

AOTCJournal

Welcome to the **Journal of the Aware Ones of the Treasure Coast**,
a secular humanist gathering, providing companionship, conversation,
support, and good times, within honest and objective atheist, agnostic
and freethinking values.

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-- Produced by the TC Secular Writers --

INTRODUCTION

IF THINGS SEEM A LITTLE WHOPPER-JAWED
AROUND HERE ...

or, the gulf between grotesque and pretty



It's the second time around for my rendition of this Aware Ones of the Treasure Coast Journal and I'm having a ball! Why wouldn't one with all the baskets of crazy we are gifted from all points of the compass. I just hope everyone likes it enough to keep me around. While some come and some go and I know we'll all miss the press secretary who would not hold press conferences for some strange reason.



Meanwhile, and I mean MEANWHILE, women are having their autonomy restricted in nearly every state in the old confederacy and the president continues attempting to make the country a gated community. The great orange fuhrer also decided that Cuba is an island surrounded by big, big water and we Americans can't be trusted to visit it. The Sinclair Broadcasting Co. fired the Springfield, Illinois affiliate's weatherman because he had the audacity to tell the truth about the climate. Does that smell like the rotting corpse of freedom to you too?

Let's not let these things deter us! This issue has two first-time contributors, Betty Tewksbury and Lucy Thorp who show that being an individual takes remarkable fortitude. Let us commence.

We continue the process of increasing the distribution of this Journal in the hopes of attracting new members. If you are new to the Aware Ones and would like to know more about us please visit our website at <http://www.AwareOnesOfTheTreasureCoast.com>. You are also welcome to join our table at Importico's Bakery, 555 S. Colorado Ave., Stuart, where we gather every Sunday around the hours of 10 to noon to share ideas and challenge your mind.

If you do not want the journal and wish to have your address removed, please email vmthorp@outlook.com for confirmation.

AOTC MEMBERS

Joan Auerbach	Stretch Graton
Marsha Banks	Bob Haskins
Ernie Breud	Barbara Lange
Eddie Buitrago	Jim Longo
Rick Burkhart	Yashi Nozawa
Sandra Burkhart	Roberta Synal
Paul Carlos	Lucy Thorp
Gloria Cosgrove	Virgil Thorp
Ray Duryea	Dan Vignau
Marilyn Graton	Ed Zillioux

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Meetings

Sunday Coffee – Every Sunday, Importico's Bakery, 555 S. Colorado Ave., Stuart, 10 a.m.ish, outside when weather's agreeable.

TC Secular Writers – Every other Thursday, Jensen's House of Brews, 6:30 pm; June 27; July 11, 25; August 8 & 22.

Events

Summer Potlucks? Anyone brave enough to volunteer?

July 2 – National “I forgot day”. Don't send a card.
Aug. 3 - National Watermelon Day!!!!

Aug. 15, AO Journal 4-4 submission deadline.

*Freeflo is coming! Nov. 1-3, Orlando FL. Florida Humanist Assoc.
www.freeflo.org/



WHO SAID THIS?

QUOTATION QUIZ

“Mr. President, you’re from Queens. You may fool the rest of the country, but I’ll call your bluff any day of the week. Opening an impeachment inquiry is exactly what we must do when the President obstructs justice, advises witnesses to ignore legal subpoenas, & more. Bye,” she tweeted, capping it off with a hand-waving emoji.

(answer and photo on page 36)

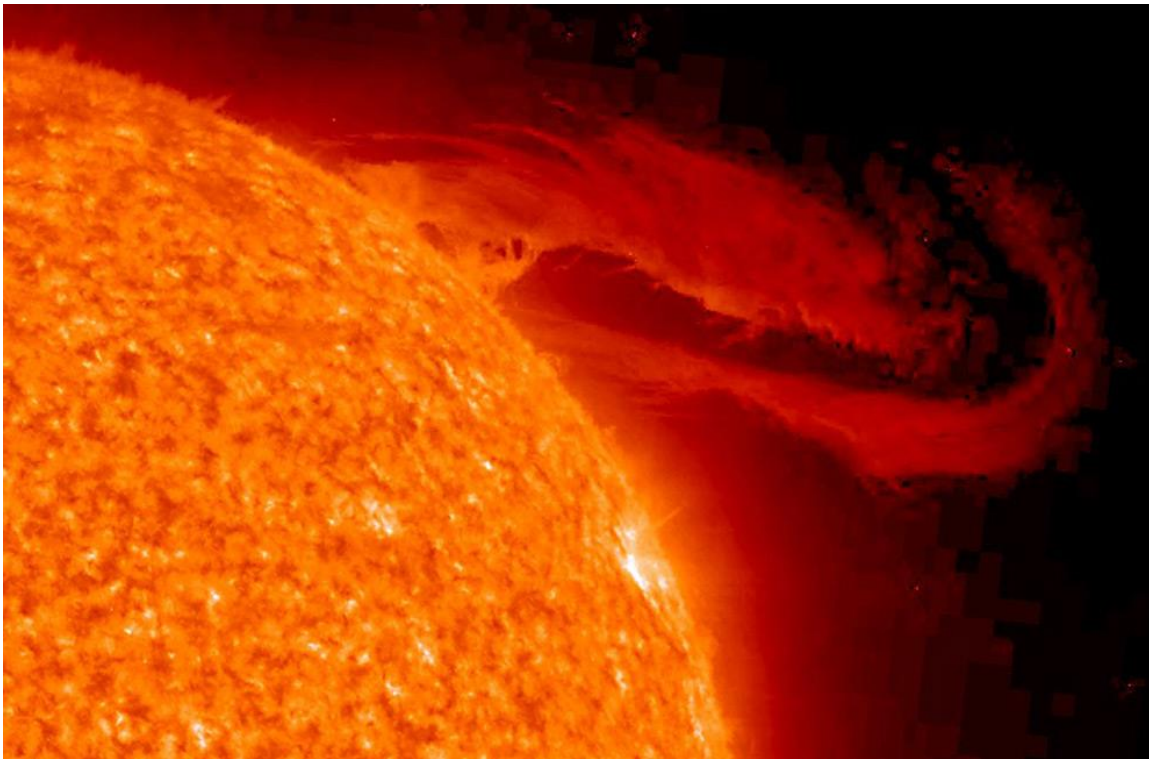
COMMENTARY

PRACTICAL THERMODYNAMICS OF CARS LEFT OUT IN THE SUN (and other observations)

By Bert Mautz

After much study of hot cars and how we suffer with them, I have several observations. The other day watched a mother with two small children approach her sun baked car with stroller, shopping bags, and the kids. She opened a back door and hurriedly placed the kid in a car seat. Buckled the urchin in place and slammed the door. Circled the car and repeat with second kid. Closed door and opened trunk to place now folded stroller in trunk, and returned to open driver's seat door.

Mind you all this time two children are cooking in a closed and super-heated car. Mom gets behind the wheel, immediately closes her door, likely for fear of mall parking lot marauders and grapples with own seat belt, fishes keys again from deep purse, to finally start car and a.c. Mom had this procedure all backward, and the kids suffered accordingly in unrelieved heat.



First unavoidable rule of cars heating like ovens; park that sucker in the shade, even if you have to walk a little further. You have a black car, really?

Second rule; when parking in the sun for several hours, face the car to the horizon with the least sun. i.e. face east in the afternoon so that the blazing afternoon sun, setting to the west is on the back windows

and not the dash, steering wheel, and your own seat back.

Third rule; open doors, give the super heated interior a couple moments to exhaust the trapped heat before getting into the car. Even better, have your passenger in on the trick and keep both your doors open for a minute while stowing gear and kids.

Fourth rule; while buckling in the kids and getting your own seat belt sorted out, leave the doors open to keep venting the heat. Better yet, reach in with keys and start car and a.c. before placing kids in their seats.

Fifth rule; have the keys in hand so to get the engine running and air blowing before doing anything else, with the doors still open. Gotta let as much heat escape and be blown out as possible, giving the a.c. a chance to begin cooling.

Not so much a rule, as a good idea. *Weathertech*, a rubber floor mat company makes a "side window deflector", a visor permitting leaving the windows open about an inch without rain's intrusion. The summer sun still heats the car, but venting the heat out the ajar windows makes a noticeable difference in the otherwise sun baked oven of an interior. If you must park in the hot sun daily, get yourself a set of visors and feel the difference. Plan ahead for the hot car battle.

NATURE WATCH

The parents are in full time feeding mode. They began building their nest in one of the evergreen shrubs flanking the driveway in late March. The twig gathering, flying in and out of the bush at the nose of my shaded car park, was a remarkable all consuming activity, and then few sightings for a period. Perhaps she was laying and sitting on eggs at this time. Will sit with a Maduro Ascot for thirty minutes observing their repeated fly-ins with worms, caterpillars, or miscellaneous bugs in their beaks, and then back out for another. The kids are hungry and the parents are dutifully providing.



Have watched previous nestings and feedings, frequently to fall prey to the blue jays, the nest robbers. The jays hang out around the bird bath on the other side of the house. Cannot know how the jays locate the vulnerable family of mocking birds. A pair of doves hatched a brood under the yellow awning above the office slider. Right out in the open, highly visible with their comings and goings, and the jays got 'um. A pair of doves are regular visitors around here, splashing in the bird bath, remarkable for their close companionship, always together.

Last year the mocking birds hatched a brood in the miniature palms within reach of my seat. My presence seemed to barely disrupt their comings and goings, but watched the feedings closely. The kids grew quickly on what must be a high protein diet, and left the nest, fully feathered, but not truly flying yet. Have seen mocking bird pairs drive off starlings, but no confrontations with the aggressive jays. Survival is a difficult matter and by no means to be assumed.

Of course the predator prey hierarchy is ever present. The new alligator inhabiting the creek eats the ducks, attacking, unseen from below. The brown hawk has hit and flown off with a starling in its talons, diving out of the sky with people all around, hunting unperturbed by human kinds' presence. Fascinating. end

p.s. Is survival of the fittest inevitable? Watching the parents flying in with bugs in their beaks every few minutes, and then they were gone, nest empty. Did the offspring fly away with parental supervision, or were they taken by the blue jays?

IT WAS "TRACKED" BY ITS LAST OWNER

Porsche car owners congregate in clubs to share track driving events, "how to polish and wax your Porsche" instructionals, and of course to socialize. So I asked my Porsche owning and loving buddy, "Would you buy a Porsche that has been driven on a race track?"

"Not if I can help it," he responded unequivocally,



"Typically a used Porsche advertisement notes whether the car has been 'tracked.'"

"So running your Porsche on the track subjects it to extra wear and tear?"

"Oh yes, tires and brakes for starters, clutches and transmissions and likely higher revs than normal for the engine. She's been 'tracked,' you betcha."

One needs to think about the notion of extra, or severe wear and tear. Is there a human equivalent? Keith Richards, of the *Rolling Stones* on tour since he was a kid, comes to mind as living a life of higher than normal revolutions powering out of the corner, in third gear, headed for the straightaway. If you get my analogue?



Have not many of us been "tracked" once or twice? At some time in our lives we tried too hard, took on too much, too many flights, too little sleep. And we survived. Put on new brake pads, install fresh tires, and hopefully didn't redline the engine, and life goes on, the wiser for our high stress life experience.

How are your brakes?

HOW DOES SHE DO THIS?

The Colorado Avenue Importico's Cafe features outdoor tables along a planting of shrubs and tropical flora. It's Florida, so the flora is inhabited by fauna, naturally. The lizard activity is particularly prevalent. Pastries are crumby, if you get my meaning. The resident lizards, we count as many as four, will dart across the pebble edging, onto the tile floor to snap up a crumb brushed off the table, or in my case, off my lap, and bolt back to common sparrow, retrieve crumbs from the Taco tables.



Betty likes animals.
a

which is the fastest lizard. So she begins pitching crumbs underhand to get their attention, and they appear to be watching. Sporadically a lizard would make a crumb run, shake it like a bull dog with a bone, swallow it and retreat. She kept at it. Believe it, the lizards were paying attention.

to feed the
Perhaps spurring
competition to see

Yes, training lizards is a stretch of one's credulity. However, in short order, she would chuck a crumb, and one of the several lizards would come scurrying, now being watched by several more lizards, seemingly waiting their turn. We dine here several mornings a week. We believe the lizards are full time residents, or as we say down here, "year rounders." If these lizards are in fact trained, there would be carry over from one day to the next time we do breakfast. Tested the theory this morning. No preliminaries necessary. Pitch a crumb and a lizard, we didn't even see where he came from, swoop out from under a palm leaf, snapped up the cranberry scone crumb, scurry back like it was being chased. Yup, she's trained a lizard to show up for feedings, unbelievable.



-In all ages, hypocrites, called priests, have put crowns upon the heads of thieves, called kings.- Robert Ingersoll



ARTICLES

BEFORE I GET MY SOUP

By Jim Longo

Jack came bounding down the stairs singing,

"I don't know too many things,

"I know what I know if you know what I mean.

"Philosophy is a talk on a cereal box, religion a smile on a dog.

"Shove me into shallow water before I get too deep."

"Ear worm eh," Jill said moving towards the coffee pot.

"I woke up with this fucking song in my head going round and round.
Why this song? Why now?"

"I know, what I don't know, if you know what I mean," She said smiling as she shoveled coffee onto the filter bowl of the coffee machine.

"Philosophy is a talk on a cereal box,"

"Okay let me try to help, philosophy literally means the love of wisdom," Jill said pouring water into the machine.

"And religion is a smile on a dog."

"Any one ever tell you, you are fucking annoying," She said turning on the coffee machine and turning toward him with a concerted stare.

"Yes, you every fucking day of my life," Jack said with a giggle and shit eating grin.

"Well that and a couple of minutes will get you a cup of coffee," She said grabbing a couple of cups out of the cabinet and placing them next to the coffee pot.

"What's on your agenda today?" He asked.

"Have to take mom to the doctor to find out about the mass on her breast."

"Cancer?" Jack asked.

"No Taurus?"

"Sounds like bull to me."

"You are such an asshole, the results for her biopsy come in today, remember we discussed this a couple of weeks ago."

"Yeah, but what do you expect, she's fucking ninety. She is going to die of something."

"I know that, and you know that, but when you are ninety the whole point of your life is to live to ninety-one."

"I guess it is as good as any philosophy."

"Beats the hell out of reading cereal boxes," Jill said, as they stared at the coffee machine pissing out brown liquid into pot.

"Just more pain and suffering, you know, what my mother used to say before she lost her mind."

"What? If you can learn to love pain and suffering you'll just love life."

"Explains why I'm with you."

"Fuck you and the horse you rode in on?"

"For every masochist, there is a sadist making all his dreams come true."

She smiled, chuckled and poured two cups of coffee, "And all my sister is worried about is what happens with my mother's house."

"Fucking vulture."

"And she looks like one too. Leave my sister alone."

"You are the one that said she looks like a vulture," Jack said, taking his coffee turning and then smiling.



They moved stuff off the high top, sat down and both stared out the kitchen window at the squirrels attacking the bird feeder in the backyard.

"You want some breakfast?" he asked.

"No, I'll get some with mom."

"You?" she asked.

"I'm not hungry, besides I might get my philosophy off the cereal box."

"No, I put the cereal in the birdfeeder. I read that shit isn't good for you."

"You know, it doesn't matter, nothing matters, all this and bowl of soup won't matter ten minutes after we're dead. I think I'll have soup for breakfast." Jack said taking a drag on his coffee.

"You said you weren't hungry."

"I changed my mind, and since it is all mind over matter. I guess I decide.

They went back to staring at the squirrels catching a sugar buzz. A couple minutes went by.

Jill said, "If philosophy is the study of a meaningful existence, it must be an art, because it sure the hell isn't science." And sucked down the rest of her coffee, and went to get ready.

Jack got up singing, "Take me into shallow water, before I get my soup. Take me into shallow water before I get my soup, before I get my soup," and he went looking for a pot and a can of soup.

We Were All Girls

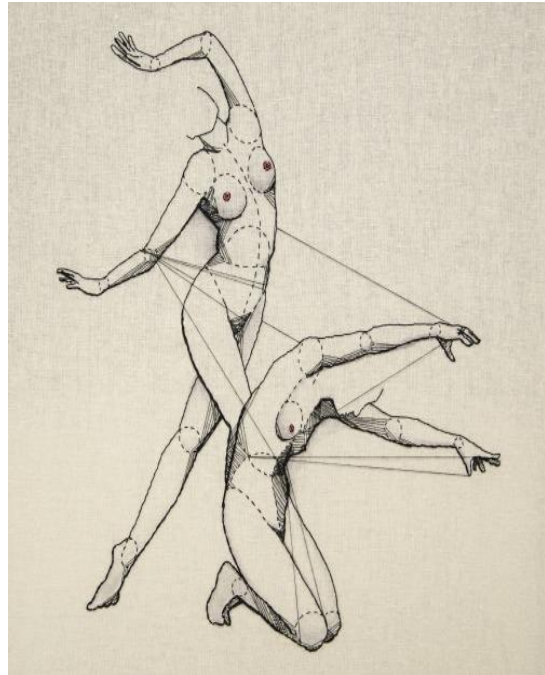
(or, it ain't necessarily so)

By Ed Zillioux

Remember the Genesis fable:

"So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man"? Sure you do – the last time you read Genesis 2.

But really. Does that make any sense? Us guys have the same number of ribs as any girl does. And if the Lord God had to recycle part of Man to create Woman why would he choose a rib? There's just no logic in that. He might at least have chosen some part that had something to do with reproduction. Or why didn't he just start from scratch?



But maybe it got lost in translation. Maybe it wasn't his rib after all. The Hebrew word in contention was "tsela," first translated as "rib" in a Greek translation of the Hebrew bible, but it seems nowhere else. The word "tsela" occurs 40 times throughout the Bible and in no other instance was it translated as "rib." Now a more careful reading argues that "tsela," in relation to the human body should be translated as "a limb lateral to the vertical axis of an erect human body." This leaves hands, feet or, in the case of a man, the penis. But we still have all our hands, feet, and certainly our penis, so what's missing?



(penis bone)

Illustration 1: Baculum

Enter Ziony Zevit, a distinguished professor of Biblical Literature and Northwest Semitic Languages, and all-around clever guy who figured it out. He pointed out that most mammals, be they terrestrial or marine, have one thing that we, sadly, are missing – a baculum or penis bone. Since even our closest primate relatives have the penis bone, you gotta wonder what happened. So Zevit's conclusion, which he

published in a 2015 issue of the prestigious periodical Biblical Archeological Review, was that the Lord God traded Adam's penis bone for a woman, which would have worked just fine until we lived long enough to experience **erectile** disfunction. But, alas, Zevit's theory was not received well by Christians in general who treated it as a bone of contention which challenged their faith.

Others were more direct by labeling his theory the phallic-bone phallacy. Richard Dawkins, of all people, came to their defense by suggesting that human females chose their mates by their ability to rise to the occasion without the need of a bone. Thus, the Christian could smugly say that it was all part of the Divine Plan. So are we stuck with the rib theory? Personally, I think George Gershwin got it right when he penned, "The things that you're liable to read in the Bible, It ain't necessarily so."

But let's leave the world of biblical fantasy and turn to science, we certainly can't do any worse. There is some actual evidence that the Bible got it all backwards. Maybe Man was made from some part of Woman rather than the other way around. I know, such a suggestion is blasphemous and I'll probably go to Hell for bringing it up, but It seems that in our embryonic life there's a point at which all embryos are destined to become girls. And, if not for a little piece of DNA that these proto girls "graciously" give to us guys, we would wind up in a world of only women!

Yes, it's true – well, sort of. But then, the Lord God would have had to come up with another option to impregnate women, but that should be a piece of cake for the Almighty. Hell, even we have figured out how to fertilize an egg in a sperm. But there's Almighty: if he of us, then we and his son anymore. That is, set of 23 condition like Jesus, instead of the result of sexual union which produces a double set of 46 chromosomes, or the diploid condition which has characterized all humans both before and after Jesus.



But wait, this is supposed to be the science section, so let's go back to our embryonic beginnings. As you know, the indicator that an embryo will develop into a boy is the Y chromosome. But this is not just automatic. If it were, why is it that some babies with a Y chromosome

are born females? There is a gene on the Y chromosome, named SRY, that normally does all of the work of turning the embryo into a boy. But it has to be turned on, like with a switch. That's where the little piece of DNA I mentioned earlier comes into play. It carries the protein that is the actual switch and when it is brought close enough, by a folding of the Y chromosome, the SRY gene is turned on and all hell breaks loose. SRA then causes the penis, and other male traits to form, and, indirectly turns on another gene called Sox9, which kick-starts the development of the testes. That little piece of DNA is called an enhancer. Without it, or if anything goes wrong in the switching process, that embryo, despite its carrying the Y chromosome, will develop into a girl. In the vast majority of cases, it does what it's supposed to do, but when it doesn't, which happens in about one out of every 5500 human births, they wind up with some problem related to their gender.

Science isn't easy so it takes a long time to begin to figure things out. That's why those writers of the Bible thought they had to come up with lies to explain virtually everything. But wouldn't we all have been better off if they could just have said, "we don't know"?

Apparently, we humans need fantasies; we must have explanations, whether or not there are any bases in fact for these. For those with a scientific bent these take the form of hypotheses, but a hypothesis must be provable or falsifiable to have any real explanatory value. Others may glam onto the latest homeopathic cure or psychic nonsense as long as it promises some level of

explanation, albeit totally false, for phenomena that are not easily understood. But for the masses it's faith. We live in a world where faith replaces truth, where faith stands as an alternative truth that requires no further thought or examination. It's easy. It soothes our anxieties. Thou shalt not challenge our faith.



THE WAY WE WERE

GROWING UP WITHOUT GOD

By Lucy Thorp

My original title was going to be "Raising Children Without Religion". After a few preliminary sentences I realized it couldn't be that since I have never birthed nor raised a child. I was, however, very lucky to have been nurtured by a woman who didn't give me rote answers. She would often answer my questions with a question (and, I had a million questions) but she never gave me an answer.



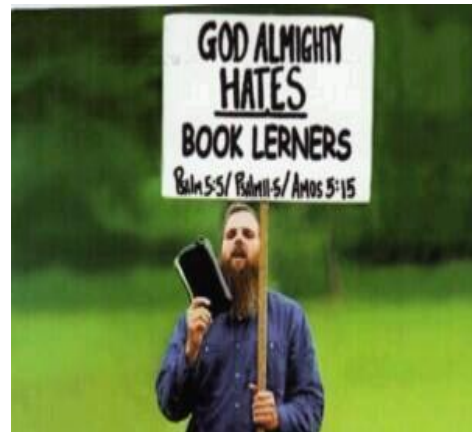
She gave me more questions; and she gave me better questions. She guided me to resources that had answers. But she always told me to be wary of the answers and especially easy answers. She encouraged me to get second opinions and consider various options. She taught me critical thinking and she did it without relying on a mystical father in the sky.

I have considered myself a "diaper atheist" but I don't think that is quite accurate. I was not raised to *not believe in God*, but to question why I would believe in a god. After many experiences I was able to come to the conclusion that I didn't believe but it wasn't always easy. People have often challenged me that I could not be a moral person without religion to guide me. I did not agree with them then and I certainly don't agree now that it is necessary for a person to have a religious belief to live a moral life.

In my search to define what a moral person is, my mother counseled me to look in the dictionary for the meaning of words. The first definition of "moral" in Webster's Concise Dictionary is: *Of or pertaining to character and behavior from the point of view of right and wrong.*

Many people (not all) who know me will agree that I exhibit morals as Webster's defines. Family, friends, coworkers, (believers and non-believers, even my very religious in-laws who know that my husband I are non-believers) and my Catholic boss of 16 years (although, I confess, I am still in the closet with him) are unanimous – I have morals. What does separate us is the inclination that it is necessary to have religion to be moral.

How do I define religion? Webster's also defines "religion" as: *a belief in a divine or superhuman power or principle, usually though of as the creator of all thing*. Sorry, I cannot swallow the idea of a whole creator of all things, superhuman power thing. I have tried to believe in a god at a few points in my life but found any supreme being, whether it was called Jehovah, Allah, Zeus, Jupiter or Chluthu lacking the substance such a being should have (however, I also realize I would have avoided confrontations with zealous believers if I had).



I've heard many atheists say the one question they are asked from believers most is, "How can you have any morals if you don't believe in God?" Some former believers who've de-converted are told, "Well at least you had good morals given you by God when you were young." They hope the god thing is still with you.

I've heard some religious acquaintances say, "You may not believe in God, but you are a spiritual person." I suppose that implies that I am a "moral" person who is just too stubborn to acknowledge a "higher power". No, I am not "spiritual". I think I am a moral person though and that is more important to me than any metaphysical notion of "spirituality".

I've heard many times that I have a belief in a god but just don't know it, "because you are one of the most moral people I have ever met." Their statements may be well-intentioned praise but they're also unequivocal bullshit!

So I hope that as you read my story – my mother's legacy to me – you may get some ideas of how to raise your children without a god.

My Early Years

The first question I remember my mother not giving me an answer to was when I was about three-years-old. I met the woman my grandmother employed to clean her house once a week. She looked different from me.

I asked mom, "Why is that woman's skin so dark?"

She didn't answer directly but asked me the following questions:

"Some people have blonde hair like you and some have dark hair like your brother, right?"

I said yes.

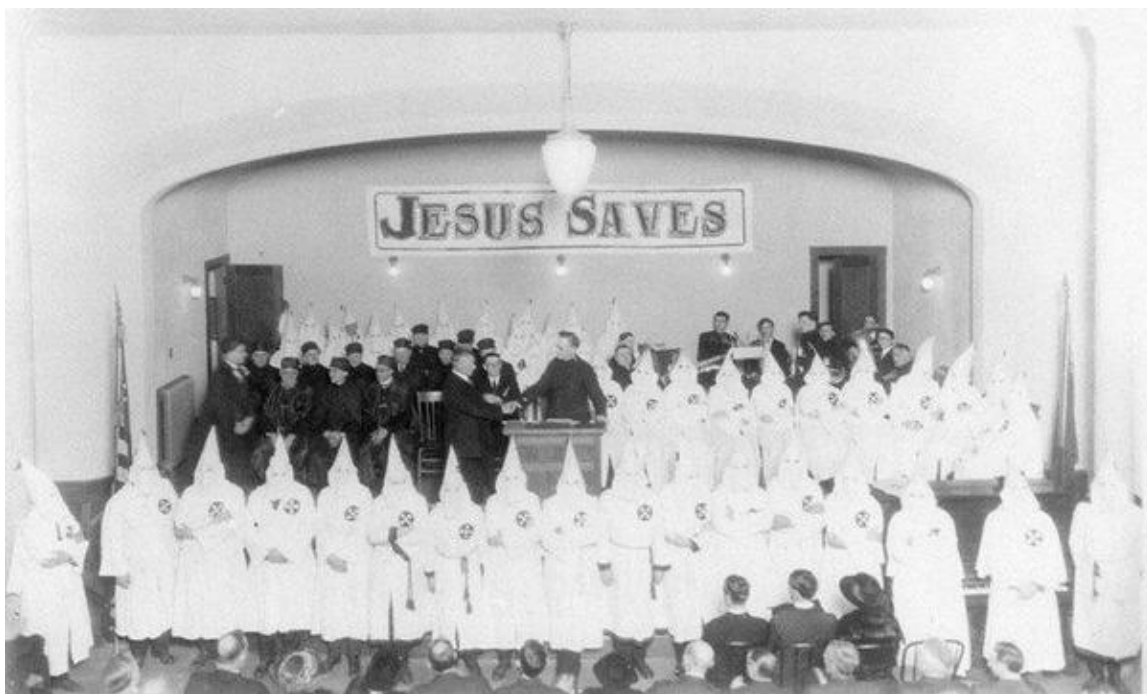
"And some people have green eyes like you and some have brown eyes like your brother, right?"

I said yes.

"So do you think that some people might have light skin like you and some other people have dark skin like her?"

And I said yes.

So, I realized at an early age that skin color is not good or bad, not right or wrong, simply another difference. I didn't need god to understand this. I had come to a moral point of view.



I was confused several years later I heard God being invoked as people of color were clubbed and hosed and attacked by dogs because they were demonstrating for the rights I took for granted being a white, blonde person. It was easy to say that their repression was (and continues to be) morally wrong.

In grade school I was aware that there was a god that my friends had to go to church every Sunday morning so they could pray to and worship him. I was told that this made them good.

I was confused because there was a bully in second grade named Elmer. He was a big boy and liked picking on littler boys and girls. One day I asked him how he could believe in god and be so mean. He explained that when he went to church on Sunday and confessed his sins (Catholic) he was forgiven and then he was good to be mean for another week.

Wow. How easy was that!!

I went to mom.

"If I believe in God, I can get forgiveness and be good for a whole week. Can't I?"

Again, no answers, just a question:

"If you hurt someone who should you ask forgiveness from – the person you hurt or something called god?"

Great question. I decided that it would be best to apologize to the person. After all, if someone hurt me it felt good if they said they were sorry. I learned the golden rule without a god.

My deepest immersion in religion was the summer I spent with Tanta when I was ten. Tanta was my grandmother's aunt. She was a wonderful Norwegian woman who strongly believed in god, family, friends and food in that order. It was a wonderful summer. The large, funny, friendly family next door were of some religion (I don't remember which) and I was sent to Sunday school with them. At the time, I no longer believed in Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny or the Tooth Fairy and they were telling me a lot of stories that seemed even more improbable. I asked Tanta some questions and was told that if it was in the bible, it was true.



Poor Tanta. She was appalled that I didn't know the lord's prayer so she taught it to me. She didn't stop there and taught me a prayer I should recite every night before I went to sleep. It scared the hell out of me! "If I should die before I waked?" Holy shit!

I quit asking questions of Tanta, not wanting to upset her (because I loved her) and enjoyed the children next door and had a wonderful tenth birthday party in what proved to be a very good summer although my mind had been exposed to a new world of drivel.

When I got home I had a lot of questions for Mom starting with the Noah's Ark story.

So, I asked Mom, "if God drowned everything on Earth – and was that the right thing to do – what happened to the fish who live in the water and the birds that fly above it? How did they drown?" And on and on.

Mom said, "Good questions. Let's start with ..."

Critical Thinking!

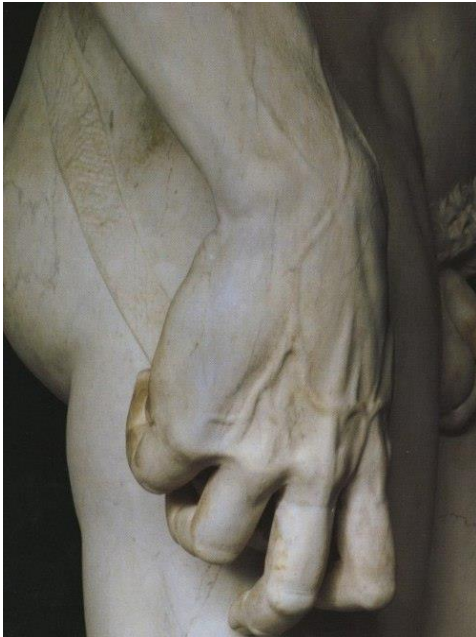
(For more info on teaching children to be good without god see Dale McGowan's *Parenting Beyond Belief: On Raising Ethical, Caring Kids Without Religion*)

VICTORY WITH SHADOWS

(Memories of a young boy in 1942 Imperial Japan)

By Yashi Nozawa

I did not concern myself with the war situation for several reasons. My father had ordered me to leave the war to professional soldiers and sailors and said that I should concentrate on my own job: study for the entrance examination for Metropolitan Middle schools. However, I



did not completely ignore the war situation. The most reassuring event, which soothed my anxiety was an action taken by the Divine Soldiers Descended from the Sky. Even though I was a kid, I knew why we started the war. There were insufficient reserves of oil. According to rumor, the Japanese Imperial Navy had only three month's worth of oil reserves. They would lose their fighting capability if they waited too long because of the oil embargo by the United States and its Allies. So Japan started the war on December 8, 1941 (in Japanese time) against them.

On February 12, 1942, the Japanese Imperial Army executed a surprise attack on the Palembang oil field on the Sumatra Island of Dutch East Indies (presently Indonesia), using its paratroopers and occupying the oil field almost intact. The production capability of the oil field exceeded the annual consumption of the entire Japanese Empire. After the occupation, the Japanese Empire would maintain its full fighting strength almost indefinitely. That was the reason we called these paratroopers Divine Soldiers Descended from the Sky.

Burma, which had some oil fields, was the next "liberation" of an East-Asian country. On March 9th, the Japanese Imperial Army occupied its capital, Rangoon. By May 20, 1942, they completed their conquest of Burma. The only remaining colonial country was India: the biggest and most important colony of Great Britain. Some pro-Germanic people had been hoping that our ally Germany would finish the European war soon, and Germany would join the Japanese Imperial Army for the liberation of India.

Germany had already conquered almost all of Europe. She was making good progress on the Russian front. In addition, a recent German success in North Africa convinced some people that the German war machine was unstoppable. I remembered that we had at least one discussion among us hot-headed boys. The major contention was what we thought would happen when Japan and Germany won the war. Our conclusion was that we would probably challenge the German idea of Aryan supremacy with our God-supported *Yamato-damashii* (Spiritual Power).

However, knowledgeable people, for instance my neighbor Goinkyo, had a completely different idea. He thought that a German victory in the near future would be a far-fetched dream. Once America's mighty industrial power was in full swing the outcome of the war would be uncertain. He and others felt that meanwhile Japan should concentrate on its defense against the counterattack from America.

According to them, America was big and strong enough to fight on both European and Pacific fronts simultaneously. Until the Pearl Harbor attack, Americans were not ready to fight a war, so Japan achieved an easy initial victory. Once the United States geared up their war material production, they would become a formidable enemy of Japan.

I thought Goinkyo was, as usual, pessimistic in his prediction because he was a merchant, not a samurai. I still believed that we would win this war because we had spiritual power and America did not. Our country would receive help from our *Kami-sama* (gods).

Shortly after
new school
began a new
class to keep
progress of



the start of a
year, we
game in our
track of the
the war.

According to Mr. Sakura, the war would be determined by naval battles, since the Japanese Imperial Army had no major opposition anymore and they already occupied all the territories they needed. Japan's major task would be to defend these territories from the United States. Americans could come only from the sea, so naval battles would be crucial elements. We would keep score of all the naval battles; who wins: America or Japan. We set up a big board on a classroom wall.

The first entry on the board was Pearl Harbor. Scores were ten for Japan and zero for America.

The next entry was the Battle of the Coral Sea which happened on May 8, 1942. Based on an official announcement, the Japanese Imperial Navy warships sank two American aircraft carriers and one destroyer. They also caused major damage to an oil tanker and shot down ninety-eight airplanes. Naval aviation squadrons based on Rabaul joined the battle and sank two American warships. Damage on the Japanese side was one aircraft carrier lost. Several other warships on both sides were damaged, but we counted only sunken ships, not damaged ones, on our score board. The final score was four for Japan and one for America. To me, it seemed it was a great victory for the Japanese Navy.

Out of curiosity, I asked Goinkyo for his opinion. As usual I went to the public bath early when no other customers were around. I found Goinkyo alone. I knew his opinion was getting to be more pessimistic than before, but that was refreshing. Goinkyo read many articles in newspapers and magazines and books because he had plenty of time. After studying the different materials, he formed his opinions, which often differed from the official point of view.

"Goinkyo, I want to hear your opinion about the result of the Battle of the Coral Sea."

"I am so glad you asked me. I always read lots of different newspapers and articles to form my opinion, but nobody wants to hear from me. Even Kashira, who used to be an inseparable companion, started to avoid listening to my opinion. He thinks I am getting too dangerous because my opinions often contradict the official announcements. At least here, in the public bath, there are no other people around. I can speak of my opinions safely."

He continued, "Do you know that the battle of Coral Sea was a major event in the history of warfare? This was the first naval engagement in which both sides never saw each other while they were fighting. Both sides used their aircraft to attack each other remotely. Our beloved Admiral Yamamoto devised a naval strategy using aircraft carriers and had great success using them in the Pearl Harbor attack. Americans learned from this and copied the strategy. The Coral Sea battle was the first time in history that both sides used aircraft carrier strategy. So, the outcome of this battle reflected the skills of both the Naval and the Aviation Forces. As a result the Japanese sank two American aircraft carriers, while Americans sent one Japanese aircraft carrier to the bottom of the sea. The score was two to one and the Japanese won. However, it also indicated that the Americans had mastered enough of the strategy to fight with a skill almost equal to that of the Japanese Navy's. The Japanese Navy lost its superiority in aircraft carrier strategy. We have to be more careful, since Americans are catching up fast."

"Thank you, Goinkyo. This is news to me. So, the Americans became much tougher to beat than we originally thought." I was not sure how glad I was about this new revelation. I wished I could share my new knowledge with someone, but I could not. If I told it to anyone, Goinkyo would be in trouble. The next entry on our score sheet was the Battle of Midway, fought between June 6th and 8th. The original official announcement on June 10th, 1942 from the Supreme Command Headquarters (SCH) was that the Japanese Imperial Navy sank two American aircraft carriers: The Enterprise and the Hornet, and we shot down 120 enemy aircraft. On the contrary, the Japanese losses were two aircraft carriers and thirty-five airplanes. However, the SCH issued a correction on June 18th. It said that the Japanese sank

only one aircraft carrier and two other warships. It was not a particularly exciting battle for our scoreboard.

I went to the public bath that day and asked Goinkyo.

"Did you hear about the victory of the Battle of Midway?" I asked.

"Is it a victory? I am not sure, but I heard the news."

"Why did you think it is not a victory? The score was three to two in favor of Japan."

"Remember the April 18th raid by American bombers?"

"Yes, I remember it very well. I personally witnessed it. It was a daytime raid executed by several B-25 bombers, led by someone called Captain Doolittle. Fortunately, our damage from the air raid was very small, just like the captain's name suggested."

"Can you remember what the Imperial Navy promised us after the air raid?"

"No, I forgot. What did they promise us?"

"They said that the Japanese Imperial Navy would occupy all the islands which could be used for future air raids on the mainland of Japan. One of the candidate islands was Midway. So I am guessing that the Japanese navy went there to occupy the Midway Island, but the American Navy ambushed the Japanese and



it became a naval battle. The Japanese navy might have won the naval battle, but it failed to occupy the island. Furthermore, we sank only one American carrier and they sank two of ours. Admiral Yamamoto pointed out that a naval battle in the Pacific was a fight between aircraft carriers, not between battleships. We lost the Battle of Midway. We failed to occupy Midway Island, and could eliminate the potential danger of future American air raids to our mainland." Goinkyo went on to give me additional bad news.

"It has been one month since the Battle of the Coral Sea which Japan won two to one. Now the Americans won two to one. America is learning very fast. If they keep improving at this rate, they might eliminate all Japanese aircraft carriers very soon, unless our Navy makes some drastic changes in their strategy."

"No, that will never happen! We have *Yamato Damashii* (Japanese Spirit) and Americans don't," I screamed.

"Calm down, Yashi. I understand your frustration. You are the son of a samurai, so you cannot think defeat. The Japanese spirit is useful and powerful in a fight between persons. A samurai probably is the best individual fighter in the world because of his Japanese spirit.

"However, modern warfare is not a struggle between individuals. The best samurai with the highest spiritual power cannot sink an aircraft carrier alone. He needs bombs or torpedoes to sink an aircraft carrier. Yes, the Japanese spirit will help our pilots to deliver bombs and torpedoes to enemy carriers, but these pilots need their own aircraft carriers or airfield on the ground. We often emphasize the spiritual aspect too much, and we forget our material needs to win the war."

I was so upset about what Goinkyo told me that I could no longer listen to whatever he was saying. I did not know whether he noticed me not listening anymore, but he continued on and on until several other customers came into the big bath.

Goinkyo disappointed me. I thought he was a typical Japanese man who had faith in our gods and believed in the victory of Japan. He was always cynical and found some problems even in good news. It may have been a typical grumble for every old man or unique to Goinkyo. I did not know which, but I did not like to hear such an argument. The most bothersome part was that his opinion was somehow credible.

PROSE & POETRY



Breathless

By Betty J. Tewksbury

Weak, strong, shallow, deep and involuntary, "it" is taken away from us, and momentarily etched in the mind's eye, only a few times in our lives.

The following usually occurs by a visual stimulus, where the eye messengers the brain of a natural phenomenon such as an awesome display of our natural surroundings, lighting bolts that dance in the nights' coal black sky, or the setting sun's fiery beauty that paints the sky with the yellow, orange and the reds of Mother Nature's palette.

The birth of a baby as it leaves the Mother's womb and gasps for its first breath of air; all evokes that fleeting moment as we stand, in jaw dropping stillness, wordlessly aware of that subtle function of breathing and the breaths we as humans depend on for life itself.

Our breath is also used subconsciously for many mundane functions and activities. We blow out a candles flickering light, we blow on our hands to warm them, we blow on our child's wound to ease the pain of a burn and we even turn and blow a kiss, to warm another's loving heart.

We use our breath to utter words, sometimes cruel, harsh, profane or soothing, loving and kind. Whatever they may relate, at their utterance, they somehow all portray the true character of the orator.

The human species, like no other animal, possesses the ability to bond with another whether it be in the form of a simple acquaintance, friendship casual or long term, or a more permanent binding marriage type, where with perseverance and a whole lot of luck the pair might make it to the pledged destination “‘til death do us part.”

If we are one of those lucky, and I use this word reluctantly, knowing full well the double edged sword that awaits, we will be present to live firsthand the parting of their loved one.

The human body, that incredible, mysterious, miraculous machine that at the final phase of life, begins the process of slowly shutting down until that last great release.

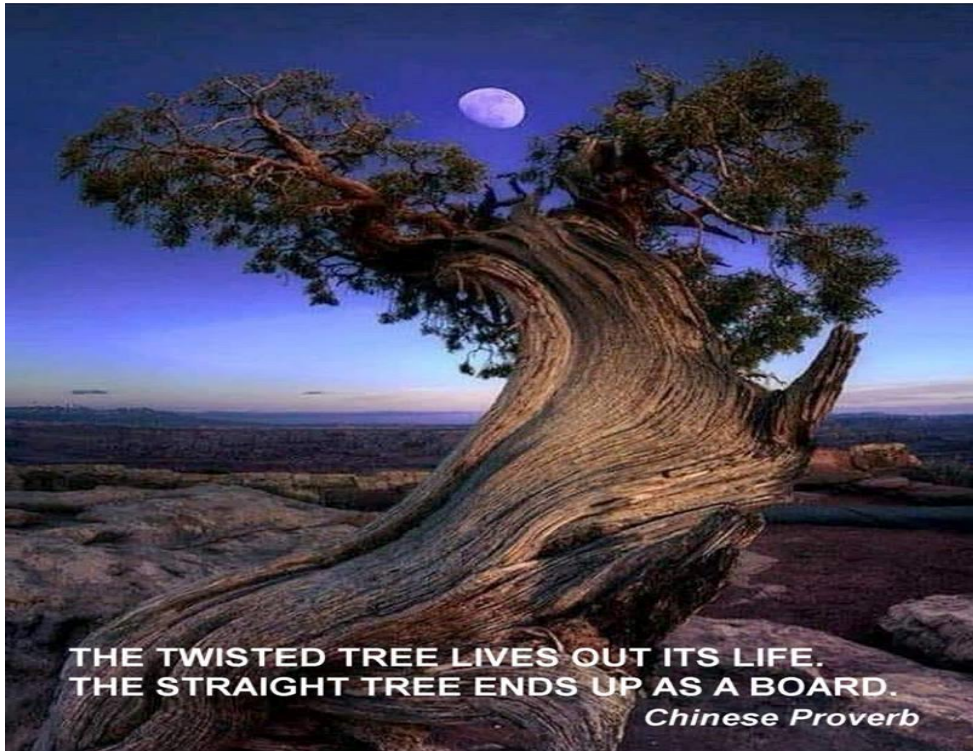


The motherboard, the brain, appears to be much in control of this process. When the main drive, the heart ceases to produce the oxygen rich blood needed to keep all of the vital organs alive; the brain, the controller of the body allows the dying process to start at the furthestmost point from it. The mottling of the feet as the lower extremities are the first limbs to be oxygen starved. Then moving to the body's trunk, the kidneys begin to fail, then the liver; the brain controls the oxygenated blood flow as to preserve the best and last for itself. Then the other vital organs in turn fail until there is not enough

sustenance left for the brain and with that now failing, the heart is destined to fail and the skin turns a pallor shade of opaque white and it is at that time that the breath becomes air and death has then parted the loved ones.

The survivor then left alone, is in that ultimate mind numbing state of "breathlessness", with their mind left blank, their eyes staring in bewilderment and their heart crushed. They somehow muster the words "I'm OK" when they are too numerous asked the question "How are you doing?"

They would rather answer: "How the hell do you think I am doing, I just lost my soul mate, I sat and held his hand while his breath became air and he was rendered breathless, pronounced dead, and gone forever."



CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS

GRIDLOCK AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD - *OMEN OR METAPHOR?*

By Virgil Thorp

Signs tell us valuable information. Printed, broadcasted, scratched on a tree or marked on the ground, signs tell us what could be good and what could be bad, what could lead to salvation or what could lead to disaster. Some signs are precise and other signs are subject to interpretation. Hopefully – and usually – it is the correct information on the signs and we can make decisions about which path to take or turn to make provided we choose



wisely. Even Robert Frost read a sign about the road less traveled by on that snowy evening that made all the difference in his life. However, other people have a problem with either ignoring signs or misinterpreting their meanings and get themselves in deep, deep and sometimes fatal trouble. A separation between the wise and the foolhardy.

Interpretations may be empirical or not as ancient cultures believed in what they considered supernatural signs by associating the color black with death and the devil and misinterpreting heavenly body eclipses as evil omens – or good omens depending on their particularly twisted superstitious religious point of view. As the medieval Holy Inquisition discovered, torture will bring out the most outlandish declaration in order to make the extreme stimulation stop. But the one thing we do not dare brush aside is Mother Nature. She gives us signs and she is remorseless to the unheeding.

As an inhabitant of the Treasure Coast of Florida I am very aware of the strength of the unrelenting bitch nature can become and which is ignored at one's peril. Often, nature responds in ways that, more than a little, resemble slaps to the face. I'm thinking the Jack Nicholson--Faye Dunaway scene in Chinatown with Jack slapping Faye as she describes the mysterious young lady hidden in the upstairs bedroom, "My sister, my daughter, my sister, my daughter" and then shattering Jack with the reality of nature; "My sister and my daughter. Get the picture?"

I think I got the picture with the photo of a crowded line on the narrow, precipitous ridge of bucket list hopefuls who were waiting in the death zone to get their selfies taken on the highest wrinkle of the planet, Mount Everest. It wasn't photoshopped. And most importantly, it was something we had not seen before. In short, a sign. An ominous sign. But also, a call by the heedless just before disaster strikes; "Look at me, look at me!"



What did it show? Overcrowding? A metaphor of democratic party presidential hopefuls? A blatant disregard for the delicate and precarious balance of a fragile ecosystem? Foolish materialism, greed and narcissism run amok? Perhaps, but I think I do understand the motivations and the feelings behind those fools which echo their breath challenged folly and have endured over the course of mankind's brief domination. *They gotta do it.* And, they believe they have holy permission for their pillage, desecration and dominion. What's bad is a religion that specifically gives us orders to subjugate the planet. Being fruitful and multiplying may be the manifest destiny of some believers but it also has its drawbacks, very serious ones at that.

As we humans move through life and over the globe we have an intimate problem. We leave waste behind. Tons and tons of it. We manufacture waste and poop it out in ways never dreamt of. The mountaineers climbing to the summit have made alarming observations of what others have left behind on Everest. As the mountain's glaciers seep away through warming, trash, shit and dead bodies are revealed that had been hidden underneath pristine snowbanks for decades. Once Edmund Hillary found success at the summit and technology made the dangerous trek a bit easier, more people felt compelled to give it a try in spite of still having a multitude of

potentially fatal dangers. The more people, the more trash, the more poop and the more dead bodies slowly poisoned by our own venom. I don't think the authors of the Bible considered that in their earth centered universe. I don't think they appreciated the fact that there is a limited finite bubble in the survival zone we all share. As Carl Sagan observed, that survival zone is this pale blue dot surrounded by the rest of the hostile and infinite universe. The Goldilocks zone astronomers call it, where life is possible.

An experiment my high school science teacher conducted provided me with a sign and an interpretation of that sign. It made an indelible imprint on me. He took a petri dish with sterilized agar and introduced a bacterium to the center of it and then returned it to the quarantined environment. Each day we made an observation of what began to grow and dominate the medium that was its universe. Initially it was kind of pretty as it grew concentrically, slowly at first but dramatically doubling its size each day. About the fourth day we noticed something else about our experimental culture. It was dying at the center. The organism produced toxins, not unlike our own poop and it was poisoning itself as it consumed its universe. Wow, what a remarkable discovery! Can I compare our pale blue dot with the petri dish? To ignore signs would be folly, right? Can I draw parallels? Are we not poisoning ourselves? Is our manifest destiny causing all sorts of mental and psychological problems as well as physical? Ask yourself, how has my environment changed since I was a kid catching pollywogs. Oops, what's a pollywog and do today's children know about them?

I think the signs are there but they could be too ubiquitous for us to acknowledge.

And what is really funny is that as we disregard an island of trash reportedly twice the size of Texas in the Pacific Ocean, we've discovered, not much farther away in one of the globe's most inhospitable places, more of our shit like the plastic bag at the bottom of the Mariana trench. To me, that's more of a sign than a dead canary might be. The only omen is; that it is dead. Get the metaphor?



We do have a choice of paths and perhaps the one that will make a positive difference in our existence is the one less taken. That's the one that is the opposite of dominate, devour and destroy. It could make all the difference for humanities' future. We don't need more of us, we need less of us. Use birth control. Stay away from petri dishes, ocean trenches and mountain tops. And lastly, pick up your trash you slovenly SOB.



Quote answer: The vivacious and intelligent representative from Queens, the honorable Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

COMEDY CORNER

HOW TO WRITE GOOD

by Frank L. Visco

My several years in the word game have learnt me several rules:

1. Avoid alliteration. Always.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. Avoid cliches like the plague. (They're old hat.)
4. Employ the vernacular.
5. Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
6. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.
7. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
8. Contractions aren't necessary.
9. Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.
10. One should never generalize.
11. Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: "I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."
12. Comparisons are as bad as cliches.
13. Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
14. Profanity sucks.
15. Be more or less specific.
16. Understatement is always best.
17. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
18. One-word sentences? Eliminate.
19. Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
20. The passive voice is to be avoided.
21. Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
22. Even if a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.
23. Who needs rhetorical questions?





