

## Life Vignettes: “Be Here, Now!”

Kuang-Ming Wu

Philosophy Department, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, Oshkosh, USA  
Email: [Kmwu2002@yahoo.com](mailto:Kmwu2002@yahoo.com)

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This essay cites seven story-vignettes to urge us to come alive, happily. They are: one, Tommy happily drawing; two, Tommy protesting against nap he needs; three, the first stone the sinless can cast to sinner; four, minnows happily swimming; five, Lady Beautiful happily kidnapped; six, a happy roadside skull; and seven, the happy spring. All these stories say, “Be here, now!” ever beyond, alive beyond alive. Conclusion tells of how these life vignettes repair and fill up seven ditches dug out by logical thinking, by story-showing how reasonable being alive is, and urges us all, “Be here, now!”

**Keywords:** Live; Story; Vignettes; Here-and-Now; Children; Happiness

### Introduction

Here are just seven of simple vignettes of life, sharply etched by life itself, to go beyond life, all quite alive. “Alive” cannot be explained, much less argued for, because we would be arguing for alive by the unknown, i.e., arguer alive. We can only tell stories to present being alive. We can add some in, we can pull some out, and the story stays intelligible interesting, drawing our attention.

Storytelling is thus coherent and open, as living is, as each day is. Each is complete in itself, as each one links to the other. These story-bits are simple and straight, while their implications open all out unlimited, far ahead and cannot finish. The following pages dotted just a few stories, just seven, with just a few implications noticed, all absorbing, gripping, deserving of attentive pondering long, each day.

Such is story thinking different from logical thinking that closes in itself. Thinking story-way is coherent as logical argument, yet opens anywhere, straight or complex, goes in any direction back and forth, and accepts any surprise to logic and to common sense. All this while, story thinking stays coherent sensible, catching time by its tail and by its forehead. Flexuous coherence makes story thinking an apt means to present actuality alive surprising (Wu, 2011). Story thinking is a routine human way to think ubiquitous since time immemorial, now forgotten with logical thinking dominant unnatural. China innocently practices story-thinking for millennia. History tells stories story-thinking way, to compose history. History is humanity in continuous story. This essay picks its seven bits.

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of how these life vignettes repair and fill up seven ditches dug out by logical thinking, by story-showing how reasonable being alive is, and urges us all, “Be here, now!”

### Life Vignette One: Tommy Drawing

All this is consequentialism. We do not know how our decision now is, but by its result alone. Whether a passing idea is sinister temptation or great brainstorm is judged by its *fruit*. Even if temptation is adroitly turned into brainstorm, the turn is a happy result, to demonstrate consequentialism that judges initiation by its end that, in turn, depends on—results from—the initial decision; our life-drawing of Tommy is an endless circle, on his way drawing! If we are done, we are done for, dead. More, surprisingly, Tommy beats uncertain consequentialism by tipping it to happy-ending *always*, by play.

Tommy’s drawing exploration of the future is *play*. Play has no failure, for future cannot fail. Tommy plays with future *now*. How could he fail? He draws a dog, oops, it’s a car, O my, now it’s a turtle! Where is failure? He hums his silly tunes as he draws, all happily. All this is such fun! We adults fail at the drop of a hat we don’t even have. We had better follow Tommy to have fun that has no failure. It is “being on our way” that shows a dynamic vacancy in our living each day, ever changing and filling up, unceasing. We call it creativity.

Kids’ creativity has no failure; their creativity is *its goal*, and their doing attains; whatever kids do is perfect. “It’s magic!” We must be Tommy drawing life, changing as we draw, fun-trying vague ideas, mumbling, “How’d I know? I’m not done yet,” “alive” playing till “coffin covered, assessed set 蓋棺論定”; but “I” don’t cover my coffin, so I would never finish drawing my life! I am ever unfinished, a moving vacancy so much fun with Tommy.

Such dynamic vacancy, a nothing that keeps moving on and moving in, is music. Music fulfills itself precisely in its going on as a nothing humming on for nothing. The “nothing” baby is

music on her dancing way ahead. Baby-nothing is exciting, for this “nothing” generates things new, never expected, never “done yet.” “Nothing” gives birth anew unceasing.

Here is its concrete story. A letter from my family doctor at Kaiser Permanente just came to say “all completely normal.” That elates me to the sky. This joy of my health is mine alone. No one else can share it, much less rob it away. Being healthy in joy; I can write nothing on it. I am just happy wordless; it is strange yet understandable as my raw joy of my raw health. “Raw” here is *nothing* I can get; I just get myself I already am. I am elated over what I already am; I am healthy, medically certified, in joy for nothing!

“Are you insane? How could you be elated for nothing?” Health is my precious “nothing” my most precious base that I am, so I am elated, yet it is ungraspable, a nothing to me, so I can say nothing, and no one (not even I) can capture it or take it away, for “it” is a nothing; no one can do anything with a nothing, right? Isn’t nothing-health the basic “joy” beyond joys and sorrows? This Joy dawns today, dawning each moment, come what may. Such Joy is life of joys in *any* sorrow, for without life, sorrow is nowhere.

Nothing, birthing, and new, they are a dynamic ternate unity, going from the first to the next, and this going tells of “nothing” that keeps “birthing” “new” unceasing so exciting, for we know nothing about what is being born from a nothing. And this exciting dynamics is music ongoing, in Tommy’s dancing rhythm on the way drawing the moving orderliness of existence so much fun, so much more alive than whatever is here now, to make alive whatever is here now.

“But kids so clumsy make mistakes all the time.” O, no, they never do. Look. Whatever Tommy draws is *all* there full, and so all is “right” there. No mistake can seep in. Now he is drawing again, an airplane, oops, a car. O dear, it’s now a tree. It’s magic! Everything is thus full here now. Everything keeps changing in pretending, as it is literally stretching (-tend) itself forward (pre-). We call it self-education; they call it “play singing” that Tommy is dancing drawing, all joys here now, and there is no other “here now.” Where is any “mistake” here in Tommy drawing humming on?

So, school is a fun-place “doing things.” His teacher grades him, not he. Doesn’t he “have to repeat the same grade”? He has no “have to,” for repeat is fun, and fun-repeating does not repeat the “same” stuff, as fun has no “have to.” Everything Tommy does is fun; he has no failure, only fun. Tessie (aged 12) went to Spelling Bee contest, and was eliminated at the word “dramaturgy.” I, her Akong-grandpa, was so upset, but she is not. It was literally her “dramaturgy,” doing her fun-drama. She did not fail; she had fun. If her days so dramatic are not perfect, there exists no perfection.

You see, “mistakes,” “failures,” and “immaturity” are all retrospective words of *adults*. Children need not look back; they only look ahead. So, they look forward here now to the next moment, and “the next moment” is always hope-filled, and nothing can be against hope, for we always hope for the better. Children live in hope now. Their now is full, filled with future fun. Isn’t their world “perfect” as can be?

Poetry compresses story; story spreads into reasoning. Poetry sings music, so all storied reasoning must sing. Singing as we read understands, to manifest style. Thus style tells content; the how-medium is the what-message, in singing poetry storied reasoned. Hasn’t all this performed poetry-sung story-thought? Now, fun reigns here. Fun guides artistry of singing poetry

Tommy is drawing. Sadly, Zen laughter is fruit, not root, of Zen struggle. Zen puts the struggle-cart before the fun-horse. He lives fun-drawing; “mistakes” are part of his fun-creation. We adults toddle after him; our failures mother inventions of researchers in inventors and engineers. Tommy fun-drawing is crucial.

### Life Vignette Two: “I don’ wanna nap!”

But now Tommy gets cranky and wobbly. He is tired and ready for nap. Mom notices it and tells Tommy to take a nap. Wow! Tommy blows his top. “I don’ wanna nap!” So he protests against what he needs. What can Mom do? She can neither *do* nap Tommy, nor can she *not-do* it and let him go “play” he can no longer do. Logical alternatives are exhausted!

Tommy is still yelling, “I don’ wanna nap!” for the world is too exciting to miss out in silly nap. But his shout tells Mom he is ready for nap. So Mom cannot let him go out play; it would be “not do,” to hurt him. But Mom cannot push him into bed, either; it would be to “do” into a World War III disaster! Instead, Mom calmly goes *between* do and not-do. “OK, Tommy, don’t nap; sit on your bed. I’ll read your favorite story, OK?” Tommy nods. “Once upon a time”—and he hits the pillow. Wow! Things are now all quiet at the front!

Tommy protests against nap that stops his freedom, all unaware of his need to nap. Mom satisfies him by reading *his* story, and he happily goes home napping to fulfill his need. Mom’s caring *no-do* skill—not do, not not-do—allows him free to nap. Wow! Mom *and* Tommy have had fun arguing. No Western logic of “either ‘do’ or ‘not-do’” can slip into Tommy’s shout, to let him hit the pillow *himself*; Mom’s story of love alone shows such strategic playing with Tommy; no-do between do and not-do did the trick!

“What is this trick?” Mom’s “show and tell” *story-thinks* freely—playfully—guiding us between do and not-do logical exclusive, no-do alive fun. We are impressed. Tommy shouts against what he needs, nap. Mom soothes him to satisfy his protest *and* his need, both at once. Jesus’ New Contract-Testament also satisfies both justice and mercy (Matthew 5:17; Luke 15:31-32; John 8:7-11). Mom and Jesus’ amazing feat is shown in routine storytelling story-thinking (Wu, 2005, 2011). What an incredible story all this is!

Helpless logical dead-end is now tamed, emerging a daily routine of Mom soothing her recalcitrant Tommy into his happy needed nap all natural, no more protest. Such a humble event, told by a humble story, turns spectacular. Story-thinking works miracles, indeed. Now, this common motherly no-do, slipping between do and not-do, has an unexpected harvest stunning homo-cosmic, to which we now turn.

### Life Vignette Three: The First Stone

The law in the Bible, fulfilled in New Testament, upholds justice that is a verb, to justify the unjust. Justice as justification fulfills the law to serve divine love. But sadly, justification costs life to restore life, to redeem life. Casting legal stones finally casts them onto the redeemer Jesus on the cross. Such a twisty logic of divine love in the divine law of justice is dramatically told in a sad yet happy story of divine love in justice, recorded in John 8:1-11 (Brown, 1956).

Jesus fulfills all sublimely, prayerfully subliminal. “Sublimen” (Glare, 1996: p. 1843) is the door to excellence with subliminal-sill and sublime-lintel; it is home to excellence. “Limen”

(Glare, 1996: p. 1031) is door's sill under and lintel above of a home. Overwhelmed, let me go over it slowly. *After* going up Mount Olives, obviously to pray the whole night, wholly alone, silent, he met the trap of dilemma set by clever scribes and Pharisees, "Should this woman, caught in adultery, be stoned as Moses told us?" Jesus stooped down, writing on sand, so as to release all parties into *themselves* to ponder. After some silence, repeatedly asked, Jesus rose, softly said, prayer-charged, to shake the world, "Let anyone sinless cast the first stone" (8:7); it pierces all hearts, and things fall into place, in charged silence.

Three parties are here, sin, death, and silence. The lady and Jesus were silent; people were noisy, and then turned silent. Jesus said only one phrase to the crowd and two short ones to the lady. All this was about sin and death. Then he silently went away and died for her, and for them. His first saying released the people into ashamed silence; his later pair of short sentences released the lady in silence. Then he went silently to die for them, all in deathly sin, from which he released them. *That* is how much he loves her and loves them.

His releasing them from death is forgiveness that he paid for with *his* life. His first sentence used "no sin" to convict them of their sin worse than the lady's. She sinned according to the law. They offended the law itself, trying to trap Jesus with dilemma by using the law. They sinned against the law itself; they are worse sinners than the lady. His last sentence used "go" to pull the lady into his embrace, as he dealt with her sin by *dying* for her. She must have *lived* on thanking him. Such brief scene! Such sharp stunning significance!

All biblical sayings tumble in, to make sense. "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matthew 7:1), for the law, a two-edged sword, judges us *all*, judge and judged alike. Be careful; wielding the sword of law perishes by it (Matthew 26:52). "Vengeance is mine," the Lord's (Romans 12:19); *we* must love to forgive, "70 times 7" (Matthew 18:22). We must not use law-sword but care for victims by law and lawlessness. Jesus said "Do so" (Luke 10:37) to fulfill the law, as he the Love (Matthew 5:17) fulfills law (Romans 13:10). All this is Christ's law (Galatians 6:2), love's law, no other.

The love's law is sensitive warm, flexuous apt, heartfelt reasonable. All this is impossibly hard to fulfill. Jesus pulls it off so naturally that all accusers sneaked away in shame, one by one. Now Jesus the stinging sinless and she the stunned sinner are left in silence. It is the moment of law stealing into love. "Woman, where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, Lord." "Neither do I." (John 8:10-11) Jesus the stinger joins the stung accusers now nowhere. This moment of law in love so tender straight, saves her life! All dawns in fresh silence, softly nudges, "Go, and sin no more."

And then, Jesus silently goes his way and atones—pays—her debts and their debts of law, on his lone cross of love, wholly unbeknown to her and to them (Aulén, 1951). "Go, and sin no more" is thus *really* fulfilled for them all, the silent dawn after the Sabbath-tomb. Every moment, one after another, is now the Resurrection dawn so calm so fulfilling.

"Where is the law now?" Jesus has lovingly atoned for our debts to law, paid up in full. The law is fulfilled and rendered moot in Jesus' deathly love now resurrected; he has fulfilled every dot of the law, rendering it moot, "You heard A in the law, but I say, not-A!" How touching powerful is his love saying so, resurrected with death-scars still on him! "Go, and sin no more." Empowered, now we *need* not sin, basked in the

dawn sunshine of his Resurrection, so calm silent here now.

Confronted by her deadly sin inducing another worse deathly sin of the Pharisees and scribes, proud experts in laws, Jesus both softly lets law-experts to condemn themselves by their own laws, *and* thereby, at the same time, upholds the laws to *save* the woman from death. Such is Jesus' stunning act as "the Savior of the world" continuing to commit two sorts of law-violations, one by a "bad" person, and the other by many "good" persons *worse* than a bad person. Mind you. This extraordinary story of saving the sinners to fulfill the law is irrelevant to gender. Its unsavory heroine could have been a man; those law-experts the worse sinners could have been ladies. Male or female, we are all sinners.

"He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first," softly said Jesus (John 8:7). This is Jesus' quiet bombshell, his key dramatic sentence that clinch-resolves the whole drama of neither-nor dilemma posed to him, who can neither let go of the lady caught red-handed (it is against law) nor can he allow them to go ahead to stone her dead (it is against love). He sentenced them all by "allowing" stoning the lady; that is how Jesus stoned them all with the law without stoning them with the law.

Jesus' quiet condemnation by permission deserves our deliberation to draw the stunning message unique to the New Testament: justice is love. It is the Old Testament that poses the dilemma between law-justice and saving-love; the Old Testament prophets vainly struggled with this dilemma. Do we remember Jesus said "the law or the prophets" (Matthew 5:17)? Jesus tells us three points on "law."

One, the law judges all, both judge and judged. Two, the law is risky radioactive energy. The good often judge others "bad" to be themselves judged "bad"; the bad can be "justified" by painfully judging himself by law (Luke 18:9-14). Three, we must thus leave it to the "sinless" (John 8:7), to wit, God (Romans 12:19), to judge people by law. So, we do *not* judge others (Matthew 7:1-5) but care for all (Romans 12:14-21, repeating Matthew 5:-7:). Jesus, soft tart, "He who is sinless, let him throw a stone at her," has *all* such implications to *unify* law and love, in New Testament.

The law judges, and the judgment is beyond our awareness even on our good deeds, and must also lie beyond our execution—reaction—on injustice we suffer. In both cases, good and bad are beyond good and evil. Nietzsche said so, but whether Nietzsche took his quip in Jesus' sense or not is another question. In short, the law is divine, and must be out of our human hand, even of our human awareness. Even Confucius (12/13) perhaps instinctively urges us to avoid litigation, but he is unclear (Confucius, 12/13). Ethical judgment—"It's not fair!"—is none of *our* business. Our all-obligation beyond good and evil is to do *caring* always everywhere to everyone, including our unjust enemies.

Extrapolated, "Why did this event happen to me?" as Job asks, is beyond our human propriety, as is "When bad things happen to good people," however popular (Kushner, 1981). No wonder, kids never care about this whole bit. They do say, "That's not fair!" but soon *forget* it and play on. All they want is to have playmates, everyone equally. Playing always, kids have no law; they don't understand, always look up to Mom and tell it all to Mom for her to judge. So do the servants in sorrow tell their master when they saw "something unfair," a fellow servant forgiven yet not forgiving his fellow servant. This parable has an additional element; the servant was forgi-

ven 10,000 talents and did not forgive his fellow servant owing him 100 denarii. This extra element threatens to take our attention away from the main point of the parable, to wit, “forgiven not forgive” is unfair (Matthew 18:23-35).

Now that we are set free by Jesus, everything is allowed except taking the law in our hands. We live on loving everyone, never under the law. We live in Christ who is all love; *he* fulfills the law. We may also fulfill the law, but in surprised love, “When did we do it?” (Matthew 25:37-40). Suffering from injustice, hurt wailing, is itself not unjust but “blessed” (Matthew 5, Luke 6). This surprising fact—in terms of legal justice—makes sense in love beyond law. This is why love in pain in the Good News of liberation from the law, precisely by thus fulfilling the law.

After all, the law is separate—holy—from us to judge us; it is proper, fearful and sure (Psalms 19:7-13). Using holy law to judge *others* is judged by the law as against the law (John 8 = Luke 18). So, we *must* never judge but love those who mistreat us, acknowledging the law against only me—“repent”—under Jesus; this is Good News to “me” everywhere (Mark 1:15).

These acts of love to *all*, including those unjustly mistreating us, are our proper legal acts to fulfill the law, as urged by Old Testament prophets unsuccessfully. These acts are New Testament novel alive, revealed by Jesus to fulfill Old Testament law in prophets. Revealing the law-love unity in our repentance, Jesus achieved this unity in his death-pain to his resurrection-joy for us.

Now that we are liberated from austere judging, we can freely enjoy “here now” with any being, even insignificant minnows. Even the tiniest humble minnows, leisurely wandering around over there in water, are our dear fellow-beings, our species-companions in playful joys of living—together with us, here now.

#### Life Vignette Four: Minnows Happily Swimming

Here the ordinary shimmers with an extraordinary “shaded light.” (Chuang Tzu, 2/62). It must mean what is presented here. It is a happy wonderland where all things freely play about (遊) in joy *together*, we ourselves included. This is what enables Chuang Tzu, a Chinese Taoist just 2500 years young, to end his profound Chapter Seventeen, “Autumn Waters,” with a story worth meditating on (Chuang Tzu, 17/87-91). It goes as follows.

Chuang Tzu with Hui Tzu happily-moved-about (遊) on the stepping-stones of the [River] Hao. Chuang Tzu said, “Small fish, out happily-moving-about (遊) at leisure, this-is the joy of fish.” Hui Tzu said, “You are not fish; how [do you] know the joy of fish?” Chuang Tzu said, “You are-not I; how [do you] know I do-not know the joy of fish?” Hui Tzu said, “I am-not you; I surely do-not know you. You surely are-not fish, [so] your not knowing the joy of fish is complete.” Chuang Tzu said, “Let’s trace-back-to the root of [all] this. Your saying, ‘How [do you] know the joy of fish?’ [shows that you] already knew it and asked me. I knew it on-the-Hao.”

This story is breathtaking both on a surface logical level and on the deep level of inter-being. On a purely *logical* level, contrary to our initial impression that Chuang Tzu’s response was a rough, illogical, and unfair dismissal of Hui’s careful clear, coherent, and logically conclusive rebuttal, we see Chuang was quite careful and logical against Hui’s incoherence. The situation was precisely contrary to our first impression.

To Chuang Tzu’s *natural* outburst of admiring description, “O, how leisurely the small fish out there move about! This is the joy of the fish!” Hui Tzu thrusts two logical points, “[1] You are not fish; [2] how [do you] know the joy of fish?” This thrust completely bypasses the exigency of Chuang Tzu’s outburst of joy-resonance.

Point-[1] packs Hui Tzu’s stipulation for his denial of Chuang Tzu’s statement on the fish’s joy. Chuang Tzu then *follows* Hui Tzu’s stipulation to deny Hui Tzu’s denial of his affirmation of fish’s joy; “You are-not I; how [do you] know I do-not know the joy of fish?” This response forced Hui Tzu to clarify, and thereby demolishes his own stipulation despite himself, for “I am-not you ... I do-not know you; I know you ... are-not fish,” amounts to “I admit I, being not you, can still know you,” that is, “as I can know you despite being not you, so you can know fish despite being not fish.”

The last point above implies that difference between species or persons blocks *no* understanding but can at most ask *how*, to link to next point-[2], “how you know the fish’s joy.” So, having responded to point-[1], Chuang Tzu goes on to answering point-[2], by saying, “I knew it on the Hao,” *here*. This “here” is a fitting answer, logically conclusive, for its brusque simplicity. Chuang Tzu’s response as a whole was logically neat flawless. This “here on the Hao” is of course loaded; the story’s brusque ending invites us to go to a deeper level, the immediacy of inter-being. Presence understands.

Let us now meditate on this *deeper* level. We have six points here. *First*, Hui Tzu said, in essence, “I am not you, but I know you that you are not fish, so you do not know fish’s joy.” Here, “I am not you, but I know you” denies *his* main contention, “you are not fish, so you do not know fish.” Akatzuka in his Commentary on the *Chuang Tzu* shrewdly saw this far, but no further (Akatzuk, 1977). He is on the side of those complicated logicians, and went no further as Chuang Tzu did further all the way to the simple *how*, not just why he knows the fish’s joy. The denial amounts, importantly, to this. Hui Tzu himself demonstrated, despite himself, that someone, being not someone else, could still know that “someone *other*” than he.

His double denials of knowing the other (not fish, not know fish; not you, know you) demonstrated their opposite, that his denial does assume that denying that “one can know the other” affirms that “one can know the other,” for in order even to deny—to the other—that one knows the other, one must know the other, otherwise one cannot know even what one denies.

After all, a denial, including the denial of knowing the other, is part of a conversation, a communication, and one must know the other to communicate with the other. None can converse with an unknown object, much less with no-existence. Even trials at communicating with a UFO were made because it was *known* as an “object” “unidentified” and “flying.”

So, after demonstrating, quite logically, how communication was made possible by knowing the other, what remains is to ask *how* such knowing happened. This inquiry into the how is revealed as the “root” of the matter here, and this “root” is quite significant, yet Chuang Tzu ended the story right here, leaving it for the reader to continue, a smart move.

It was thus, *secondly*, that Chuang Tzu went to a deep meta-level, the “root,” to query into how all this happened, i.e., *how* he came to know fish’s joy. The above conversation—moving-happily back and forth 遊—happened between the two, being the “other” one to the other. The conversation between two mutually known *others*, on a denial of knowing others, happened

“here,” where both “others” were “happy.”

Likewise, “My happily knowing fish’s joy—moving-happily back and forth 遊—happened *here* as well, in the same manner as our happy conversation happened *here*,” declared Chuang Tzu. It was here that Chuang Tzu knew—by resonating, “conversing,” with the fish in an inter-being way—that they were happy moving around swimming, as he moved happily around in mind with Hui Tzu. He happily moved around (遊) with the fish *and* with his friend, by being *here*. Human-with is as happy as with-fish!

In the end, Chuang Tzu tells Hui Tzu, “Get down out of high, empty and abstract logicizing, Hui Tzu, locked up in a solipsistic dilemma that is self-contradictory. Thus Chuang Tzu enables Name Scholars such as Hui Tzu to cease being impractical, to turn bitingly relevant to daily praxis. Chuang Tzu does so by following Name Scholars’ careful logicizing, to rigorously apply their thinking to actually living it. Chuang Tzu turns Name Scholars alive, natural-cosmic. “Is Chuang Tzu one of the Name Scholars?” Well, he goes beyond them with their rigor, by playing with their argumentation. Chuang Tzu is China’s Socrates who is a sophist beyond all sophists. Come down here. Be *here* and just *watch* the fish with me!” To see is to believe. Being immediately present has such an impact so direct as to exclude room for roundabout argument into a solipsistic trap, unless the argument itself *embodies*, as Chuang Tzu has just executed, the immediacy of the joy of darting around as fish do. This is indeed “playing with argument” in situ (Wu, 1998). The whole situation, *thirdly*, amounts to this. Hui Tzu the Name-logician wanted to stay neatly systematically within a solipsistic system of the self. Logic closes in on itself tautologically. Logical thinking is solipsism in the final analysis. Chuang Tzu opens it into actuality—in story-thinking in situ.

Chuang Tzu points *out*, story-logically by *showing* their actual situation of having been darting around “on the Hao” here now, that to assert the impossibility of going beyond oneself amounts to going beyond oneself, by asserting it to someone *other* than the self. Thus such assertion goes beyond the solipsistic self—to root oneself *here with* the other.

All this sounds so complex, but wait! It remains, *fourth*, to note this “just being here”—how simple it is! It takes Chuang Tzu to so perceive *through* things as to cut the Gordian knot of logical tangles in Hui Tzu’s solipsism, with a jolting simplicity, “I know it on the Hao” here. This simplicity is dynamic interactive.

The “here” is dynamic, Chuang Tzu’s inter-be-ing with fish that evoked Hui-Chuang inter-be-ing between humans, symbolized in turn fish-Chuang inter-be-ing between species. All this existential inter-communication is so simple compelling, and so it is complex, multiplex, many-ply-ed-together, and deeper than logical thinking. Wisdom that is beyond ordinary logicizing is so concrete as to offend usual logic. Actuality is shockingly simple, as with straight births and unfussy deaths.

Thus, *fifth*, the actual, the beyond, the deep, and the simple, they are synonymous, to synonymously inter-elucidate. Do we glimpse the simple depths of the religious beyond here, in our simple routine meeting of the other? Do we see Buddhas in common folks walking on the street? To believe in the Beyond is so simple, and yet to know how we believe so is so impossible. Nobel laureate physicist Hideki Yukawa confessed, in disarmingly simple language, to such simple wonder at the simple concrete joy of the fish in “Chuangtse: The Happy Fish” (Mair, 1983: pp. 56-62).

The actuality of the other consists, *sixth*, in the *here* be-

yond-logic that facilitates communication between mutual others, two mutual-beyonds—by, to repeat, just being “here” mutually involved, itself a communication enjoyable. Now, all things everywhere are other than me myself, what are beyond me, and among things beyond me I can communicate, and this reciprocal communication-and-involvement good “management” that consists in staying in things-beyond as they are, as I am, here now. It is being with others without being with them, being situated in a situation here now. Concretely, the simplicity of actuality goes this way, in Threefold Piping (Chuang Tzu).

I watch the wind, invisible yet visible in constant swellings and fallings of the waves of water, one after another, with busy swings of tall grasses, back and forth, shooing, swishing. The wind brings me earthly piping. All this means, meaninglessly, in rhythm-less rhythm, all sun-drenched after the rainstorm, all as such in the heavenly piping. Herein is genuine intimation; “desiring to ex-press it, words are already forgotten.” (Waley, 1941). I am lost in it, lost in time, here. But then, this “here now” can ominously induce death any time; two vignettes below deal with death, surprisingly happily.

### Life Vignette Five: Lady Beautiful Happily Kidnapped

To graphically capture an alternative to a usual gloomy view of death, Chuang Tzu gives this story in terse two lines (2/79-81), packing thick feelings. “As Chin State first got Lady Beauty, daughter of Ai border-man, tears wet her neckline—till reaching the king’s place, sharing square bed, eating grass-fed meat, and she repents of tears. How would I know the dead would not repent of pining after life?” Let us now look close.

Lady Beautiful cherished by the border-guard at Ai is kidnapped by a barbarian Chin Chief and, in tears drenching entire robe, she came to the Chief’s residence. And then, she is nightly treated to the world’s most expensive square-bed, daily treated to the choicest steak, custom-prepared. By and by, her Ladyship comes to wonder why she shed tears at being “kidnapped” *this* way. Now, can we be sure the dead are not having a second thought on their initial wailing after life?

So, words are redefined. “Kidnap” shows a view from life-perspective; “having a second thought” tells of view-revolution from “life” to “death.” Death may be enjoyable, and this “may be” can never be disproved in life whose logic is no death-logic, as dream is no awakening. Chuang Tzu then wryly says that we are her Ladyship ready anytime to be *happily* kidnapped by the gracious barbarian Chief Death, to be treated royally. This is a distinct possibility no argument can dispel; nothing in life prevents us from jumping at this glorious possibility.

This is yet so incredible that Karl Marx had to shout “foul play!” Poor he did not know Chuang Tzu, much less these happy death-stories so this-worldly—as if Marx had a reason for shouting denial; cynics in sour-grape mindset join him, unaware that our delicious grapes are not unreachable. That religion is opium makes sense on three assumptions. One, life is nothing but pain and evil. Two, life has nothing beyond it. Three, both assumptions are self-evident. But they are not, nor can they be proven, as such assumptions go beyond life, and none has logic beyond life to prove the beyond-life. They dogmatically assert that all such “rosy death” is a desperate pie in the sky of “religious opium” to numb our fear of death.

They insist that “Lady Beautiful happily kidnapped by kind Chief Death” is a rosy fool’s paradise of “death joy,” a contra-

diction, just a dream of empty happiness. Can they ever be sure that *this* “dream” is a delusion? Isn’t Pascal’s wager for a kind all-powerful god afar, a barren rerun of elder Chuang Tzu’s colorful “wager for” a kind barbarian Chief Death close-by? Is there anything to prevent us-alive from jumping on to such a delicious death-possibility so natural so alive?

If anyone still ridicules us for embracing a “fool’s paradise,” we can easily retort that his—it is usually a boorish “his”—possible “cynic’s hell” is just as baseless, and worse off than moping around at unreachable sour grapes, for he is not even *sure* if our delicious grapes *can* be reached. In short, the kind Chief Death remains our distinct option so daring so delicious, and so natural alive.

Thus we have an easy smiling counteroffer. Delusion for delusion, which one would we embrace? Fool’s paradise and cynic’s hell, both are beyond the grave, impossible to prove on *this* side of the grave, as dream-logic of reality is no awakened-logic of reality. More, are we sure we are not insisting “we are of course awake” while dreaming? If we are unsure even of *us* awake, how could we be sure “death-joy” is no joy? In all, we would rather embrace our fool’s paradise of her Ladyship, as “baseless” as your cynic’s hell of non-existing sour grapes.

“No argument can demolish the possibility of bad after-death, either,” you insist. Well, does the bad possibility demolish the rosy possibility after death? All things being equal, bad after-death cannot demolish good after-death. The fact-*now* that good after-death empowers us is decisive *for* good after-death. Bad-after-death cannot cry, “Be realistic!” simply because realism is on the side of our being-empowered by good after-death (that gloom-after-death depletes), and science opts for anything that empowers. Instead, good-after-death should cry “Be realistic!” to bad-after-death!

“Empowerment of this life touches no beyond-life. It is still debatable if ‘good after death (gad)’ is real or empty beyond death.” OK, here are three responses. *One*, if gad is real beyond death, it is natural/logical/reasonable that gad beyond death empowers this life. *Two*, if gad is thought empty beyond death, the fact that gad empowers this life is unnatural/illogical/unreasonable, for no emptiness generates empowerment. No placebo-effect lasts forever, as history tells us. *Three*, if such reasoning-debate itself is doubted, *this* doubt cuts itself off from the possibility-of-doubt based on reasoning. We cannot even doubt if we doubt the above reasoning.

In all, these three points prove *good*-after-death as real beyond death. Eddie’s dearest Dad is alive, Joy’s dearest Dad is alive, Biho’s dearest parents are alive, and my/our dearest parents are alive! But human reason must leave blank on *what* good-after-death beyond death is. Three scenarios are possible. *One*, this-worldly joys continue, as Islam’s abundant water, fruits, and women, popular cults’ long life (in *Gilgamesh*), power and riches, nature (Chuang Tzu’s Lady Beautiful, roadside skull); *two*, we shadowy-sleep, in Buddhism and Judaism; and *three*, cosmic “holy history, Heilsgeschichte”) as proposed by Christianity, and perhaps Hinduism. We can accept any of them (Socrates accepts No. *one* or No. *two*), but cannot accept all (they are incompatible) or reject all (good-after-death beyond death would be empty); Confucius leaves it all open. Since my great grandfathers, all Go-Wu Family have traditionally accepted Christianity. Life ever in transit transforms; life passing-on changes itself wonderfully ahead. Death is in transit to transform, to liberate us from our worn-out physical life into the good beyond death spanking new.

We are all blessed by our cherished forebears and our precious others gone-on, all beckoning us ahead as they surround us, smiling each single day. Death does wonders-ahead. An elderly Shaman Black Elk fell to all fours and played with the babies, for they just came of mystery as he was soon to enter it, unaware that all our mystery is wonderful after-death ever good amazing, never bad in any sense.

A photo of the great grandma, soon to enter mystery, hugs *her* two great grand-babies, just out of mystery, to induce smiles from me, her son and their grandpa, irresistibly wanting to hug them all three! Always smiling, I watch them five times a day, joy overflowing mysterious, for nothing. Beware, Kishner, wailing after his dearest boy lived to only twelve (Smith, 1958)! This rabbi gritting teeth must be told that “bad things” herald good after-death to empower our life all the way to life-beyond. He is blessed by his cherished boy! His boy is Lady Beautiful happily kidnapped by Chief Death, both beckoning him, and us all, to joys.

“Now wait. You probed subjective impossibility of doubt. The problem remains of whether or not our subjective reasoning applies to objective realm—if any—beyond death.” “Possibility of doubt as reasonable” is more than subjective as reasoning is more than subjective, as science shows. Think of our natural *nisus* to the beyond-now, as we welcome each dawn *beyond after* nightfall. Reasoning is part of “beyond after”; it understands that Death dawns Life beyond after life physical.

Our gut-hunches, e.g., ESP as logic of discovery, on things-beyond occur often. It is contrary to reason to think then that death cuts off all such reasonable “beyonds.” The cut-offs, as crises to end the world, do continue on as history, into “holy history” beyond this-worldly history. Now, all this may be a speculation, but it does show how infinitely more reasonably probable it is, than not, for there to be a realm beyond death. Once there appears a realm beyond death, all reasoning above tumbles in for the *good* beyond death as real.

“You pulled out an odd ESP. Explain such spooky stuff.” Sartre (1938) was nauseated at sheer raw chestnut tree, lacking categories to classify the gluey stuff into manageable entity called “chestnut tree.” But he at least “met” the “presence” of some “stuff,” they all being in the same physical realm on this side of the grave. In a “realm” “beyond” death all ceased, nothing stands-together stuck together, unsystematic incoherent, not even a loose hotchpotch of anything is around.

We are lost in god-knows-what. We are, however, aware that we are lost far, and *aware* that even “lost far” is senseless here that is no “here.” Such awareness is our ESP of discovery-logic in the beyond-death that we are convinced is “good.” All my cherished people, beloved classics, Chinese calligraphies historic, musical compositions, all my health, all my sunshine, trees, grass, and birds, are bits of heaven strewn over me, fractions of foretaste of good-beyond-death dropped so generously.

Death catalyzes physical life into something good beyond physical all. “Physics” is a dynamics of birthing into beyond-physics; this birth-into is death. The significance of death-transit is (in) its destination, the good beyond death that empowers us all here now. Now, as if to support death as a happy-kidnap, to give us *what* it is that is so “happy” after death, Chuang Tzu tells us this incredible story yet all so natural.

### Life Vignette Six: Happy Roadside Skull

Chuang Tzu (18/22-29) travelled and saw an empty skull,

bare and still in shape. Horsewhip tapping, he asked, “Sir, did you come to this by losing reason with life-greed? Or did loss of a state axe-fell you, to turn like this? Or did you worry that deeds not-good would shame family, to turn like this? Or did chill and famine trouble you into this? Or did your seasonal years turn into this?”

Now, Chuang Tzu could not help but ask this way because Confucius, Socrates, Buddha, Jesus, and many others were all decently buried; even beheaded criminals are buried with the head back on. Thus to have only the skull here, and that casually tossed on roadside for so long as to be dry and barely in shape, is the rock-bottom misery imaginable. The skull was parched and still in shape, firm enough to pillow on that night. And then things happened.

At midnight, the skull appeared in a dream, “Your words are a quibbler’s, all on troubles of the living. Once dead, I have no such. Do you, sir, wish to hear about death’s *joy*?” “Yes!” “Death has no ruler above, no subject below, no matters unfinished through seasons. Unhurriedly with Heaven-Earth I make spring-autumn. No awesome royalty can go beyond it.”

Chuang Tzu, incredulous, said, “If I have Destiny Manager revive your form, remake your bones, flesh, and skin, and return you to parents, wife-children, neighbor-friends, would you like it?” The skull deeply wrinkled forehead, “How could I discard this royal joy to return to labors among people?” Never mind how a bare skinless skull can knit its brows into wrinkles.

Interestingly, all violence inner and outer, to self and to others, and all its sad and unsavory effects, fear, despair and all devastations, happen on *this* side of the grave. In grave and beyond, all destruction ceases, as sorrow departs, nothing negative or positive remains. Death deadens all, in absolute calm beyond joy and sorrow, beyond love and hate. All senses in every sense cease; death is sense-less.

Buddhism is here, calling it an “all blow-off,” Nirvana. Buddhism is religion of death. Chuang Tzu is here, too, but dares to call death *Joy* Ultimate, and Jesus here also dares to *manipulate* death into re-birth. Death has these three possibilities, for death is a nothing, a “de-cause,” to enable claiming anything. Buddha, Chuang Tzu, and Jesus smile at one another standing apart, precisely here, on this no-spot of death.

Now, what is odd, again interestingly, is that all this meditation on death happens not in death but in *life*; being alive, we can entertain even the possibility of meditation on death-in-death. Does this fact that *life* probes death tip the scale—whatever the “scale” means here—to life, and Buddhism’s “*life-de-cause* in pan-cessation,” while alive, must concede to life alive beyond life? After all, Buddhists themselves are all alive now.

That is why the Buddhists must train themselves in death while alive, for no dead person can be trained; these Buddhists themselves are alive to be “trained.” Such training amounts to beginning to begin, to yet to begin *living* happily ever *after* physical death. After all, we daily die at night to “train to daily live” at dawn from scratch. The beginning unceasing begins the season of life, the spring of life.

### Life Vignette Seven: The Happy Spring

Now, aren’t all these stories factual beyond all facts? Aren’t these beyond-facts natural alive? Isn’t the beyond-fact the incipient spring? Aren’t all such stories the young spring of shouting children? Doesn’t the young spring of those kids invite us irresistibly in? The nature-poet Robert Frost (1969) senses it

and chants it, as he intoned spring “Pasture,”

I’m going out to clean the pasture spring;  
I’ll only stop to rake the leaves away  
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may);  
I shan’t be gone long.—You come too.  
I’m going out to fetch the little calf  
That’s standing by the mother. It’s so young  
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.  
I shan’t be gone long.—You come too.

Wow! What joy so clean! The spring is the pasture out with leaves to clean, where the little calf is licked by his mother and totters. Who can resist *being* such spring at every moment, so invincibly natural alive? Let us join in, then. We will all be natural alive, quite playful, as these stories have played to show the spring as playing calf and Tommy the kid, all natural alive.

Being natural alive is always the springtime, the blossoming season spreading Not Yet toward All Yes. We must be there in the spring, and the Not-Yet and the Yes shall join to begin to begin, to yet to begin quiet wobbly calf, and Tommy jumping alive, as we are in the spring eternally fresh.

Whitman declares, “The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem” (Whitman, 1973). We say, this is because USA is the world’s poem of the *spring* of eternal youth, individualistic empathetic, independent interdependent. Robert Frost in America in the spring was cited above. And then we add, China is the world’s greatest historic poem, chanting how we can live happily ever *after* physical death as Lady Beautiful, doing seasons with Heaven and Earth as the dry skull on roadside, both as vignettes to our eternal spring. Both these stories are Chinese Chuang Tzu’s, told for 2,500 years spring-fresh, cited above.

“Be here, now!” these stories shout, and we shall enjoy the spring with minnows and Tommy always, as everything is justified by the enormous just Love homo-cosmic of Jesus of the Bible, smiling at Robert Frost and Chuang Tzu. All these vignettes from life urge us to “be here now” in situ, fully alive, to live on happily ever beyond life *after* death—beyond death.

## Conclusion

“So, what? They are just idle stories. Do these story-bits have any cash value?” Wow! This question of yours hits a jackpot, pal. All stories above actualize story-thinking for the first time in human thinking, no less than epoch-making (Wu, 2011). Tremendous cash values are got here. Seven ugly ditches (Chadwick, 1956)—logical vs. actual, current vs. historical, East vs. West, objective vs. subjective, general vs. personal, alive vs. dead, and justice vs. love—diligently dug out by long-faced logic, typically of the West, vanish in seven stories told and thought of above.

### Ditch One

Logical vs. Actual: Our logical thinking proudly, precisely, separates us from actuality, while the very purpose of logic is to cut into actuality. William James urges thinking *be pragmatic*, but he is still thinking, separated not practical, as the West digs the ditch *and* tries to jump it across. This self-defeating struggle vanishes in stories-telling that *thinks* story-actual, *story*-thinking as actuality going. Logical thinking comes alive flexuous, in storytelling story-thought. Logical ditch vanishes in story-thinking.

## Ditch Two

Current vs. Historical: We tend to brush aside what is past as gone and done so we can press ahead, unaware that it is what is gone that goes ahead guiding us now. To cut off the past cuts us off from our root to grow to future. Stories told compose past history, factual and beyond-fact. In stories history comes alive as our root that solidifies to vivify here now, thereby allows us to critically learn from what our fore-parents achieved, to improve on them toward our future. In story-thinking the ugly ditch between now and past vanishes.

## Ditch Three

East vs. West: Oriental wisdom brewing stewing slowly story-way is despised by the cutting-edge natural science of the Occident impatiently looking forward. Yet ironically, Western science adheres to “past supreme,” to wit, “as past, so future” in experiments based on the assumption that the future repeats the past events, to concoct natural laws.

But actual happenings are each unique, never to repeat as copy of past events, and “exceptions” continually erupt to the West’s natural laws statistically *set* into the future. Oriental story-thinking as thinking-reasonable flexuously conforms to flexuous contingencies of actuality, to make sense in East *and* West.

## Ditch Four

Objective vs. Subjective: How can “1 + 1 = 2” concocted in the subject here, nowhere objectively out there, count those stones objectively out there? This separatist dilemma gnaws at the base of Western science and knowledge in general, based on mathematics.

This dilemma vanishes when actual stories are told about actual counting of stones, to show—demonstrate—that difference is no separation but a facilitation of coming together. It is difference that enables togetherness, as storytelling describes. Separatism vanishes in natural storytelling joining differences to overarch subjects beyond toward objects, unifying them in convivial concord homo-cosmic.

## Ditch Five

General vs. Personal: Statistics is a general survey, while my living is specific situational. The public is for all to see, while my privacy is hid from public eye. It is general survey of the publicly general that gives knowledge, so my specific situation in privacy can never give “knowledge.” Ouch! Story-thinking comes to save us from no-knowledge. Story-thinking as *story* follows concrete specific situation, and gives “knowledge” as storied *thought*. The general-personal ditch vanishes in story-thinking.

## Ditch Six

Live vs. Dead: We shrink instinctively from death, daunted at life’s edge, in dread of de-cease all-unknown beyond the grave that awaits us, quite inevitable. Such dreadful ditch vanishes as stories are told of delicious potentials stretching beyond physical life, forever beckoning us alive to go on alive beyond death.

Stories are told on how we the Lady Beautiful are happily kidnapped by kind barbarian Chief Death, how a dry skull on

roadside enjoys ever rolling seasonal shifts, rolling with them, rolling them. These stories, however tall and wild, can never be disproved. Story-thinking dissolves the alive-dead ditch.

## Ditch Seven

Justice vs. Love: Legal fairness is forever pitted against visceral compassion. Justice that exacts punishment clashes with unbearable pity for the victims of justice. Such dilemma vanishes in eternal Justice itself dying the death of the punished to satisfy and fulfill justice, while rising up alive again in eternal Compassion to dissipate the sting of punishment and reclaim the condemned dead, now raised alive with Compassion. Such story-thinking, all too factual beyond this-worldly fact, repairs this just-love ditch.

In all, it is *thus* that storytelling savored above empowers us to be alive visceral, in story-thinking urging us “Be here, now!” Only life-vignettes of stories pull off such a stunt, amidst pain and dread all around. Now, as Tommy draws ever “not done yet,” he hums his silly songs to begin various “moments musicaux” Schubert plays, singing future *now*, to initiate spring symphonies of Schumann and Britten, all pastoral after the hearts of Beethoven and Vaughan Williams.

They are all unfinished, all Tommy-fresh and story-alive happily ever after. All the above seven story-bits describe “life vignettes” in the absolute lilting Utopia beyond the grave, melting away all dystopias, ever antiphonal chorusing back and forth “Be here, now!” Nothing more can be said or thought about. We must live, to *be* here, now, fully, beyond here now!

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