

FROM
AN ORTHOGONAL UNIVERSE

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MANY HANDS
VOLUME MMIV

PRODUCED BY THE TEMPLE OF THE NIGHT SONG

TRANSLATED BY
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Disclaimer: All characters in this book are fictitious. I think that pretty much goes without saying. If you want to believe they're real, then, well, I'm not one to criticize your lifestyle. Just keep doing your thing, and don't sue me. Also, I'm not omniscient. That means any resemblance to real persons is entirely coincidental, and not because I'm a passive-aggressive jackass. Honest.

With apologies to Epictetus...

- 1 -

Virtue is like a cat falling into a body of water. The cat will smell damp for the next few hours. The musk of the cat is not up to us. Our feelings on the musk are up to us, as our reaction to the howling. We may cover our ears and our noses. We may not cover both our own nose and our neighbor's nose. Should our neighbor be without hands, one of us will gag at the stench. We must not allow our pity to keep our noses uncovered. It is up to us to choose to move on, or be hindered by our handless neighbor or howling, damp cats.

- 2 -

If you are averse to the stench of damp cats or howling or claws, you will be without sense of smell, deaf, or bloody. Step back from the cat with gentleness. It will likely pounce.

- 3 -

If you like squirrels, say, "I desire squirrels!" When it is crushed by the wagon-cart or horses, you will not be upset. You will have a meal for two, assuming you or your neighbor prefer the taste of flattened squirrels.

- 4 -

Whenever you are going about eating a flattened squirrel, remind yourself of the dimensions of the squirrel. If it was of three dimensions, remind yourself that what appears to be only two is, in fact, still three. The height of the flattened squirrel, being the third dimension, is unobservable to the human eye. But that which is unobservable may exist.

You will undertake the eating of the squirrel with security if you say, "I want to eat the flattened squirrel." That way, if the squirrel becomes unobservable, you will be ready to say, "Oh well. The flattened squirrel is now parallel to my line of sight. I simply must rotate my head more than zero degrees. I cannot take this action if I am annoyed that there is no squirrel in my hands."

- 5 -

He who has the last word is the most likely to be called an ass. Asses are upset not by the words they heard, but that they were called an ass.

For example, I pushed my neighbor into the mud. What upset me was not that I was called an ass, but that my neighbor clearly didn't like me.

- 6 -

Do not take pleasure in that anyone can push boys into the mud. Take pleasure only in your own mud-pushing. Then you are joyful in your own superiority. And it's funny.

- 7 -

Consider that you are on a voyage, with your ship anchored. If you want to get fresh water, you may pick up a shellfish or an onion on the way. But, suppose you picked up a wife and a child instead. Then, you better get your eyesight checked; unless they're mermaids or have body odor, women and children are nothing like shellfish and onions.

- 8 -

If you are eating an apple, and a prankster deftly switches it out for an onion, then keep eating the onion anyway. That way, when you start to cry, you can blame it on the onion - and nobody will think of you as less of a man.

- 9 -

Suffering is like fish heads floating in barrels in a wine cellar - the wine is always flat. Do not be sad that your neighbor beheaded all your fish and threw the heads in your wine. Fish heads are a hindrance to your wine, but not to your ability to enjoy the wine. Say this to yourself, and invite your neighbor to settle your differences over a tall glass of fish-wine.

- 10 -

Shit happens. Get over it, and keep doing your thing.

- 11 -

Two onions in a basket make you cry twice as hard as one, if both happened to be chopped. Do not be sad that your neighbor chopped your onions. While you were crying over your onions, your neighbor had sex with your wife - after he wooed her with an onion sandwich. Never say you have lost your wife to an onion. Say you have gained a recipe for onion sandwiches. Take care of the onions as you would something which is not your own. Then, when your neighbor comes to apologize, you can throw an onion in his eye.

- 12 -

Don't forget to savor the onion milk, if onions were mammals and produced milk for consumption. While your wife is bearing your neighbor's children, give up considerations like, "If I neglect my pet onion, it will produce no milk for my illegitimate child." It is better to die of thirst with fear of no onion-milk gone than to live upset among a plethora of milk-bearing onions.

Nothing comes for free. If your onion produces too little milk, say, "This is the price for living in my dream world where onions are mammals and produce milk for consumption. My being upset or not depends not on the lack of milk produced from an onion - nor does it depend on my cheating wife or blind neighbor with onions for eyes."

- 13 -

If you want to make progress, let people think you are but a mindless fool. That way, they'll still elect you to public office, and then you can neglect them.

- 14 -

You are foolish if you wish to be in command of things you are not. If you wish your rooster to stop eating its own eggs, then you are stupid. A rooster that eats its own eggs is not a rooster, because roosters don't lay eggs, hens do.

- 15 -

Remember, you must behave in life as you would at a potluck lunch. If something disgusting is brought to you by a friend or superior, put your hand out politely and pretend to eat. After your friend or superior turns around, you may discretely feed the food to the dog.

- 16 -

When you see your neighbor weeping in grief at the loss of his onions or wine, take care to not be misdirected. Instead, be ready to offer him a glass of fish-wine or an onion of infidelity. Don't hesitate to feel superior at his expense, but be careful not to laugh out loud.

History repeats itself. This is what I taught, and always believed. Then I met Sheridan, a man hitchhiking down the highway without a care in the world - a lonely figure who told me history, and the world, was ending. His evidence was the story of a mathematician who tried to prove the world didn't exist.

It was a silly proposition. Nobody can prove the world doesn't exist. But as I became more convinced Sheridan was right, that the proof lay at the edge of reality, I could only wonder, *where would we go?*

The first stage of *An Orthogonal Universe*:

A FOUNDATION IN WISDOM

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