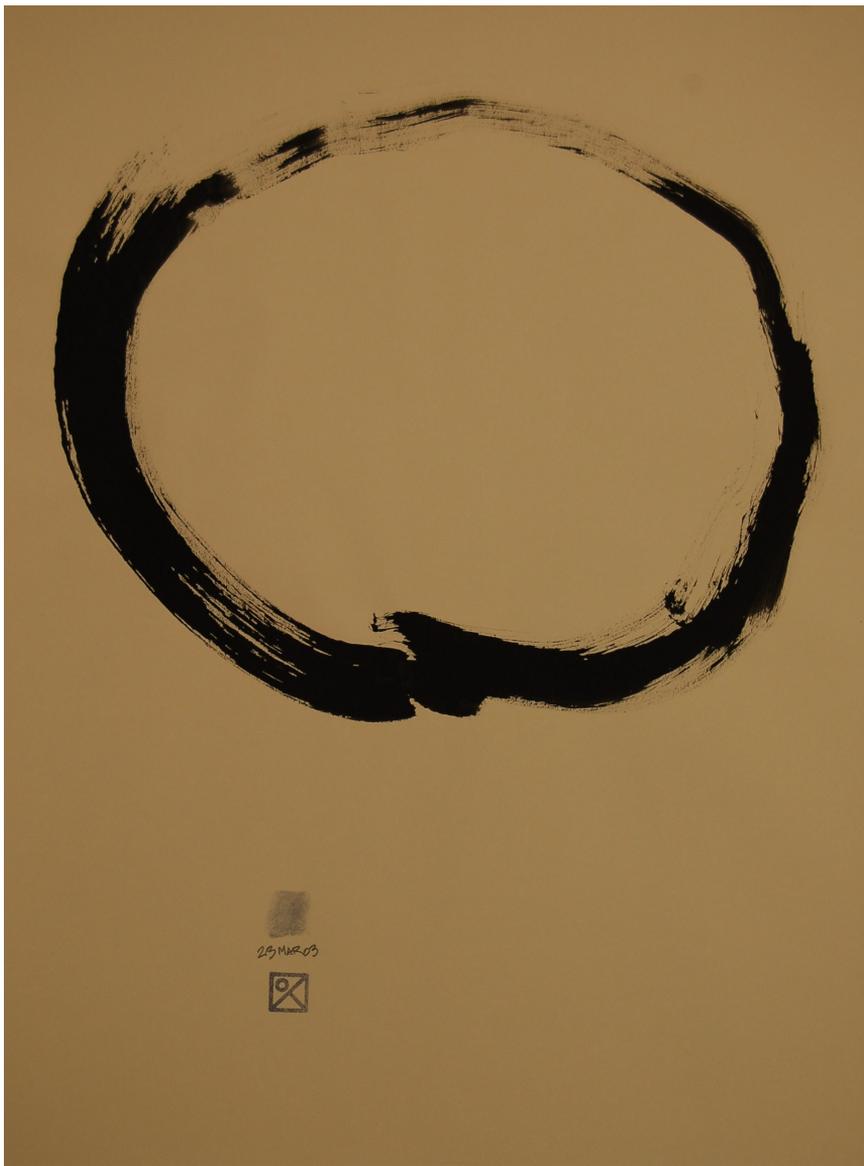


GOD IS A STOIC



a journal by

Erik Wiegardt

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Cover design and Sumi e (ink-brush drawing), “Perfect wa,” by Erik Wiegardt

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Introduction

This is *hypomnemata*, a literary genre that took the form of personal notes in antiquity. Today we would call it a journal. However, this journal is not like the usual log of daily events that inspire us in life. It is a journal of life, to be sure, but one that is specifically related to Stoic philosophy. It is a journal that is ever-mindful of Stoic theory as I perceive it in the world outside and inside my own mind. Everything is a possible subject in a Stoic's *hypomnemata*, because everything is accounted for in that philosophy. I am writing these personal notes as exercises in order to remember and more deeply examine the principles that currently shape my life and character.

My inspiration is the Roman Stoic Emperor Marcus Aurelius. He may not have been the first, but he is the only Stoic of antiquity who left a record of *hypomnemata*. We named his work, *Meditations*; he never gave it a name. So far as we can tell his exercises in Stoic philosophy, his personal notes, were not meant for publication but for remembering what he believed. What he wrote was published centuries after he died. Can you imagine it, a Roman emperor taking the time and trouble to write down notes to remind himself over and over again to always be a good and just human being? Marcus did. It is indeed an inspiration to know that in a period of history rife with wars, drought, famine, and other hardships, there was once an emperor who wrote *hypomnemata* to increase in wisdom.

And that's what I'm doing. Except that in my case, I'm not a ruler or even an important person. I'm just a common Stoic seeking to increase in wisdom. And unlike Marcus, I feel compelled to title, organize, and make my *hypomnemata* available to others even while I'm alive. Are my words worthy of such attention? Of course not, which is why I'm not looking for a regular publisher. However, I am a tutor at the College of Stoic Philosophers, and this is one of the assignments I require of my students. Everything I require of them I have already done. It is hoped that in setting about to write in their journals any who have questions, uncertainty, or a lack of confidence will be able to read this and know they can succeed.

One other thing you should know. It's not finished. It may never be finished. Like Marcus, I will need to remind myself time and again what it is that forms a noble character, probably for as long as I live. I intend to add to this journal as inspiration dictates, so that if all is well every few months there will be a new edition. And because only fools and prophets pretend to predict the future, I will leave the evolution and completion of this journal to another, greater wisdom. I can only avow my intention; fate may have other ideas. What I have begun today may end at any time. I don't really know. I spend a lot of time playing with Nature in the Pacific Ocean, and I may be fortunate enough to die there. Maybe tomorrow.

Erik Wiegardt
San Diego, California
September 2009

Booger in Kiddyland

A very big, and obviously very powerful, power boat was parked across the street last night. It was hitched to a very big and obviously very powerful truck to pull it. The boat and truck together must have cost well over \$100,000.

I have a Boogie board. It cost a little over \$100. No gas needed to make it go, no insurance premiums, parking fees, taxes, maintenance or repairs. I go to Pacific Beach with my Boogie board three or four mornings every week. I went again this morning and noticed that for an hour and a half, even when I was out of breath, I never stopped smiling.

*

They call us, “Boogers,” the surfers do. That's because we ride Boogie boards, not surf boards. They also call us, “Spongers,” because our boards are little and soft, not like their big, hard ones. They call the surf where we catch our little waves, “Kiddyland,” because it's safe and close to the shore where kids play under the supervision of their mamas. That's OK. Maybe I'm a Booger in Kiddyland because I've entered my second childhood. Or, maybe I'm here because I catch five, 3-foot waves for every 5-foot wave they catch farther out. You do the math.

*

“Lourdes of the Pacific.” That's what I call the beach where Nature and I play with my Boogie board. It's real name is Pacific Beach, or 'PB' to us locals. It's not that there's anything special about the waves or waters of PB; it just happens to be where I go for the cure. I'm sure the surf on any beach on any ocean would do – as long as it has waves. They don't have to have big ones. The cure I go for is a geriatric condition know as world weariness.

Does Nature know we're playing together? I'm part of Nature, and I know we are, but what about the greater part, the Whole? Does Nature even know I'm here? That presupposes Nature is conscious, and that its consciousness resembles our own. A classical Stoic might think that it does, but how can we be certain? The conscious providence of Nature requires faith to be believed. A Stoic's faith. But any faith, even a Stoic's faith, holds as much doubt as it does certainty.

Going for the cure at my Lourdes of the Pacific costs nothing but the gas to get there and back. I drive a 20-year-old Honda with a lot of sand in the carpet. My wife goes too. Her name is Amielle. We boogie together and smile at each other when we catch a particularly good wave.

It takes 800 miles of wind blowing on the ocean to make a single wave. And its free. All of the waves are free, and they just keep on coming night and day, even when I'm not there. (A solipsist might disagree.) I love my Lourdes of the Pacific, even if it isn't conscious. Nature created me, and then it gives and gives, more and more – even when I'm not there, even when I forget, even when I don't care.

*

The ocean is two parts hydrogen to one part oxygen, plus sodium and traces of a number of minerals.

The scientist sees Nature as essential elements, mathematical calculations and measurements; the poet sees it as a wonder, a marvel, magic, and mystery. We cannot see the underlying physical structure of Nature and stop there; we must go on and see and feel and know both the structure and the wonder. We can and should be both poet and scientist. One or the other alone is not enough.

The ocean is not just H₂O and sodium; it is a thousand, ten thousand things more. It's the cradle of life on this planet and the home of millions of fish and mammals living in balance—eating, sleeping, defecating, copulating, traveling, hiding, seeking, and playing. Yes, playing. It's the agony and ecstasy of the swimmer, surfer, sailor, and fisherman. It brings rain to the thirsty and cooling breezes to the feverish. One could go on and on like this for hours, but sadly it would still be unlikely to impress those who are so petty and poor in spirit that they cannot see above and beyond the H₂O-plus-sodium ocean of life.

Scientific descriptions do not describe life; they describe everything but life: the non-life, the dead. Those who believe that when we die we return to the elements from which we are made are only identifying the parts from which their body is made. The breath of life, the *pneuma*, they cannot see, feel, or measure, and so they commonly sneer and dismiss it. “If we can't measure it, it doesn't exist,” they say. They say the same thing about God. *Hubris* is very much alive and well in the scientific community.

Life is not the stuff of science; that's merely the nomenclature, measurement, the abstract intellectual identification, and organization of parts. Life is everything else. It is the the whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. To really appreciate life, one must also remember that death lies at the opposite end of this dynamic continuum. Whenever we remind ourselves of that, then we should also take the time to remember what an extraordinary gift we have been given by Nature just to be alive, to be conscious, to reason, and to feel love. Nature has done this, and by comparison all the scientists in the world are merely children playing with blocks.

As Epictetus said, “Any one thing in the creation is sufficient to demonstrate a Providence to a humble and grateful mind [*Discourses* bk I, ch. 16].”

*

One who claims that everything in our familiar world can be explained without needing God presumes to know everything – and God.

*

The first winter surf of the season: churning, powerful waves criss-crossing and washing up on the beach halfway to the sea wall. The seaweed was thick, entangling, and sometimes didn't want to let you go. And there were hard rip currents, the kind that makes you say to yourself, “Whoa! Hmm. Let's back up here.” (Later, I read in the paper that an Arizona man, 15 years my junior, was pulled out or under by that rip current and drowned. He just disappeared for a half hour, his family said, then washed up on the shore.)

No surfers. A couple of other Boogers started out, then left after five minutes or so. One body surfer was there – a tall, skinny guy about 30 with straggly hair and uneven wisps of a beard. He stayed nearly as long as Amielle and I. He looked a lot like the seaweed, which may explain why he was obviously so comfortable with such wild and woolly waves. The water temperature was actually warmer than the cloudy, blustery air. Pelicans had to work hard to keep their formations in order. No cruising on gently undulating air currents today.

Nature. The surf is different everyday – kind of like no two fingerprints are the same and no two snowflakes are the same. But today the surf was as different as fingerprints are from snowflakes compared to what it was the last time I boogied – two days ago. Why did it do that? Why the radical change? Of course we can go to the meteorologist and geologist and physicist and come up with some scientific-sounding explanation, but what do we really know about it? All we really know is that Nature seems unconscious because it goes it's own way without any apparent interest in our opinions. So we call it a brute force without thought or feeling, a capricious chaos, a random accident without reason or control.

But that's only because it's not held under *our* control. It's way too magnificent for us, and we can only choose whether to boogie or not to boogie depending on how scary it seems when we climb aboard and hang on for dear life. We can't tell it what to do and it doesn't mind us or cater to our every whim, so we say it's stupid, and not just stupid but flat-out unconscious, which is as stupefied as you can get. I'm sure we would even say it was dead if it didn't move around so much and feed and clothe and comfort us – in its way, by its rules, not ours.

*

I have plantar fasciitis. It comes from stressing the plantar fascia, a sheath of thick connective tissue that supports the arch of the foot. Both the heel and arch of the bottom of my left foot are affected. It's an aching pain, like pushing on a bruised muscle. That's all I know about it. Aren't you glad? Athletes get it from over-exerting and straining that sheath. Really fat people can get it just by walking – too much body mass. I got it from Boogie boarding.

It happened about six weeks ago. I could tell it was happening when it was happening. It was another hard rip current day, and it took all my strength just to stay in Kiddyland. I also got a blister on the ball of my foot, the same foot, from the same cause, but it healed in a couple of weeks. The plantar fasciitis hasn't healed. I think it's getting worse because I keep aggravating it every time I go back out there.

My body is like the ocean. I don't tell it what to do; it tells me what it wants and doesn't want, and I just go along for the ride. I didn't want plantar fasciitis, didn't even know it existed until I got it. Now my body is suggesting that I stop irritating the plantar fascia on my left foot, but I'm not being agreeable. I know that's not very Stoic, not prudent, but sometimes you just have to make a choice. I could stop going to PB, but then I would quickly become all-over physically and psychologically lame. Now it's just my left foot that's lame. Maybe we can compromise. I'll go three days a week instead of four.

*

What do Stoics believe about the body? It's one of the externals, an indifferent. How can it be an indifferent when I'm as attached to my bodily parts as I can be to anything? Even the pesky and all too vulnerable plantar fascia is inside my skin, right? Yes, but I don't control it.

Amielle had a classmate who died of lung cancer at the age of 29. She was a delightful young woman, normally healthy in every way, never smoked, rarely drank, exercised, ate properly, and died before she was thirty. On the other hand, Winston Churchill drank and smoked cigars *all day*, every day, didn't exercise or eat right, and lived past ninety.

We *may* be able to affect our longevity with how we treat this body, but there are no guarantees. I know that I feel better today, physically and emotionally by exercising and living a healthy lifestyle, but whether I get plantar fasciitis or a brain tumor tomorrow is not something I can directly control.

It's the *I*, the psyche, the soul, the Logos that is within this body of clay that is internal – and some believe is eternal. The only control *I* have is over the will and the choices of the will. All good and evil come from the choices of *my* will – not from Nature, not from another's will, but from my will alone. If I have no control over the will of another or the Will of Nature or even over my plantar fascia, then these must be matters of indifference.

But how can *Nature* be a matter of indifference? Am I not allowed to love and revere Nature? How can I feel indifference to what a panentheist calls his god? How can I feel anything less than wonder and awe for something that can create life, consciousness, reason, and love? Nature is the designer of that very part of me that reasons, the *hegemonikon*. This is the god within, the Logos. Is it good, is it evil, is it indifferent? Or, is it beyond good, evil, and indifferent?

If, as Heraclitus said, to the God all things are right and just; and if, as the Stoics believe, all things *are* the deity, our god, then how can we be indifferent to it? Certainly that would be impiety of the highest and lowest order, and, as we have seen, one of the Noble Duties is piety.

So, what do we say is the good? “Good is virtue that evil lacks.” Good is virtue and evil is the lack of virtue. As Marcus said, the evil of a part, my evil, my lack of virtue, is no impediment to the Whole. But that's what we say about the evil of another. Someone else's bad behavior is no impediment to me-- unless I use it as an excuse to behave badly myself. Then, I have committed an evil. That is, I am lacking in virtue and the nobility of my character has been compromised.

Unlike we common folk, the Whole, Nature, the deity, our god is not compromised by my bad behavior – or anyone else's. If that's the case, if the Logos is *never* compromised in the choices of its Will, then it's a much better Stoic than I am. In fact, I believe that is the definition of the mythical Stoic sage: to *always* live in agreement with Nature. So, the Stoic sage isn't mythical after all: God must be one.

What about my plantar fasciitis? If Nature always does the right thing, then how come my heel hurts? If the choices of the Will are always correct, and we Stoics

say that they are, then my heel may not feel “good,” but even something as infinitesimally small as my aches and pains are not going to cause the Whole to misbehave.

Well, that's a relief!

*

Stingray

Stingray, n. any of the rays, esp. of the family Dasyatidae, having a long, flexible tail armed near the base with a strong, serrated bony spine with which it can inflict painful wounds.... up to 5 feet in width (1.5 m) with a tail up to 7¼ feet (2.2 m) in length.... adapted for life on the sea bottom, having a flattened body and greatly enlarged pectoral fins with the gills on the undersides.

Plantar fasciitis on my left heel; stingray barb on the right. I may spend the rest of the day on the couch.

A remarkable creature actually, the stingray, lying flat on the sandy ocean floor, minding its own business and having a nice day until a hulking humanoid with a Boogie board comes tramping through its home. What does it feel like to be stung by a stingray? Like someone stabs you with a shard of glass. Then, after a minute or two it really hurts. That's the venom at work. Groaning helps.

I known for some time that PB has stingrays. I've seen them. I didn't see this one. Several months ago I asked a couple of lifeguards about them. Both had been hit, more than once. One guard said the first time it happened to him he cried like a baby. The greatest unpleasantness is the venom. Wash off the blood, then soak the affected area in hot water, as hot as you can stand it, for about two hours. That breaks down the proteins of the venom. It works.

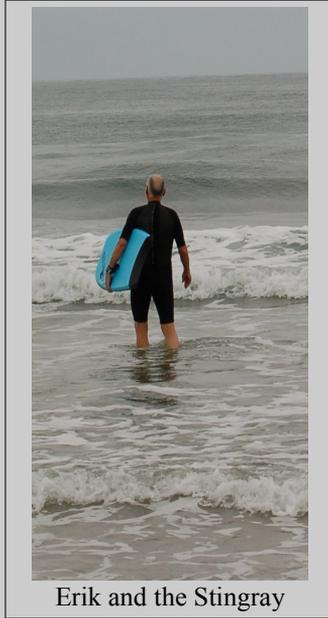
Renowned Australian “Crocodile Hunter,” Steve Irwin, was killed three years ago when one stung him in the chest. Fortunately for me, I got mine in the heel at the base of the Achilles tendon. Hmm. We don't know how commonly people die of stingray attacks because, unlike our fascination with sharks, there is no international agency that tracks them. If you want to see some stingrays and what Irwin was doing when he was hit by a stingray go to YouTube and enter “Steve Irwin death video.”

I'm glad it finally happened. I've been wondering when it would happen and what it would feel like. Now I know. Reality has a funny way of being distorted when you meet a grouchy stingray. At such times, life is made up of two parts: there's consciousness of intense throbbing pain; then there's everything else passing by like a dream. I wonder if that's at all similar to the pain of childbirth.

By a happy coincidence, I *almost* have a record of the moment of the attack. Amielle and I had a friend taking photos of us in the surf this morning. We are going to use the best one for our holiday greeting cards.

OK, I'm going to fix some lunch and take a nap now.

*



Erik and the Stingray

It was 7:45 AM. I parked my car by the sea wall and got out. She was a disheveled woman of about thirty who greeted me as she passed. Her make-up was thick and tired – like it was left over from a party. Her greeting was nothing more than a quick nod, then she went her way, and I went to the water.

She's always there every time I'm there at that same stretch of sand in PB, the one by the main lifeguard tower and the public restrooms. Sometimes she's alone; sometimes she's with other “beach bums” with the same disheveled look – like they came to the beach one day a long time ago and never left. I've never seen her panhandling or propositioning. I don't know how she gets by.

You can live on the beach for free – free of a rich man's mortgage, and free of wage slavery – if you can get through the nights. That's the scariest time, I suppose. That and the times when you're hungry or sick, or hungry *and* sick. I don't remember seeing a fat one in the lot of them. Speaking of the lot of them, there seem to be a lot more of them now that the autumn nights are a bit frosty up north.

She's the first one of the bunch to show me any recognition, to notice how often I'm there. It made me feel good—like I was accepted, like I was a “local.” The beach is their home, I suppose, and I'm a regular guest. . . . stingray!

*

The Body. All these parts – the joints, bones, bone marrow, organs, muscles, ligaments, veins and arteries, blood, skin, hair, brain, nervous system, synapses, cells – all these thousands of things moving together, working together silently, seamlessly, hour after hour, day after day, year after year, and all without so much as a glance of recognition or appreciation from anyone.

*

A quivering heart, deaf to all reason, will go its own way as surely as night follows day. The primitive brain can be a providence, and it can be a grey lizard of the primeval. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

*

Change is the only constant. Every day is different: the waves at the beach, the clutter at home, the aging of my skin. The Republicans have their way with the country, then the Democrats, then the Republicans, then the Democrats again. All the changes in a life lived this long: sometimes I was ahead of them, and sometimes behind. I wonder at those who refuse to change their minds, even with new knowledge and so many opportunities. They appear to take pride in their obstinacy and confirm Emerson's observation that "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds."

*

The Toilet Dream

I awakened at 4:30 AM after just having killed a man. The realization of it didn't particularly upset me, more curious than upset, and I didn't feel the least bit of guilt about it, only surprise. Maybe I should feel guilty. I'll think about it.

I was in a town of sorts, a resort village: buildings, streets, hotels. I needed to use the toilet rather urgently, and I was sure there must be one in the hotel nearby. Amielle and I walked there directly. It was occupied and there was a line. She stayed behind and held my place while I went searching for another.

There! Three toilets side-by-side just to the left of the grand entrance doors of the main lobby. All three appeared to be occupied, and as soon as I walked up to one about a dozen people immediately converged upon the same location presumably in search of the same goal. We all quietly queued into three lines and waited our turn.

I was first in line at the toilet closest to the entrance, waiting, when a burly and brusque man walked up and stood in front of me. I explained that we were standing in a line which formed to the rear. He just turned around and stared at me, looking all defiant and angry. He held his ground.

While he was still turned around staring at me, I noticed over his shoulder that the door had opened and "my" toilet was suddenly vacant. I stepped around this rude man and walked directly to it. He saw what I was doing and attempted to hold me back, but I succeeded in getting inside and closing the door.

He began shouting and banging and shaking the door with a dreadful racket, cursing me and make all kinds of silly threats. I sat on my toilet seat and waited for him to go away. He didn't. He became more angry and determined to cause such a ruckus that I wouldn't be able to accomplish what I had come to do.

At that moment, I noticed the door beginning to weaken at the hinges. Just before he wrenched it off with his bare hands I gave it a swift kick right in the middle, and the door flew off its hinges, taking the rude man with it. Back he

fell, still holding on to the door, not in the lobby where he should have been, but off a sheer precipice of extraordinary height. The door fell away and I leaned out to watch as he fell spread eagle further and further, getting smaller and smaller. I averted my eyes at the moment of impact and awoke.

I was in my bed at home. I look at the clock on the night stand: 4:30 AM. I got up and went to the toilet.

Query: when the laws of Nature no longer rule, and cause and effect no longer live up to one's expectations, is one still responsible for one's behavior? Yes, I believe so. The world may not be what it appears to be, and who knows for sure if it is, but we are still responsible for our intent. The decisions we make and the actions which follow, even if unpredictable, are still choices of the will.

Nowhere is it written that a Stoic must be a punching bag and allow others to push them around. Of course, there may be occasions when it's in one's best interest to silently endure injustice, but that only follows a calculated choice. One may be a wage slave and tolerate an impossible boss in good humor when it's deemed to be in one's best interest to do so (the Primary Impulse), but only so long as it's necessary. Injustice can be confronted and denounced with courage whenever and wherever possible.

When under attack, fight back. It's called self defense, and the Goddess of Wisdom rules this contest. It don't think it's any accident or coincidence that Athena is both the Goddess of Wisdom *and* of Defense. Self-defense and defense of the homeland are well within the parameters of wisdom. And a Stoic needs neither guilt nor apology for such action – regardless of the context or final outcome.

*

There is nothing more jarring and discordant than plastic things thrust into nature. True beauty lies in the natural processes, the cracks in the crust of a loaf of freshly baked bread, as Marcus said, and in the aroma. Beauty is to Nature as radiance is to a candle flame.

While we admire the *skill* of the painter and sculptor who can accurately portray such things as the cracks in a crust of bread, theirs is only an imitation of beauty, a vain striving for beauty, one that will never know the awesome beauty of a great stone weathered by ages of sun and rain, or in the joy that Nature gave the face of a flower.

As Seneca said, “All art is but an imitation of Nature [*Letters* 65, 3].”

*

From my mother, I inherited a positive attitude. From my father, I inherited sensitivity and a kind of fierceness. From both, I inherited a healthy body and average intelligence. That's all. And that's enough.

*

Stoics believe the nobility of one's character can be seen in the face, the countenance, even in one's bearing. It is the beauty of one's soul making an

imprint on the physical body. Not long ago I heard someone say that by the age of forty everyone gets the face they deserve. Or is it fifty?

I have a neighbor in his forties whose face appears permanently imprinted with anger. For the first ten years I knew him he was addicted to both a rage and alcohol. He once stormed out of his house and yelled at me for picking up a pebble lying on the ground that he claimed was on his side of the property line that divides us. I placed it back on the ground.

After spending a month in county jail for hit and run and driving under the influence, my neighbor joined alcoholics anonymous and began taking medication for his daily fits of rage. His face remains the same. It's been nearly three years now, and I still find his face uncomfortable to look at.

A couple of days ago, Amielle and I were using the showers by the lifeguard tower when a man about fifty joined us. He was handsome, tall and strongly built, with long golden hair and a beard of the same color. He was a surfer. We could tell because he leaned his surfboard next to our Boogie boards.

Amielle and I were startled when he said, "Good morning." We had grown accustomed to being ignored by surfers. In fact, we decided we were invisible to them, because no matter the proximity or greeting we gave they would look right through us without seeing or saying anything. It was like we were in a movie where you see spirits of the dead vainly trying to contact the living.

"Good morning," we said. I explained that we were surprised by his greeting. I also explained why. "I'm not like them," he said. Encouraged by his friendliness, I told him we were thinking about learning to surf. He said that what we were doing was a good way to start, adding, "Everybody's got to start somewhere." I said I was a little concerned about learning to surf at my age. "Upper body strengthening," he said, and then he left.

I keep trying to remember his face. The further I am removed from the moment he walked away, the more he appears like a god.

*

It's the first day of November. My wife's very old cat just walked in through the open, sliding glass door, looked me in the eye, meowed twice, then walked back outside. I have no idea what that means.

Mystery above; mystery below; mystery all around. Where am I? What does it sound like to the gods when we talk to them? Cats meowing?

The Stoics of antiquity were more confident in their rational oneness with the divine. There may be another more universal language than mere utterance. It may be found in music – or in silence.

*

You cannot refuse the Grim Reaper, even if it's inconvenient. Dying before you have finished your work may be the best thing that could happen to it.

*

Jury Duty

Leaving the house at the same time today, Wednesday, but heading in the opposite direction. Not a Boogie day: jury duty.

It smells like the woman behind me had peanuts for breakfast. She appears to be about 50 with long graying hair, unwashed, hanging down in her face and on her shoulders. She could be an inmate escaped from an insane asylum, but she's quiet – except for coughing and blowing her nose.

The jury room is full, yet it's quiet. After accepting the inevitable, silence. Even the complainers have apparently adjusted to their civic duty. The first thing many do when they get their notice is look for a way to get off. They brag about this, if successful, as if they got away with something, as if the inconvenience was just too much to bear.

So, what should we rather be doing instead of jury duty? For myself, I could be Boogie boarding right now, chasing waves and stingrays. But what can be more important than justice being done? The opportunity to serve in the making of a decision for fairness and in the determination of what is right to the best of one's ability is a kind of sacred trust in the harmony of human life, the social contract. How does one say 'no' to such an opportunity.

First, a juror swears to be honest. Imagine that—promising one's fellows to be truthful. Second, a juror is asked if he or she can be objective, impartial, keep an open mind. Amazing. Third, during the trial one is not allowed to discuss the trial with anyone. Each of us must listen silently, examining his or her own inner discourse and wisdom for guidance. At last, in deliberation, the jury organizes 12 strangers into a cohesive, decision-making body, a kind of council of elders to become the god of fate in another individual's life. Is there anything we do that is more important?

I didn't get on a jury.

*

There are days when world weariness sets in, and even the thought of playing in Nature makes you tired: getting the stuff together, driving in rush-hour traffic to the beach, adjusting to the cold water. Even when you know there is joy awaiting you, waiting patiently for you, somehow you can't be bothered. Even when you know you will be happier, healthier, and able to get through the funk you're in if you just go – all you want to do is nothing. Nothing.

Times like these test the discipline of a Stoic. Where do they come from, these bad moods? Sometimes remembering to use the power of the mind to climb out of dark holes takes all the strength of one's inner discourse. Here I am reminding myself that Nature gave me life, consciousness, reason, and love, this awesome power, and all I have to do is move, stand up, put on my wet suit, and go Go!

Okay, I'm back.

*

How long does it take me to ignore them, those people who giggle and snort and make inane comments about my work? Only as long as it takes to remember to empty the trash. As soon as I stop replaying their foolishness inside my head, they cease to exist. My serenity is *my* choice; not theirs.

*

To be continued