

# SUCHNESS AND SOOTH

*"... is there such a thing in this world as truth, by means of which truth-speakers perform an act of truth?"—MP*  
4.1.42

*"Truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are."—Nietzsche*

*"Truth conceals that there is none."—Ecclesiastes*

*"When you want to fool the world, tell the truth."—Otto von Bismarck*

*"Give to ordinary mind what is true, and to extraordinary mind what is."*

## THE LIVING LIE

I can't think of anything more treacherous and delusional — the terror behind terrorism, if you will — than a simplistic, self-serving, belligerent, take on "truth." There is no truth without adjoined untruth. Truth sees through ignorance. But what is ignorance? Ignorance ignores itself, wittingly or not.

Living a lie! Possible? All too. We would know.

Poems, in principle, are that which has cut through to this level of lucidity. Correct? A lying poem? A propagandistic poem, a self-promotional poem? A partial poem?

For example, for a view to be true, it will have broken through to the insight that allows one to completely enter, without obstacles or confusion, clarity of a course conducive to one's wellbeing with respect to the wellbeing of others, having received the grace and glory of Being by recognizing its nature as all we know. In this way, the purpose of poetry (if it agrees to being purposive) is to prime such auspicious potential.

Truth assumes we're perfectly capable of making ourselves miserable. It also assumes, as a baseline, that we don't necessarily have to make ourselves miserable, that, in fact, we'd rather not—and what's more, we have a responsibility to ourselves, individually and collectively, to not do so. Thus, there's extensive self-inquiry to carry out. Truth assumes there's a course to take, perhaps as sure as the coursing of the earth around the sun, that will be most interdependently beneficial. A view or statement integral to one's conduct, in light of the nature of mind as ground of being staging all experience; a view or statement that accords with our greatest realization of peace as our lives made precious by its path; this concentration, is what is known as "the power of truth."

I would not speak for the truth, nor would I speak the truth. Truth can speak itself. (Is that an absolutely true statement?)

Truth's realism—what makes the truth true? Truth is not what I'm seeing. Is truth what I see when I put aside what I'm seeing? What am I seeing when seeing radiates openheartedness in all directions? Creation is true. But is it true if I say Creation is the form in which God is revealed?

Relativistic, re-interpretive, reductionist truth wherein one's self-centric view equates with external reality is a treacherous path. (Unexamined reality is the cause of war...agreed? A greed.) This mind/matter homoisis is like the "structural isomorphism" of Avicenna and Wittgenstein, or Aquinian adequation: "*Veritas est adæquatio intellectus et rei.*" Mind/world correspondence can easily have no basis in truth, existing as cultural consensus, catch-phrase, counterfeit tone, put-on comportment, concept contagion—all contingent on the reigning conventions. The correspondence could be a *pragmata*, the most expedient construct. It could be a provisional, performative predicate, accomplishing what it intends irrespective of the facts (Fromm's optimal truth). It could simply be a cutthroat, zero-sum opponent destroyer. You lose, loser!

In the West, perhaps it's possible to cobble together a realistic realm of truth: Kierkegaard's "heartfeltness" of truth + Heidegger's *being-truth* and *unconcealedness* + Aristotle's *phronesis* + Hannah Arendt's "*metaphorically, it (truth) is the ground on which we stand and the sky that stretches above us.*" (from her essay Truth and Politics); although always undercut by Nietzsche's run amok, naturally selective will to power that prefers untruth over truth if it happens to be more *vital*, life-affirming, empowering, necessitous and fit — a fatal linking of power to truth and, inextricably, power to money, as upstart negativity tends to steal the show, win the day. And stemming from Nietzsche, Foucault's blasé "truth is undoubtedly the sort of error that cannot be refuted because it was hardened into an unalterable form in the long baking process of history." Just as undoubtedly, critiquing, luxuriating, in the holes in Western metaphysics is money for old rope.

In terms of modifying tone to dial down aggression by backing off of one's rectitude, discursive accounting of truth is of little use, as the discursive is, itself, the untrue. Speech affected—infected—by our faults (confusion, resentment, addiction), unprotected by... a vow to bring peace by the very means of our faults, must necessarily deceive, divide, distract, dissemble, deaden and disconnect from our basis in bliss (the very moment we were conceived from beginninglessness). The starting point is: truth isn't an add-on or insistence. It isn't even a practice or a path or that which the path is on. So elemental is truth, we deceive ourselves in its search.

I'm merely wanting an extremely difficult-to-achieve luminosity to be as present and shared as daylight. It's easy to do away with conceptualizations of reality and any sense of subject/object distinction and assume the result is direct experience of *dharmadatu* (reality as-is, as it arises, without our poetics) and perhaps dissolve experience altogether. Dharmadatu's contrary is alethic relativism, the zombie materialism of glib stiff owning their own words in worlds of their own making, scarcely larger than their constructedness.

Speech is straight-up intimacy. It is *unconcealedness*. Prosody turns us inside out. Even if you're lying, there it is, written all over you, sounding out. To speak is to be naked. To speak is to be fully armored. To speak is to test and distrust, to hide in front of each other, to turn into each other, to be known and respected, to have misspoke and hurt others, to have offered help and have said the unsayable. Wherever words come from, they define one's whole morphology, carry one's gestures and determine character. Language, whether used for lying or disclosing, is reality brought out of oblivion.

When referring to harsh or violent public speech that must be toned down, people tend to distance language by calling it *rhetoric*, or at least *discourse*. Herein lies the problem. Rhetoric pertains particularly to public speech in terms of art, artificiality, affectation, persuasion, propaganda. Rhetoric is the eloquence of privilege, power, policy-mongering. (Ostensibly, poetry can be defined as the art of composition that overcomes the limits of both raw and artificial language, while in practice, easily falls prey to its own conceits, as well.)

In Aristotle's metaphysics "To say that that which is, is not, and that which is not, is, is a falsehood; therefore, to say that which is, is, and that which is not, is not, is true." Truth as fact, as correspondence between language and a mind-independent world, is certainly the very least that can be understood about the nature of both language and mind.

The hiddenness of truth is that speech is an everyday ritual. With each word we sacrifice our nonexistence. If we can shine light on this everydayness with each word spoken from beginninglessness ... with civilization on life-support and steroids at once and in dire need of directly efficacious rituals, true words are the only medicine immediate enough to treat our condition in time.

## SATYA-KRIYĀ: TO BRING BEFORE ONE'S EYES

As told in the *Milindapañha* (questions posed by the Greek king Menander to the Indian sage Nagasena, ≈ 1<sup>st</sup> c. BCE) on the banks of the Ganges in the city of Pataliputta, King Asoka asks his officers if anyone could make the river flow backwards. While all officers quickly confirm the impossibility, a courtesan, Bindumati, overhears Asoka and, through the power of an act of truth, turns the flow of the Ganges upstream. Astonished, Asoka asks Bindumati:

*"Is it true what they say, that it is by your Act of Truth that this Ganges has been forced to flow backwards? How have you such power in the matter? Or who is it who takes your words to heart (and carries them out)? By what authority is it that you, insignificant and sinful as you are, have been able to make this mighty river flow backwards?"*

*"It is true, O king, what you say. That is just the kind of creature I am. But even in such a one as I so great is the power of the Act of Truth that I could turn the whole world of gods and men upside down by it."*

*"What is this Act of Truth? Let me hear about it."*

*"Whosoever, O king, gives me gold — be he a noble or a brahman or a tradesman or a servant, I regard them all alike. When I see he is a noble I make no distinction in his favor. If I know him to be a slave I despise him not. Free alike from fawning and from dislike do I serve the owner of the money, do service to him who has bought me. This, your Majesty, is the basis of the Act of Truth by the force of which I turned the Ganges back." (In Bindumati's case, the power of the truthfulness was her impartiality and lack of judgement of others in the face of being judged and demeaned herself.)*

Of the compound word *satya-kriya*, it would be misleading to simply reduce the meaning of *satya* to ‘truthfulness’ or ‘honesty’ or ‘oath.’ Behind *satya* lies the even more expansive root *sat*, ‘real.’ *Satya* is the aligning of one’s body, mind, speech and conduct with the real and with one’s aspirations and values that accord with the real. *Kriya* can be translated as ‘action,’ ‘effort’ or ‘practice.’ *Satya-kriya* is the practice of living this alignment and the coherence of wellbeing it offers.

At origin, *satya-kriya* is a performative miracle. It’s a spoken truth as a completed imperative. Speech *consonant* with (as distinct from *conditioned* by) existence, with the power to compose existence in ways that are in keeping with the workings of its total wellbeing. In this way, the “truth” of what-is includes elementary phenomena like gravity, multi-cellularity and consciousness, as well as our ethical conduct integral to our statements capable of keeping all things working well together. In this way, moving away from affectation, there’s hardly any limit to the degree of intoning and entraining within truth, as its embodiment.

*Satya-kriyā* is the antithesis of affectation; truth carried out by means of the its very statement. In its entirety (as well as in its simplicity, for that matter) “truth” is not a treacherous word at all.

Beatrice, in Canto 1 of Dante’s *Paradiso*:

*“All things among themselves possess an order and this order is the form that makes the universe like God.”*

While affectation is subtly, or, overtly, coercive; *satya-kriya* is conducive and effective. The tone of a statement conducts untruth as well as truth. Blessing can’t exist without cursing. How much energy has been exhausted attempting to pull these two apart? Perhaps if we were to tonally sensitize ourselves to the point at which affectation itself would be heard as a curse cast upon us ...

*Satya-kriya* is scarcely related to the “speech act” of linguistics. True statement, as in the case of Bindumati, can even go against the grain, defy the rules, of both nature and culture, to affirm an elementary ethics consonant with the ground of being from which our actions arise. The power of true statement acts on the intractable, the chronic, the entrenched and atrophied. It’s beyond the energy (is indeed constitutive of the energy) that brings the cosmos about, holds it together and brings it into balance (Logos, if you like); conducive of the coherence and harmony often controverted by our radicalized poetics.

*Satya-kriya* is more creational and realizational than invocational, performing its own power. It does what it says. Word/world/wish coincidence.

Because the nature of existence is dynamic and dis-equilibrating, *satya-kriya* acts as a core and encompassing power capable bringing mind and material back into balance. (Speech mediating the mental/emotional and physical, once again.) This has always been the work of the *rishis* and *rishikas*, a lineage as clear as any wisdom tradition, which we now faintly refer to as “poetry.”

*Satya-kriya* is practiced in the Vedas—moreover it is the *mode* of the Vedas, a Vedic institution not unlike our current systems of justice and government. It’s a calling upon and an aligning with the power of truth, to realize an imperative based on greater wellbeing. “*A light just like the sun, the night the same as the day, I perform this truth, in need, for help.*” (AV 4.18.1). The shift from Vedic *satya-kriya* to Pali/Buddhist *saccakiriyam* and the stating of the 4 Noble Truths is quite congruous. Unhappiness can end.

“Let there be light” (because I’m almighty and I say so). A name alone can be an instance of *satya-kriya*. To say Amitabha's name accomplishes a vow, completes the imperative. Just as saying the name of the beloved can fully manifest that love. It could simply be a bringing to mind of an ancestor’s courage through which we now exist.

Generally, *satya-kriya* has two parts: a phrase avowing the truth that is to be drawn upon and the imperative/command to be carried out by the power of that truth. *Satya-kriya* is primal; a formalized outcry; an upwelling within human being that can be found across all cultures, calling upon inconceivable strength to overcome deadening limitations. The truth-basis empowering the imperative primarily (or at least requisitely) depends on the truth-sayer’s personal integrity and lifelong meritorious conduct. (There may also be divine, hierophantic or institutional authority drawn upon.) Although *satya-kriya* could be providential or purely grace-given, its efficacy is typically proportional to the integrity of the speaker.

“May her innocence save her from this terrible illness.” It’s the innocence that confers credence.

“Sister, since I was born, I do not recall that I have ever intentionally deprived a living being of life. By this truth, may you be well and may your infant be well.” (Angulimaliyasutra)

*Satyam eva jayate*: 'Truth alone conquers.' (Mundaka Upaniṣad).

*Satya-kriya* is also civic and pedestrian. “Stop, in the name of the law!” “By the power vested in me, I now pronounce you ...” “I swear on my mother’s grave...”

Anecdotally, the few times I’ve found myself confronted, outnumbered, assaulted in the street, I’ve survived — not unscathed, but in one piece — only by means of the disarming power *satya-kriya*. By crying out the greater damage being done to humanity. Not “fuck you.”

Tone of voice moves matter. Immediately, miraculously. It patterns and shatters body, speech, mind and being-together. It composes what occurs, according to one’s vow. The truthfulness is the agency and efficacy of the statement. We *can* be healed by nothing other than honesty, an asseveration of truth, a solemn aspiration, or by an act of candor, alone. (The whole body consents, concedes, conforms to the forgiving.) *Satya-kriya* and mantra (*satyamantra*) are closely correlated. Mantra is a means of *satya-kriya*. *Satya-kriya* is a truth spell, a *sāt vācas*. (It can also be an “untruth spell” for sowing discord and desecration; a verity-inverter, as in the case of a politically, personally motivated fact-laundering distortionist preposterously positing, for example, Hezbollah, the FBI and the Deep State as the instigators of a Capital Building Seat-of-Democracy assault, bending whole world to one’s belligerence.)

*Satya-kriya* is necessarily instrumental, conductive, conducive; a ritualized asseveration while touching the earth as proof or sooth, literally or figuratively; the taking responsibility for and fulfilling of one’s purpose and creativity. Unlike confession or profession of faith, *satya-kriya* is commissive, not admissive. It’s a *carrying-out*.

*“By this then know the force of truth. There is no place to which it does not reach.”*

So, what is true for truth can equally be said about untruth? No. What is true for truth can only unequally be said about untruth. Self-asseveration, in itself, is *unsooth*. What *is* (that within which all phenomena arise) *is* truth. *Satya-kriya* is conducting oneself in the world in ways that illumine its truth.

## FLYING OFF THE HANDLE

*"Only the days are not sufficient to hold so much blessing."* Ode 166

Nonreactivity is more instantaneous than reaction. It's simply an open state free of judgement, taste, bias, provocation, imposition (a mental "fasting," if you will). What is refrained from is that which would be sorely caught up in causality, burdened by negative repercussions, enmeshed in sympathetic nervous system signaling.

Nonreactivity flows and suffuses. An arduous effortlessness.

Virtue, on the other hand, is a gratification based on an isolable subject's carrying out of a beneficial action. It's a conforming to the behavioral values that are, contrarily, the very means of the perpetuation of war.

(On which horn shall we impale ourselves?)

As an example of de-polarized paradox (when non-doing is more *effective*), archaic Chinese *wu-wei*: indivisible body/mind/speech acts spontaneously aligned with our ethico-eco-cosm. Also Laozian *tanli*: following the heavenly pattern—skillful living requiring neither techniques or practices, only devotion and attunement. (The "spiritual alignment" of Catherine Murupaenga-Ikenn, as mentioned above, also comes to mind.)

From the Daidejing (Ch. 38, tr. E. Slingerland): "Hence when the Way was lost there arose virtue; When virtue was lost there arose benevolence; When benevolence was lost there arose righteousness; When righteousness was lost there arose the rites." Once valued, value degenerates (by means of esteeming conventional, reactionary action).

The fittingness (*yi*), not the forcefulness, defeats the foe; the apologetic, not the apoplectic. Or it could be said that we're constituted by spontaneous virtue (*de*). We're each the hearing of a perfect music, from which tone of voice arises. Our spontaneity is the original *lila*, the play of the divine.

Peace intermediation (and activism in general) that doesn't begin in one's own mind, as one's mind, as a charnel ground, as a *commons* (the basic space of all arisings) risks reproducing the rhetoric one works against, becoming another cause of war, ordinary mind conformism, the pushing of one's own buttons, tone of voice as self-victimization.

And if righteous punishment and justice is your *lila*, recall the tenth and deepest ditch in *Malebolge*, reserved for truth-traitors, counterfeits of the real; a face of good cheer as tail of a scorpion; one's own unexamined view as the only one; the most deeply rooted affliction.

IF IGNORANCE IS THE CAUSE OF SUFFERING, BEING ALIVE IS THE PROBLEM,

if there is a problem, and if there a problem it is breathing. Fortunately, we have direct, deepest experience of the time between thoughts, the space between inhalation and exhalation, the *ontos* between “o” and occurrence. Cutting through, setting aside. No energy aside from no energy. Aside from no energy, no energy. Laying to rest even rest. Vivid as a blue jay, a dollhouse, a dandelion, moss, a fire truck, a glacier melting.

Consonants without vowels, and all that doesn’t exist, is within the heart. Only tone is there. Tone that does not surface.

Voice’s antecedent.

## NO THEORY ONLY *THEORIA*

—*Theoria* divides into “show” and “union.”—

To *show* direct vision of God, I can simply draw a flower, point out a chair, frame a street-scene, say a word. Nothing changes, if not everything. Hearts we never see are all we see.

All my stages are in each word. Which stages are those? Comprehensive, countless, inclusive, concluding in the uncaused word.

And each letter is, indiscriminately, a perfected text, without supports and unforthcoming. Dark plus light energy. The cosmos may collapse, but it can’t fall down.

There is an antidote for meaninglessness that is other than the middle of the road between permanent meaning and pointlessness guide rails and crash barriers. Over the top, out of bounds bliss, holding the whole show together. Often mistaken for boredom. The heart we never see is the *all-encompassing*, totally dependent on the minute details of our everyday comity.

No one running the show knows the meaning of the word “uncaused.” Ruining the show, those running it in the first place because they don’t know how to not ruin it. This is called “leadership.”

In losing belonging—with each other, on earth:

at aid-distribution lines, bags handed out to fill with food in fact for use as the bearer’s bodybag; refugees fleeing erosion, refused where climate change is not recognized. A big sister forced to work for her family, her personal dreams passed on to her little sister. In the flood, happy to have lost only one’s livelihood, one’s home, one’s animals, in place of one’s family, friends and one’s own life.

“In the don’t say is the say.” Bangladeshi women’s voices. Incapable of statement other than stunning *satya-kriya*.

Regardless of the honor and principles packed into the word “practice”—however whole and heartening, however redeeming it is to have a practice, get rid of the time it takes.

## ALTOGETHER NOT OTHER THAN

Your desire to be safe can't exist without your enemy's desire to be the same. I can't dig a trench around your suffering. It's airborne. Inborn.

Don't insist the belligerent parties don't exist...only their belligerence. It starts with ingredients. Our makeup. What, exactly, is belligerent? What of my belligerence is yours and in what faculty does it form? In nothing that is made of anything. It blows in. Passes through. So blow ourselves up. Don't blow ourselves up. Don't both blow ourselves up and not. We may survive. May we survive.

Blow on it. Pinch yourself. Appear in a mirror. There's nothing we are not. Empty even of otherness, as is identity otherness. We've never not been the other's shore, nor ocean. I'm not on your side I am altogether your sidedness, as that which you side against. May we develop nuclear arms as equals.

Think of phenomena as being boundlessly familiar. There's no *unsurpassable* because there is no *surpassable*. It's what we're made of that's not made of anything. Bunker-buster-bomb-diplomacy is empty of itself and still itself.

I write so that long gone ancestors and sages may rejoice.

We blow up any world we've solidified, in order to be operable within it.

Just the thought of it—the thought—was hit by a truck. The thought of conventional truth. I stick to my guns only to find I'm firing at their manufacturer. The dispensation for advancing peace and eradicating hunger, combined, is 0.1% of global military expenditure.

We're one budget reallocation away from basic insight as the duty to fulfill basic needs of the cosmos as our earthly economy as nature of mind. Wisdom has no consistence. The GBU-57 Massive Ordnance Penetrator has an exact, extreme, perfect antipode which is, unfortunately, *dependent upon* its antipode. *Antidote requires ailment.*

Like the world, the head becomes empty not when it's stuffed full of everything, rather *because* it's stuffed full of everything. I'd pity us if we weren't so pitiable (there'd be no freedom or freshness in this), were we not perfectly alive, out of all possible possibilities.

Reactivity is fixation. I would remove this from self-orbiting.

I noticed that the war I spoke of was not already happening. Let form and feeling first dissolve and then ask with raised fist why credit card issuers are exempt from usury limits and laws. Being born, aging and dying aren't hype—there merely all that's added. To what?



Give to the concrete what is concrete's, that you may have a crematory or vault, an impeccably level, well-kept cemetery grounds. A freeway, a sky scraped, a planet with or without us, scrapped. Know that concrete is not cement and cement is not made of itself. And so on. And so on no longer. And then address the assembly of lawmakers, convincingly.

*Bloodthirsty* is a conglomerate of parts no one is party to at their own party or parting. This is the beauty of undoing.

2 weeks into doxycycline treatment for neurological Lyme disease I ask my infectious disease doctor what he thinks of complimentary medicinal plant therapy, like Japanese Knotweed, Skullcap and Ghanaian Quinine. He answers "you have to ask if it will kill you if you take it." (Nothing offered with regard to possible or proven benefits.)

Does the poem manifest love, or doesn't it. It'll kill you (if it doesn't).

The nature of fire is to burn. The nature of water is to flow, freeze and turn to steam. The nature of solidification is to see through its suffering. Being made negative by negativity makes miserable. Common is within individual. The nature of peace is to not yet have been realized. Truth, by nature, can't be sectarian—not created, not imposed, not instrumentally made up. Give me a piece of your mind. The nature of familiarity is to become illimitable. When you move a mountain, leave not a trace.

## KAKISTOCRACY & HEAVEN

*"Universities have become banks and real estate development companies that offer classes."*—Dr. Maura Finkelstein

*"I truly believe that if we had more conflict in the world, we would have less violence."*—Priya Parker

## THE TASTE OF ONE'S OWN MEDICINE

The Mandate of Heaven, introduced by insurrectionary kings of the Zhou dynasty, claimed that Heaven would bless the authority of a just ruler and revoke its mandate from a tyrant. According to the Mandate, a successful coup d'état proved the uprightness of the rebel and justness of the revolt. (It's not the uprising per se, but the hoarding of power that is seditious.) The fact that the script can be—and will be—flipped is another sort of heavenly mandate. Stability is anomalous, or, at best intermittent. If it can't quite be said that rule by the out-and-out worst leaders is the tendency, it can, on other hand, confidently be said that rule by the not-best hearts and minds is typical.

*Colonize or be colonized*, especially if colonized. When it is wisest to distrust? Who wouldn't envy full spectrum dominance? Stability is temporary lopsidedness.

(Peace, of course, is an even greater heavenly mandate perpetually obscured by conflict. By now, we've heard every conceivable oxymoron, every conscientious twist: "just war" "peace offensive" "militant affection" "avant-garde" "sacred rage" "weapon of love" "war to end all war" "power to the people" "nonviolence is a weapon of the strong" "hate greed" "peace is the only battle worth waging" "forgiveness is the most powerful weapon" "anger is a very effective fuel" "those closest to the pain must be closest to the power" "peace does not mean an absence of war" "silence is violence" "Peace demands greater heroism than war" "reward peace more than war" "sword of justice" "good trouble" "harmonizing hegemons" "rage is the sacred medicine for repair" "never again" "fire for fire" "eye for eye" "tooth and nail" "toe to toe". These expressions (especially because they sound like reasonably radical solutions) all bear seeds for the conventional causes of war; the genetics of its inevitability, the guarantee of reprisal. In the words of George Carlin: "Fighting for peace is like screwing for virginity."

What gets you killed is... *not* believing you're going to die.

Conceits aside, is not all law divine (Greater Than Us having created all of creation) law—mind minus our poetics, which includes the stone tablet, sutra, epiphania, *mysterium tremendum*, terma, beatific vision, gurbani, empirical evidence, inherent moral principle, interpretation, convention, consensus or truth? Minus our assertions and asseverations and, perhaps above all, our confusions. As political theologians would say: *"Do not therefore try to understand in order that you may believe, but believe in order that you may understand."*

Now we see: Americans have always been contentiously oblivious to the fragility of democracy and the ease with which a civil society can devolve into autocracy and rule by kakistocrats. The presumption of democracy is so deeply ingrained in our sense of identity we'd be the last to realize, the last to admit, the last to disallow, patent knavery and misrule. Death by a thousand cuts now looks like a bludgeoning.

A free press is even freer to deceive. The ultimate test. The cosmos is a lie. Only we could say such a thing. Negligibly existent. We didn't have to die.

It is through constituent power and popular sovereignty, and moreover *due* to constituent power and popular sovereignty, that republics are lost to autocracy. The very checks and balances that are put in place to curtail institutional corruption are the same tools used to legitimize, for example, a monopolistic anti-labor corporatocracy, deregulation for the benefit of the few already living beyond regulation, or overrepresentation of monied interests wherein opposed political factions drink from the same filthy trough.

From the bottom, the disgruntled majority falls for a populist façade. From the top, concentrated wealth and personal power propose self-protective, self-enriching legislation. From the middle, the disaffected non-voting masses give a free pass to potentate takeover. All this is enabled because constituent power, unlike constituted power (like the power of congress, a parliament or a presidency established by a constitution) is not bound by the constituted legal order; it basically has the power to alter or overthrow that order, in favor of grassroots mob-rule or rule by a klepto-crypto-kakistocratic clan from above (even potentially from as far away as Mars).

The first amendment protects the right to peaceably assemble in protest or counter-protest, regardless of "content" and no matter how hateful the message, including grievances against government policy and calls for the impeachment of a president. At the same time the "authorities" have the right to disperse or outlaw

protest if it is a clear and present danger to public safety or national security. Judges have historically ruled that the right to protest is not unlimited. The current administration has repeatedly referred to peaceful protests as “illegal.” In one instance last March the president warned that “All Federal Funding will STOP for any College, School, or University that allows illegal protests” and that agitators would be imprisoned or sent back to whichever country they came from. Education Secretary Linda McMahon reinforced the threat by stating “This is not a freedom of speech issue, this is a safety and civil rights issue.” This is known as “frame warfare” or VVVV, victory via vilifying vocabulary. Call a protester an agitator often enough, an immigrant a criminal, a demonstration or strike illegal and the stain will be indelible.

In 1861 and 1862 President Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus under the Suspension Clause of the Constitution (Article 1, Section 9) allowing a bypass of judicial process in cases of rebellion or invasion. In 1863 congress ratified Lincoln’s proclamations by providing a legal framework for the suspensions. Act first, legislate later.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the 1993 Constitution of the Russian Federation stated that Russia had become a democratic, federative, law-based state with a republican form of government, guaranteeing human rights and fundamental freedom for all citizens. This fledgling democracy was no more than a constitutional cover for the re-autocratization of the country, a transition to a sovereign-crown presidency. The “secret” to the illegal seizing and maintenance of absolute power is to do so *legislatively*. (Just walk in through the front door. Throw everyone off guard. Exceptions to the rule will become the new ruling.) Subsequently, Putin simply drafted an amendment that allowed him to stay in power until 2036, two 6-year terms beyond the constitutionally allowed two 4-year terms. He also introduced a law criminalizing the constitutionally-granted right to peaceful assembly, to prevent “mass unrest” and protect non-protesters from “radicalism.” Benito Mussolini’s regime came into power by advocating for the integration of divergent interests into the state for the “common good”. In 1975, Indira Gandhi, citing “an imminent danger to the security of India being threatened by internal disturbances” imposed *The Emergency*—granting herself the extraordinary authority to rule by decree and suspend democratic freedom, arresting over 110,000 protesters and opposition leaders, all within the ambit of the constitution. Currently, in Germany the AfD is simply being voted into power throughout the county. A rebellious Hernán Cortéz drew upon the legal lemma in Castilian law *Obedezco pero no cumpro* (I obey, but do not comply) to justify his invasion of Mexico against the explicit orders of the King and his officers in Cuba to stand down.

To uphold and preserve the law, every police officer must act extra-judicially, must be trained to do so: to personally judge or interpret, in a split second, whether a crime is being committed, whether their lives are in danger.

Rule of law and the suspension of rule of law are indistinguishable. Giorgio Agamben calls this the *state of exception*. What absolute power seeks is subjects who are subject to the state while being excluded from protections and freedoms under its laws. Overt examples include Guantanamo Bay, mass deportations, revoking birthright citizenship, the Patriot Act. Less obvious —though rife—direct and discrete examples of citizen control/corraling/coercion by the state could include surveillance, minimum wage, deregulation of consumer and environmental protections, credit card interest rates exempt from state usury laws, insuring health for profit, lobbying, sycophantic legislators, debt burdening, union-busting, packing people into prisons and cities, broken lives, barren landscapes, the free market, the state as an organ of corporations, the cost of living itself, isolation, and so on, all matters which constituent law, uncorrupted, has the power to change. Agamben sinisterly posits the state’s modus operandi as the formal logic of the

concentration camp—or, even more insidiously, (un)civil society as subjects with no say, *homo sacer*, legally abusable (the law suspended by the law)—*murderable* subjects who are, nonetheless, too defiled to even sacrifice; a suspended humanity. The brutality of this “bare life” is barely beyond the global trend to cut government deficits and balance budgets through severe austerity measures, as wealth and power concentrate in fewer and fewer hands.

The tone of voice of a speaker not tempered by—not infuriated by— this soft totalitarianism will become less and less believable, less and less truthful. For Agamben, the brutalized subject and the citizen are one, held within the concentration camp paradigm and its entirely illusory (contrived, connived, void of actual compassion) nature.

Rights for the fit! Only the sovereign survive. This is why the refugee, with no place to belong to, now attracts such repudiation. People no place wants! And the looming civil war under the suspension/exemption of humanity, the exception of inhumanity: one’s political opponents are not only opposed, not only demonized, but ostracized; “others” as human contaminants. Righteousness and autocracy *both* tar and feather. While the “real” rhetoric is withheld—the repressed, coiled messaging within, the unspoken and the extrovert virtue signaling, are the actual spearhead. Here, constituent power is demonic, not liberating, undermining not only the civic body but civil being. The law contains extralegal clauses, emergency wartime and disaster powers, extraordinary measures, commutations of sentences, executive orders, suspension of fact-checking, empty campaign promising and even rule by divine mandate—the law squared; the law must be against the law or we grind to a halt; each citizen under constituent government can attempt to overrule the rule, call for the head of despot or become one, through the power of the spirit of the law and pursuit of one’s own supreme happiness.

Biopolitical, illiberal democracy is not built on a failing liberal democracy like a modern structure raised on ancient ruins, or like a new tenancy moving into an existing infrastructure, or an organic adaptive authoritarianism. The new demagoguery is a parasitoid. It lays its eggs in a host body, feeding off its life force and manipulating its behavior until the host is killed off. Dictatorial Türkiye, Hungary, Israel, Russia and the United States unfold from within, in plain view. On one level, it could be argued that such a radical parasitism is neither good nor bad, playing a sort of evolutionary role in a political environment, terrifying the complacent, freshening the fetid and dismissing the dissemblers; cleaning house, so to speak. Such an argument, in relation to an envisioning of humanity we’ve yet to fulfil or at least further, is itself degenerative. Initial crimes against humanity trace back to our obscured vision.

Of course, early, revolutionary Americans were referring to a foreign government, not their own inchoate, constituent constitution when they declared: *“deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government,”*

As if the Declaration was designed for mob/mob-of-one interchange.

And even more incredibly: in order to constitutionally change a free country into an autocracy, it isn’t necessary to change a single letter of the law. There’s plenty of room for a motivated quasi-monarch to maneuver.

## WHAT IS THERE WHEN NOTHING ELSE IS THERE

*“The poet needs no weapons and no cunning, as long as God’s absence comes to his aid.”*—Hölderlin

*“Only the cunning and the stupid speak, and they do it in the name of the market, the crisis, pseudo-sciences, acronyms, institutions, parties, ministries, often without having anything to say. Those who, in the end, are brave enough to speak know that they speak—or, if need be, keep silent—in the name of a name that is missing.”*—Giorgio Agamben, *The Fire and the Tale*, 67

*“What is poetry if not an operation in language that deactivates and renders inoperative its communicative and informative functions in order to open them to a new possible use?”*—Agamben

On the other hand, opposing sides both constantly speak, criticize, cry out, accuse, curse and condemn; both in the name of a Name that is not only present but implicated, in Gaza and Israel. Bhakti is *devotional Name*; as in hesychasm and cloistered Ashokan therapeutae as well; an operative/inoperativity of the Name. Perhaps our most advanced poetics *is* paradox.

And those outside of the privilege of investigative philology, who work themselves to the bone, with the fewest freedoms with the camp, can at most hope to suspend the grind long enough...to luxuriate in potential long enough, to land a less subservient position within the free market.

Had the name not been appropriated (the name which constitutes the origin of all languages) perhaps words would still be operable, and the cognoscenti would not be calling for its inoperativity and crippling.

All these concerns—*absence of the name, state of exception, suspension of law, bare life, unenclosed concentration camp*—bring Agamben around to a *poetics of inoperativity*. Because Agamben labored so extensively to clarify his meaning of “inoperativity” I’ll belabor the word only briefly. It’s certainly not simply an *unwork* ethic. It’s not merely pure contemplation, i.e., the thought of thought (*noesis noeseos* or the Unmoved Mover). Inoperativity is an operation internal to basically any activity; it would deactivate the operability of law, biopolitics, thought, self, language, utility, purpose, economics— and I would hope, bias, belligerence, militarism and war—in order to back away from “ends” and open us to excessive potential from which new uses may arise. In the end, Agamben gives way to “grace” as the only viable operativity.

(The means to put an end to war, alone, will never put an end to war.)

Could you have made what you’ve made out of nothing? Could you make nothing?

What is the spell that would render violence inoperable?

Do but don’t do *something*. Make, but make only the making. The war will never come. The tone will temper. Make doing. Make doing itself.

Inoperativity confers upon the operation its truth, its *satya-kriya*, it’s origin in potentiality, playing out.

Any language is the name of God.

Life without illusion is illusory. The illusion of illusion. Destitution imposed by the state is not cenobitic; a writing obtained by prayer is not the writing of writing. Truth no longer corresponds to truth. Mystery perfectly coincides with whatever we swear it is not. This coincidence is our deepest wound. Words are the safe distance from which we operate, like the distance of wrist from heart where the pulse is neither drowned out by pathos nor silence, by thunderous executive power nor the people.

Virtue has always, secretly, wanted us to *not* be defined by what we do...yet, it could never contradict itself to that extent. Virtue has given up its potential in order to, of course, be virtuous, to play a positive role within the concentration camp, the concentration of power, the cause and effect cathedral of all action, the interpenetration of all appearances, the glut of products and sales pitches.

To delight in the design of machinery without churning out an end product is not a model of the mind.

The way in which one is the writing of one's own constitution is the mechanism of war. The law of force and saving face.

Don't do don't make don't contemplate. Not performance, rather, consonance. Not potential, rather its openness. Not inoperativity, rather, effortlessness. Not aim, but the *already*. Effect, but uncaused. Going to go. Not labored, rather, unelaborated. Not display but passing away.

To refrain from intention, to take away its impetus, suspend materialization and realization—only grace can confer upon this waste its goodness. Ultimately, Agamben's poetics of inoperativity arrives at the name of *grace*, his way of keeping the name of God inoperable, falling short of its use.

For a poetics of perpetual peace (the operability of peace) inoperativity can be thought of as a state of *involatility*. If opposed parties were to face off in an *inter-inoperativity*, suspending the argumentative, the preset bottom lines and the procedural norms—entering instead the potentiality of war, the war of war (and certainly not mental war, rather the playing out, the draining out of war) it would be impossible to act on war. All in the name of a politics of grace (or grace of politics), the impossible potential of war. To have removed war from potential.

*Only he who has long kept silent in the name can speak in the without-name, the without-law, the without-people. Anonymously, anarchically, aprosodically. Only he has access to the coming politics and poetry.* Agamben, *The Fire and the Tale*, 81.

To *wish* for aprosody is to put an end to energy.

## COSMOS NONCONFORMISTS

*"It is a violence from within that protects us from a violence without. It is the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality."*—Wallace Stevens, *Necessary Angel*

*"If mythical violence is lawmaking, divine violence is law-destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them; if mythical violence brings at once guilt and retribution, divine power only expiates."* —Walter Benjamin

*"After Tao was lost, then came the 'power';  
After the 'power' was lost, then came human kindness.  
After human kindness was lost, then came morality,  
After morality was lost, then came ritual."*— Daodejing 38

*"Heaven is the least sectarian word I've ever heard."*

Chinese *de* is translatable as virtue, power, integrity, accumulated effects of consequential actions, *scintilla conscientiae*. *De* is to step directly in relation to *xin* (heart-mind)—our actions are the activity of the *Dào*. It's the "de" in "Daodejing." Virtue is as old as the hills—though, without the hills, without our lives, there's no path to follow or place to wander.

Virtue is the cause of war because virtue can't be constituted without vice and violence. *Noble, ignominious, injurious*. A virtue *seems* to have a flip side, while in truth they—the purported sides—perfectly overlap: as in Mahayana, wherein samsara and nirvana are the same scene, working in an operative/inoperative, desirable/undesirable dichotomy, as matter/energy demands. Virtues are extremes, as symbolized in the *taijtu* (YinYang symbol). Even *wuji*, pre-yin/yang primordially, undivided, boundless, can only be understood in relation to division and boundedness.

Do good. The inexhaustible exhausts itself, just as we must wear down and deplete paradox. "Make a difference"—a paradox in itself. Is heaven moral? Or is it ethical? To become, just be. Being is a bad reaction to benevolence.

We're family *because* we're unrelated. The Mohists were attacked for their philosophy of all-inclusive, impartial care. Be selfless, above all, for your own good. Greedily acquire assets with which to be generous.

Heaven dictates. Nature disorders. Despotism is the worst defense. Disputers distract. Fine art deprives. Impoverished virtue, prosperous vice. We're involuntarily wayward, as sight to eye, hearing to ear, seed to soil, warmth to cold. It's all good.

Virtue is disastrous purely because it's dynamic. It's based on operativity, the thoroughly disproven belief that there's no way in which all things hang together with which our actions may align. Virtue is discordant. "We're going to make things right." No we are not; we're too absorbed in making amends for all the wrongs and centuries of deep acedia. You too can be happy. Virtue is performance, not grace. It's an option, not a vow (an insurmountable constraint.) Attempting to balance as we cross the razor thin Chinvat Bridge—the sifting bridge—above the abyss of slurs—the malignant mind—the humanmade hell (the only hell that is possible) with one's virtuous conduct throughout life as the only hope of hearing the healing, harmonious voice (which is truth itself as existence), the song that draws the departed along the widening path that leads to the abode of sustainable peace, if not for oneself, for all.

How did we ever arrive at this precarity? We could only have *asked* for it. It's not compulsory to turn creation into Tvashtri (Creator), conscience into Yazatas (Guardian Angels) or meaninglessness into a

Messiah. We condemn the effete performing of the ciphering of the Name, or claim no intimacy with the hidden nature we've hidden. (Imagine a time of pre-moralistic, pre-BigBad thunderbolt throwers, pristine awe.) We adore deactivation due to all we desecrate and engage in revolutionary violence that reenacts having never conferred the truth on a single speech act.

Can we raise an anarcho-theological prayer of the heart to at least demilitarize phenomenal dystopia? The passive rights conferred by simply being human fail to apply to more and more nonrefugees. "Threat" has broader implementation than policy. The tacit, unwritten, unenforced coercion.

Lists of virtues across cultures, eras, constitutions, reforms, revolutions and religions are so remarkably overlapped they can be read as the direct effects of natural law as cause: "...an all-embracing law, through the realms of the sky unbroken it stretched it stretches, over the earth's immensity." (Empedocles, as cited in Aristotle's Rhetoric I,13.) Natural laws are the rights inherent in human nature, ordering our governments, guiding our moral conduct and tuning the cosmos.

Virtues, via the Age of Enlightenment riding the tide of Scholasticism, became the bedrock of classical republicanism and contemporary positive (poetic) jurisprudence, property rights, revolutionary rights, sovereign individuation and social contract theory—with Divine Law as the luminous elephant in the room as the most "positive" protrusion of all. Had we, by now, been able to solve the conundrum of the Luminous Elephant, we'd also have been able to put forward a politics of living less violently, a poetics of perpetual peace. The preeminence of virtue, practiced outside of that which underlies virtue does (as can be expected) turn "positive" into *negative*.

To belong to nature we've simply replaced the word "law" with "rights" and Dante's *insensata cura de' mortali* with humility.

No one knows how to die though everyone *can*. This is generosity. There is no "secular" in mind. For a thing or a thought to be made sacred I'd have to desacralize all else. The conceptual is pure shock, the unnoticeable paradox. Vow confers truth on conflict. Be kind or be killed. Be kind or be gone. It's our failure to suspend advantage-seeking that separates us. Polis over policy. This is war. The bouquet withers even though we adore it. We are, like war, the one thing we are without trying. Dying is to give. The landfill is full, mostly of resentment that was once wisdom. It's because the ocean excludes neither water nor the ocean that it is the ocean. Insisting on heaven is this hell. There is no hell on earth, earth in heaven or heaven in heaven, only gratitude for the terms. Practice with seeds, insects and trees. Like the body, prosody can't lie.

If I say God is what is and you say no God is not, I'd then agree that God is also all that is not. It's unbelievable here is here, you're here, love inheres. Sweep the floor, out of gratitude, as deepest listening. To tidy is to transform. Transfix, do not suspend. Do not push water uphill. Do not "do not." To drop everything is to bow down and levitate. Completely pass away as a whole world is being born, and this is miraculous. Leaving ourselves alone. Do it to do it. Democracy dropped out of *wu-wei*.

Never have I sought the limit of language over the expansion of meaning, and for this I will burn pure. Heartbreaking joy is not dual.

Heaven says kind speech can in no way be strategic—the view Doctor Communis came to. The burned straw. God saw compassion is contradiction and said that it is neither good nor bad. Heaven says not even



not enough is not enough. Nature speaks ethics. Fragility must mandate. Swim in the most crystal clear waters without making the minutest ripple. This is morality: whenever two or more are interwoven in its name.

Beginning middle and end—in none of the above, in matters of the heart: profound, impartial, paltry profitable. Without us, heaven can't help itself—its host of virtues, i.e., *humanness*, can't exist.

Even one kind word roots in many lifetimes. “A child offered sand to the Buddha and became Ashoka in a subsequent birth.” Give breezing to the breeze. Give, from where you sit, a faraway mountain's topmost tree to a friend. Help a shoe. Help salt. Help the openness of the window. Were you unable to do all these things, you wouldn't be *here*. A kind word is not bound by effect. It knows nothing of the law of being forgotten. Needless to say, without being the same we could only be the same.

When I say “heaven says” I say humanness. When I say the furthest reaches of the cosmos enfold here, I'm home. When I say space I say speech. When I say peace, there will be...

If you're fleeing after having just murdered 4 people in a bar, what are you fathoming? Is there somewhere that's not there? Here is someone that can't be not there.

Science still defines itself as a rebuttal to faith. Abrahamic is now Dharmic. Because we know we do so much damage.

“My religion is not deceiving myself.”