingers it. Creativity is the thing which sets us apart as beings on this planet. One can certainly see how writing (and literacy) can be

exploited by reigning power to subjugate unknowing participants in the learning process to greater controls, and all under the guise of a gift toward greater learning. That brings up an ominous point...perhaps the purpose behind the written word is the deciding factor. As writings become more and more subtle or intelligent, it takes more "educated" readers to decipher them. It would seem, then, that the writers will eventually get farther ahead of the readers. This could be problematical because, as the length of time to decipher increases at the same rate as the length to learn how to write that way, it follows that someday, wherever writing takes us, it will be impossible to avert certain results because the reaction of world events to the "purpose" of the writing will occur before the reaction of the world to the interpretation of those writings can be possible. And so it would seem imperative to allow and encourage our young writers to involve in better thoughts to write and to learn to become more critical readers.

Writing is much like a painting or a song, if we allow it to be. Perhaps it is more important for the reader to be moved into the realm of the writer only that the reader may then emote their own response to the stimuli presented but, all the while, in the same spirit of whatever it is which evoked the writer to write in the first place. Now, that would be education! But it wouldn't be literate! But it wouldn't be illiterate! Is something else beginning to come to mind? To be spiritually or naturally literate is what comes to my mind. What comes to mind is Carl Roger's premise that "the only learning which significantly

influences behavior is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning" and, when the true spirit of the writer evokes a response rather than saying something specific for the reader to "learn", the reader has the opportunity to synthesize his or her own experience as the result of reacting to the emotions aroused by being "tapped" by the spirit of the writer. Though this may not be considered "literate", it cannot be considered "illiterate" either. Although the words of the writer will not get into the reader in exactly the same way it came out of the writer, the spirit which moved the writer to place the words on the page will move the reader in some way appropriate to the compounding of that spirit with the reader's. Some communication, then, is occurring between the writer and the reader and that communication falls somewhere between the written word and the reason the writer was moved to write it in the first place. This takes the writer out of the realm of being a teacher and into the realm of learning at the same time his reader also learns. Each will learn in a "self-appropriated" way.

My interpretation of Mr. Roger's belief in written communication is that the spirit behind the effort to place a word on paper is the essential influence on the final reaction in the spirit of the reader of those words. The words themselves stand little chance of ever getting into the reader's mind with the precise meaning they had in the writer's mind but, if the writer was deeply engaged in the process of writing, the reader has greater potential to become like engaged in the process of reading and, more or less proportionately, will be influenced by the

attitudinal polarity of the spirit behind the efforts of the writer. Most important are considerations that the spirit of the writer may be more or less constant and, thus, his or her writings will have the same tone throughout a variety of subjects addressed.

But, we said all of this at the beginning, didn't we...before being introduced to Old Toad? And where has it gotten us? Let me summarize where I think it has gotten us as I proceed to conclusion.

SUMMARY

It appears, with the importance I attribute to positive feelings, that I have little positive to say about how things are going in our world. Exactly! I believe we are going the wrong way, traveling the wrong trail. I do not like what I see when I view recent and recurring developments the areas of politics, religion, corporate activity, the homeless, education, drugs, crime, education, world rule, and our environment. And I particularly do not approve of the methods and self-serving proposals invoked by our nation's leaders to solve these problems while keeping their "ship" on course when I believe the "ship" is on the wrong course to begin with. Because it would be unrealistic to expect to change things in our lifetime, we must look to the future and to future generations for these changes. As a body of thinkers, mainstream Americans do not care much for the future unless they are going to be in it. This runs converse to traditional thinking in other cultures...cultures which are

being "rubbed out" by our desire to make everyone the same. Differentness is not celebrated. Prejudice prevails and, doing so, asks that we all be the same, think the same, act the same lest we be prejudiced against. But some of our greatest resources lie in the area of spirit and traditions of the spirit. Children understand these, before they become acculturated. Minorities understand these and practice them in private places lest they be purged.

If one compares the traits of mainstream society with those of minority groups, he or she cannot help but feel revulsion for the directions chosen by the majority. But little is done to correct our destructive ways. Rationalization is the new power invoked to justify our predilection. Creativity and critical thinking and personal knowledge and spiritual groundedness is not taught in our schools because there has never been a way to do same without offending some individual or individual group of people. Administrative responsibilities have overshadowed teaching responsibilities and literacy has taken on a nationalistic flavor which serves to prepare our children to better serve the corporate machinery. Religion has become a laughter because of the indiscretions of an increasing number of pious charlatans and religious segregationism defeats the purpose of global peace and understanding. Good and gentle people suffer everywhere because of the balance of power, drugs, crime and a growing number of professions which depend upon pathology to survive. Insurance companies, the medical professions, legal professions, accounting firms, legislators, and civic

organizations have devised a network of backscratching which only serves to drive the citizenry into further servitude to the "system" rather than to the peace of mind these "services" promise to provide. And with the electronic technology advancing in quantum leaps, personal privacy, as well, promises to be seriously compromised in a short time.

This will not be the world of Old Toad....not in our lifetime. There is not enough understanding of the very simplicity of the problems which confront us. There is not enough desire to understand the simplicity. We seem to think that we are more clever, more genius, if we can show to be complex and confusing in our creations and our solutions. This is not the way of Old Toad. As an example, let us take a look at the rising rate of divorce in our nation.

Divorce rates are easy for Toad and I to understand. Refer, for a moment, to the mainstream traits chart presented earlier and note how our culture influences its participants. Individual goals are preferred over group goals; there exists a domination/power orientation; stimulation is preferred to tranquility; a high competition orientation exists; economy and prudence are preferred to sharing and generosity; and we don't mind prying into the business of others. Now, I ask you, how can two people who are raised under the influence of this system of preferences ever be expected to share life under the vows of marriage which are traditionally based upon sharing in sickness and in health, being obedient to the union, and encouraging the growth and happiness of the other before yourself? It is no small

wonder so many can not live in the same house after the "game" and "stimulation" are gone and sensibility and harmony become necessary for co-habitation over the long term.

The solution to the range of problems we discuss lies in the ontological education of future generations. This can only be achieved with the philosophical rehabilitation of certain facets of existing society's resources. I will be long dead before this ever occurs. In the spirit of life, however, I look to the future as a part of that future and that future's energies. I deny death its ego-centric terminality. I offer, with these words, the synthesis of a man consumed with the purpose of his spirit. I am not able to perfectly explain my motivation or my model for solution for reasons we have discussed far more than we should have ever dedicated the time. Be that as it may, a moral development program should be the foremost goal of all of the institutions of our nation, if only for the children. A program of hopeful design which embraces the spirit of life and personhood and dormancy and potential and flaws in character, body, and direction. A program which could be designed along the lines of the great power and potential of spirituality of all of the inhabitants of our earth without interference from fear of loss of influence or power from all those who claim to be interested in the same goals for our many different, multi-colored, and hopeful peoples. To echo Sorokin's call, "At the present juncture of human history, a notable increase of an unselfish, creative love (goodness) in the superorganic world is the paramount need of humanity.".....**finis**

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