

## **(IM)Pure Land Buddhism Embracing the Smile that is this Moment**

**By Ian Black  
(& I am Blue)**

© Copyright Brett Paufler 2009-2014  
www.paufler.net

### Splash #1

Pure Land Buddhism seeks to merge two contradictory ideals. The first is to experience reality as it is. And the second is to realize that since this isn't possible, you might as well see things however you want and enjoy the ride.

**(I'm saying! Sign me up!)**

According to Buddhism, when one walks in the Pure Land, one is experiencing the world as it is; one is in the now and is experiencing the truth of the moment. Unfortunately, this state of affairs is not actually possible -- so sorry.

However as a sort of consolation prize, the powers that be have arranged it so that the closer one gets to that mythical now, the closer one also gets to Nirvana -- another wondrous place that does not, in fact, exist anywhere outside of the seeker's own mind.

Still, it's a nice place to visit, and if you wish to know the way, this book may serve as a useful guide.

**(Especially if you read between the lines and listen to my advice. 'Cause let me tell you, this knucklehead is hard to understand. But me, I'll give it to you straight. For instance, when he said neither Nirvana, Pure Land, nor an objective reality didn't exist, he wasn't kidding.)**

## Splash Page #2

Nirvana is a poorly understood concept. It is here. It is now. But it is also what remains after all of the illusions of the world have been shed... and then, replaced with the stuff of fantasy. That sounds sort of nice, doesn't it? The stuff of fantasy. Maybe it sounds like a place you'd like to visit? Spend some time?

If so, finding your way there is simple enough. To fully immerse yourself in the world of fantasy, all you must do is embrace reality for all it is worth. Or if you don't like that line of reasoning, once one has embraced reality totally and completely, they will discover that the truth they are seeking does not exist -- and so they may fill this void however they desire.

(Eh, fair enough, it's still pretty confusing.

But if I laid it all out on the back page, you'd never buy the book. So, what do you want me to do? Give the secret of the universe away for free when I could sell it for \$12.95? I don't think so.)

If he only knew...

## Doorways

For every door that is opened; beyond, a million more are revealed. What this means is that there is no way to know everything or reach enlightenment through the attainment of knowledge. This one speck of wisdom is all one ever needs to know.

(Of course, behind this one little speck of wisdom awaits millions of subtle intricacies. So, just in case you were wondering why "the grand Pooh-Bah's illuminating words of wisdom" didn't make a whole lot of sense, now you know.)

Enlightenment is embracing the smile that is this moment.  
(While meditation is the art of letting it go.)

## Materialism

To reduce the number of things which you own and your attachment to them, simply pick a number ([any number](#)); and then, proceed to sort through your possessions and discard items until you are left with only that many items. Whether it takes you a day, a week, or a year to accomplish this process is not important.

Once you have reduced your belonging to this first, intermediate number of things, then all you must do then is to cut the number in half, and repeat the process once again.

And then again.

And again.

Until all that you are left with is this moment.

And then finally, once you have given away even this moment and have nothing in this world to call your own, you will suddenly discover that the universe awaits, and all is yours.

[\(All in this case being nothing... but an illusion.\)](#)

## Splash#3

Embrace the smile that is this moment.

Embrace the smile that is you.

This is Zen. This is Buddhism.

This ain't complicated. This ain't supposed to be some big mystery. And it sure as shit don't need to be revealed to you from some orange robe wearing dude with a funky accent.

Zen is simplicity itself.

Zen is you... being enlightening, having confidence in your actions, and trusting that you are on the right path.

You will know that you are on the right path, because your mind will be at ease. You will have no worries. And you will have no fears.

For you are the smile that is this moment.

And nothing else need matter.

Zen made easy, as it was meant to be.

Meditation is nothing more than the art of waiting patiently:  
for knowledge, for insight, for peace, and for death.

(I mean, you do want to die, experience that little death, don't you?)

### **Splash #4 (THIS IS GOOD)**

Down on my knees, at the foot of the Buddha, a thousand miles from home, I was seeking enlightenment.

Thankfully, It didn't take long.

No years of chanting. No lighting of incense, sitting in uncomfortable positions, or staring at walls for endless decades.

Rather, almost instantaneously, a feeling of mirth swept over me. Suddenly, I realized the Buddha was laughing at me... and the silliness of my quest.

As you can imagine, I was enraged. Here I had come to worship at his feet and he was laughing at me!

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry," the Buddha said. "It's just your stupid western clothes... and I know you don't believe that the Spirit of Nirvana or whatever resides in a fifty foot idol, so why are you even here?"

"Enlightenment," I whispered curtly, hoping none of the other monks would hear me... or at least understand the language in which I was speaking.

"Oh right, enlightenment," the Buddha repeated in mock thoughtfulness as he pretended to mull over the words as if I was the first pilgrim ever to pray at his feet. "Um, let's see. Enlightenment, eh? Um, well. Have you tried embracing the smile that is this moment?"

"What?" I asked, perhaps a little peevishly. "Is that it?" I had been hoping for something more than a trite phrase.

"Well, I could reword it if you like, but that might take a while."

I looked around the temple and at all the aging acolytes who filled the room. And then I realized, “They’re waiting for you to reword it, too. Aren’t they?”

“Yeah, but there’s plenty of room,” he insisted, trying to make it sound nice. “I can hook you up with a free bowl or rice every day and on Saturday night there’s the chant-along, that seems to help make the time fly by. Oh, and on your tenth anniversary, you get a nicely embroidered cushion for your tush. Of course by then, you’re really going to need it.”

He might have gone on, but I’ll be honest, I had stopped listening. I wasn’t about to waste ten years of my life waiting for the Big Guy to come up with some clever rewording of “Seize the Moment” or “Be the Day” or whatever he had in mind.

Besides, Embrace the Smile That Is The Moment had a sort of ring to it. It was catchy. I mean, I could write a book based on that one saying alone and probably make a fortune. And when you get right down to it, that had a certain undeniable appeal to it. So without losing a single second more, I jumped to my feet and ran out the door, only pausing ever so briefly at the threshold to cry over my shoulder, “Thanks, dude!”

Sometimes when I recall that moment, I think I can remember hearing the Buddha call after me, something about, “Hey! If you’re make any money on that smile thing, make sure you cut me in on the royalties.” But over the years, I’ve come to realize that something as materialistic as that doesn’t really seem like something the Buddha would say, now does it?

(Darn tooting! Sounds a lot more like something your alter ego would say. You know, he might say something along the lines of “This book wouldn’t be half the book it is without me. So fair’s fair. Share the wealth and all that. Time to sign over one of those royalty checks to your better half, don’t ya think?”)

Splash #5 (is #4 reworded, condensed)

Down on my knees in some far off land, a giant statue of the Buddha towering over my head, this is when the Buddha whispered to me, “Embrace the Smile That Is This Moment... If you can’t make a fortune selling that line, there really isn’t any hope for you,” he added scornfully after a moment or two more before commanding me to return from whence I had come and write a book.

And at that, I had to laugh, for I knew the Buddha advice what spot-on... and that he was a lot more cynical than anyone had ever imagined.

Embracing the Smile That Is This Moment is a simplistic guide to that oft-misunderstood Zen Buddhism thingy for Westerners, heretics, and other non-believers.

## **[EXCELLENT SPLASH]**

Embracing the Smile That Is This Moment is a simplistic guide to that oft-misunderstood Zen Buddhism thingy for Westerners, heretics, and other non-believers.

[\(This means you, Buddy Boy.\)](#)

Always seek the moral high ground.

[\(Presumably because it’s got a better view... and should that flood thing ever happen again, it’ll be a lot safer. Just a word to the wise.\)](#)

**END OF FIRST EDIT  
EVERYTHING ABOVE  
GIVEN FOR FREE ON WEBSITE  
WWW.PAUFLER.NET**

## On Illusion

The last layer of the illusion that can be revealed is that the last layer of the illusion can never be revealed.

All deception is self-deception. All illusion is self imposed. Once one understands this, one understands all there is to know, and the universe will bow at one's feet.

Grasp onto reality as hard as you can. Squeeze it between your fingers until nothing is left -- save for the stuff from which the universe was made. Feel free to do with this as you will.

Karma is a way of looking at the world. It is cause and effect all rolled into one. It is a way of saying you are where you are because of your past actions. It means nothing more than one thing leads to another. This is causality. This is objectivity. There is nothing magical or mysterious about it. And if you think the universe is keeping track of the score, you are missing the entire point -- like gravity cares if you fall.

Karma is. The universe is. And you are part of it.

What you do now effects your future.

This, in a nutshell, is what is meant by Karma.

Not that doing some things leads to negative consequences, but that everything has its consequences. Thus, be mindful of what you do, and the consequences you are even now creating.

The intent of Meditation differs from practitioner to practitioner and moment to moment. At times, I strive to achieve a state of blankness and emptiness -- what I call the Empty Mind. At other times, I strive to achieve a state of openness and

receptiveness -- what I call the Open Mind. And at still other times, I strive to achieve a state of emotional arousal full of imagery and wonder -- what I call the Vision Quest. All of these states and more are possible through the practice of "Meditation." This, more than anything else, should serve to underscore the openness and ambiguity of both the term and the practice.

Enlightenment is the state you achieve when you have stopped trying and no longer fear failure.

Meditation is the art and science of practicing to be enlightened if only for the moment.

If you expect to "get something" out of meditation, you are approaching it all wrong. Meditation is the art of subtraction, not addition.

(At least it's not geometry or worse yet fractions. I never did learn how to divide fractions.)

Meditation is the art of losing oneself in the moment, forgetting the past and the future, and living only for the now.

The light reflects brightly  
Casting shadows on my dreams.

(Say what? I don't even think he knows what he means by this.)

There is a fine line between the ability to fight, being willing to fight, and actively looking for a fight. If a man is unable to fight, unwilling to fight, and therefore will lose every fight in which he participates, a man will most assuredly seek to avoid any confrontation that comes his way -- be it physical, social, or intellectual.

This is what it means to be meek.

This is what it means to be humble.

And this is the only way to the victory that is known as



everlasting peace.

Surrender your will. Embrace your fear.

Sunlight shining on distant landscapes is all we will ever require.

(How about sunlight shining on nearby wading pool full of bathing beauties. I mean, by nature I'm not one to be critical, but that whole sunlight in the distance thing leaves a lot to be desired.)

Treat every day as if it was the last -- at school, at work, or at play... in your house, your marriage, or your relations.

This is it. This is the end.

Look around. Tomorrow, all that you see will be gone.

If that in itself is not reason enough to smile, then smile because you still have today. And a nice day it is.

(Yeah, great. The first nice day in weeks, and what are they forecasting for tomorrow? The end of the world. Typical.)

Take a break. Breath deep. Smile. And enjoy this moment.

All that has passed, has passed for this.

So, do not grieve its passing, but rather rejoice in the pleasure it brings.

(So, are we talking about taking a crap here or what?)

Understand that you will die a violent death and that no one -- not even you -- will lift a finger to stop it.

Understand that you will be wronged and that no one -- not even you -- will do a thing to prevent it.

Understand that the bark is worse than the bite, that the fear is worse than the reality, and that by giving the victory of some improbably future to another, that by willingly sacrificing yourself, you are freeing your soul to embrace this moment.

(Is it just me, or does this guy seem a little preoccupied with death at times. Dude, lighten up: breath deep, enjoy the moment,

and all that deng.)

Satori is a state of grace.  
Zazen means nothingness.  
Nirvana is that which you desire it to be.  
You can search for deeper meaning and hidden truths in these words, but if you do, you are likely missing the point.

It is not possible to be Holier Than Thou.  
One can simply do the best that they can.  
Rest assured, everyone else is doing the same.  
(But you see, the whole point is that my best is better than your best. I would think you would be able to see the virtue in that... unless of course, you're dimwitted, jealous, or your best just isn't very darn good to start with, Mr. There Just Ain't No Way You're Better Than Me!)

Attend to everything in your life as much as you do to the words on a written page.

(What? What was that? Did he say something important? Ah, come on, now. Tell me what he said.)

You only get one chance to experience this moment.  
(What? Is he just saying that because I wasn't paying attention and missed the previous entry?)

Yes.  
(Spiteful bastard. Sort of reminds me of myself sometimes...)

[Four Way

Take time to enjoy the sunrise, the sunset, and all the moments in-between  
(Great, next he'll be talking about the phases of the moon.)

Follow the phases of the moon. Rejoice in its coming and its going.

(The heathen! The pagan! Obviously, next up is something about the changing seasons and how you should sacrifice your younger brother during the Rites of Spring or some such nonsense.)

Let the seasons roll as they will from one to the next, for change is the spice of life.

(See, I told you! I was totally spot-on... except for that bit about sacrificing your younger brother. When you get right down to it, he seems to have dropped the ball on that one.)

But in every instance, remember to delight in this moment, for this is all you will ever really have.

(Drat, he caught me off guard. I wasn't expecting another entry in this series. Oh, well. At least he didn't get all freaky and ask me to hug myself, embrace my inner child, or commit some other form of hemophilia, self loving, sacrilegious atrocity.)

### End Four Way]

When in doubt, laugh.

(I'm guessing this guy laughs a lot.)

Trust your instincts.

Even though it appears you might be wrong, you might just be right.

(No, dude. Face facts. You are wrong. Period.)

Pain is the result of avoiding one's purpose in life. If you are in pain, then you are going about life the wrong way.

(Or getting bopped on the nose. That sort of hurts. Or if you've ever stubbed your toe on the way to the bathroom in the middle of the night, man, that really smarts!)

The problem with Christianity is Christ.

The problem with Buddhism is the Buddha.

Be your own savior, and let others save themselves.

(Word to the wise, I'm guessing this applies to the lunatic fringe as much as anyone. 'Cause from my point of view, the entire problem with that whole Hari Krishna thing is ole Hari, himself.)

Live as the impoverished gentry.

Aspire to elegant sufficiency.

(Yep, a Rolls Royce, a fifty-foot yacht, and a willing maid -- or you know, if that's the way you swing, a willing butler -- it's all I've ever really wanted. Oh, wait. I guess I've just described conspicuous consumption. Eh, maybe he just over looked that one.)

When you don't give a shit, you're on the right path.

(Really? I'm more in tune with that whole enlightenment thing than I ever dreamed possible.)

Success lies in the eye of the beholder.

(Much like with beauty, the real trick is getting it out, polishing it up, and bringing it to market. You can get a lot for that sort of stuff once you clean off all that eye muck.)

Fill you life with tales of Heaven.

Lead the life you want to live.

(Oh, now that's good. Lead the life you want to live. Why didn't I think of that? Duh, because it's so obvious, it's stupid. You know when you get right down to it, this is a perfect example of the type of aphorism that got me started down the slippery slope of writing witty rejoinders in other people's books in the first place. Lead the life you want to lead: it's right up there with Don't

## Worry, Be Happy.)

Don't Worry. Be Happy.  
(Idiot.)

The middle way is the path of moderation and temperance.  
The first bite is always the best.

The first sip always the most refreshing.

And the first kiss always the most memorable.

Whenever you find yourself at the beginning of something, pause and linger in that moment of reinvigorating renewal; the possibilities are endless.

(Is it just me, or does this guy sound like the type of guy who would go to a party, take a bite out of everyone's sandwich, sip on their beer, and kiss their wife and then have the nerve to call it having a good time? Oh, wait. That's probably me. Oh, well. We've all got our faults.)

Follow your muse.

Give in to your passion.

(So when I say, I feel compelled to point out that your advice is banal and trite, I shouldn't feel guilty about it, I should just do it, call it my purpose in life, and move on? Well, OK. I can hang with that.)

The first step is always the hardest.

(Not true. Often times, it's the last step. Hence, the reason why it ends up being the LAST step.)

When someone calls you a birdbrain, consider that this is all a bird really needs.

(OK. Two things. First, anyone who's ever talked to a parrot knows that all Polly really wants is a cracker. And second, it really comes as no surprise that someone has been calling this guy a birdbrain.)

Sticks and stones can break my bones but names will never hurt me.

(Yeah well, talk softly and carry a big stick, that's my motto.)

At the end of the day when I am exhausted and tired, I am often overcome by an overwhelming sense of giddiness and delight. I like to think that this mirrors the happiness which awaits one at the end of a long and productive life.

(Interesting concept. But what does this mean for those of us who inevitably find themselves angry and annoyed at the end of the day? Or the beginning, for that matter?)

I sit and search for something meaningful to write; and in it's absence, I am aware of the bliss on the edge of thought... just out of reach... where it belongs.

(I'll just plug that into my Pretentious Buddhist to Pop Culture Dictionary, and let's see... bliss... edge of thought... meaningless search... Ah! Here it is! No news is good news. Oh, wait, I'm getting another result. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. Oh, no! Not another! Don't go looking for trouble, it will find you soon enough. Help! I'm being smothered in platitudes!)

Enlightenment as a word is ill defined.

Love is no better.

But that is because people, so often, are trying to describe these states rather than live them.

Be love. Be enlightenment. And soon everyone around you will know exactly what these words mean.

(Not that they'll be able to tell you, mind you.)

You are God, king, and master of all.

You are a slave, beggar, and an insignificant nothing.

Live like you are both.

Act like you are both.

Think like you are both.  
Breathe like you are both.

This is what it means to walk the middle road, and it is a path that is no easier or harder to walk than any other.

(You are the cat hunting the mouse who is in turn chased by the dog. Meow! Hiss! Roar! Listen to my purr, but dare not interrupt my nap!!! Now if you'll excuse me, I must lick my fur.)

When you find a calling that you love, work it like you had no other choice.

(When you find a wine that you love, drink it... like the alky that you are. Or maybe that should be, when you find a book concept that finally sells, milk it for all it's worth like the hackneyed writer that you are. Yep, I think that's the one. Far more fitting than any other if you ask me.)

In this moment I find delight.  
In the moment I find peace.

(In this moment I find... Hey! Cool beans! Look, I found a quarter! I wonder if there's any more loose change lying around here.)

All roads lead to Rome.  
All paths lead to the Master's Door.  
There is but one destination to which all lives must lead.  
(And it's called Death, my friends. It's called Death.)

Be unto yourself like a light in the dark.  
(And you will be delivered, like a moth unto the flame.)

Enlightenment is stopping to eat an orange... and having nothing else to do once you are finished.

(If you ask me, it sort of sounds like this guy needs a hobby... or maybe a job.)

The stronger -- more enlightened -- party in any interaction is morally obligated to assist the weaker in any way that they can.

(Really? So, um... can I borrow twenty bucks?)

Peace is that moment between action and inaction when all possibilities are present but none is more compelling than the rest.

(It's also called apathy, my friend... or ambivalence. But, eh... What do I care? Call it what you want? It's not like it matters.)

### Truth x3

Wisdom is knowing the truth for what it is and what it is not.

(OK. Fair enough. So, share the wealth. Tell us of this truth of which you speak, Almighty Master.)

Truth is as it always has been and as it always will be.

(I guess that's what I get for worshipping at the altar of a false prophet.)

While enlightenment is accepting this truth with neither struggle nor anger nor intent to change.

(You sure it wouldn't be have been more accurate to entitle this book: Polishing the Chains that Bind: A Slave's Guide to Resignation, Acceptance, and Inner Peace?)

### Three Commandments

Though shall not kill is not as personal or informative as I shall not kill. Therefore, and in keeping with this dictate, I shall strive not to kill in thought, word, or deed. There is no occurrence -- no thing which might befall me -- for which killing another is an acceptable, reasonable, or appropriate response.

(No. No. This is totally bogus. If I'm like playing *Slaughter Quest* and some newbie is camping by the spawning node and just



plugging me left and right whenever I reform, racking up the kills, well brother, when that happens, I figure not only do I have the right to kill him whenever I get the chance, but it's a moral imperative!)

Though shall not steal is not as personal or informative as I shall not steal. Therefore, and in keeping with this dictate, I shall strive not to steal in thought, word, or deed. There is no occurrence -- no thing which might befall me -- for which theft of any sort is an acceptable, reasonable, or appropriate response.

(I'll be honest here. All of this stuff is sounding sort of familiar. Do you think maybe this guy lifted it from the Bible? No. No. Of course not. That would be stealing, wouldn't it? And as we all know, he doesn't do that stealing thing.)

Judge not lest ye be judged, is the formal way of saying it, but I feel the dictate works a bit better if one personalizes it a bit and leaves the saying at: I shall not judge.

For it is not my place.

And I shall waste no time in this endeavor.

(Uh, huh? Is that some sort of backhanded slam against us critics? We got to eat too, you know.)

Spend no time on things that might have been or fixing problems beyond your scope. When your life is working perfectly and all is in tune, you will find that you suddenly live in the perfect world and there will be no cause nor need to change another.

(Oh, right! I see what he's saying. Change yourself first and you will find that there is no need to change any another. But you know, I'm pretty pig headed. And in the end, I think it would probably be a whole lot easier to get everyone else to change their sinful ways, than for me to change one single thing about myself.)

Do not allow War to enter your consciousness. Simply, turn the page or switch the channel instead.

(Out of sight, out of mind, right? Like an ostrich with its head in the sand? I'm sure that'll make it go away.)

Be apolitical in your thought. Do not concern yourself with the rules of man. Man can take care of himself. You only concern must be to nurture your own soul.

(So, you're saying, I'm not my brother's keeper. Fair enough. But how do I love my brother as myself if I don't, you know, at least keep my eye on him and help him when he's down? Besides, if you knew my Big Brother like I know my Big Brother, then you'd know he's already keeping tabs on me. Only seems fair to turn the tables on him and keep tabs on him, as well.)

In this moment your only concern is the smell of the flowers, the taste of the breeze, and the sun on your back.

(Unless, of course, you became apolitical, lose the war, and wake up one day to find yourself a slave. Then your concerns would be the smell of burnt flesh, the taste of blood, and the sting of the whip on your back.)

Has anyone ever mentioned how negative you are?

(No. No they have not. Not ever. Nope. Sorry, can't say that they have?)

Give me liberty or give me death is not a war cry, a rally to action, a dare, or a threat. It is simply a state of mind, a statement of fact. Give me liberty or give me death: one can live no other way.

(But I'm guessing there are plenty of other ways to die.)

This world is not worth fighting for.

(Whoa! Now, there's a depressing thought. "What are we fighting for?" Apparently, nothing.)

My strength is my weakness.

My weakness is my strength.

(Sounds like someone's been reading [1984](#), again.)

Love is putting others before oneself.

(You have the first bite. No, you have the first bite. No, I insist; you have the first bite. No, I insist; you have the first bite. This, apparently, is how two starving people love each other two death.)

All of these concepts are merely ideals, things to strive for. If one should trip, stumble, or fall along the way, the only thing to do is to pick oneself up, dust themselves off, and carry on. One is bound to experience a few setbacks during a journey of such magnitude.

(So this isn't something I can do in an hour? 'Cause like, there's a show on TV I'd like to watch in an hour...)

Dukkha is; it exists. When it comes to you, embrace it, pity it, weep for it; but do not reject it.

(Dukkha! Here, Dukkha! Dukkha! Dukkha!)

Dukkha is pain.

Dukkha is suffering.

Dukkha is death.

But most importantly, Dukkha is the fear of these things, the dread which precedes them. Without fear, there is no Dukkha, and only pain, suffering, and death will remain.

(Well now, there's a cheerful thought.)

Dukkha is the storm cloud that hangs low in the sky; it is the empty glass of water longing for more.

(Dukkha is the cat that cries out in the night, or the dog whose bark is not answered and who never can bite. Dukkha is the poem that refuses to rhyme... or reading the words of a hackneyed author, just killing time. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.)

Please, no applause. Your appreciation is enough.)

Dukkha is the black shroud of death that visits you in the dark of night when you are all alone. If you can embrace this prospect of utter desolation, you can embrace anything.

(Didn't that guy who live in a church by a hill, or something or another, say, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." Or do you have something else on your mind, dude? Maybe some dark sinister secret or two you'd like to get off your chest?)

Remember, not everyone in this world has had the benefit of eating of the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Be kind, practice tolerance, and endeavor to be forever humble.

(Cross out that last sentence and I say: Amen, to that, Brother! Amen, to that!)

### Franklin's Thirteen

In order to improve himself, Ben Franklin made a list of thirteen praiseworthy traits; and then, cycled through the list, focusing on each item for a day, a week, or a month -- noting when he fell short and how he could improve.

The following sayings are slight rewordings of that list and the goals to which he aspired.

(Because we all know the old duffer was notorious for being unable to turn a witty phrase or to even say what he meant.)

Temperance

Eat not to dullness.

Drink not to drunkenness.

(And where's the fun in that?)

Silence

Only say what may be of benefit to yourself or others.

(And this I need to be told?)

### Order

To everything its place.

To everything its time.

(Turn. Turn. Turn.)

### Resolution

Resolve to do what you ought.

And then do it.

(As long as we're rewriting them, why not simply say, "Do as you ought," and leave it at that?)

### Frugality

Waste not. Want not.

(Good advice, but not even close to what Benny Old Boy said.)

### Industry

Lose no time. Always be employed towards some useful goal.

(For now is the season of our discontent! Strike while the iron's hot, and all that. But don't you think this is sort of a repeat of the aforementioned: Waste not, Want not?)

### Sincerity

Always think innocently and justly of those around you.

If you speak, speak well of others.

(He probably would have made an exception when talking about this guy, though. Don't you think?)

### Justice

Be just in your actions.

Never shirk your duty.

(Isn't a shirk one of those jailhouse weapons? You think this guy ever did any time? Maybe went to philosopher's prison for

moral crimes against the ethical norm? “Don’t quote Nietzsche to me, you ungrounded relativist! Or I’ll slice ya like the opportunist you are!”)

### Moderation

Do not hold a grudge.

If you are harmed, part of the blame likely rests on your own shoulders.

(Oh, it’s true. I looked this one up. Word for word what old Franklin said... NOT!)

### Cleanliness

Be clean in body, house, and mind.

(Because cleanliness is next to Godliness.)

### Chastity

Fucketh not to excess.

(OK. You know, this isn’t exactly what Franklin said, I think he might have couched this concept behind some highfaluting term like venerary; but all the same, I think this guy’s interpretation is spot on. Ten, maybe fifteen, times in any one day is more than enough. Got to pace yourself, you know.)

### Tranquility

Don’t stress the small stuff.

(Better known as, shit happens. Yeah, that’s right. Two can play at that swearing game.)

### Humility

Be like Jesus and Socrates.

Strive towards greatness.

Walk with humility.

(Walk on water. Turn said water into wine. Take a sip. And promptly drop dead... only to rise from the grave three days later. It’s the Mad Libs / Mix and Match of the Ancient World.)

(OK? So, what comes next? The Eightfold Path? The Four Noble Truths?)

(Bingo! Am I good? Or am I good? OK, sure. I looked in the table of contents before I made a guess; but at least, I took the initiative, so grant me that.)

### Four Noble Truths

Buddha taught that there were Four Noble Truths that could lead one towards enlightenment.

(Four Noble Truths, one Eightfold Path, plus a few other odds and ends, less your student discount... and let's see, that should come right out to about \$12.95 +tax.)

Noble Truth #1

There is suffering.

(Usually from reading poorly written self help books filled with useless aphorisms.)

Noble Truth #2

There is suffering, because Dukkha happens.

(Nope. Pretty sure it's from poorly written self help books.)

Noble Truth #3

One cannot prevent Dukkha from happening, but one can accept it and therefore deprive Dukkha of its power.

(Or you can write notes in the margins of those there books. I find this deadens the pain a little.)

Noble Truth #4

The way to do this is through the Eightfold Path.

(Me, I use a pen. But hey, to each their own.)

## The Eightfold Path

According to Buddhist scripture, the Eightfold Path is a formula for accepting Dukkha and entering the blessed state of Nirvana.

(Better known as how not to give a damn.)

### Right Thought

Know the universe for what it is and your place in it.

(Never forget your place, Boy!)

### Right Understanding

Know what you are doing and why.

(As apposed to shooting from the hip? I guess, I'm going to have to work on that one.)

### Right Speech

Speak honest, forthright, and true.

(No speak with forked tongue.)

### Right Action

No killing, stealing, lying, drinking, or deviant sexuality.

(Which one do you think this guy has a problem with? I'm guessing it's that deviant sexuality thing. I can just see him getting drunk, having his way with a wayward sheep or goat, and then lying about it in the morning.)

### Right Livelihood

Just because you're an employee doesn't change anything.

(Better known by the mnemonic; Momma, don't let your children grow up to be goatherds; they'll frolic with goats and smell like the beasts in the morn'.)

### Right Effort

Be master of your body, mind, and soul.



And exert your will towards making progress on the Eightfold Path.

(Do what you should do and not what you should not. Yeah, that's right. I'm talking to you, Goat Boy!)

#### Right Mindfulness

Be aware of the inner working of your mind. Use what you learn to your advantage and guide your thoughts down the Eightfold Path.

(Goats! Get thee behind me!)

#### Right Concentration

At all times, keep your mind focused on the goal and the Eightfold Path.

(I'm trying not to think about the goats. I'm trying not to think about the goats. I'm trying not to think about the goats.)

### The Ten Commands

Coming down from the Mount, Moses presented his people with Ten Commandments by which they were instructed to live their lives. As follows is an updated version.

(Hey. I know I shouldn't be surprised. I mean, he paraphrased Benjamin Franklin's classic list, rewrote the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold path; so really, his willingness to tidy up God's grammar and syntax shouldn't surprise me at all at this point, but somehow it still does.)

There is nothing greater than doing good.

(But what if you are bad at doing good and good at doing bad? Then does that mean that when you're doing bad, if not doing good, at least you're doing it well?)

Placards and awards are no substitute for doing good.

(But all those indulgences I bought still count, right?)

The concept of good shall not be watered down.

(What do you take me for? I run an honest business here. I don't water down my stock. If I say something is 100% good, then that's what it is! Of all the nerve!)

Remember the Holidays and Festivals of your forefathers to keep life sacred and full of joy.

(Let's see, April 21<sup>st</sup> is the annual Raping of the Virgins, always a personal favorite. Oh, and I've got to mark my calendar for August 23<sup>rd</sup>, don't want to miss the Sodomy Festival... again.)

Honor your elders and those who came before you.

(What do you want to bet he's no longer in his youth. "Eh, sonny? What's that? Your elders, sonny, your elders. Honor them. Now be a good kid and pass me my colostomy bag.")

Don't kill.

(Just in case you didn't know, killing be bad.)

Don't sleep around.

(Just a word to the wise, don't sleep with goats. You're not all that. You don't look cute when dressing up like Little Bo Peep. And "Ba-aaa! Ba-aaa! Ba-aaa!" has always meant NO! NO! Oh, my God, NO! )

Don't steal.

(Don't lie. Don't cheat. Don't steal. And don't even think of scribbling anything from this book onto a bathroom stall without giving credit where credit is due. Let's see. For a good time call...)

Don't let others take the blame for your wrong doings.

(And trust me, nobody believes you when you say this book was like this when you opened it. What? You think the printer

plastered blue handwriting all over this book. I don't think so, young man! You got some 'splaning to do!)

Be satisfied with your lot.

(Thus spoketh the idiot Ian Black. Amen! Can we move on to something a little less heretical now?)

Life is like a prison with walls of our own choosing.

Death is nothing more than a continuation of the same.

(Oh, how uplifting. You think maybe this guy is a manic-depressive or something?)

Rejoice in the success of others, for they make ready your place at the table.

(Rejoice in the death of others, for they make ready your place in the master's house. Muwaha!)

Pain is nature's way of reminding you not to repeat the same mistake again. When pain arises in your memories, they are not to be shunned or run away from, they are to be welcomed back into one's consciousness for the quality lessons that they are.

(I can't help but imagine that there is some lesson to be learned from this passage, but the throbbing in my head is making the meaning a mite hard to decipher.)

Each journey starts with smallest of steps.

And if you desire, it can be the next step that you take.

(Now, why couldn't I start with a great-big whopping step and get off on the right foot, so to speak?)

Your journey starts here, now, at this moment.

Your travels will never end, for there is no final destination.

So please, enjoy this moment and every other stop along the way.

(Never end? What does it do, go around in a circle like a

Ferris wheel? Or maybe he tends to stagger around like a drunk when he walks, so distances always seem longer to him than they really are? I mean, if he would only walk in a straight line from here to there, surely there must be an end.)

Stop calling me Shirley.

(Sometimes, I haven't got the slightest idea what this guy is talking about.)

Brevity never hurt anyone.

(The phrase Any Last Words comes rapidly to mind as a critical exception.)

A well written aphorism needs no further explanation.

(Which if you read between the lines, just might tell you something about the quality of this guy's writing.)

## THE GOOD

What makes a person good? I don't pretend to know, but I imagine that a good person would have the following attributes:

(Is he really pleading ignorance? This know-it all? I can't believe my eyes!)

Frugality

Live well below your own means and of those around you.

(So tell me, when was living your life poorly ever a virtue? Man, I just love a good pun.)

Charity

Give at least as much back to the world as you take from it -- in equal measure.

(OK. Let me see if I've got this straight. Share and share alike, right? So, that means one for you; and one for me. Two for you; and one, two for me. Three for you; and one, two, and three

for me. Four for you; and one, two, three, four for me...)

### Honesty

Be forthright and true.

(Fat! You want to know how you look in that dress? Fat! And like a pervert, you freak. OK, a cute pervert, I'll grant you that much, but a cute pervert who could stand to lose a few pounds, nonetheless. And just so you know, I'm not trying to hurt your feelings. I'm just being honest.)

### Humility

Put others before yourself: in thought, deed, and action.

(Which still doesn't explain why HIS name appears before mine on the cover of this book.)

### Chastity

As a wise man once said, 'Goats, get thee behind me.'

As with Frugality, take less than is your share.

(Did I tell you! Did I tell you! Does this guy have a thing for goats, or what?)

### No Evil

The first rule is Do No Harm.

Be not malicious, capricious, or bad.

(I just knew there was a catch to this being good crap.)

A person might want to fine tune that list a little, but if you can manage all that, I'd be happy to shake your hand and call you a good person.

(Oh, yeah. The prospect of shaking this joker's hand gets me all tingly inside, makes it seem like it would be worth the effort... NOT! To heck with that being good crap! I'm falling off the wagon, and how! Bring on those goats! But girl goats, if you please. I'm no freak like this guy.)

Life is a gift. If this moment doesn't seem like the gift that it is, do something to change it, so that it does.

(Like putting down the pen, closing the book, and moving on to something different? You'd like to get rid of me that easily, wouldn't you? But it ain't going to happen. I'm going to hound you to the very last page.)

When you wish ill will on another, you are actually wishing ill upon yourself.

(What the heck is this guy talking about, now?)

{*'What the heck is this guy talking about, now?' That's the best bit of heckling you can come up with? Your kind makes me sick. You're a disgrace to all heckler kind.*}

Time stands still when you look right at it, but drifts away whenever you shift your gaze.

(a.k.a. Watched water never boils.)

{*And what about a heckler who suddenly finds his own work under scrutiny?*}

(Back off, Jack! This is my book! Go find your own!)

{*Touchy, aren't we?*}

Share and share alike.

Ownership is an illusion.

One cannot own a thing without being owned oneself.

(I'm warning you; stay out of this.)

{*Ooh, big talk. What's the big bad heckler going to do? Cry to his mommy?*}

(OK! That's it! Let's take this outside.)

{*Sure thing. I'll be there in a few minutes... and if I'm not, feel free to start the fight without me.*}

Stop what you are doing.

Watch as the needs of the moment drift by.

And once they have, all that will remain is you... and you

alone.

(Being the Bene Gesserit Litany Against the Moment.)

*{What kind of obscure reference it that?}*

(A literary one, you Philistine.)

Focus on the solution, not the problem.

(And by solution he means me. And by problem he most assuredly means you. So amscray, you double-heckling parasite ignoramus. This is my book!)

*{Fine! I know when I'm not wanted.}*

In a hundred years, none of this will matter.

(Au contraire, in a hundred years this will still be my book.)

*{Mrph! Hel-rmph!}*

What's all that then? Did I hear something?

(Nothing to be concerned about. I'm just tying up a few loose ends. You were saying? Something about how none of this will matter?)

Treasure this moment -- all that it contains and all that it entails -- for it will be over soon enough.

(You can say that again, Jack.)

*{Mrph! Mrph!}*

Sacrifice the "I" to the "Thou."

(I'm all over that.)

*{Mrph!}*

Kill the Ego and be reborn to this world.

(I think what he's trying to say is: [If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him.](#))

*{Mrph! Mrph! Mrph!}*

*(What was that, Mr. Buddha?)*

In the end, the good life can be tediously boring. But this is

why craving for action and excitement is so dangerous. The desire to do something -- anything -- can quickly lead one astray... or get out of hand.

(No. Not really. Not if you tie them up first. The key to it all is using quality rope. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got a package that is in desperate need of being mailed to Burma.)

Overhead, the fan's gentle turning marks the passage of time.

Strive to be generous.

Give that which you want away.

And thus, may you always have it on hand for a treat for both others and yourself.

Revel in your existence.

For you, let your own existence be the cause of your happiness.

(Whew! You would not believe the line down at the post office for mailing annoying double-hecklers off to Burma. I thought I was going to be there all day. Let's see, did I miss anything? Fans? What's with that. Generous? Not going to happen. And that brings us to MY existence: if that's not reason enough for all you schlubs out there to be happy, I don't know what is.)

Work, live, and love as if this were your last day of your life.

(What? Did he see my test results? Tell me the news, doc! I got to know!)

Work every day as if at the end of it your boss would hire or fire you based on your performance.

(In other words, clear your desk, boy. You're going home.)

Live today, as if this was the one day God would be paying attention and by it judge your entire life.



(No pressure there. Just be sure not to choke.)

And make love to your wife as if tonight was your last chance.

(Is that a threat? Are you sleeping with my wife? Cause I know this guy, who knows this guy, who knows this guy; and let's just say, it's hard to write with a pair of broken thumbs, capiche?)

Even if you live to 100, you only get 200,000,000 breaths. Make each one count.

(Dude! You are so off. Let's see your math. A-ha! This is where you went wrong. See, it's 250,000,000. You forgot to carry the 50,000,000. So, in your face, dude. One can only wonder how you ever managed to pass the Buddha-CAT.)

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

(One! One! One happy Buddha breath! Ha-ha-ha-ha!)

No seriously, try it. It'll make you feel better.

Just breathe in.

Hold it. Relax.

And then breathe out.

(Two! Two! Two happy Buddha breaths! Ha-ha-ha-ha!)

I don't think you're giving breathing the chance it deserves.

It's a neat trick.

Just stop what you are doing.

Relax.

Breathe in.

Pause.

Then breathe out.

(Three! Three! Three happy Buddha breaths! Ha-ha-ha-ha!)

But the real trick is to breathe out first, letting go of the

worry, confusion, and guilt.

And then breathing in the happy refreshment.

(OK. Make up your mind. Is it breathe in, breath out? Or is it breath out, breath in? Because I'd like to get this happy Buddha breath thing down, but I'm getting a little confused here.)

Start by emptying your lungs, squeezing out every last drop of air, worry, and concern.

Focus on the moment: the flow of the wind.

And then inhale.

Rejoice in the fact that you are alive and able to draw breath.

Realize that in the end, happiness is never more than a breath away.

(Unless you forgot where you put it! I know that blessed happiness is around here somewhere. OK. OK. Just calm down. You're bound to find it sooner or later. Just breathe in, breathe out. Shit! No. Not like that. You got to breath out first. So, center. Let it all out. Purge the lungs until there is nothing left. And then, when you really, really need to breathe -- when you're desperate to breath -- take it all in, let it fill your lungs, and realize that oxygen is a drug: as satisfying to an asphyxiating person as an apple is to a starving person or a glass of water is to a person dying of thirst.)

Um, yeah.

Breathe in, Breathe out.

(That's what I said, dude. Weren't you paying attention?)

A bowl of rice, a cup of water, and this next breath are all that you need. All else is confusion, burden, and death.

(Death is a bit harsh, don't you think? How about calling it extraneous to life and leaving it at that?)

Do not concern yourself with what is next.

Limit your focus to now.

(But now that this is over, what's next? That's all I'm

saying.)

Focus on what works, not on what doesn't.

Focus on the good, not that bad.

(I think we all realize that what he's trying to say is, ignore the words in black and focus on the cool words in blue.)

The problem with Christianity is Christ.

The problem with Buddhism is Buddha.

(And the problem with this book is Ian Black.)

Garbage in, garbage out.

Greed in, greed out.

Hate, violence, and indifference in; hate, violence, and indifference out.

In our media saturated environment, it's no wonder we have to travel to the farthest reaches of the Himalayas to find a Holy Man.

(And with that being said, I should just mention that this joker lives in a condo down by the beach and likes to watch TV all day.)

Out of sight, out of mind.

The heart does not hunger, for the things it has never had the opportunity to miss.

(a.k.a. I've said it before and I'll say it again, ignorance is bliss.)

The Temple of the Divine Footstep

(Being where you learn to do the Hokey Pokey... if you're like really cool.)

The Shrine of the Powdered Path

(I know a powdered path, but I don't think it's the one he's talking about.)

I once went to a temple. All the acolytes had gathered to pray. After the ceremony had started, a man walked down the center isle. His feet were caked in white powder. With every step a cloud of dust rose, leaving a ghostly outline of a footprint in its wake. When the man got to the front of the church and after much fanfare, he finally took a seat.

I asked the person sitting next to me, “What’s with the guy with the white powder on his feet.”

They replied, “I imagine that his feet must bother him something awful.” And then as if to clarify, they added, “Some people require more patience than others.”

(You know, I once went to a temple... yada, yada. And this annoying guy sitting next to me kept on asking me stupid questions. “Why’s he wearing foot powder?” “Why’s he got a bandage on his arm?” “How much longer is this going to take?” Man, talk about annoying. Shut up, already! Geez!)

Just getting there is half the fun.

So, best to enjoy the moment every step of the way.

(Mind you, this advice is coming to you from a guy who can’t tell the difference between foot powder and a divine sacrament. So let’s just say, you might not want to follow too closely in his footsteps.)

Listen to the singing birds.

They are telling you to slow down... make the morning last.

(And with that bit of advice, the radio industry collapsed as listeners began to notice the world around them. Subsequently, all that could be heard on the airwaves was the ever pervasive Sound of Silence.)

Having a soul is meaningless if you don’t love.

(Sounds like someone has lost his goats and doesn’t know where to find them.)

The road does not end until everyone has reached the Eternal Destination. We are all on this trip together.

(So tell me again, why don't we simply hail a cab and split the fare?)

A cool breeze, a sunny afternoon, and a glass of wine.

Doing nothing, and nothing that needs doing.

This is where the road ends.

This is now.

(You heard it here first.)

Stand in silence.

Enjoy the peace.

Listening to the hum of the universe.

(OK, boys and girls. Listen up, 'cause I'm only going to say this once. This is your brain. And this is your brain while meditating. Any questions?)

Just like books on a shelf, soon enough the thoughts in your head will grow old and die. In time, everything becomes meaningless.

(Meaningless? Maybe. But worthless? I think not. Might want to search through those books and see if you've got a signed first edition Hemingway amongst them. I hear tell that if it's in good condition, you can trade it straight across for a house.)

At their best, statues of the Buddha are nothing more than tangible expressions of an idea, a goal, and a way of life.

At their worst, they are idols to be worshipped and obeyed.

(Oh, mighty Buddha. I hear and I obey. As you command, I shall destroy the infidel Ian Black... but first, another round of Hari Krishna's while I burn a stick of licorice incense!)

Do not kneel and pray before a hunk of wood, my friends.

If you must kneel, if you must pray, pray to yourself, for yourself, that one day you may be worthy of being called a

follower of the Buddha.

(You heard the man. Down on your knees, swine! And pray to the glory that is I.)

This idea -- and not statues caked in gold -- is what lies at the heart of Buddhism.

(But if you don't mind, I'll take a statue caked in gold. You have no idea what they fetch on the black market these days.)

Do not build temples to enshrine statues of the Buddha. Rather, cleanse your body, mind, and soul until they are worthy of housing the treasure that is you at your highest potential.

(But if you could get someone else to build you a temple to house your body, mind, and soul after you've reached your highest potential, well, that would be a neat trick, too.)

You are what you read.

(Dribble? Now you're calling your readers dribble? Come on, dude, that's no way to sell a book.)

A creator is nothing without its creation. But that doesn't mean, the two don't need a little time apart now and again.

(What? I was joking. Can't you take a joke?)

(Bummer. The silent treatment.)

Aspire to be better than you are. (A thing which not only easier said than done, is much easier for some than for others.)

An empty mind is an enlightened mind. (In much the same way that vessel which has been emptied has also been en-lightened.)

Love is a two player game; it takes two to tango.

(But if you play your cards right, sometimes you can arrange for a threesome or even a foursome.)

There is no excuse for getting angry or losing one's temper. Yelling is what people do when they have nothing meaningful to say and don't have the wisdom or willpower to abstain from saying it.

(Stop yelling, already!)

Smoking is stupid.

Drugs are dumb.

(Now, now. There's no need for the name calling or beating yourself up about it.)

The key to successful meditation is to remember that nothing is worth your attention... nothing is worth the effort.

(Like say, meditating in the first place?)

Incidentally, this is also the way to create room in your life for joy and wonder.

(Or if not that, it's certainly a surefire plan for losing one's house and sleeping under the stars indefinitely.)

Who says life is short?

A single day can last darn near forever if you stare into space and do nothing.

(Just ask any lovesick fool, pining for his wayward goats.)

Take a day off.

Take a vacation from whatever: school, work, or play.

And spend your time contemplating what else you might be doing, instead.

Are you really spending your life wisely?

(All those long, lonely nights carousing in the fields, chasing after goats -- looks like someone regrets how they've spent the last three years.)

Repeat after me.

I am Zen.

I am calm and centered, concerned about nothing but this moment, nothing but this breath.

(I am Zen. Nobody believes me when I say this. ‘No way,’ they say, ‘Zen’s not your real name.’ So, I always end up pulling out my driver’s license to prove it. But even after I do, they still don’t believe me; they think it’s a fake. Of course, the guy I bought it from said, ‘No one will be able to tell.’ But he was like totally wrong; they can always tell.)

Cool thing about Zen: watching the clouds drift by counts as a religious experience.

(And gets you out of washing the dishes to boot. “Like to help you, honey, really I would. But I’m watching the clouds right now.”)

Zazen -- one of the most sublime states in the Zen lexicon wherein the practitioner doesn’t think and doesn’t want to think -- is almost perfectly analogous to having a head cold.

(And liver cancer is what, then? Nirvana? Enlightenment? No, no. Liver cancer can’t be Enlightenment, because Enlightenment is like a bad flu where you don’t want to get out of bed for weeks on end... oh, wait; that’s called a honeymoon. Never mind.)

It is in exchange for our time, vitality, and energy that we are given money. So when one wastes money, what they are really wasting is their life.

(But if to waste not is to want not, surely we must waste a little to want a little.)

Before spending a dime, consider whether a purchase is worth the time and energy that it will ultimately cost.



(Let's see. Carry the one. Subtract 47. Nope, sorry. The math doesn't work out. I will be unable to leave you a tip this evening, so sorry.)

To free your mind and live in rags?  
Or to chain your mind and be clothed in silks and jewels?  
That is the question.

(Now, I don't want to be a stickler for details, but I thought to be or not to be, that was the question.)

We all know what is meant by Cause and Effect.  
Something happens and by its nature brings into being something else.

In other words, what one does now -- in this moment -- effects the future.

This is not religion. This is not mysticism.

This is simple fact.

The future is defined by the actions we take in this moment.

This is the sum totality of what is meant by the word Karma.

Nothing more. And nothing less.

Karma is the cause that leads to the effect.

Karma is the now that leads to your future.

Your Karma is who you are now... in this moment. It is not some burden you must carry forward with you from the past. It is the future that you make for yourself this very moment.

Feel the freedom. Embrace the possibilities. Be the future that you want it to be.

(Be... Be... Be the future. Be the past. Be the moment. Just be... and in this way, end the cycle, transcend the moment. All is one and one is all. The future. The present. The past. You are one. You are all. You simply are. So be, my child. Be... in perfect everlasting harmony. Just, be.)

Cuckoo! Achoo!

(Smiling, right back at you!)

More witticisms and wit than rightfully belongs in any one book.

(Well, more of something, anyhow.)

Listening to the philosophical grad students debate the crazies on the steps of the student union taught me three things:

1: If God wants me to know something, he'll find a way of letting me know. He's a smart guy, that God.

2: No one is better suited or more motivated to determine the right course of action for me take in my own life than myself.... you know, since it's my soul that's at stake.

3: And although a good predictor, lice are not always a positive indicator of insanity.

(Yummy, yummy lice!)

Choose,

Vitality over decadence,

Feeling over reason,

Compassion over justice, and

Wisdom over knowledge.

(What nonsense is this! I say, choose,

Pork over beans,

Cats over dogs,

A bird in the hand over two in the bush,

The Raiders over the 49ers by seven, and

Starlight Special in the fifth over Clarence's Bell to show!

It's paying 2 to 1, you know.)

Logic is an assumed limitation. It is quite easy for God to create a rock that is so large that even He cannot lift it... and then proceed to lift it. Why? Because God does not limit himself. He has chosen to be more powerful than logic, reason, or a seeming contradiction. And if you want transcend the limitations of logic, you can be too.

(That's right, for a mere \$19.99 +s&h, the mysteries of the universe -- or at least, some more Useless Sophist Axioms -- can be yours. Please send check or money order to address below. Offer not available in all states, some restrictions apply, those goats under 18 wishing to order, should obtain their parents permission. Thank you. This nonsense is now over. You may now turn the page.)

Logic cannot be proved; it is an assumed system of belief, no different from faith.

Logic cannot disprove faith, no more than faith can undermine a logical conclusion.

(See, it's sort of like Rock, Paper, Scissors... No, wait. That's a bad example. See, it's more like One Potato, Two Potato...)

The unquestioned faith that modern man has in logic is the elephant standing in the room.

(Whereas, the logical failure of faith is more like the cheetah, hiding in wait behind the bathroom door: messy, not talked about too terribly much these days, but all in all, the results are highly predictable. Caught you with your pants down on that one, didn't I?)

A collection of aphorisms, axioms, and sayings by which to lead your life and gain enlightenment. Straight from God's lips to your ears.

(Nothing cocky about that.)

At what? Forty? Fifty? Sixty?

I have lived longer than 99% of my predecessors, in more comfort, and have had more fun doing it.

By any measure, my life has been a rousing success.

In this race called life, I have most certainly won.

(OK. But that was only because I wasn't ready. What do you say, best two out of three?)

Death.  
Poverty.  
Suffering.

Willingly embrace the worst that life has to offer, that is the only way to escape and be free.

(Or to ensure one dies a slow and painful death. But hey, dying quickly is a great way to get out of all the rest, all that other pain and suffering. So, what the heck, ole Ian. I say, give it a shot. I'll even buy you the bullet.)

Only after you have embraced the worst can you embrace the best.

(I guess that might explain the goats...)

### Fireside Book Query... a sales pitch never sent

Recently, I came across of a copy of “Don’t Just Do Something, Sit There” by Richard Eyre, A Fireside Book published by Simon & Schuster.

Upon handling the book, I immediately realized that it had the same feel about it that I wanted for my own book of self-heckled Buddhist aphorisms, which I call “Embracing the Smile which is this Moment,” by Ian Black & I am Blue.

*Embracing the Smile* is composed of two interlacing layers of composition that serve as the perfect metaphor for the Buddhist tradition of following the middle road.

The first layer, composed by Ian Black, consists of roughly 200 original axioms, maxims, and observations. In truth, there is nothing really special about this layer. You’ll find the same sort of hackneyed sayings in almost every other inspiration title on the market.

It is in the second layer, wherein I am Blue comments on each of Ian’s sayings, that *Embracing the Smile* stands apart from the rest of the pack. To be printed in blue to mimic handwriting, it

is as though someone went through Embracing the Smile with the intent of heckling and negating all of the ‘wisdom’ it contains.

Typical entries include:

Success lies in the eye of the beholder.

(Much like with beauty, the real trick is getting it out, polishing it up, and bringing it to market. You can get a lot for that sort of stuff once you clear off all that eye muck.)

Brevity never hurt anyone.

(The phrase Any Last Words comes rapidly to mind as a critical exception.)

Aspire to be better than you are.

(A thing which not only easier said than done, is much easier for some than for others.)

A well written aphorism needs no further explanation.

(Which if you read between the lines, just might tell you something about the quality of this guy’s writing.)

If you are interested, I have the completed manuscript sitting on my desk ready to go. And if upon review some of the maxims are not to your liking, I have plenty of extras with which to replace them.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

Did you know that one of the major reasons Marx hated capitalism was because he didn’t want capitalists to rule the world. That is to say, with all the other things there were to do with money (helping the poor, improving the world, or simply partying and having a good time), Marx didn’t think that anyone capable of saving money would be a fit ruler since their priorities were obviously all out of whack.

(Though, whether he would be keen on having a goatherd as president is still hotly debated.)

Be,

Curious as a cat.

Loyal as a dog.  
Crazy as a fox.  
(Limber as a lemur. Courageous as a cougar. Extravagant as an elephant. And sexy as a goat.)

As I get older, I find myself rejoicing more and more in the human body and the simple things that it is capable of doing.  
(I'm thinking, somebody went to a strip club last night. Oh, wait. He's talking about the human body, not the goat body. I'm sorry. I'm going to have to rethink this one.)

Inner peace transcends time.  
It is a moment that lasts forever.  
(I've got an appointment at three o'clock. So if you don't mind, can we hurry up this inner peace thing. Time's a wasting.)

In all things, in all moments, there are decisions to be made.  
The good person makes those decisions based upon the benefit to be derived for all.  
(It is perhaps the first reasonable thing he's said all day.)

Feeling the breeze, sipping cocoa.  
Nothing needs doing.  
Nothing needs saying.  
(And therefore, nothing needs reading.)

With eyes closed, there is a moment when you stop looking at the back of your eyelids and start looking through them. This is the moment when the truth is revealed.

(I'm sure this makes no sense to you; but then, that's because you are looking at the words... and not through them. Which is probably just another way of saying an enlightened individual can see right through this guy... goats and all.)

Buddhism is an empty word. Oh, it has a general meaning, a

general feel, and a general intent. But when push comes to shove in almost any real world example as to what the Buddha would have done, no two Buddhists can agree.

(Not true! Not true! Not true! Don't listen to him. He does not know what he's talking about.)

Like the sun shining high or the cloud on the breeze,  
Live a life full of love, contentment, and ease.

(There once was a book selling monk,  
All the goats thought him a hunk,  
But when he opened his mouth  
The truth never came out  
So another got paid to debunk.)

Stirring coffee  
Put on hold  
The silence is newly welcomed  
(Bought a book  
Was misled  
Sort of like getting  
Hit in head)

As the body grows old in these civilized times, little is worth staying up late for, and even less worth awakening early.

(Early to bed, late to rise, means a man is getting old. Try a little exercise, dude.)

Maintain you quality of life.  
Shun work from dusk till dawn.  
(Unless of course you're a goatherd and you like what you do for a living.)

On Sunday morning, my neighbors take their children to the beach instead of church. It may seem sacrilegious at first; but trust me, their plan has worked like a charm. Their children's love of

the Lord literally has no limits.

(And how does he know this? Not from going to church, I can tell you that.)

Moderation in all things.

And in this, too, moderation.

(Well then, why not immoderation in all things; and in this, too, immoderation? Might as well say, 'Do as thou wilt is the whole of the law,' and be done with it.)

Do as thou wilt and nothing more is the whole of the law... just kidding.

(Ha. Ha. Very funny.)

In everyone, see everything.

And in everything, see everyone.

(Did someone have wild mushrooms for dinner again last night?)

Per Socrates, in life one should endeavor to do good and to avoid evil.

(Easier said than done; but then, perhaps that's why old Socky didn't go into any more details than that.)

If you're not suffering from some serious wants and desires in life, then you're probably not giving enough to the Lord.

(Or maybe if you are, then he's not been giving enough to you.)

Like the tax man living in opulence, if one finds themselves in a place of wealth and ease, perhaps one is not offering enough of their time and their wealth to the Lord.

(I didn't know God collected taxes. I wonder what happens to those who don't pay?)



Give till it hurts, and then give some more.

It's only how much you give after it hurts that matters, for this is the part that is truly an offering unto the Lord.

(Apparently, God is a bit of a sadist; when you come to think about it, it explains a lot.)

Enlightenment cannot be found. Stop what you are doing, look around, and you will see that it is right there at the tips of your fingers.

(Like a mirage on a distant horizon, always there, just out of reach, like a rainbow after a storm.)

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day.

(Oatmeal? Again?)

The effectiveness of a superior can be seen in the achievements of their subordinates.

A boss who has made themselves redundant through zealous delegation of his duties to others is the best boss of all.

([Zen and the Art of Being Downsized](#), coming to you soon from Doublethink, Inc..)

Enlightenment cannot be found through searching.

It is something that sneaks up on you when you are at rest and at play.

(Sort of like a Bengal Tiger, I'm guessing... or maybe an angry Billy goat.)

They say that behind every great man there is a good woman, but wouldn't it be more accurate -- or at least, cheerful -- to say that behind every good woman there is a great behind?

(Whoa there, fella! You're going to rile the goats if you keep on talking like that.)

In an effort to keep materialism at bay, I used to restrict my

possessions to a set number: 1018. However, lately I have been thinking that this is way too many things to own. So perhaps, I should limit my belongings to those which I am willing to name.

(Penny the pencil, I'd like you to meet Timmy the typewriter. Today we're going to loose our minds, but before we do, let's write something. I'm thinking of calling it Embracing the Smile that is this Moment. What do you think Ernie the eraser?)

Name your belongings.

If an item is not worthy of a name, it is not worthy of your time or attention.

(I'll name this goat Betsy, and this goat Charlotte, and this goat Diana...)

Generosity is giving the last piece of fried chicken to another.

(Please note that he didn't say the last piece of curdled tofu. "No, you have it." "What? Oh, hell no! It's yours." "Sorry, full. Couldn't eat another bite." "You're going to eat it, monk boy, and you're going to like it.")

You know that tradition were one person slices the last piece of cake in half and the other gets to choose which piece they want?

Well, generosity is slicing it so the other person gets the bigger slice on purpose.

("OH! Ga! Who made this cake? Oh! It's awful! What is it made of? Mud?")

Much like politics, religion is not based on facts or reason, it is based on faith and emotion.

As such, it is not typically possible to convert another to one's own way of thinking.

(No, say it ain't so.)

The easiest way to share one's faith with another is to first determine where the other is coming from and where they want to

go, then all one need to do is simply show them how one's own way will enable them to get where they want to go quicker and easier. If your faith can't help them in this, then it simply can't help them.

(What do you mean you don't want to become Enlightened? No, no. You're thinking of the old Enlightenment. Here, look at the new brochure we printed up last week. Check it out. Seventeen of them. All virgins. Well, goats are just an idea. You can go with whatever you want. But have you thought about goats; they come in all colors, you know... with horns, without; nannies, billies... Look, if you're not interest, maybe I'll just keep this here brochure for myself.)

It can be hard to convince a man to walk down a road that does not lead to where he wishes to go.

(Yeah well, leading men might be hard, but let me tell you, goats are darn near impossible to organize... stubborn things, those goats.)

If you find a person annoying, the appropriate response is to politely take your leave and simply walk away.

(I'll be going now. Bye. Chow. Sayonara. Asta la vista, baby, and all that.)

Annoyance is simply Nature's way of letting you know that you don't have your head screwed on right.

(OK, now. Let's see. Righty, tifty; lefty, loosey. Oh, damn! I did it the wrong way again. Hold on. Hold on. I'll get my head screwed on straight in a minute.)

If you're angry, it probably means you don't understand something... or putting your own desires above someone else's.

(Um, yeah. Duh. I'm getting ripped off, here. Can't you see I'm getting ripped off. My time's getting stolen if nothing else, and that's why I'm angry.)

But if one let's go and realizes that whatever one is getting angry about is not worth fighting over, then it becomes easy to let the anger go as well.

(Stupider words were never spoken. On second thought, just give me \$20, it'll save us both the trouble of me beating you to a bloody pulp. Better yet, make it \$40. Look, just hand over your wallet.)

Jealousy is wanting what another appears to have.

(Don't change the subject, you were about to give me the contents of your wallet.)

To be jealous is to miss the point, each of us share 99.99% of the same experiences as everyone else.

(Yeah, but it's that last .01% that includes the hot babes. Oh, wait, you wouldn't understand that, would you? I guess what I'm saying is, all goats are not alike, and the .01% that people are fighting over includes trips to Barbados with Betsy.)

Jealously is stopping to smell the roses and wishing they were daffodils.

(Tulips, if you don't mind. I prefer tulips.)

If I die in my sleep, then the rest will have been settled without me.

(Why anyone would find a phrase that begins 'If I die in my sleep' to be comforting is beyond me.)

Driving can be amazingly relaxing if one takes their time, drives under the limit, and just sort of eases on down the road.

(HONK! HONK! Get out of my way! HONK! HONK! Move over gramps! HONK! HONK! I'll give you relaxing! HONK! HONK!)

Do not call others on their false fronts. Often there is nothing behind these people's empty smiles; they have nothing else to offer.

(It's like I've been saying all along.)

The brain is nothing more than a sense organ, and in this you should take its advice: if a thing is not happening at the moment, it might as well have never existed.

(As excerpted from [Total Denial and the Art of Getting out of Traffic Tickets.](#))

When in doubt, laugh.

(Oh, I'm laughing, alright. Let there be no doubt about that.)

Striking a classic meditative pose is how certain Type A people pretend to relax. It's not really the way to do it. Trust me, there is no better way to meditate than sitting back, cracking a beer, and watching the sun slowly sink over the horizon.

(With a goat at your back, two at your side, and the rich smell of heather filling the air...)

There is no wrong way to meditate.

(So does that also mean there's no right way, either?)

Want to simplify your life?

Then get rid of half of your commitments, belongings, desires, and possessions.

And then do it again, and again, and again.

(Congratulations you now have nothing, can do nothing, and are nothing. Brilliant!)

Stop what you are doing now.

Don't worry about what you are going to be doing next.

Simply be.

This is Zen. This is Buddhism.

(And if you've done it right, you are now the Buddha. You are the man.)

If you don't consider yourself Enlightened, maybe that's because you expect more from Enlightenment than it has to offer.

(Complete and utter bliss, my friend, isn't that what everyone is promising? Complete and utter bliss.)

To be Enlightened is to understand Enlightenment.

Therefore, if one is not Enlightened, it follows that one does not fully understand what it means to be Enlightened.

(Thus, disproving the notion that Ignorance Is Bliss now and forever.)

If you're not Enlightened, it's probably because you don't understand the nature of Enlightenment.

(Not that reading this book will have done you any good. How about a simple sentence? Something along the lines of: Enlightenment is...)

Enlightenment is knowing that you are Enlightened.

(Doh!)

To understand Buddhism, it helps to consider that as a prince the Buddha was a man who had it all -- fame, fortune, wealth, power, and glory -- and that he turned his back on these gifts as not being worthy of his time.

This in a nutshell is what Buddhism is all about: turning one's back on fame, fortune, wealth, power, and glory, and instead taking the time to commune with a caterpillar or enjoying a cool glass of water.

(Ah, what do I need of your worldly desires. I have my goats, the setting sun, and a bottle of wine... Oh, and here comes a talking caterpillar. I do believe I now have it all... or at least, that the mushrooms are finally kicking in.)

If you don't want to go to Hell, live your life like that's where you are already headed.

(Well now, that's comforting.)

If God has created a Heaven and a Hell, I'm pretty sure I'm going to the later.

(Yeah! No, duh! It was the goats, dude. It was the goats.)

Be eager to please.

(Or if not eager to please, at least eager to be pleased.)

There is no excuse for ever raising one's voice or getting angry. None.

(Then let me say this quietly...)

If like Sisyphus, you find that you are running around all day, getting nowhere, simply stop.

(Or, you know, get off the treadmill. Those things look like they're moving real fast, but they're usually bolted to the floor, so you're actually going nowhere. Just a word to the wise.)

It is often the case that doing nothing will get you closer to a goal than a flurry of frantic activity.

(Especially if that goal is getting fired.)

If you want to make your life simpler, find a way to remove a key from your key ring.

(Oh, let me tell you, this one doesn't work at all. Taking his advice was a real disaster. I chucked my key ring into a lake... big mistake, that. Big mistake.)

The key to understanding the life of Jesus Christ is to realize that he knew in advance that he only had three years to spread the word of his gospel.

I mean, if you knew in advance that you were going to bite it in a few years, all of a sudden lots of things would no longer matter... like your reputation, saving for retirement, or you caught some lingering disease like leprosy or AIDS. Heck, I mean, even if you died a week or two early from pissing off some minor political figure, what would it really matter?

(“What do you mean, I shouldn’t hang with the goats or I’ll get Goat Herder’s Syndrome? What do I care? That shit takes nine years to kill you, and quite frankly, I’m pretty sure I’m going to be arrested for bestiality long before that.”)

Be the man, follow in Christ’s footsteps, have no fear of the consequences, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

(Thus spoke Zoroastor.)

The trick to Enlightenment is realizing that there is no trick to Enlightenment.

(And that’s the trick. Get it?)

I’m not getting paid enough to get angry.

(Neither am I. And quite frankly, it’s starting to piss me off.)

Let savoring this moment be your life’s work.

(And would this moment of which you speak be with goats? Or without?)

Savor this moment as if it were your last.

(Oh, wait. I got a better idea. Savor this moment as if you’d just read the last line in this here book. Yeah. Just like I thought. Sort of sends a chill of relief down your spine, doesn’t it. For I say, “Yea! Verily! In time, these words, too, shall pass.”)

Trust that everything can and will take care of itself.

(But will it do it properly? Or will it do a half-ass job and muck it up like it usually does? That’s all I’m asking.)



If this life is a test, rest assured that you have already failed it. So, you might as well have fun and enjoy the good times while they last.

(Another cheery thought, brought to you from the same guy who brought you [Three Goats and a Mule](#).)

An empty day lasts longer than a full one.

(Oh, Lord! When will it end?)

An empty glass holds more than a full one.

(Really? Oh, well if that's the case, then give me another empty beer there, barkeep, and keep them coming.)

If you have no desires, you cannot be thwarted in your desires.

(And a rock falls to the ground if you drop it. How about telling me something useful for a change.)

Some believe that upon death, one is transported to the spirit world, a place of chaos, similar to the world of dreams.

And for these, the true purpose of meditation is to focus one's intellect and concentration so that when the time comes, they may keep their cool, and pass the final test, thus ending the cycle of birth and death.

(Test? Test? We're going to have a test? I thought life was one of those gimme classes where everyone was going to get an A at the end for just showing up... and now you tell me, there's going to be a test! I am so not ready.)

It's only money.

(OK. I can be cavalier about it, too. After all, it's only your money that we're talking about here.)

One cannot waste time.

One can only spend it.  
So, spend it wisely.  
(And if you don't, what have you done then? Wasted it?)

Do not worry about the past.  
Let the future take care of itself.  
(And as to now? Well, that's a bit of a problem. You're going to have to take care of that one, yourself.)

Always look on the bright side of getting screwed.  
(After all, you never know what sort of darling love-child will be born of the moment if you do.)

The world is my oyster.  
And I am its pearl.  
(Irritating to the core.)

Rather than focusing on worry or concern, force your mind to look for the wonder and amusement in the moment.  
(I worry about you sometimes... and then I remember who I'm worrying about and I laugh and laugh and laugh.)

Another Query  
(because selling this book would be like get money for nothing... or books for free...)

Ian Black lives on the beach in Hawaii where he aspires to be a world renowned writer of Science Fiction & Fantasy... an occupation about as far from the Zen ideal as you can get.

I am Blue, on the other hand, is a fictional creation, and as such is about as close to the complete dissolution of ego as a person can get.

(Ahem. What Ian failed to mention is that he is constantly warring with his neighbors over his goats. Are they pets to be honored as part of the family, as he claims? Or livestock in

violation of covenants of the home owners associations; and thus, destined to be the main course at the next luau, as most of the surround community maintains? Good eating, them goats, that's what I say.)

Well, that's just sick.

(And only a person like Ian could possibly interpret my comments in such a way. And he says, I'm the one who's sick... the freaky vegetarian.)

Do not worry. Everything will take care of itself.

(You know, emergency room doctors have a saying as well. It goes something like: all bleeding stops... eventually.)

Better is the enemy of good.

(And slipshod is the enemy of total crap... but I digress.)

Do not own more than you can manage.

(Lest you find that it you who is being managed.)

In exhaustion comes clarity of purpose.

(Fine. Whatever. I don't care. Can we just be done with this, already?)

I read about three hours a day, that comes out to roughly a hundred hours a month. If I don't begin a book within a month of obtaining it, I'm really not interested in reading it, so I throw it out.

(Oh, and he throws out plenty... the ignorant goat loving bastard.)

When I am told that a movie, book, or play is good or that I would enjoy it, I ask the person why. If they can't give me a compelling reason, I ignore the suggestion.

(I read this great new book called [Embracing the Smile that is This Moment](#). You really should read it. Oh, what am I saying? Never mind. [You](#) probably wouldn't be interested.)

Reduce your current to-do list (or reading list) until it includes just the one thing that you are currently working on. This is Zen. This is enlightenment.

(This is saying the only thing in you life is [Embracing the Smile that is This Moment](#). Um, may I quote you on that?)

We're probably not all interconnected, but it can't hurt to live your live as if we were.

(And while we're on the subject, you're probably not God's chosen child, but it couldn't hurt to live your life as if you were that either.)

Do what you must do.

But don't bother with what the rest.

(And telling the two apart? Almost impossible.)

Live your life as if someone was putting Prozac in your water.

(Oh, but they are, my goat loving friend, they are.)

Fighting fire with fire almost never works.

(Except for that one crucial exception: when you're actually fighting a fire.)

Fighting fire with fire is just another way of saying burn everything until there is nothing left to burn.

(Sounds like [Mutually Assured Destruction](#) if you ask me. And you said, fighting fire with fire never worked.)

Experts now agree, the Buddha was actually a cat; that explains his happy disposition... and the constant OM-like purring sounds he made.

(You need to get yourself some new experts, dude.)

If you don't enjoy something, why do it?  
(Three words: \$, \$, \$.)

Put down the book.  
Unplug from the media.  
Look out the window.  
And go for a walk.  
(Your goats miss you.)

You know how they are always telling stories about these holies guys who are sitting by the side of a stream and watching the world go by? Well, that's because if you sit in one place long enough (say while meditating), the world does sort of start to spin around like a top on its own accord.

(Waiter! I'll have what he's having. Better yet, make it a double.)

If you aren't living the life you want, you best do something to make this life the life you do want.

(Like rethinking what you really want... that's always the easiest.)

If you aren't living the life of your dreams, change things around until you are.

(Bessie! Today, we're going to get your hair done. From now on, you're going to be a blonde!)

If there really is a God, our offerings and prayers must seem like visions in a dream to him.

(Like melancholy wisps of transcendent vapors: illusionary, transitory, and insubstantial.)

The worst thing that a man can do in his life is to procreate.  
(Sending the fruit of his loins to ravage the land, where he himself might have died quietly, thus ending the cycle.)

In many instances (war, famine, etc.), the appropriate thing for a good man to do is simply die.

(When the time comes, I think maybe I'm going to be a switch-hitter.)

Sleeping with the cats is preferable to sleeping with the fishes.

(While both are preferable to sleeping with the goats. E-gad, but those goats smell.)

The point in a dream where one tends to awaken is the spot where one starts to think, which in turn, is the moment that an idea which needs to be worked out and deliberated upon has been introduced by the streaming unconscious.

(Right. Right. So when I awoke last night in a cold sweat -- having just been served cold tea and soggy biscuits in a Paris café by a surly, yet provocatively dressed, goat -- this was the dilemma my mind was setting me to work on: How to get the sultry beast back to my Hostel and into something a little more comfortable with no one seeing, or worse yet, stealing her away?)

Printing a book on recycled paper is not better than nothing. Not printing the book in the first place would be best of all.

(As a general rule, I'm not so sure. But in this particular instance, I can most heartily agree.)

Recycled is better than not recycled.

But not is best of all.

(Not no way. Not no how... Um, what were we not talking about, again?)

“Reduce. Reuse. Recycle,” is trumped by never using it at all.

(Ha! But I got a full house. Read 'em and weep, Mr.

Environmentalism. Looks like I win and you're sleeping with the goats, again.)

My strength is my weakness.

My weakness is my strength.

(OK. Granted. This one didn't make any sense to me either, but then I went and lived in a Buddhist monastery for twelve years -- OK. It was just the two hours, but time is relative in those places -- and after the first three minutes, I would have done or said just about anything to get out of that place. So, strength is weakness, you say? Sure. Sure. And freedom is slavery? No problem-o.)

The only way to be truly free is to be a slave to your conscious.

(I won't say I told you so... but I told you so.)

Enslaving yourself to your conscious is the only way to be truly free.

(Didn't he just say that?)

If no money is involved in a transaction, you can bet it's probably pretty environmentally friendly.

(Yep, that's why I like dumping my goat's toxic waste in the ocean; it's cheap, easy, and environmentally friendly. Pisses the hell out of the surfers, but that's another matter.)

The poor are accidental environmentalists.

(Well, they should be more careful about it, then, shouldn't they! Stupid, ignorant poor people!)

A lot fewer people in the world would be taking sleeping pills if more folks watched ballet.

(This has been a public service announcement from your local Farmer's Coop and the Better Goat Dance Society.)

Grief begets grief.  
And pain begets pain.  
But happily, joy and laughter beget more joy and laughter.

(Goats beget goats.)  
While men beget men.  
And even if you mix it up, the resulting squids will still be called kids.)

The subset of I shall not Steal includes:  
I shall not cheat.  
And I shall not lie.  
(So, um, say. Do you want to play poker with us on Friday night?)

The subset of I shall not Kill includes:  
My own death is an acceptable outcome and this eventuality I shall not fear.  
(Nobody's talking about killing you. 'Getting Slaughtered' is just a figure of speech. Come on over, we'll toss back a few beers, deal out the cards, and you're bound to find the walk home easier... your pockets being so much lighter and all.)

The subset of I shall not Judge includes:  
I shall not hate, despise, or loathe.  
Pity is acceptable, but only if it is followed by mercy, compassion, and kindness.  
(I pity the goat loving fool who comes up with these stupid sayings. So anyhow, about that game of poker. Don't worry we won't hate you... and we're certainly not going to take any mercy on you.)

My success is my failure.  
My failure is my success.



(Enough, already! My this is my that, and my that is my this.  
We get it, already.)

I will not fear death.  
Rather, I shall welcome its coming, its cold embrace.  
(Dude. I'm just going to say this the one time. Death best  
not look like a goat, you sick fuck. Got it?)

Some people require more patience than others.  
(Ahem, to that!)

No one can ever do any better than their very best.  
(And no one can do any worse than their very worst... not  
that it keeps some folks from trying...)

What is Christianity?  
What is Buddhism?  
I have a hunch that if you asked a random group of true  
believers to define their faith in a single sentence, more than half  
of them would not bother to use the word Jesus Christ or Buddha  
in their definition).  
(While others might completely omit words like love,  
kindness, and mercy.)

Be your own best friend. Which is to say, be the best friend  
that you can be to yourself.  
(Hey! I thought I was your best friend.)

While meditating:  
Find the Garden of Eden... and eat of the fruit of knowledge.  
Seek the Holy Grail... and drink of its wine.  
And finally, kneel at the foot of God... and know what it is  
like to be truly loved.  
(Consult your travel agent for complete details. Black out  
dates may apply. Advance bookings required. Some venues have

limited -- as in very limited -- seating (e.g. Garden of Eden). See your favorite religious scripture for complete details.)

There is no Other, only oneself.  
(Oh, yeah! Well, I say there is no Self, only the Other, so there.)

Choose roles for yourself which further your goals.  
(Say as a goatherd, just as a for instance.)

Other people can be right in what they say or wrong. The choice is completely up to you.

(Hmm. Tricky. This is one of those mind bender, trick problem aphorisms, isn't it? If he says this, then I have to say that. And if he says that, then I have to say... Sooo, the correct answer is: I'm forced to agree!)

Hell is Heaven turned on its head.

(Lucky you, there's a joke that goes along with this one. See, there's this guy who goes to Hell and he has to chose a room in which to spend all of eternity. So after looking around a bit at the various options, he opts for the room full of goatherds standing waist deep in dung, sipping mint tea. He figures it can't be that bad. So he says, "I take this room." And then, right after he's settled in, the devil in charge yells, "Coffee break's over, back on your heads.")

Nothing matters very much.

And that which you think matters most, probably matters least of all.

(What's the matter? Some mean ole goat spurn your advances and hurt your feelings?)

It's not them, it's you.

(No. It's you.)

You.

(You.)

You.

(You.)

Jinx.

(Double jinx to the infinity. Ha. Ha. It's you.)

Victory can only be achieved after complete surrender.

(Well then, I'd rather be lost in success.)

With thousands of aphorisms between its covers, some of them might actually ring true.

(But I wouldn't bet on it.)

Tantric love is a two-headed beast with each chasing the other's tail.

(You had to mention a tail, did you? You make me sick, goat boy. What we have here, folks, is Tantric love defined as only a goatherd could.)

If done properly, Tantric love is an act of metaphysical procreation: the offspring of the act being love and adoration.

(Um, OK.)

Be your own Philosopher King.

(And as my first act, I shall appoint Ian Black as my court jester. Congratulations on the promotion, goat boy.)

When in doubt, smile.

(So that's why he always has a big grin plastered across his face, the poor confused goat-loving fool.)

### Anger Triage

Do not stand in the way of anger. Rather, like a matador in

the ring, nimbly step aside, until the bull exhausts itself and fatigue sets in.

(Apparently, Ian and the goats do a bit of role-playing on the farm, folks. Wonder which one plays the angry bull?)

It is always best to yield the right of way to an angry man.  
(For, they always seem to be in such a hurry... to be the first to the scene of the crash.)

Anger and rational thought do not often inhabit the same space.

(It's called segregation, my friends! And it must stop!)

God is lonely. Give him a call. Let him hear from you every once in a while.

(Actually, word is, he's worked hard all week long and he deserves a break, so leave the omniscient, most holy dude alone for a change. OK, folks?)

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to enjoy this moment.  
(But you have all the time in the world in which to do it.)

### Co-opt Platitudes - Misc

Co-opt platitudes.

For instance, be your own Army of One in your fight for justice.

(Which is to say, be your own Army of One and Twenty Goats in your fight for right to be called King of the Herd.)

Co-opt the platitudes of others.

(Don't mind if I do.)

Deny evil. Refuse its existence. Turn your back on it.  
Only in this way can you live in a world free of its malignant

presence.

(Makes you sort of wonder if any of those goats he's keeping on his farm aren't ostriches... a malignant presence, by the way, if ever I saw one.)

The future starts now.

(Which means you can kiss your past goodbye, right about... now.)

Peace is not an objective nor a goal, it is a way of life.

(Attained through constant struggle and strife? he asked innocently enough.)

Spend a complete day -- all 24 hours of it -- alone outside, watching the sky and listening to the wind.

(Of course, you just might want to reschedule this one if it starts to rain. Don't worry, I won't tell.)

OK, this one isn't an aphorism, helpful advice, or anything like that. It's a simple mnemonic to tell if the moon is getting bigger or smaller, going to full or new. So, all set? Here we go.

If you can see the moon at sunset it's getting bigger (going to be full soon), and if you can see it at dawn it is getting smaller (going to disappear and be new soon).

So, at Dawn it Dies.

And at Sunset it Survives.

Simple, yeah?

(This has been a message from the Heresy Institute and BAA! the Better Astrologers of America. We thank you for your time. And no, you can't have it back.)

Acquire a mentor. Adopt an apprentice. Let them both be the same person. Let them both be you.

(This is what it has come to: one person doing the work of three.)

You are a miracle.

(No. No. I beg to differ, the miracle here is you... and the fact that you ever got this here book published.)

Heed your visions, dreams, and omens.

(How about that nagging voice of doubt that's constantly shouting in your ear? Think maybe you should heed that every once in a while? Hmm? I'm talking to you, goat boy. Well?)

OK. This is a convoluted argument for multiculturalism.

In a Stone Age tribe, members with different vision abilities conferred different advantages to their group: far sighted individuals can see eagles and herds of traveling salesmen from miles away, near sighted individuals can read the fine print on peace treaties and other legal documents, and even those color blind individuals have their part, for they can see through leaves, forest canopies, and camouflage defenses better than anyone else. So, despite their differences (and perhaps apparent weaknesses), each of these sight patterns confers an advantages to the tribe as a whole.

By the same token, all of these smaller tribes that we've got going today (Liberals, Conservatives, Republicans, Democrats, Nihilists, Pragmatics, Lutherans, Baptists, etc.) can be thought of as conferring some sort adaptive ideology or way of looking at things that is advantageous to society as a whole, (i.e. something that makes the whole human race stronger and more capable of survival).

(Goat Boys, for instance, provide many a comic interlude, and by their advocacy of it, let you know when an idea is completely and totally wrong. Thanks, Goat Boy. Good job. You may now go back to cavorting with your flock.)

Considering how few people I want in my life, I can be extremely picky about who I let in.

(Got that? So, if you're not a goat, no need to apply. The position has been filled.)

If it's not happening, don't force it.  
(But if you don't force it, it'll never happen, so there.)

All is this moment.  
(And let me tell you, it's one fucking crowded moment.)

Rest in peace: it's not just for the afterlife, it's a good way to live this life.

(I do believe the demented bugger is now stealing my lines.)

If life's a joke, then this must be the punch line.  
(Hey! Wait! Saying stuff like that is my job.)

### As an Idea, Have a Reverse Order Section

(By their late twenties, most people have successfully put their adolescent ideals and childish philosophies behind them.)

Unless of course, they are wise beyond their years.

Well, that didn't last long...  
(Never does with you, Goat Boy.)

Money may not be the root of all evil.  
But the root of all money is most decidedly evil.  
(What about blood money? Wait. No. Bad example. Drug money, then? No. No. Sorry. Sorry. How about coming back to me in a bit. I'm sure I'll think of something.)

I try not to worry very much about whether I will grow old or die young.

(I wish I could say the same, but I do really worry that you'll live a long and happy life spreading your particular brand of free

goat loving, easy living filth to the next generation. Really, I do.)

Celebrate celebrations.

Honor the honor.

And, admire the admiration.

(Fair enough. I say, mock the mockery.)

Disdain the disdainful.

And, indulge in indulgence.

And on that note, pass me a goat if you please.)

You will be seen in the best light if you allow those around you to shine.

(Or if you keep them totally in the dark. Because you know, it like totally depends on how you look in the contrast.)

I'm co-dependent on my goats. I'm a goat enabler.

(That's not all you are, goat boy.)

It might help to assume that I'm wrong some of the time.

(Oh, don't worry about that one. I've got you covered there.)

To live in the present is to live patiently and without effort, with no concern for what comes next.

(Or what drivel you might have just read and cheerfully forgot just as soon as you're done reading it.)

I like the idea of \$10 soap.

(That's no surprise. Living with all those goats, I can see why you would.)

To be enlightened is to be without worry or concern.

(Or apparently, common sense.)

A crashing wave doesn't stop just because you're standing in its way.



(Surf's up! Cowabunga, dude!)

There are two types of people in this world: those who like watching the fog roll in and those who do not.

(Oddly, there are also two types of readers in this world: those who like reading about the fog rolling in and those who do not.)

When you're getting crushed by opposing forces, often it's best to simply relax and try to imagine that you're getting a free massage.

(In other words, surf's up, dude.)

A book suitable for Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike.

(That's no way to promote a mass market book. You got to be exclusive. So forget what he said. This here book is for those who don't have the slightest idea what Buddhism is about. I mean, they're the only ones this guy is going to be able to fool, anyway.)

Words of wisdom suitable for pondering during meditation, regardless of one's personal level of achievement.

(In other words, ponder on it all you want; even if you've been meditating all your life, the advice given herein still won't make any sense to you.)

Structure your life to have vast areas of undefined free time.

(i.e. waste your time.)

The good thing about goats is that their small talk consists almost exclusively of the weather and what's for supper.

(Um, OK. Bahhh!)

Try not to confuse wit with wisdom.

(If you ask me, this guy should maybe take a look at his own playbook every once in a while.)

To love is to be changed.  
(Fair enough. Then let's just say, don't try to change me, dude. Don't try to change me.)

To be a better conversationalist, try studying drama. You really get a lot of practice listening to other people talk, waiting for your cue, and setting others up for the big punch line.

(What? It's my line? A little help, here! Cue! Cue! Come on, help me out! Cue!)

Life is filled with contradictory impulses and desires. The trick is figuring out which ones to heed.

(Let me tell you, this guy's ability to wrap the readily apparent in the obvious is beyond compare.)

The attainment of the True Heart is made without struggle or sacrifice; without will, action, or effort. It comes easily and naturally, like water flowing down a mountain stream.

(Tell me about the goats that sip from that there stream, Goat Boy. Come on. Tell me about the goats.)

Your body is a machine that if not serviced properly will break down. What is your body asking for right now?

(You don't really want me to answer that, do you?)

Accept your worries for what they are. Let them be as they will. For when they are finally free, you shall be free of them as well.

(Because nothing rings true like simplicity itself.)

In any interaction, one participant is going to learn more than the other. Let that one be you.

(Whatever you say, sensei.)

Buddha is.  
(Fragmentary sentences and incomplete thoughts, apparently, being amongst the most enlightening.)

Zen and magic are opposite ways of interacting with reality. Zen is the opposite of magic; that's the magic of it.

(In other words, chopping wood and carrying water doesn't lead to something else. It's all about the wonders of chopping wood and carrying water.)

God is an idea.  
(And thou shall have no ideal before him.)

In the beginning there was an idea and that idea was all.  
(What an idea that must have been!)

Don't confuse quantity with quality.  
(Like say in a book filled with endless sayings and aphorisms when only one or two would do.)

There is no more common malady than clinging to the past and the way things once were.  
(Thankfully, there is a cure. Not sure what it is, but of there being a cure, I am sure.)

Heaven is Hell. And Hell is this place.  
(Now all you have to do is work it backwards.)

The secret of Zen is that there is no secret.  
The mystery of Zen is why, exactly, it takes so many so long to figure out this simple truth.  
(Actually, the real mystery is why so many folks prefer to get their enlightenment from teachers who spent half their lives learning this little gem. Don't ask me, it takes all kinds. There is no secret kiddies, that's the secret. You can all go home now. But

if you insist on searching further for the truth and you wind up taking half your life to come to that very same conclusion, don't say I didn't try to enlighten you sooner.)

When you know in your heart that you know all that there is to know about Zen, you are enlightened.

(Or a bloody fool... so hard to tell, so hard to tell.)

When you know in your heart that there is nothing more to the world than what you can see, you are enlightened.

(This being the teaching at the heart of the Missouri School of Zen Buddhism.)

Enlightenment is like awakening from a twenty year nap under a tree as you stare through the branches at the light glittering far overhead through the leaves, and realizing that this, this very moment of magic and wonder, is all that there is.

(This being the central tenet behind the Rip Van Winkle School of Zen Buddhism.)

### *Embracing the Smile That Is This Moment*

(The title says it all. Everything else is redundant. A good read to be sure, but redundant nonetheless.)

### One Hand Clapping

(...(...(...

A koan is a seemingly unanswerable riddle that Zen teachers instruct their students to ponder for years on end. One of the most famous of these riddles goes something along the lines of:

We all know the sound that two hands make when they come together, but what is the sound that one hand makes when there is none other there to meet it?

Which has been shortened over the years to the familiar:

Yo! Dog! What's the sound of one hand clapping, dude?

Now, there are a lot of answers to this particular koan. “Silence”, “Frustration”, and “Nothing” have all been both proposed and accepted as suitable responses at one time or another. As have physical demonstrations, such as making a clapping sound with one hand, slapping of one’s thigh, or simply gliding one’s hand silently through the air.

As stated, all are perfectly acceptable answers.

And all doomed to failure if proposed by the unenlightened.

The reason for this is because after the student has put forth his answer, the teacher will slap them as hard as they can across the face while saying something along the lines of:

“What? That’s the best you can do? Twelve months of contemplation and this is the rubbish you come up with?”

It doesn’t matter what the student says, no matter how witty, brilliant, or original their answer is because the koan itself is not the real test. You see, getting struck by one’s teacher for no good reason, that’s the sound of one hand slapping. And so is the way in which the student responds to such an abusive assault.

If the student responds with anger, frustration, or hatred, if this is the sound the student hears while one hand is clapping, then the student has failed. Their world view, and the answer which was born of it, is unacceptable.

But if the student responds with love, acceptance, and understanding, if this is the sound that they hear when one hand is clapping, then the student’s response will be accepted no matter how uninspired it might otherwise appear. For the student has proved that they are right minded, and that they are capable of seeing the world for the bliss filled paradise which it is... even as one’s friend, teacher, and confidant betrays them and subjects them to a needless assault.

Which is all to say, the sound of one hand clapping is the sound of your heart at your most vulnerable. It is the sound of your soul when you are all alone.

And the real question then is: Do you like what you hear?

Be the gift to others that you were always meant to be.  
(God's gift to women, that's all I'm saying.)

If a memory doesn't bring you happiness, let it go.  
(And if a book doesn't show you the way, be sure to mark it  
up all proper like before you throwing it away.)

If you don't stand your ground, you can never lose it.  
(For, it will already be lost.)

If you don't fight, you cannot be defeated.  
(Though, I am told, there are worse ways to die than to be  
killed in battle... slow torture, coming rapidly to mind.)

A koan is a riddle with the answer unknown.  
Thus, is the way of Zen.  
(i.e. A puzzle parading as a paradox, a mystery that unravels  
to reveal nothing.)

It's you and me against the world, buddy.  
(There is no world to be against.)

They may be right.  
(I don't know how you do it. But even in this, you may be  
wrong.)

Is this the way you will want it to have been?  
(And who said Zen was focused on the present?)

Always remember, that's just the way some people are.  
(I'm beginning to think that it's true for most.)

Rather than waiting in line, wait until the line is gone.  
(In other words, let others go first. You know, just in case the  
forgoing wasn't exactly clear.)

Along with all that nonsense about breathing, if you're looking for some advice on how to meditate properly, you might also want to consider closing your eyes and trying to see the world through your eyelids.

(Eyelids: closed.

Eyes: open.

Limits of the rational world: no where in sight.)

Fantasizing and writing fiction are about as far from Zen as a person can get.

(Or as some might say: it would take a million-zillion years for the light from right to shine on this joker.)

I'm afraid I'm on the verge of becoming a hypochondriac.

(No. No. Afraid not. A real hypochondriac would already know that they were suffering from that particular ailment.)

Everyday should be a day of indolence and ease.

(Spoken like a true slacker... or should that be, Dharma Bum?)

Letting Go of Zen Mind.

Letting Go of Zen Breath.

(Being the runner up title for this book. Along with, Idioms for Idjits, Things You'll Dare Not Repeat in Public, and Goats: Can't Live With Them, Can't Live Without Them.)

Want to be the Master?

Want to be Enlightened?

Then step up to the next level. Rather than meditating on the secret to be revealed in the heart of a koan, try crafting a koan to reveal the secrets of your heart instead.

(Riddle me this, Oh Master of the Koan.

What is the sound of one foolish man talking?)

Embracing the Smile that is this Moment: the title says it all, now all I have to do is come up with a few hundred koans and other bits of mental flotsam, which might be able to pass themselves off as little snippets of wisdom.

(No, no. No worries there. Fat chance that any of this will come across as wisdom.)

Embracing the Smile that is this Moment: if you'd like, I could spend the next 200 pages telling you what this means?

(No, thanks. I think we get it.)

Koans condense the wisdom of Zen into nifty little sayings of ten words or less.

(Not that the exact word count is important, but shorter is better, because if you go on and on, you start to look like a bit of a nit who can't organize his thoughts. Not that that would describe me, but I think you get the point. Shorter is better. Enough said. I shall not belabor the point any further... than this... at the present moment... though I reserve the right to come back to this later... in case things have changed... at a later date... that is...)

A koan is like a whisper on the wind, sending forth the secrets of Zen.

(Or a shout from the dark, desperately advertising one ignorance and need of professional assistance.)

A koan is a question in search of an answer.

(A muse in search of a rhyme.

A man in search of a reason.

A goat in search of open pastures...)

As I stare at the shadows on the wall, no one else around, I realize that this is me, unfettered, alone, as I truly am.

(Okay, then. Looks like someone needs to go out into the



great big world and get themselves a life.)

BIG BREAK  
(small comment)

It's not my job to burst your bubble.  
(Not that you could if you would.)

When the secrets of Zen have been revealed, all you'll have is this moment and nothing more.

(In other words, there's nothing to it.  
Yuck. Yuck.)

Looking for my overall philosophy of Zen, the better to pigeonhole me? Well then, let me help you out.

I believe we all see the world through filters -- preconceptions and generalizations. When we speak of awareness in Zen then, what we are really speaking of is awareness of these filters and the way they limit our experience of the external world. Once we are aware of these preconceptions, we can change them, and thus change the way we interact with the world at large.

In a sense, Zen is a method by which one may construct a happiness filter through which to see reality. It is the art of constructing rose colored glasses... and then, forgetting that this is what one has done.

This is the best that can be done.

Realizing this is Enlightenment.

(This is, also, the art of self deception.

Better know as the brainwashing of the self.

“Everyday, you are becoming happier and happier and happier.”

When you get down to it, it's just downright pitiful. Just pitiful.)

The Vision Quest.

I close my eyes and see visions.  
Streams of water, lakes, and clouds.  
Forests to run through,  
Roads to drive down,  
And people to meet.  
Girls!  
Pretty girls!  
Oh, those visions of pretty girls!  
For them, I would do anything.  
And if it is the desire of my mistress,  
I shall do nothing,  
But sit here,  
And wait.

(Amamida Babble'on  
Show me thine eyes  
So that I might gaze on  
Eternally entranced  
In this world and the next.)

It's sort of ironic, but wet dreams and visions of beautiful women are what have fueled my desire for "enlightenment" from the start. The irony is doubly so once one considers the extensive changes (for the good, I believe) that this base quest has wrought in my being. And why? So that I might stay in the realm of these visions, these dreams, for but one moment longer, for a second, a kiss.

(Wait till his goat Betsy hears about this! Boy! Will she be jealous!)

Realize that you will die young, penniless, and forgotten.  
That your death will be painful and quite likely violent. And that there is absolutely nothing you can do about this.

(And this is comforting?)

Not comforting, but freeing... to live your life now without fear of consequences for the worst has already been fated to befall

you.

The Cult of Travel has no allure for one who spends his time enthralled with the manifold sights which surround him.

(Goats, piles of dung, and flies. You can see why this joker has no desire to get away from it all.)

Whilst conversing with another, it is often helpful to assume you don't understand what they are saying, so that you may ask for more clarification as to what exactly they mean.

(I don't think I understand, exactly, what you mean by this clarification?)

Things don't have to be fair.

Be willing to accept the short end of the stick.

(Oh, you don't have to worry about that with me. If there is ever a stick involved, I'll be sure to let you have it... the long end, short end, whatever.)

Of the five people I meet in Heaven, one will be a kitty-kat.

(The other a goat, two turtles, and a pet python he had to disown... due to extenuating circumstances.)

Zen is a grocery clerk bagging your food in his old age.

Savor the inevitability of this outcome -- the fun, the adventure -- and you need not fear it.

(Pension! Pension! We are Zen monks. We don't need no stinking pension!)

There are no enemies, only friends waiting to be made.

(Oh, yeah. If there are no enemies, then what are you?)

A question one should constantly be asking of themselves.

Zen concerns itself with what a person is in their own mind, not what they have, have done, or will be in the future.

(Bunch of commies those Zen monks, if you ask me.  
Probably happy eating nothing but rice.)

All things must come to an end.  
(Even the validity of this simplistic saying, I suppose.)

There is no way to win this game called Life.  
The best one can hope to do is lose with style and grace.  
(What? You're telling me you can't even win for losing?)

It's healthy to spend a day bored out of your skull every once  
in a while.

(But it's probably a little healthier if that boring day is the  
rare exception, you know, the better to put the rest of one's life into  
perspective, rather than the rule.)

Spend your time watching and modeling right behavior, not  
wrong.

(But is it right to be wrong or wrong to be right?  
Or perhaps, methinks, it's right to be right and wrong to be  
wrong.)

Yes, that is it. Nothing could be simpler.)

The secret of a peaceful existence is to hear no evil, speak no  
evil, and see no evil.

(I guess that would explain why those cartoons always show  
those wise men camped out in caves at the top of a mountain far  
removed from the realities of the world, cable television, and a  
high-speed Internet connection.)

That which I don't know is a mystery to me.  
(But rest assured, the extent of it all would fill volumes.)

Everything will work out alright.  
(Unless it works out all wrong.)

There is nothing to think through, nothing to figure out, and nothing to solve.

You think; therefore, you are.

There is no further rationale to it than that.

(Undoubtedly, the simpleton intended no pun.)

What pun?

(My point exactly.)

In the end, all will be revealed.

(Location of missing socks, where all those ballpoint pens got to, and so on. Granted, it's a bit much, and most go insane in the process, but it's the price to be paid for ultimate knowledge.)

If you smile, she will come.

(Here, Betsy, Betsy, Betsy.)

Stand tall, look to your future, and smile.

(Ah, yes. Ignorance is indeed bliss.)

The longer you stay awake, the closer you get to your dreams.

(Sleep? Sleep? We are Zen monk practitioners. We don't need no stinking sleep.)

You don't build a better life, you simply have a better life. Today. Right now.

(Might I suggest putting down this book and going for a walk, you know, as a sort of celebration of your new-found love of living.)

Every day is a celebration.

(Like I said, it's walk time.)

There is no end.

There is no beginning.  
There is no escape.  
(Lighten up, dude. Grab yourself a beer and call it a nice day.)

Excess breeds waste.  
(Well, I'm not so sure about that. But sure as shanola I can tell you: with this guy, familiarity breeds contempt.)

Each day,  
Give one hour to the future,  
One hour to the past,  
And leave the rest for the present.  
(But a present for whom, that's all I'm asking.)

Do not run from death, nor to it.  
Rather, stand your ground and calmly watch its approach.  
(Just keep in mind kiddies, this is a guy who's never met death face-to-face. Do that a time or two and you'll learn that running for the hills for all you're worth is the best response to an approaching Armageddon. The hills, my friends. The hills.)

Yesterday's mistakes are tomorrow's action items for change.  
(Hmm. He's got a lot to do tomorrow, I imagine.)

The failures of the past are the opportunities of the future.  
(And with this guy, opportunity abounds.)

Smile and the rest will follow.  
(And that's something to smile about?)

When you get right down to it, God  
(or Yahweh, as my people like to call him)  
is probably a wee bit embarrassed about that whole business of crucifying his only begotten son on a cross.

(You know, in much the same way that you might be a wee bit embarrassed about some of the things you did way back in the day when you were a innocent lad of six... thousand years old.)

Less is more.  
(More or less.)

Be the leader that you want to follow.  
(As apposed to following the leader you want to be.)

Smile.  
(That's the best idea he's had all day.)

Those unpleasant memories which spring up from the past are there to remind you what you could become again if you aren't careful.

(An unprepared fourth grader getting called on to speak in front of the class? Don't laugh. Or you'll be next.)

It's not a matter of trying harder, but of focusing better.  
(Much like in hammering a nail, it's not always so much as hitting it harder as it is making sure you don't hit your fingers in the first place.)

Ouch!  
(See, I told you.)

Say, hey. It's a brand new day.  
Say, hey. Things will go your way.  
Say, hey. It'll be alright.  
Say, hey. You'll sleep good tonight.  
(This is why goatherds should not be allowed to listen to the radio.)

Aspire to be elegant, stylish, and graceful.  
(Me, I say, be or be not, there can be no aspire.)

Oh, no. Wait. Ten percent aspiration, ninety percent perspiration. That's even better.)

And boy does he smell.

(Oh, and you're one to talk, goat boy.)

Choose elegance.

Choose style.

Choose grace.

(Choose to max out your credit card, fall into debt, lose your house, and end up working as a goat herd.)

I am not blessed to know, whether in God's eye's a thing is right or wrong, good or evil, or pure or impure.

All I can do is try to decide if an act, thing, or practice has the potential to cause harm to myself or others.

(Being a long winded way of saying: first, do no harm.)

As to Satari

Being a place without words, no poem can describe it

Being a place without form, no sculpture can depict.

Being a place without color, no painting can show it

Being a place beyond time, one's visit is timeless.

And not being a place, it doesn't exist,

Satari is one.

Satari is all.

And they like to say the place cannot be described.

P-shaw. The fools.

Now, if only I could only get there.

(But there is here... only the here and now is not.

Oh, that was fun.

But rather than bothering to list off a bunch of things that Satari is not, let's just say that it is not, and leave it at that. Which is to say, if you ever find yourself in Satari, know that you will have left the real world far behind.)



This helps.  
This does not.  
So, I'll do this.

(Which? He isn't being very clear, is he? Which one are you going to do, again?)

World without meaning.  
Life without end.  
(Heard it through the grapevine.  
Not much longer would sanity be thine.)

Dharma leads to the end of action, the end of days.  
(Oh, now that sounds good.)

Dharma Kitty, Buddha Cat.  
(Formless Kitty, Godless Cat.)

Sun, it does a body good.  
(Being milk's relatively unknown second cousin.)

As to the practice of Buddhism,  
If we assume a state of mind exists,  
That this state of mind is generally considered to be pretty cool,  
That wise men have devoted their lives to attaining this state of mind,  
And that we too might one day attain for ourselves this state of mind,  
Well then, doesn't it make sense to spend a moment or two every day in pursuit of this state of mind and meditated for a few minutes every day?

(That's exactly the way I feel about playing the lottery, bud. Well, you know, if you replace winning the lottery for state of mind and buying a ticket for mindful meditation.)

## Dharma Kitty, Buddha Cat (Perplexed Puppy, Dumfounded Dog)

The chief advantage of the contemplative life is that it rules out other more sordid lives.

(You know, sort of how being a goatherd sort of rules out that whole decadent rock star career path.)

### Pillars

From a positivist perspective The Four Noble Truths can be rewritten (rather loosely) as:

This thing is worthy of me.

This leads to this thing's beginning.

This leads to the beginning of this thing's beginning.

Thus, I will choose this path (which leads to the beginning of this thing's beginning).

Or if you prefer, from a negativistic approach the Four Noble Truths can be rewritten (also rather loosely) as:

This thing is unworthy of me.

This leads to this thing's demise.

This leads to the beginning of this thing's demise.

I will choose this path (which leads to the beginning of the end of this thing's demise).

In a nutshell then, doing what is worthy and avoiding what is unworthy is at the heart of Buddhist thought and tradition.

(The specifics of which we shall leave for you decide, for that too is the Buddhist way.)

Keeping your back straight and your eyes to the world, this is meditation, this is now.

(And this is the way it always will be.)

Live the life you wish to live.

Be the person you wish to be.

(Ah, if wishes were wings we'd all fly... because like a flying Valkarie Pirate, now, that's the Viking life for me!!!)

Bog of Sensuality.

Swamp of High Ideals.

(Well Johnny, the correct response in question form is:  
What are two locations it's hard to escape from?)

You get what you deserve.

So, deserve what you get.

(No. No. No, just desserts for me, please. I'm trying to cut down.)

Birth. School. Work. Death.

Try to fit a little of each into every day.

(Oh, yeah? What about play?)

I would have thought I'd included that in the Birth part.

(Oh, you sneaky little devil, you. You sneaky little devil.)

A vow of poverty isn't so much about being poor as it is about not minding if you are presently or soon to become poor.

(Heck, that's an easy one, goat boy. What do I care if you're poor or not.)

Nurture dreams which do not require success, money, notoriety, fame, or the subservience of your fellow man.

(Embrace humility.

Embrace mediocrity.

Embrace normalcy and one's regression to the mean.)

(Or better yet, Ha! 'Subservience of you fellow man'? I thought your kick was goats?)

Grow your own food.

Cook from scratch.

And mend you own clothes.  
(You know, live life the “simple way.”)

Take seriously what others dismiss.  
Dismiss what others take seriously.  
(The path of the fool.)

Trivialize the important.  
Make important the trivial.  
(Logic is nonsense.  
Thus, nonsense is logical.)

Meditation begins when one stops, stands still, and looks around.

From there, the trick is to simply turn one’s attention inward until one finds themselves... gone.

(It’s like a disappearing act. Probably done with smoke and mirrors. But still, the illusion can be fun.)

You don’t know as much as you think you do.  
(And what you do, you don’t.  
No wait, maybe that should be what you don’t you do.  
No. No. That can’t be it.  
Maybe the trick is knowing what you don’t.  
Yes. There it is... whatever it is, because like I said, I don’t know.)

If you start a timer and do nothing, five minutes lasts a long time.

(I bet he hears that a lot from his goats. Snicker.)

There’s nothing like sitting still to remind one of all the things that need doing.

(Nature abhors a vacuum... or a mind at rest. Don’t ask me why it puts up with this guy.)

Done properly, meditation breaks the cycle of what comes next; for, there is no next, no need for it.

(Amen to that brother!

No. No. Don't turn the page. That's just what he wants. Besides, I thought we all agreed, we have no need for what comes next, especially if this guy has anything to do with it.)

Embrace the fear. Embrace the darkness.

Walk towards suffering. Walk towards death.

This is the moment. This is now.

What? You think there will ever be a time when death, suffering, and disease, will not loom over us, threatening to cut us down, cripple us in our sleep, or take our loved ones away?

That moment of peace will never come.

Enlightenment is walking with Death.

Yea! Though we walk through the Valley of Life.

Knowing in advance that this is Death's domain and that we are just visitors. We cannot win.

Enlightenment is not caring as we skip merrily along, enjoying the dance, enjoying our time, enjoying this moment.

Enlightenment is acknowledgment and acceptance of all this, and more.

Death awaits us at the end. But that day of reckoning does not matter... not yet... not today.

(Okay, then. Doctor's visit. Monday. And you're back on your meds.)

When a thought scares you or makes you jump, try to recall the memory and welcome the moment back into your life. Ask it to return and sit with it awhile, getting to know it as it slowly fades away.

(Let me channel Winston Churchill here, echoing reverb and all, and say, "The only thing we have to fear... is fear itself."

Well, that and crazy wacko nutcases.)

There is no next. Only now.  
(So, sorry, I wasn't listening. So now, exactly, what did you say was next?)

It's a bad sign when someone says to you, "I think you must be here to teach me something."  
(Fair enough. I say, "lesson learned.")

The future cannot reach me here, not now.  
(But just you wait.)

Some people require more patience than others. And I fear, I may be one of them.  
(No need to fret about it, dear boy. Let me put your mind at ease. You are.)

Grandma's solution to living a conscientious life was simple. While lying in bed at the end of the day, she would:  
Recall something good she had done,  
Recall something bad,  
Resolve to do better,  
Clean the slate,  
And go to sleep.  
(The good thing I did today was to resolve to give grandma's method a try.

The bad thing: whilst doing it, I couldn't help but image her lying next to me, wiping the slate clean of the idea, and resolving to come up with a better idea in her next life.)

Hedonism is enjoying what you have here and now on the theory that there will be time enough when this life is over to delve deeper into matters of the mind.

(Hear that, kiddies? Hedonism is the new Zen. Try it today, for tomorrow may be too late.)

Pain is to be experienced and relished, so when it all over,  
one will know they have lived.

(Come here, goat boy. You've got some living to do.)

Emotion is life.

(Choose life.)

When they made him, they threw away the mold.

(Now, do you suppose that was a quality control issue?)

You're all the complication I want in life.

(The lover's lament.)

If upon entering a church, one does not immediately feel  
God's presence, all the work put into the building's creation has  
been wasted.

(Do you suppose the same thing could be said of a field of  
wheat? A sunny day? Or this very moment?)

Fools learn from no one; the wise, from everyone.

(Nah. Nah. I'm rubber and you're glue.)

A fool finds wit in nothing; a wise man, in all.

(See, that would explain why I spend so much time laughing  
when I read your work.)

The naked allure of youth fades quickly as one grows old.

(Read between the lines, my friends, read between the lines.  
Sounds like trouble in paradise...)

For a passing thought, I've had a good run of it.

(For all we are is dust in the wind...)

Today is a good day to watch the rain, drink tea, and eat some

mints.

(So, he finally took the hint. I was wondering when the goats would gather the nerve to say something about his bad breath.)

Quick to dismiss is quick to a' miss.

(Ah, but is quick to a' miss quick to dismiss? 'Cause these truisms have to work both ways, you know.)

The Anguish of Nothingness from which all Being derives.  
(The point at which Existentialism and Zen Buddhism collide... or at least, achieve a near miss.)

The Impossibility of the Possible is Death, when nothing is no longer possible.

(Johnny, I'll take catchphrases in Existentialism for \$200, please.)

To transcend death is to find the possible contained within the impossible.

(i.e. the basis of all religion.)

Sun. Wind. Rain.

This is life.

This is nature.

(Spoken like someone who has been living in a cave -- or a modern prefab tomb -- for far too long.)

Control what you can and let the rest go.

(Fare thee well, my good friend.)

Each day I die a little.

(So when the end finally comes, it really should be no surprise.)

Zen is not writing. It is not reading.



Put down the book, look beyond, and spend a moment trying to read a tree and laugh at the wind.

That is Zen. And the words that describe it? Just memories of a moment.

(OK, kiddies. Listen up.

This is your mind.

< Crack! [the sound of an egg breaking]>

And this is your mind on Zen.

Any questions?)

Meditating is silently abstaining from what should be done while letting the urgency of the moment slowly slip by.

(Sort of like the desire to turn the page, now that this one is over. Don't do it. Let the urgency flow away, pick up your bookmark, and stop for a moment. You've got better things to do with your life than reading this drivel. Like simply enjoying the world which surrounds you or the thoughts in your head. And that in a nutshell is meditating on the moment.)

They're not many rooms that couldn't be improved by being moved right next to the ocean.

(Um... OK.)

In a word, Stupendous.

(Probably should have put that particular word on the cover of this here book. You know, as a sort of warning.)

Question:

Why are so many people desperate to hold onto a life that doesn't make them happy?

(Answer:

The alternative is perceived to be worse.)

Now, that is a depressing thought.

(You said it kid, I mean, Goat Boy.)

You and your mind are not the same.  
(One of these things is not like the other...)

You are not what's on your mind.  
You and your thoughts must be allowed to go their separate ways.  
(In fact, there's a name for this particular affliction. It's called Dissociative Schizophrenia.)

There are two kinds of Zen.  
One is akin to lying back on a summer day and watching the clouds drift by, enjoying the fuzzy cottony balls of delight for what they are.  
The other, akin to enjoying clouds for the pictures and stories they tell.  
(In the end, they are both one and the same.)

There are two kinds of Zen.  
One is seeing clouds for what they are; the other, for the pictures they contain.  
(In the end, one will find that both of these things are one and the same.)

Worries and concerns can be likened to the indicator lights on the dashboard on the mind.  
(For some reason, the nickname Idiot Lights springs rapidly to mind... maybe I should take that as some kind of warning?)  
Ignore these warnings at your own risk.  
(You heard it here first, folks.)

ZEN: The Adventure Within!  
(ZEN: The Adventure Without!)

If a thought causes pain and one wishes it to go away, the best course of action is to atone for the misdeed that drives the

memory along and gives it continual renewal.

(Paying others back: perhaps the hardest of the nefarious Twelve Steps.)

Every once in a while, my mind tries out new thoughts and ideas, much like a girl trying on new clothes in a store.

(What do you think? Does this thought make me look stupid?

Why, yes. Yes, it does.)

When the sun hits it just right, the sparkling morning dew on an evergreen looks amazingly like the tinsel on a Christmas tree.

(Someone had a late one last night.)

It is something of a tradition in Zen that when the aspiring young neophyte asks the wizened old master “What is Zen?” that the master respond with a cryptic phrase of the form: Zen is:

“The morning dew,”

“A pebble in your shoe,”

“A flower petal falling to the ground,”

“A beetle crawling in the sand,” or

“The cold wind on a winter's eve.”

But all the master is really saying is, “Zen is the experience of this moment.”

(Words written poorly on the page.

Rhyme without reason.

Incomprehensible mutterings.

The ravings of a madman.)

Words cannot describe Zen, Satori, Zazen, and all the rest, because one can either be lost in words or lost in the moment, but never both.

(Unless one's moment consists of being lost in words. Huh? Huh? What about then, my twisted up Zen minded friend?)

Ever awoken from a dream and not be able to remember what it was about? Just that it was nice and pleasant? And that you really wanted to remember what the dream was all about and maybe go there again? But all that was really left of the moment was a vague idea, a wisp of a memory that floats out of sight, just out of reach?

I've got a sneaking suspicion that's what Zazen is like... and why words fail to describe the state. Being totally in the moment, no part of the mind was taking notes, so once the moment is gone, it's gone.

(A lot of things are like that: logic, reason, common sense...)  
The self.

Zen: the absence of being.

(It being nothing, the last figurative hope.)

You'll never see the world around you if every once in a while you don't stop and look at it for a moment... or two... or three... or four.

(Exactly, how long is a moment, anyhow?)

'Cause I've been thinking, maybe I've been reading a moment or two, too long.)

No matter how frustrated, angry, or annoyed you get, it's best to assume that everyone else around you feels worse.

(Tell me about it. Even though you're sort of making sense right now, you're still pissing me off.)

When you're young, they punish you by sticking you in a corner and telling you to stare at a wall for hours on end. When you're an Old Zen Master, that's your reward.

(Reason #32 for not devoting your life to Zen. The upside is staring at walls. The downside, having to read books like this.)

I'm just going to complain for a few more minutes, then I'll

be fine.

(You, too?)

Looking for something to believe in, something that's worth fighting for? Zen will teach you that there's nothing worth fighting for. And that's something.

(Really? I thought it was nothing. Maybe we should go over this one again.)

Having nothing, owning nothing, being nothing...  
Nothing can be taken away from you.  
Nothing is worth fighting for, nor enduring strife nor struggle.

This nothing is not something. It is not cause for pride nor sorrow, not happiness nor despair.

It is.

But then, it is not.

A fleeting moment, here and gone.

A memory, never to be regained... that is here with you forever.

(Now, you see. This. This is what I'm talking about.

Nonsense, through and through.

Might as well write the first thing that comes into your head. Put it down, let it go, and move on.)

There's nothing to it.

(You can say that again.)

Nothing.

(Alright already, we get it.)

In the sense that the problem with Christianity is an irrational faith in Christ.

So too, the problem with Buddhism is a sort of silly, over the top reverence for the Buddha.

(I know what you mean buddy. I've long regarded Satan as

the thorn in the side of Satanism.

And if I may be politically incorrect for a second, Jews to be the problem with Judaism.)

Silence, I have at least some hope of controlling that.

(You've clearly never lived under a troop of circus acrobats. I've never heard such a racket. And when they finally moved out, guess what? A herd of rhino's moved in. But then, I digress...)

Jealousy of other's success is something I have to come to grips with.

(Fortunately, jealousy of your success is not likely something I will ever have to come to grips with, myself.)

Anyone you meet could already be enlightened.

(For all you know, everyone you meet already is.)

If you ever find yourself wondering whether you should be annoyed or not, the answer is no.

(Problem is, I'm not wondering whether I should be annoyed, I know I should be annoyed, especially with you.)

When you find yourself angry or thinking of revenge, consider whether the cause of this emotion is present in the moment with you. If not, if it is removed in time and space, then let the annoyance go, the time to be angry has long since passed.

(Stupider words were never spoken. Haven't you ever heard the saying: revenge is a dish best served cold.)

Break the endless cycle of Book, Read, Search, Book.

Put the book down and let the ever after begin today.

(You're speaking to the choir, Mutton Chop. What an endless cycle this has turned out to be: Read, Puke, Wretch, and Groan. No need to repeat that any more.)

When talking of the endless cycle of Birth, School, Work, Death, consider that reading follows a similar progression that is similarly hard to break.

(Read, Puke, and finally, Praying for Death.

No, no. Kill me now. Not another page. Don't they ever stop coming.

Lord, but somebody is in love with the sound of their own quill scratching on parchment.)

ILLUSION (a big section)

All the world is an illusion. Buddhist mystics like to say this a lot, so I'll say it again. All the world is an illusion.

But what do I mean by this?

Start with a Koan. Fill a glass halfway with water and then ask yourself: Is this glass half full or half empty?

In the end, it's a trick question, because the glass really just IS. Sure there is a measurable amount of liquid in the glass and that amount might be half of what the glass filled to overflowing would hold, but the entire exercise misses the point.

The point is that no one ever says of the ocean that it is half full or half empty. It may be at low tide or high, but the quantity of water, the nature of the ocean does not change.

Nor does anyone ever remark of a pile of leaves, "Oh, that's only half a pile of leaves. See, there's a full pile over there." One can split piles of leaves, combine them, or compare them, but in every instance each pile is still a pile... and each glass is still just a glass.

Let's start over with a glass of water -- half full -- and pour it's contents into another glass of much larger size. Although the new vessel is not nearly as full, is there less water in the new glass? Has the amount of water involved changed? Or is it just the reference point that has changed?

By the same token, is it meaningful to speak of a glass which is half empty or half full, if the vessel in question holds far more liquid than one could ever hope to consume?

Or, is it meaningful to talk of a glass that is full to the point of overflowing if the container in question is the size of a thimble and incapable of quenching one's thirst?

So, let's go back to the beginning and the glass of water. Is the glass half full or half empty? Truthfully, the specific answer doesn't matter. The important point to consider is that in whatever we answer, we will be simply putting forth an idea, a construct, a way of looking at the world that has no intrinsic meaning.

After all, even a glass that is half full isn't really half full. No one fills a glass to the brim (because it would spill and isn't practical). Thus if one were to take half the liquid commonly presented in a full glass of water, the amount of liquid would actually be significantly less than half the glass.

Thus, half is an arbitrary concept. It is a moving target.

Confused?

Perhaps that's the point.

For at some point, the burden of thought will become too great and you will stop thinking about the glass and whether it is half full, half empty, or just a glass. It isn't important which choice you make. The important aspect is that eventually you will make a choice and the choice will be arbitrary and subjective.

See the glass as half empty if you choose... or half full... or simply forget about the problem altogether. What do I care? The important part to remember is that it is a choice that you get to make. There is no underlying reality to it. It is all an illusion. And the choice you make about this little thing will color the rest of your life. For you can see existence through rose-colored glasses or blue. And although the quick of thought and clear of mind may opt for clear lenses, that is not really an option. In fact, the belief that one can see reality through un-tinted lenses is the biggest illusion of all.



Because that glass(es) we've been talking about. Where are they?

Odds are, outside of your head, the problem doesn't exist at all.

(OK. Listen up, cause I'm only going to say this like a zillion times.

You think he's only playing with a half a deck? But that's not right! No, sir! He's not the one playing with half a deck.

I can prove it. But first you've got to consider how many cards are in a deck.

52, right?

Wrong-o, chum-bo! Not in a Tarot deck, those sucker's got like 78 cards: some of which, the likes of which you've never seen. Play the Sun card in a game of Rummy at the local tavern and they'll think you're crazy, but that's only because they're the one's missing a few cards from their deck.

Understand?

Fantastic! When you get a moment, explain it to me.

In the meantime, suppose you got a poker deck, 52 cards, read them and weep, but you're playing with a bunch of yokels down on the farm, some game: Pinochle. What the hell is Pinochle, anyway? Some stupid game that the yokels play down on the farm, I guess, a game that doesn't use 52 cards but only 48 (2 of each Nines and higher). And if you play that game with a standard 52 card deck, you're going to lose. And not because you're playing with a half deck, but because you're playing with a full deck, and you've got too many cards, so you'll never discard your last card. How's a Three of Clubs going to beat a Nine of Hearts? That's what I'm saying. Start with that Three and you're doomed to lose. Why? Because getting rid of your cards, losing your cards, getting to the point where you're only playing with half a deck, that's the real goal, that's the whole point.

To win you must lose.

To Ying you must Yang.

Commo usta usted, Senior Grass'e Hopper'ero?

Of course not. You're still playing with a full deck, you've still got that stinking Three of Clubs that you're hanging onto for dear life. And the only way to get rid of it is to start over: re-deal, shuffle and cut.

But before we do, perhaps we should decide what game to play and what type of deck to use. Because who knows, maybe you'll want to play a double-decker game. In which case, even if you think you're playing with a full deck, you only really have half the cards you need.

Whoop-de-do. Will you look at that? The Cat is Licking It's Tail and I'm back at the start. A Mini Straight through the Ace. Ace High beats a Pair of Jacks, and all that.

Rake 'em in. I win.

So, sorry.

But now, I must go.)

On Happiness:

The longer one resides in a certain mental state, the easier it becomes to find.

(And to this, the word Insanity comes rapidly to mind.

Just saying.)

There are certain universal things that all Holy Men do.

Do them.

(That settles it. Tomorrow, I'm walking on water.

Well, water-skiing, anyway. But you get the idea.)

If the only way other people can tell you're a Holy Man is by the odd haircut or funny clothes, you're going about it the wrong way.

(Ha. Ha-ha. Ha-ha-ha. Sorry. Sorry. It's just that hair... and those jeans. Dude, the sixties are over. Time to get a new look.)

Attend to the moment and the future will take care of itself.

(Oh right, sure. I went on vacation once, left Future in charge. Bad idea. I wasn't gone two hours and my bud the Future had called up his friends Fate and Destiny and invited them over for a wild night. They trashed my entire life. Never again. No, sir. Never again.)

There are things you wouldn't do to a friend (lie, cheat, and steal). Don't do these things to anyone else, either.

(And by the same tokens there are things you would do to a friend (force them to watch a long boring slideshow of your vacation, just as a for instance); well, let's just put it this way: Don't do to your friends the things the you wouldn't do to your worst enemy.

"OMG! Another, goat! And this one, so different from the last. Love to see the rest, but I've got to go. Big day tomorrow, scraping the scum from between my toes, and all. Maybe get a lobotomy. Who knows? Want to get up early for that if I do. So, got to go.")

Be a friend and you will have friends.

(Be an enemy and you will have enemies... or just force them to sit through another one of your "Great Goats of New Zealand slideshows. OMG! Is it? Let me guess? Another goat?)

Jealousy is your mind's way of telling you that somebody else is doing something right.

(Isn't it odd, how I'm never jealous of you...)

A person does not become educated by listening to a single teacher.

(Tell me about it. Oh, those bachelor Phd's talk a big game, but the things they don't know about marriage would fill a book... maybe two.)

There is a dark side to every issue.

Resolve to follow the light.  
(I wonder where this tunnel leads?  
Oh, well. Not to worry. I'm pretty certain I left my body  
around here somewhere. I'm sure it'll turn up sooner or later.)

Attend to the pain of the moment.  
(Thus sayeth the [World's Greatest Attention Monger.](#))

Don't make decisions of long term importance in moments of  
anger.  
(Sounds like good advise, but I'll have to get back to you  
when I'm not so annoyed.)

See one.  
Do one.  
Teach one.  
(Read one.  
Write one.  
Erase one.)

Your passions will wind up killing you. In the end, it's only a  
matter of time.  
(Let's see. I can't fit you in Friday, I've got a prior.  
Saturday... not going to work. Sunday's my day off. Golf on  
Monday. Look, what do you say we just leave it open for now, and  
I'll get back to you.)

This is your blank page. Spend the time it would have taken  
you to read whatever words might have been on it to enjoy this  
moment, instead.  
(Not really such a blank page, is it?  
Oh, oh. You mean the next page over. Well, why didn't you  
say so.  
Oh, right. Shsh. Shsh. It's quiet time.)

Being childlike means looking at the world with inquisitive eyes, curious and watchful for what's new.

(Being childlike also means drooling incessantly and shitting your pants. So, it's not exactly all it's cracked up to be.)

Even an estranged partner adds a certain complexity and depth to the sexual experience.

(Damn it, man! Enough with the goats, already.)

Every frustration is an opportunity for learning and growth. To remain frustrated even after recalling this fact is to admit that you are fighting your education every step of the way.

(Mom, dad, I'd like you to meet one of my professors from school, Prof Dukkha -- better known as, the Goat Boy.)

Frustration is an opportunity for learning and growth.

Exhaustion is an opportunity to grow stronger.

(Where as this is an opportunity to close the book and go to sleep. Ah, sweet exhaustion. Relief is thy name.)

There's nothing like a picture of a hot girl to inspire me to be a better man.

(Not a goat? Not a nag? Not a mare? We're talking about an actual human being here?)

What can I do today -- in this moment -- to help me become the man I wish to be?

(Step one: undergo a sex change operation.)

The essence of Zen is that nothing needs doing.

(Or reading. Nothing needs doing or reading... or for that matter writing. So, what do you say, Goat Boy, time to hang up the quill?)

This is the price for living in a world such as this.

(More to the point, reading jibberish is the price to be paid for perusing a book such as this. Just saying.)

If one hits their thumb while hammering, one will understandably be annoyed. Some degree of annoyance is inevitable. After all, no one wants to hit their thumb with a hammer.

But one will be better able to deal with this annoyance, if it doesn't happen very often.

And it won't happen as often, if one is mindful of what they are doing when pounding nails.

This is the essence of Zen.

This is the two-pronged method for reducing and dealing with Dukkha.

(See, this is why I like this guy. Buddha, what a chump, he went on and on about the Four Pillars of Zen and the Eightfold path. But this guy, he's got it down to the two-pronged method of hitting the nail on the head. Now that's progress.)

Take a breath.

Gaze into the distance.

Only when you must, turn the page and read the next entry.

(And no, Johnny, you don't get to watch TV or go out and play when you're done. If you finish ahead of the class, you can just go back to the beginning and start over.

I thought that would get you into the right mood.

Now, take a deep breath (sigh if you like).

Gaze longingly into the distance.

And only when you can resist the urge no longer -- foolish being that you are -- only then may you turn the page.)

To be in the moment, unfettered and real, one must turn off the self-talk, the moment-by-moment commentary, and the unending narrative.

But it is not only the self-talk that one must slough off like a reptile sheds its skin, one must also cast off the emotional flow, the last remnants of reasoning, and the habitual tracks of the reactive mind.

It is only in this way that one can be free, alive, and see the world as it truly is without blinders, filters, or deception.

(I must confess to being a little curious as to what this unfettered world looks like, o' Crazy One.

You know, what the world looks like sans logic, emotion, or reason.)

Everything that matters can be found in this moment.  
(Except for my car keys! Haven't happened to see them, have you?)

This moment contains all that there is.  
(Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.  
Everything except those blasted car keys.)

The key to Nirvana (Ah, here they are! Always the last place you look!) is comprehending (not to mention believing) that this moment contains everything required for full and complete happiness. Nothing else is required. Nothing else is missing.

(Except for now my wallet's gone! I mean, isn't that how it goes? I finally found my keys, and now my wallet's gone missing.

Now let me retrace my steps...

Why of all the...

The last time I had my wallet, I was with that no-good thieving Goat Boy. I bet he took it. No wonder he seemed so pleased with himself. He best not say anything about spending this moment anyway you want next or there will be... um, the opposite of Nirvana to pay, Dukkha I believe they call it.)

Spend this moment however you wish.

It is yours to enjoy and contains all the riches for which you could ever hope or dream.

(OK. That's it!)

When flossing your teeth, let the activity fill the whole of your mind, spend the moment flossing your teeth... and nothing more.

(Sounds like another wild night at the Goat Boy's.)

Your life will not only seem longer, it will last longer if you slow down and make the morning last.

(Hey! Aren't those the lyrics to a song?)

In all things, try to do your best and be as slow and deliberate as possible.

(O-K. This. I. Will. Try. G. O. A. T! B. O. Y!)

If you are going to multitask, multitask on the task at hand.  
(Sorry. Drawing a blank here. Who knows? Maybe it's a good idea.

No, really. It could happen.)

A mantra:

Slow and steady wins the race.

(Actually, my experience has shown that a slow and steady pace is a pretty good way to insure that one loses the race.)

Another:

The \$100 I have in my pocket could buy a lot of rice.

(Didn't I tell you he swiped my wallet?)

To lose one's Ego -- one's awareness of this moment -- and to meld with the world, that is the ultimate goal of Buddhism.

(Who would have thought Buddhism and a tab of acid had so much in common.)



The capacity for abstract thought increases with age.  
Therefore, to have the mind of a child means simply to turn off the cognitive function of abstraction.

(And do you do that before or after you come up with these little gems, Goat Boy.)

Reading shortens your life.  
Don't believe me?  
Spend five minutes reading and five minutes doing nothing and see which one lasts longer.

(Oh. Oh. Oh. You mean reading something fun and interesting. Oh, now I get it.)

Have no preconceived ideas about it, Zen is the manifestation of nothing; it brings substance to the void.

(I think this just might be one of those them there koans. Ain't got time for them myself, but if you're of the mind, knock yourself out.)

Every day in every way I achieve less... and less... and less.  
Soon, I shall cease to be and thereby achieve perfection.  
(Can't come soon enough, if you ask me.)

The refrigerator creaks  
Clouds drift by  
And I am at peace.  
(Well, good for you.)

Look around you.  
Can this moment be categorized or understood in any way, except as Now?

(Refreshing?  
Invigorating?  
A good place to stop reading for a while?)

Satori is the sleepwalk dance of life.

(I, for one, don't want to do this sleepwalk dance, anymore.)

As an old man in a retirement home, let the morning pass you by. This is meditation.

(No, dude. This is being old before your time.)

Of its own accord, a ceiling fan turns in the breeze.

(Well, okey-dokey.)

Zen is now.

(Hence the saying, Now and Zen?)

Grasshopper, your mind jumps, first here then there.

You are like a flea, a parasite feeding on your own fears and desires.

If you wish to be free, you must stop behaving like an insect.

(I'll have you know, Mister, some of my best friends are insects!)

Meditation is like getting a base line reading of your mind.

Until you know your internal state, how can you accurately comprehend the true nature of the external world?

(Sort of like how before taking a picture, you might want to take a reading of the ambient light.

Well, sometimes this guy makes sense.)

Have no goals for the future.

Carry no quests from the past.

(Turn out the lights and pack a light lunch.

Because, sometimes I make no sense either.

But then, I'd feel bad if I didn't say anything at all.)

Last thing at night and first thing in the morn', I sit on my pot and meditate.

(Just in case you were wondering about the ultimate origin of these delectable little gems.)

One day, they'll make an immersive computer game that'll accurately mimic the real world. Until then, you'll have to console yourself playing the real thing.

(My advice for you, Goat Boy, be prepared for an Epic Fail.)

Gratefully dedicated to a higher calling.

(To live you must die.

But to be truly dead, you must never have lived at all.)

On the journey towards enlightenment there is no difference between the first step and the last. The trick is to keep on walking.

(You heard the man.

Attention!

Eyes forward!

Chin Up!

Left! Right! Left! Right! Left...

Hey! You there! In the back row! Pick up the pace!)

To awaken, one must first let their mind fall asleep.

(But does this not imply that to be in a state of slumber, one must have already been awake at some time in the past?

Maybe the world was sort of boring and that's why I decided to take a nap in the first place?

Huh? Ever think of that?)

When you find yourself in a rush, that's the best time to take a break and slow down.

(Ah, a man after my own heart.)

Being harried is like a disease; it's a bad habit that is amazingly difficult to break.

(Sort of like picking your nose... only not as gross.)

## Blessing

Consider the blessings of this moment.

What are the blessings of now?

(One page closer to the end of the book by my way of reckoning.)

Every annoyance is a call to now.

Every annoyance is a blessing in disguise.

(So, now he's calling himself a blessing. Talk about an egomaniac.)

So, here's my pitch for my hit reality TV show: Ultimate Buddha!

You see, there's this mystic master -- the guru -- and he's got a bunch of follower/disciples who compete to win his attention, positive regard, and so on by solving complex koans, meditating to exhaustion, and limiting themselves to a low calorie -- starvation level diet. And as the season progresses they'll advance through various levels of attainment and achievement with mystic sounding names until one of them is -- Finally! -- selected for "Dharmic Transmission."

(But here's the real gag. See, before the show is halfway through, it will be revealed that the guru -- if you want to call him that -- has been having... um, intimate relations with the livestock on his farm -- and you were wondering why they focused on those goats and their pained facial expressions so much during the opening title sequence. Anyhow, the laughs will ensue, the series will degrade into one giant farce, and the disciples will ultimately dissipate to the far corners of the Earth, trying hard to forget the time they wasted on the 'Master's Farm'. But we can't just end

there, so seeing as how no one else is around, old Betsy will wind up receiving what the Goat Boy is euphemistically referring to as "Dharmic Transmission," live on national TV. Talk about sensationalism!

This programming may not be suitable for all ages.  
Dharmic Transmission is a trademark of Ultimate Buddha, Inc.

Goats not available in all markets.)

## Meditation

Meditation is Now.

To practice:

Keep your eyes open. Focus on your surroundings, not your thoughts.

Keep your back straight, so you don't fall asleep.

And do it first thing in the morning, last thing at night, and for a few minutes here and there in between, so your mind gets used to the repetition.

You can make it harder if you want to, but it's not a requirement.

(What? No gongs? No incense? No cruelly uncomfortable sitting positions? That's not meditation. Let me tell you about meditation...)

Well, we're waiting.

This I want to hear.

(What? Oh, right. Should have figured a guy like you wouldn't know the first thing about real meditation. Let's just say that if your legs don't go numb, your stomach isn't rumbling from hunger, and you don't have someone smacking you in the back of the head with a board every few minutes to keep you awake and your mind focused, you're not doing it right.)

<Snicker>

Sounds like fun.

(No one said enlightenment would be easy.

Oh, you're serious. Well then, try the group up the ways, I hear they're into that sort of sick sort of shit.)

## 14 Precepts

The Tiep Hien Order of Buddhism gained international acclaim during the Vietnam War when certain of its adherents decided to immolate themselves. Looking at the Order's Fourteen Precepts -- which every member must vow to uphold and obey or so I am led to believe -- may shed some light as to why setting themselves on fire seemed like such a good idea at the time... and then again, it may not.

(Maybe there should be a warning in here somewhere. DO NOT LIGHT YOURSELF ON FIRE. Only very enlightened beings -- like the Goat Boy, just as a for instance -- should think about torching themselves... as a service to others, I'm thinking, if nothing else.)

Precept One [and as are the all rest, this precept is abbreviated, perhaps to the point of eroding its original intent, for clearly I am not a follower of the faith and so may not know or understand what these precepts are all about] - Do not be bound by dogmatic thoughts or concepts.

(Yes, folks. This is the first precept that those Tiep Hien monks must swear allegiance to -- the concept that swearing allegiance to an idea is stupid.)

Precept Two - What you know will change.

(Hence, you'll come to change your mind about the wisdom of vowing to conform to anything.)

Precept Three - Do not force others to adopt your way of thinking. Through example and dialogue others will come to see the error of their fanatical ways.

(It's true. Set yourself on fire and others are bound to follow your fine example. Don't believe me? Give it a shot.)

Precept Four - Do not avoid or turn your back on suffering.

(Rather, pour gasoline over your head and light a match. You think you've got Dukkha? That's not Dukkha. I'll show you Dukkha.)

Precept Five - Share your wealth with the less fortunate.  
(Or at least, write an ironclad Will and Last Testament before setting off for the bonfire.)

Precept Six - Do not feed anger.  
(Do not feed the sharks. Do not feed the bears. For that matter, do not feed any of the creatures at the zoo. Believe it or not, their natural diet does not consist of marshmallows, peanuts, and/or jellyrolls... that last one I included for your benefit, Goat Boy.)

Precept Seven - Don't disperse yourself, i.e. stay focused on your goal.

(That's right. You would not believe how many of the younger monks we send to the market with strict orders to light themselves on fire only to find them still alive at the end of the day. Lax. That's what it is. Lax. Lax. Lax.)

Precept Eight - Don't say mean things.  
(Whatever, Goat Boy!)

Precept Nine - Don't lie.  
(Don't say all things are impermanent -- even the validity of ideas -- and then go forming a crazy-ass cult whose First Precept is that it's members must vow adherence to a set of unvarying mental concepts. Fucking hypocrites.)

Precept Ten - Don't profit off of Buddhism.  
(That's right, no setting up communes, building temples, running weekend retreats, or worst of all, writing books if you plan on making any money off of them. Buddha never asked for a dime for his teachings. Granted, he died poor. But you can't take it with you. So really, what's the loss?)

Precept Eleven - Don't make any money off of evil.  
(As apposed to the much simpler, don't do anything evil.  
"What? This? I'm not making any money off of this. I'm doing it for the sheer love of it. So, it's OK.")

Precept Twelve - Don't kill.

(Unless you have a sudden urge to light yourself on fire. For one must keep in mind: To all things, there is an exception.)

Precept Thirteen - Don't steal.

(OK. But what if I -- through no fault of my own -- manage to misplace my can of gasoline and pack of matches on the way to the protest? Can I "borrow" some gasoline, then? How about some matches? You know, as long as I promise to return them when I'm done?)

Precept Fourteen - Your body is a temple.

(You heard the man. Worship me for I am a blaze of glory.)

Bored

Pure Land is a state of mind.

Pure Land is the place at which you arrive after you've put down the book, turned off the TV, and become so bored that you are even bored of being bored, so bored that you become sort of giddy and drunk and starved for sensory inputs, and the world sort of comes alive.

(Ah, the sweet intoxication of psychosis.)

The song list playing in your head prevents you from listening to the songbirds of the morning.

(Unless of course, I'm playing the Byrds.

Never thought of that, did you? Admit it.)

Naptime is over.

(Hey! No fair! I never got my juice!)

Do not do anything that reduces your credibility.

Do not do anything that reduces your integrity.

(For some, I suppose that means: Do not do anything. Maybe that's why all those monks of old were always sitting around with their thumbs up their arses; it beat the alternative.)



Want to be an effective missionary?  
Be credible -- i.e. don't lie or say stupid things  
Start the discourse at the your audience's conceptual level --  
i.e. don't talk over their heads or about what they consider trivial or  
unimportant.

Try to convert those who are capable of converting others in  
the community first -- i.e. influence the influencers.

(No mention of guns, superior fire power, or booze? Not  
very serious about this whole missionary thing, are you?)

Daily Meds:

I consider my girlfriend's constant interruptions and requests  
for attention as a call to Now and part of my daily meditations.

(Sounds like ole Betsy's got an itch she just can't scratch, if  
you know what I mean.)

Some hormonal change must take place to make a man more  
altruistic after he's fathered a child. But not having sired any  
children yet, I'm self-centered enough not to want any such change  
taking place.

(On behalf of mankind and the rest of creation, I would like  
to thank you.)

Do you think in the days of old when one of the masters  
would give a student a koan to ponder for years on end that the  
other monks would get sick and tired of that student's continual  
babbling on about the same thing over and over again?

"One hand clapping? Hmm. Any ideas, George?"

(Me, I'm thinking 'George' and the rest would just smack the  
heck out of the poor NOOB.

"One hand clapping?"

Smack!

"You want to know about One hand clapping?"

Smack!

"I'll tell you about One hand clapping!"

Smack!

"Have you had enough or do you finally get it?"

Smack!)

I have read enough in my life to know that the joys I have been told were to be found within the pages of books are simply not there.

(Sometimes I think this guy forgets exactly who is the heckler and who is the heckle-e.)

As a follower of Zen, I think I just might be a Proto-Reactionary Sensationalist, but don't ask me what that means, exactly.

(Don't worry, I won't. In fact, the thought hadn't even occurred to me. Being a Post Modern Nihilist Non-Reactionary Revisionist, I tend to take things as they come.)

When in a rush, relax.

When frantic, freeze.

When overwhelmed, unload.

Should a call to action be heard, interpret it as a call to inaction.

While a seeming emergency should be treated a chance to pause and take stock of what is really important.

(Um, yeah.

So this guy's an unemployed goatherd.

Well, now you know why.

No doubt the last words his previous employer said went something like this:

"When I say jump, you ask 'How high?' You don't stop to smell the roses or listen to the call of the ocean. You don't... Wait. Are you even listening to me? Goat boy! Goat boy! Earth to Goat Boy! That's it! You're fired!"

"Yeah right, dream on. I've got your severance package right here.")

There is no escape.  
There is nowhere to go.  
There is only here and now... the last refuge from the self.  
(Understandably, something this guy wants to get away from.)

Being successful in the moment is to be valued over having succeeded in the past.

(Yes, but it is quite difficult to acquire the accouterments of the later without at some point having succeeded in the former.)

Before we can love others, we must love ourselves.  
(But the Catch-22 of it all is that before we can love ourselves, we must love others, you ignorant so and so.)

To thy own self be true.  
(But, hey. Feel free to lie to the rest.)

Model your life on the life of your heroes.  
Live your life as an example to the rest.  
(Of what not to do, I'm thinking, if the Goat Boy's life is to be any indication.)

Be the real thing.  
(Are you saying I should be a Coke™?  
What if I'd rather be a Pepper™?)

Today I will.  
(Well in that case, today I won't.)

I am the Iron Buddha.  
(Well, you're something, that's for sure.)

They're only words, it's not like they mean anything.  
(Ah, truer words were never spoken.)

Do not lower yourself by entering the fray.  
(The Fray? Isn't that a nightclub?  
Oh, oh. It's that sort of nightclub.  
OK. Word to the wise, folks.  
DO NOT enter The Fray!  
You will not like what you see there.)

Upon Enlightenment you will find that Reality is a Non-Sustainable Concept.

(Fair enough. But for those of us who feel that Enlightenment is the Non-Sustainable Concept, what happens to Reality then?)

In life, you can't just show up, you have to be present.  
(So true. I took this evening class, once. And although I showed up for every meeting, because I sat in back and never raised my hand, the teacher marked me as absent -- you know, not present -- for every class and gave me an F for the course. I talked to the prof about it after I got my grades, and he went on about how I'd flunked the mid-term and final and never handed in a single homework assignment. But you know that if I'd sat in the front row and shown a little leg, I'd have gotten an A.

What? It's true. He was that type of teacher.)

The masses are Super Saturated with Need and Desire.  
Don't be like them.

(Tell a guy a catchy phrase; and if he's writing a book, you just know he's going to try and work it in there somewhere.)

Be aloof from the concerns of the day.

(Got me, what he means. I can't find 'loof' in the dictionary anywhere.)

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, flatter your betters until they are better no more.

(Yes. Yes. That's all fine and dandy. But let's get down to what's really important. Working on the assumption that they could chuck wood, how much wood would a woodchuck chuck? That's what I want to know.)

The "Continual Revelation of the Manifestation of Reality" means that our ideas must be continually updated.

(Which means instead of being a nutcase, the Goat Boy is now just totally off his rocker.)

"Help! I've fallen and I can't get up."

(See, I told you.)

Do not run from your past.

Let the visions of your past be clear and accurate.

(You know, while you're enjoying the here and now.)

The memories you make today will last a lifetime.

Do yourself proud.

(But no real guidance on what that means.

Guess I'll have another beer and try to figure it out.)

If you wish for what you have, you will have what you wish for.

(Let's be clear on something, I did not wish for this here book. And anybody who did, I'm thinking they're feeling a bit ripped off by now.)

Free time begets free time, just as indolence and ease beget indolence and ease.

(In other words, you won't have to worry about having any responsibilities if no one will give them to you.)

The less you attend to your unhappiness, the happier you will be.

(Ignorance being bliss, and all that.)

A rich man wants for nothing.

Therefore, want for nothing and you will be rich.

(A foolish man knows nothing.

Therefore, know nothing and you will be a fool.

Well, what do you know? It works.)

Concentrating fully on your breath means that you are concentrating on nothing else. It is so often the absence rather than the presence, which makes meditation so profound and meaningful.

(Blast it all!

Stop breathing on my neck.

This is the last time I sit in the front row.

I'm warning you. Stop it!

Don't make me come back there.)

It is often easier to do than to do not.

Do not take the easy way.

(...)

Patterns are made for change.

(Change is made from patterns.)

To be aware of the moment, one cannot be lost in it.

Experience requires some measure of distance before it can be fully observed.

(Lost in the moment? Now you tell me. I knew we should have asked for directions at that last gas station. But no, you

wouldn't have that. And now we're lost. Well now, doesn't that beat all.)

Karma is another way of saying: where one finds themselves tomorrow all depends upon what one does today.

(Well, if it's as simple as that, I'm hopping on a plane to Jamaica.)

To every question there is an answer.

(Really? Then riddle me this, oh wise one. Which Darren on Bewitched was the best?)

What is and what one perceives it to be are the same. One does not follow the other. One is not the cause. They spring to being in tandem.

Perception IS reality.

So by choosing one's perception, one is in fact choosing their reality.

(And I perceive you to be a complete and total idiot, Goat Boy. Just saying.)

The light within will show the way.

(Oh, yeah. This is like totally true. I was in this blackout once. And I thought, I'll get a candle. And that was a good idea. So, what do you know? A little cartoon light bulb turned on over my head, and I never did need to light those candles. True story. I kid you not.)

In life, there is the probable and the possible.

Focus on the probable and you will have no need to worry about the possible.

(Is it possible, I have no idea what you mean? Probably. Probably.)

Anger has no place in a happy man's heart.

(Tell me about it. If you want a little elbow room for your emotions, try hanging out in the liver instead. It's much bigger... especially if you drink.)

If you live your life focused on the greatness you will become in a thousand years, such greatness will find you thousands of years sooner.

(I'm hoping, because I just don't think I have that long.)

What you will be in a thousand years depends upon the steps you take today. This is the secret of Karma: you can take it with you.

(OK. See, this is where Goat Boy is wrong. He's never even been to Eastern Europe and so he has no idea what a hassle going through full lock-down customs can be. I mention this only because from what I've heard, St. Peter is like the mother of all custom inspectors; nothing -- and I mean nothing -- gets past him.)

Follow your soul, it knows where it's going.

(Hmm. Let's see.

...

To the fridge. Imagine that.

Guess it needed some nourishment.)

Honor the blessings of the day that you might receive more.

(Food! Glorious food...)

Memories of good never stopped one from doing evil; only memories of evil, itself, have done that.

(What strange memories you must have.)

Know that feeling you get in the pit of your stomach when you think about slamming your foot in a door or hitting your hand with a hammer.



An Enlightened being feels that way about hurting another; it is like contemplating hurting oneself -- sickening and disagreeable.  
(Then let's just say when it comes to you, Goat Boy, I'm not very enlightened. Get my drift?)

To improve society, improve yourself.  
For the world is nothing more than the sum of its parts.  
(The Goat Boy's no follower of gestalt, I'm thinking.)

The world will always be full of evil.  
But will you?  
(Well, now. That is a good question. It's about time. I knew I was reading this book for a reason. Congrats, Goat Boy. You finally said something worthwhile.)

Most things claimed as "justifiable" are not.  
(Justifiably, I must disagree.)

That which helps you hinders you and vice versa.  
(I can assure you, Goat Boy, any help I have given you has been totally unintentional.)

The only treasure you need acquire is the heart of a great man.  
(So, are we going to do this thing with an anesthetic? Or do you want to be adventurous and experience every little cut of the scalpel?  
Oh, wait. Damn!  
That's like a compliment, isn't it?  
I knew I'd say something sooner or later that could be taken the wrong way.)

It is always possible to love more.  
Continue to strive towards this perfection.  
(No.

You want the counterargument? It's a decision not to walk this sick twisted path, pure and simple.

Nothing more.

Nothing less.)

To be lost in love is to be lost in oneself.

(I suppose, in his case, with no chance of asking anyone intelligible for directions.)

One cannot become enlightened alone.

One must either carry the rest upwards or be dragged back down into the muck by them.

(So, you're saying I can become enlightened carrying others on my back or riding in luxury and style? Well, if it's all the same to you, I'll choose the later.)

When at last you confront yourself; it is inevitable that you become overwhelmed by your grandeur and humbled by your own magnificence.

(Happens every time I pass a mirror, dude. Happens every time.)

All things are transitory.

(Like the transitory nature of things? Just as a for instance?)

Be kind.

(Ah, but it's cruel to be kind, you know, in the right measure.

Or so the folks on the radio would have us believe.)

Would you stand on a hill and yell at the wind to stop blowing? Or the sun to stop shining?

Of course not. Therefore, waste not your time concentrating on the deficiencies of your fellow man and advising how their shortcomings might be corrected.

(I mean let's face it, even if you enlightened them, they wouldn't be smart enough to do anything about it, anyway.)

Talking about art is an art in itself.

(And while mulling this over, one should remember that being "artless" in discourse is generally considered to be a mark of honesty and sincerity.)

Even the ordinary becomes extraordinary if it is done with enough concentration and devotion.

(Extraordinary observation, my goat loving friend! Simply extraordinary!)

The taste of meat is the taste of death.

The flavor of flesh is death.

(Somebody's regretting that undercooked pulled-pork sandwich they ate last night, I'm thinking.)

A thing not required is extraneous, best to let it go.

(Like this here quip for example.)

Your place is with the gods.

Go there today.

(Sounds innocent enough, but consider that when a priest wants to say 'Fuck You,' what he ends up saying is 'God Bless.'

So in that light, have a great day.

You know, live long and prosper.)

As to crime, society is always to blame; for without creating the modes, means, and rewards, a criminal could never get started down the path or hope to succeed.

(See [The Medium is the Message](#) for more clarification on this concept.

In the end, every society is responsible for the creation of its own sickness and means for its downfall.)

With strength, all things become easy.  
(Except touching your toes. You ever watch one of those body builders try to touch their toes or scratch their back? They sure don't make that look easy.)

Only after you have forgiven everyone else may you forgive yourself.

(I may forgive, but I'll never forget.)

Constantly judge yourself as you would on your final day and you can't go wrong.

(9.5.

Ah, what the heck.

I'll go with the crowd and give myself a perfect 10.)

The opposite of bragging is hiding in shame.

Live your life so that you are compelled to do neither.

(I hate it when he makes sense.)

Value the items which you possess.

If you do not value an item more than any other would, it is best to discard it.

(Yeah, I hear you.

I'm assuming this tidbit of wisdom goes for aphorisms, as well.)

## Excuses

Do not make excuses for your failings.

Except them and try to do better.

(Fuck you.

Yeah, I know. Not really heartfelt. But tomorrow is another day.

As god is my witness, I will hate again!)

The Buddha is an illusion.

Therefore, discard all illusion and not only will you see the Buddha, you will become the Buddha.

(You ever see that movie with the line, "It's just like those rich folks to be throwing away a perfectly good white boy like that"?)

Well, this is just like that... or not.

Really, I've got no idea what either he or me is talking about at this point.

Anyhow, if you see the Buddha by the side of the road, take him home... or just leave well enough alone and figure the folks who threw him out knew what they were doing.)

Do not run toward death nor run away.

Stand where you are and live.

(I mean, it's metaphorical. If a freight train is bearing down on you, feel free to jump out of the way. And then when you are done dusting yourself off, rejoice in life... before leaping out of the way of that 18-wheeler that is bearing down on you, and so on.)

Living in the now, a man with no future is relieved of the burden of worrying about it.

(And if that's not an enviable position to be in, I don't know what is.)

Let your spirit be free.

(Fly! Fly! Fly away little spirit.)

The blame lies not with others but always within oneself.

(Tell me about it. Those others, they're alright. But that oneself... I mean, what's with that anyway, oneself. Who calls themselves oneself? It sort of tells ya all you need to know about them right there. Oneself, of all the blooming nerve.)

If you blame or complain about those whom you love, you do not really love them.

(Fair enough, so what do you call it then?)

Time

In time, all things.

(Oh, we're playing that game, are we? Right-o. Fair enough. I can name that aphorism in four words.)

All things, time.

(Or three.)

All things.

(Two.)

Time.

(One.)

...

(Houston, we have lift off. We have left reality far behind.)

The magic of the koan.

(Is that some sort of magic mushroom thing?)

Nothing is more important than the trivial.

(Which is simply another way of saying: things which seem to be of great import are usually found to be trivial in the end.)

You're not in Heaven unless everyone else around you is in Heaven, as well.

(And when everyone around you feels like they're in Hell, then where are you?)

Habits begin by repetition, and that's how they end.

(Tell me about it. I've stopped smoking so many times now, I think I just might have stopped as many times as I started.)

If you cannot be wise, at least be not a fool.  
(Thus sayeth the wise man? Or the fool?)

The only thing one may ever hope to control is themselves.  
(And by controlling this one thing, one controls all that there is to control.)

Live your life as an example of how you would best live it.  
(Brilliant!  
No, no. Really. Brilliant!  
Of course, you caught the double negative in there, didn't you? Or maybe you didn't? Oh, well. Not to worry.  
I think. No. I think not.)

Be your own best friend, your own best company.  
This is the secret of Zen.  
(What? What's that? Who dares disturb my meditation?  
"Boot to da head! Ah, blessed silence.")

Always be packed, ready to go on a great journey.  
Live each day as your last... each week, each month, each season to it's fill.  
And if a thing, an idea, or a practice does not add to the quality or pleasure of your existence, discard it -- lightening your load, making it all that much easier to pack your things and begin anew.

(I told you he got evicted, didn't I?  
No? Oh, well. He got evicted. Now you know.)

If you do not strive for wealth, you will not have to strive at all.

(i.e. Herding goats takes effort; setting them free to wander as they will, none at all.)

The end to which one lives their life decides the quality of their life.

(Work for a goatherd, live like a goat herd... or rather, an unemployed ex-goatherd with no goats to herd.

Sort of pathetic when you stop to think about it, really.)

To suffer is to grow.

(No pain; no gain. That's what I say.)

To learn from experience is to grow wise.

(To not learn is to simply grow old.)

Is the future you strive for just a disguised reflection of your past -- long gone and hopelessly out of reach?

(Only you would know, Goat Boy, only you would know.)

To nap in a seated position without falling asleep, that is meditation,

(Yeah, yeah, yeah. And I'm studying the back of my eyelids. Just don't wake me if I start to snore.)

If you never make any mistakes, it's hard to learn from them.

(But look on the bright side. If you don't learn from your mistakes, they'll be plenty more chances to do so in the future.)

Ask yourself:

What can I learn from this person?

What can I learn from this moment?

(Oh, it's a riddle. Alright.

What can I learn from this guy?

That is a hard one.

I think I just might be stumped.)



Live life like you're rich.  
Follow your bliss.  
(And this line of thinking led you to the life of an unemployed goatherd. My. My. But isn't truth stranger than fiction.)

Never read a book from cover to cover if the message it was written to convey can fit on the dust jacket.  
(You mean like, "Embracing the Smile that is This Moment?")

Books on the lawn  
I know my feeling of frustration has been heard  
I am at peace, at last  
(The Goat Boy outstays his welcome, once again.)

Be honest with both yourself and others about your thoughts, feelings, and intentions.  
(I think I feel like you're an idiot and I have no intention of revising my opinion. You mean something along the lines of that, Goat Boy?)

Some play not to win, but simply not to lose.  
Play to win.  
(But try not to lose.)

If they didn't want Bridge to be a contact sport, they shouldn't have included clubs in the deck.  
(Just saying.)

Study one woman well enough, until you know them all.  
(I'm sure the same can be said of Goats.)

Maxim of the Mad: To do without thinking or thought.

(Or to write without thought or contemplation.)

At the time of death, whatever advantage you may have had in this life will be over.

(So, best to take advantage of it while you can.)

Ask yourself of all whom you meet: How does this person surpass me?

(The answer, Grasshopper: in every conceivable way.)

How is this the best of its class?

How does this thing surpass all others?

(A koan for all occasions.)

Offer no resistance to the concerns of the day.

Like a leaf in the wind, let the breeze carry them away.

(Or fly a kite. I like flying kites.)

Got no idea what this has to do with what the Goat Boy was saying. But you know how little sense he makes sometimes. So I thought I'd play along.

Kites with long tails made of rags are the best.

Same with goats, I hear tell.)

Fresh.

Rather than moving forward with your anger, stand quietly still until your emotions subside.

(How catatonia first sets in, I'm thinking.)

Alternative title:

And Other Bad Advice I Won't Be Heeding

(Like brushing your teeth, combing your hair, and keeping up with basic hygiene.)

Cause-by-the-by folks, the Goat Boy's affectionate nickname doesn't come from his job; but rather, his looks.)

Nothing you can do will increase your chances of becoming enlightened in this world.

(Meaning, nothing is the one thing you can do that will help. Try it, today.)

Me, myself, and I are not one; we are not the same.  
(Alright, you schizophrenic freak, you.)

Me and my mind are not the same.  
(Me, and my shadow!)

I am the smallest part of myself.  
(For he is unto the smallest drop of water in a mighty sea of ignorance.)

I am not what I know.  
I am not what I do.  
I am not what I say.  
I am not.  
(And you can't make me.)

A great mind will also attend to the smallest matters of the moment.  
(Absentminded professors of the world, take note!)

I am not me.  
(Then who are you?)

This me who says *this* is not who I am.  
(Here's to wishing the me who reads this wasn't the who, what, where, or when that did.  
Oh, the horror... the horror.)

Nothing.  
No thing.

Nothingness.  
This is the way to enlightenment.  
(Seriously, no.  
Not no way.  
Not no how.)

The Greatest Pillar of Zen on which the rest is founded.  
I am not.  
(The absence of the self being the enlightenment everyone is searching for.)

Living with a disorganized person helps one become more aware.  
(Every last time you stub your toes or bang your head, that is.)

Live your life so that should others follow your example, they would come to no harm.  
(Nor cause others to come to harm... by say, spreading false wisdom. Just saying.)

Your mind is a machine for making thought manifest in reality.  
(Which is to say, reality makes itself manifest in thought. Or so I presume.)

Like attracts like means your mind is a tool for making thought manifest.  
(But remember, if the only tool you have is a hammer, everything tends to look like a nail. Y'all have to connect the dots from there yourselves.)

When engaging in conversation, uphold your end as if that was how you earned your keep.  
(So, when it comes to reading?)

Ah, but then, you bought the book, so do what you like.)

Treat day to day conversation as therapy with you being the therapist.

(Ding!

Your hour is up.

No. No. I really must go.

Your bill will be in the mail.)

Self Help is the business of the Self.

(And even if must I say so myself, business is good.)

Greatness is achieved on your day off.

(To wit: On the Seventh Day he rested.)

Not exactly what I had in mind.

(Looking at you, him neither, brother. Him neither.)

Morning sun.

Glittering tree.

It feels like Christmas in the spring.

(Seven by Seven

With Nine in-between

A simple Hai'k'a for you'a)

The sun rises,

The sparkles fade,

And we are left with just another day.

(Full of magic, dude, full of magic.

Look, pep up little buckaroo.

So, you lost your farm.

Here's a neat little trick I learned. You fill a basin with water, and after you've washed your face for the first time in over a week, you can pull the plug and watch it drain away... In a Circling Vortex!

Is that not cool or what?)

Play not to win, but rather not to lose.  
(The words of a loser if I ever did hear them.)

Let it be in Heaven as it is on Earth.  
(Dude, don't you mean let it be on Earth as it is in Heaven?)  
No.

Let it be in your Mind as it is in this World.

(And in this way, insanity is prevented.)

Oh, I like that. Hell is holding onto an insane believe system.

(So, like. Welcome to Hell, my friend, welcome to Hell.)

Not quite what I had in mind.

(And thus we come full circle, Grasshopper. For nothing ever is.)

Religion is nothing more than a visualization technique.  
(For turning water into wine.)

Embracing the Smile that Is this Moment

Written in the style of the ancient Zen Koans, which hold that even the most profound of truths may be conveyed in a single sentence... if only the reader cares enough to look for it.

(Yeah. In other words, if you're going to get anything from this here book of "wisdom," you're going to have to make it up for yourself as you go along.)

Thus, instead of wasting time reading chapter after chapter packed full of meaningless empty words, I invite you to spend your time in a more fruitful manner, searching within for the eternal truth.

(Let's see. Eternal truths? What have we got? Sex sells. Death and taxes are inevitable. And neither Ian or myself are getting paid by the word count, so we're going to keep it short and sweet. And if you can't follow along, maybe you're not really all that interested in becoming enlightened.)

The essence of freedom is allowing your mind to go where it will.

(Like unto a fool and his money.

Cause you know, a mind is a terrible thing to waste on this here moment.)

What doesn't kill you, only makes you stronger.

(All deference to Nietzsche aside, a most important fact remains, sometimes it kills you.)

Looking for a reason to laugh?

Remember, you are your own best source material.

(Some, more so than others.)

No rules to live by.

(No dreams to die for.)

The only goal, the only struggle worthwhile is the struggle itself. For in the end, there is no finish line, no end zone, no goal.

(Or starting bell, either.

The gig is up.

And it's already ended without you.)

Examine the cracks.

The ripples will teach you more than the current.

(What type of river has cracks in it?

No, really. That's not supposed to be the set up for some sort of riddle. It's an honest to goodness question. I'm just trying to figure out what the heck he's talking about.)

No fears or hopes for the future.

No accumulation or achievements to carry forward from the past.

Thus is the nature of Zen.

(No nothing, you say?

Sort of goes a long way towards explaining why all the gurus you meet these days are fakes. Once you've achieved Enlightenment, you don't much care for anything else. Thus, everyone you meet on the road is by their very presence at the same place you are, the same distance from Nirvana.)

This is your Karma.

(This is your burden.)

This is your life.

Accept it.

Let it all go and you will be free...

(to fall, an epic fail by the side of the road, as all you meet pass you by.)

Zen and now?

Zen is now!

(Every now and Zen, at least.)

Inside your head is a lonely place to be.

(For no other will ever join you there.)

It has been said, being bored is a stepping stone towards enlightenment.

(Oh, my g-osh! Are we enlightened yet? We must be enlightened. Oh, my lord am I bored. Tell me we're enlightened.)

To love the world and everyone in it is to love oneself.

Not because we are all interconnected.

Not because we are all one and the same.

But because one observes the external world through the filter of their heart and soul, through the pathways of their mind; and in the end, one will not be happy with what they see if they do not like the medium through which they observe it.



(i.e. You are the lens through which you envision the world; and if all you see are cracks, faults, and shortcomings, it would behoove you to check your equipment.)

Embracing the Smile that Is this Moment, the title says it all.  
(i.e. you will find no further instructions or explanations than that herein.)

Buddhism is as much about doing as not doing.  
Zen and nothingness.  
(Being about as much an explanation as you're likely to get as to why these entries are so short... well, that and the fact that he's prone to distraction.)

If I don't win the lottery, who am I then?  
(Same as always, win or lose... but then we're talking about you, so mostly it's lose.)

At the heart of every religion you will find some sort of bizarre incoherent belief; this is what makes it a religion and not a mere philosophical discipline.

(So what makes yours so odd?  
Oh, right.  
That you can embrace an intangible thought and hold it close to your heart: like love, kindness, or compassion.)

Embrace the fracture...  
(And you will be made whole.)

There was a thought  
That I lost.  
Don't even know what it looked like  
Or where I put it.  
But I know I'll recognize it  
The moment it returns.

So I sit here looking within  
Waiting its return.  
(This my friends is the antithesis of Zen.)

One of my prejudices is that if I see a person with a damaged body, I believe the mind contained within must be damaged as well.

(You monster, you.)

Embrace the chasm.  
Embrace the solitude.  
Embrace the end.  
(Accept the worst, and you can live with anything,)

Do not confuse knowledge with wisdom.  
(Or wit with wisdom.)

Quantum mechanics tells us that the process of observing changes the observed. This, in a nutshell, is the whole purpose and process of Zen.

(And as to a nut in a cell, the reason Buddhists flock to monastic orders is because they are trying to assemble a giant particle accelerator of the mind, which will enable them to one day, take over the world and change it for the good. Mu-ha-ha!)

Universal Truth is not universally acknowledged.  
(At least on that, I think we can all agree.)

I do not know what befell her to make her so angry, but should such a malady ever befall me, my one hope is that I accept my fate with calm and equanimity, to remain happy when no one would blame me for spending the rest of my days in a mindless rage.

"I bet you like walking in the fucking rain, fucking idiot. Like a fucking duck, that's what you are."

Of course come nightfall, a warm safe place was waiting for me.

(Fucking duck.)

I am the punch line.

(Life is the joke.)

It has been said that "there are those here among us who think life is but a joke."

And the lucky ones are those who know they are the punch line.

(Darn tooting, you fucking duck. Quack. Quack. Quack.)

The trick in life is to get to a place where you aren't struggling against yourself -- struggling just to survive.

(Trust me. It's not me who I am struggling against. It's all these fucking ducks.)

Pain -- physical, emotional, spiritual -- is an indication that you're living your life wrong.

It's a sign that something needs to change.

And that something is you.

(You are the pain that needs to change, so I'mma going to get you the fuck'a outta of my life. Capiche?)

Attend you own personal invisible college of the mind on a daily basis.

(Yeah. Yeah. Don't rush me. Right now, I'm working on the syllabus.)

My sovereign right and obligation as a consumer is to consciously attend to my purchases and direct my buying habits so that they net the greatest good.

(So, let's see. I could Super-Size that? Or, I could get a second double cheeseburger? Decisions. Decisions. Oh, right. And which one will serve the greater good?)

Most surfers aren't graceful at all, they are struggling to simply stay on their board and ride the wave.

(Well, duh. Until you realize the secret of surfing success is to become the wave, you don't ever ride a wave; it rides you.)

Life is a joke.

(And you are the punch line... but then, I think, I repeat myself)

To live happily as a monk, one must abolish the Will to Money.

(Ala Nietzsche as interpreted by Marx, I'm thinking.)

Impress

Live your life to impress yourself.

(Because you're as sure as \$#!% not going to impress me.)

Let the vision of who you want to be nurture the person who you are.

(So, what we're really saying is in the realm of Being and Nothingness, we should let Nothingness take the lead? I don't think so.)

And thus you cease to be.

I think, therefore I am, Descartes famous proof has its detractors. If one takes away the obviousness of it all, it's not a convincing proof at all.

Look at the form. I (blank), therefore I am.

I talk, I walk, I eat green eggs and ham; therefore I am.

If I am already there and able to do anything, then clearly I am. It's a circular argument. The conclusion is contained implicitly within the proposition that I (blank) and nothing has been illuminated beyond the simplistic idea that a thing which exists does in fact exist.

But even from this meager conclusion, one can gain a valuable insight into the nature of being if one roots around in the cracks. You see, Descartes famous proof takes the form that it does, because Descartes knew that his observations about the universe might be wrong and his whole concept of reality might, therefore, be in error. Even though Descartes thought that he was talking, thought that he was walking, and thought that he was eating green eggs and ham (it's a well-known fact that Descartes wasn't a finicky eater), he knew that he might not actually be... doing any of that.

Let me say it again slowly.

Descartes knew that he might not actually be -- doing or otherwise.

And that his existence might be nothing more than an illusion.

(Much like your typical philosophical proof or commentary thereof, I'm thinking.)

Thinking is no more proof of existence than the lack of thinking proves the converse.

(But what happens when I don't think on alternate Wednesdays that you may or may not fail to utterly exist at being nothing in a convincing manner on an intermittent basis? What then Mr. Hot Shot Philosopher?)

Would a rock exist any more or less if it thought?

Does the apparent lack of sentience in the mineral species indicate a failure to exist?

(Thus why I never much cared for philosophy.)

## Existentialism

### EXIST

In the Garden of Eden, the apple was freewill.  
(And the orange was philosophy; the banana, internet porn; while the pomegranate was a low-grade unsecured financial instrument. No one ever said Adam was the sharpest kid on the block; that Eve sure screwed him over... and not in the way you're thinking.)

Who says God gave Man his freedom?  
Fact is he stole it, as his first act of defiance.  
(And for an encore? Let's just say, there weren't no indoor/outdoor plumbing in that there garden.)

One is free to choose the nature of their existence, the nature of the reality they inhabit.  
(Hard to believe you got right here to this moment reading this book by freewill, isn't it?)

In searching for the truth, the greatest freedom can come from assuming that one's elders were wrong.  
(Hey, face facts. They didn't beat you very much as a child, and in that was their downfall.)

### Climb

If you want to be a mountain climber, live on the fifth floor.  
(Whereas, if you want to be a rock climber, sleep in the top bunk.)

I find myself searching for a religion without god.  
(Better known as [The worship of Man.](#))

Respect others -- honor them and hold them in awe -- and assume that they look upon you in the same kindly meant way.

(Remember folks: when you assume, you make an @\$ out of you and me.)

Today my good woman, I celebrate not being married to you.

(Well! I never.)

And you won't. Not if I have anything to say about it.

## Tribalism

I suffer from a tribalistic turf war of the mind,

("A tribalistic turf war of the mind," you say. Sounds like schizophrenia if you ask me. And fact is, you asking me, goes a long way towards proving my point.)

I shall make a valiant last stand in this war against Death.

(It's a suicide mission, you know.)

You have to have a sense of history before you can watch history unfold before you.

(As time stands still and boredom unfolds...)

Ignore the ignorant.

(Yes, but my only question for you is how do you ignore yourself?)

It's only a prison if you're trying to get out.

(And nobody gets out of here alive.)

Reading may well be the world's most popular form of meditation.

(I don't know about that. But this is certainly the best cure for insomnia I've ever run across.)

Think like a cell.  
(Breathe like a mountain.)

Deny The Other an existence.  
(Embrace all that is.)

In this race of life, I'm sprinting for the finish line.  
(And I'm going to let you win that one.)

The purpose of imaginative play is to enable abstract thought. And once that is achieved, we fall ever further into ourselves -- and as time goes by, without reference to an external clock, our thoughts cruising at the speed of light, time rushes by ever faster. This is why the years seem to pass ever quicker as we grow older. Kill abstract thought and time will literally stand still.

(You know, sort of like how watching grass grow or paint dry seems to take forever. Boredom has that effect.)

This man's worries are not my own.  
(I guess it might make more sense if you realize that he's talking to himself. But then, no. It doesn't actually make any more sense. Bloody fool, that's what he is.)

I am not this person.  
I do not have to let his cares concern me.  
(I suppose it's important to make clear that the 'I' and 'this person' in the above relate to the same being. If not and you take this advice to heart, you're not acting like an enlightened being, you're acting like a jerk.)

Being good is being willing to sacrifice yourself for another, to die so that another might live.

(And I suppose that means being evil is being willing to take another up on the offer. What can I say? Color me evil.)



It's not like they're trying to be fair. What's fair for one person is not fair for the next.

(And vice is versa or some such clever thing.)

If you're halfway decent at meditating and you can't, then that's a pretty good indication that you should stop and take care of whatever is causing the difficulty.

(Or maybe, it's just an indication that you're not as good at meditating as you might have previously thought.)

The problem with living in an imperfect world is that no matter how pure you are to start, sooner or later the nature of the world you live in rubs off on you.

(Or just rubs you the wrong way).

The problem with an imperfect world is that sooner or later it rubs off on you.

(Sort of like "cuties".)

The world is an imperfect place and if you're not careful it will rub off on you.

(Too late.)

## Tools for Fools

Tools are more important than beliefs.

Zen is a tool.

(And you are a fool.

(Don't you just love it when things rhyme?)

The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost equals:

You, me, and the resultant interaction between the two.

(You did notice how both you and I become the unnamed surrogate parents in the aforementioned love triangle, I'm hoping.)

Money is for people who don't know how to live without it.  
(Said the beggar to the thief.)

Money follows passion.  
(And passion attracts money.  
Just ask any old whore.)

Make the most of being poor.  
(Those that can, do.  
Those that can't, do without.)

Anything is better than nothing.  
(Yes. I couldn't agree more. Anything is better than this.)

Jealousy is the desire to be more like another.  
Heed the desire.  
(Sounds like a marketing slogan, if you ask me.)

And through elegance thereby transcend the material.  
(Oh, yeah-yeah. This is like totally hardcore Buddhist  
doctrine. I mean, there's a reason all those fifty-foot statues of  
Buddha are made of solid gold.)

## Life

Give the things around you a life of their own. Treat them as  
you would people. Honor them. Adore them. Respect them.

Do this and you will be a great conservationist -- a protector  
of things and their environments.

(Not to mention more than a little insane.)

## Realization

The great Buddhist realization is that you cannot change the world, you can only change yourself.

(And you're lucky if you can just manage that.)

It is not possible to get something for nothing.

Oh, on some level it is possible to get something for nothing.

But the -- oh, so often -- unseen side effect is to reduce one closer to nothing.

In other words, if one gets something for nothing, it behooves one to consider that they are the nothing in question.

And that they are being reduced in the process.

(And if you think about it, this pretty much sums up Zen.

Something = enlightenment

Nothing = meditation

With the unintended consequence being that the practitioner tends toward zero and ceases to be.

Thanks for nothing, Zen!)

Remember, whenever you get something for nothing, you are the nothing.

(I know you are, but what am I?

Or perhaps, I should have said, "Did you just hear something? I thought I heard something? Oh, well. Guess it was nothing, after all.")

The stars in my night sky are electric indicator lights.

(Someone needs to get out more... literally.)

## Anger

Anger is a call to action, a reminder that one is not doing things the right way.

(So basically, if it feels good, do it. Is that what you're saying?)

It's odd how we honor and revere complete wastes of time: spending a year as a monk in a Zen monastery coming rapidly to mind.

(And reading about it, coming in a close second.)

Now, if only I can get myself declared insane, then when I die alone in poverty, the cultural success of my legacy will be assured.

(Poor? Check.

Crazy? Check.

Well, two out of three, ain't bad.)

But then, I won't commit suicide, not because I am a coward, but because I am not.

(Yeah, right. Coward.)

(Ironically, that is all he wrote...)

**(IM)Pure Land Buddhism**  
**Embracing the Smile that is this Moment**

**By Ian Black**  
**(& I am Blue)**

**© Copyright Brett Paufler 2009-2014**

© 2014 Copyright Brett Paufler  
all rights reserved

Brett@Paufler.net

www.Paufler.net

Please see [www.Paufler.net/TermsOfService.pdf](http://www.Paufler.net/TermsOfService.pdf) for full disclosure.

Originally posted at:  
[www.paufler.net](http://www.paufler.net)

So, that's where more pieces like this may be found. Also, if you find this document hosted on any other site, you can rest assured that particular site is run by a bunch of thieving idiots who now owe me at least \$250,000 for copyright infringement. Thieves, because they don't have the right to host this document. Idiots because, well, exactly how hard is it to scrap off a few words at the end of a document (or even read it before you post it)? And \$250,000 because theft comes at a price... a hefty price if I have anything to say about it.

**(IM)Pure Land Buddhism**  
**Embracing the Smile that is this Moment**

**By Ian Black**  
**(& I am Blue)**

**© Copyright Brett Paufler 2009-2014**