

# *Spirituality & Community*

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## **Western Enlightenment Philosophy John Locke**



**The Way Home- Making Heaven on Earth**  
Madis Senner

**Healing Back Twinges**  
Betsy Otter Thompson

**The Pirate: A Christmas Eve Story**  
Brian Joseph

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# Who We Are

[www.spiritualityandcommunity.com](http://www.spiritualityandcommunity.com)

***Welcome!*** Seeking spiritual fulfillment? True happiness and mental wellness? Well, that's what we're all about. Spirituality & Community is a magazine, web site, and online community for those seeking answers to life's deepest questions. ***We are dedicated to promoting spirituality, true happiness, mental wellness, and appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs.***

## A New Age of Light

***Our focus is spirituality, which we view as an inner search for happiness and fulfillment.*** We are concerned with what lies within the heart. ***We believe that within everyone lies a pure love that we call the Light or the Lord within. We believe that one must open one's heart to the Light to attain spiritual fulfillment and that only this brings true happiness and mental wellness.*** The Light is the essence of humanity. ***Ultimately, we find our way by casting our gaze inward.*** We will search this inner world over until we find our home:

***We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
T.S. Eliot, Little Gidding***

***We believe that mankind is entering a new age, an Age of Light.*** We see a growing spiritual crisis in the world today. Our culture has brought us unprecedented material well being, but we seem further away than ever from true spiritual wholeness. We also perceive an increase in mental health issues in our society and believe this to be linked to spiritual detachment. Many wander endlessly in search of the material gratification that will bring them happiness. Many have lost faith in religions and traditions. Others sincerely believe in traditional religions but remain unfulfilled spiritually and unhappy. Unfortunately, too many are so close-minded they refuse to ask what is missing from their lives. Yet, many hunger for spiritual wholeness and are searching for answers. ***We believe that we are entering a new age of enlightenment in which genuine spiritual progress will be made and that spiritual development depends upon a genuine appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs.*** An appreciation for diversity of belief provides us with a fresh view of the beliefs of others, allows us to take from each set of beliefs that which rings true, and enables us to synthesize a personal spirituality that makes sense for each of us. When we view the beliefs of others with our hearts, we see truth shine through. We look with the highest regard to traditional beliefs and religions for guidance, and we also look forward. ***We believe that the past is not the end but the beginning.***



## What We Do

*Spirituality & Community produces a magazine and encompasses an online community. Both aspects serve as the basis for bringing together those who share our aspirations and beliefs, to meet each other and exchange ideas.* We provide many opportunities for exploring spirituality and communicating with others:

- Spirituality & Community magazine*
- Features on the site*
- Online chats* (as interest arises)

The magazine is based on a Reader's Digest® type model. It is comprised primarily of reader submitted material. It is the primary mechanism for a member to both explore spirituality and communicate his or her ideas to others. Features are also posted on the site. When interest is sufficiently high, we will hold chats online. *We sincerely hope that you will find truth within, and we wish you only the best on your own personal journey!*

# Western Enlightenment Philosophy

## John Locke

### An Essay Concerning Human Understanding

John Locke (1632-1704) was an Enlightenment philosopher. His ideas concerning social and political philosophy greatly influenced the founding fathers of the United States, including those who penned the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. This piece relates to a theory of mind, which has important implications regarding the nature of consciousness and the soul. His theory is often summarized by the idea that the mind at birth is a *tabula rasa*, or blank slate. For more, see:



[http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/locke/locke1/Essay\\_contents.html](http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/locke/locke1/Essay_contents.html)  
<http://arts.cuhk.edu.hk/Philosophy/Locke/echu/>

### Book II. Of Ideas

#### Chapter I. Of Ideas in general, and their Original

*1. Idea is the object of thinking.* Every man being conscious to himself that he thinks; and that which his mind is applied about whilst thinking being the ideas that are there, it is past doubt that men have in their minds several ideas,- such as are those expressed by the words whiteness, hardness, sweetness, thinking, motion, man, elephant, army, drunkenness, and others: it is in the first place then to be inquired, How he comes by them?

I know it is a received doctrine, that men have native ideas, and original characters, stamped upon their minds in their very first being. This opinion I have at large examined already; and, I suppose what I have said in the foregoing Book will be much more easily admitted, when I have shown whence the understanding may get all the ideas it has; and by what ways and degrees they may come into the mind;- for which I shall appeal to every one's own observation and experience.

*2. All ideas come from sensation or reflection.* Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas:- How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE. In that all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation employed either, about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring.

3. *The objects of sensation one source of ideas.* First, our Senses, conversant about particular sensible objects, do convey into the mind several distinct perceptions of things, according to those various ways wherein those objects do affect them. And thus we come by those ideas we have of yellow, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet, and all those which we call sensible qualities; which when I say the senses convey into the mind, I mean, they from external objects convey into the mind what produces there those perceptions. This great source of most of the ideas we have, depending wholly upon our senses, and derived by them to the understanding, I call SENSATION.

4. *The operations of our minds, the other source of them.* Secondly, the other fountain from which experience furnisheth the understanding with ideas is,- the perception of the operations of our own mind within us, as it is employed about the ideas it has got;- which operations, when the soul comes to reflect on and consider, do furnish the understanding with another set of ideas, which could not be had from things without. And such are perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing, and all the different actings of our own minds;- which we being conscious of, and observing in ourselves, do from these receive into our understandings as distinct ideas as we do from bodies affecting our senses. This source of ideas every man has wholly in himself; and though it be not sense, as having nothing to do with external objects, yet it is very like it, and might properly enough be called internal sense. But as I call the other SENSATION, so I Call this REFLECTION, the ideas it affords being such only as the mind gets by reflecting on its own operations within itself. By reflection then, in the following part of this discourse, I would be understood to mean, that notice which the mind takes of its own operations, and the manner of them, by reason whereof there come to be ideas of these operations in the understanding. These two, I say, viz. external material things, as the objects of SENSATION, and the operations of our own minds within, as the objects of REFLECTION, are to me the only originals from whence all our ideas take their beginnings. The term operations here I use in a large sense, as comprehending not barely the actions of the mind about its ideas, but some sort of passions arising sometimes from them, such as is the satisfaction or uneasiness arising from any thought.

5. *All our ideas are of the one or the other of these.* The understanding seems to me not to have the least glimmering of any ideas which it doth not receive from one of these two. External objects furnish the mind with the ideas of sensible qualities, which are all those different perceptions they produce in us; and the mind furnishes the understanding with ideas of its own operations.

These, when we have taken a full survey of them, and their several modes, combinations, and relations, we shall find to contain all our whole stock of ideas; and that we have nothing in our minds which did not come in one of these two ways. Let any one examine his own thoughts, and thoroughly search into his understanding; and then let him tell me, whether all the original ideas he has there, are any other than of the objects of his senses, or of the operations of his mind, considered as objects of his reflection. And how great a mass of knowledge soever he imagines to be lodged there, he will, upon taking a strict view, see that he has not any idea in his mind but what one of these two have imprinted;- though perhaps, with infinite variety compounded and enlarged by the understanding, as we shall see hereafter.

6. *Observable in children.* He that attentively considers the state of a child, at his first coming into the world, will have little reason to think him stored with plenty of ideas, that are to be the matter of his future knowledge. It is by degrees he comes to be furnished with them. And though the ideas of obvious and familiar qualities imprint themselves before the memory begins to keep a register of time or order, yet it is often so late before some unusual qualities come in the way, that there are few men that cannot recollect the beginning of their acquaintance with them. And if it were worth while, no doubt a child might be so ordered as to have but a very few, even of the ordinary ideas, till he were grown up to a man. But all that are born into the world, being surrounded with bodies that perpetually and diversely affect them, variety of ideas, whether care be taken of it or not, are imprinted on the minds of children. Light and colours are busy at hand everywhere, when the eye is but open; sounds and some tangible qualities fail not to solicit their proper senses, and force an entrance to the mind;- but yet, I think, it will be granted easily, that if a child were kept in a place where he never saw any other but black and white till he were a man, he would have no more ideas of scarlet or green, than he that from his childhood never tasted an oyster, or a pine-apple, has of those particular relishes.

7. *Men are differently furnished with these, according to the different objects they converse with.* Men then come to be furnished with fewer or more simple ideas from without, according as the objects they converse with afford greater or less variety; and from the operations of their minds within, according as they more or less reflect on them. For, though he that contemplates the operations of his mind, cannot but have plain and clear ideas of them; yet, unless he turn his thoughts that way, and considers them attentively, he will no more have clear and distinct ideas of all the operations of his mind, and all that may be observed therein, than he will have all the particular ideas of any landscape, or of the parts and motions of a clock, who will not turn his eyes to it, and with attention heed all the parts of it. The picture, or clock may be so placed, that they may come in his way every day; but yet he will have but a confused idea of all the parts they are made up of, till he applies himself with attention, to consider them each in particular.

8. *Ideas of reflection later, because they need attention.* And hence we see the reason why it is pretty late before most children get ideas of the operations of their own minds; and some have not any very clear or perfect ideas of the greatest part of them all their lives. Because, though they pass there continually, yet, like floating visions, they make not deep impressions enough to leave in their mind clear, distinct, lasting ideas, till the understanding turns inward upon itself, reflects on its own operations, and makes them the objects of its own contemplation. Children when they come first into it, are surrounded with a world of new things, which, by a constant solicitation of their senses, draw the mind constantly to them; forward to take notice of new, and apt to be delighted with the variety of changing objects. Thus the first years are usually employed and diverted in looking abroad. Men's business in them is to acquaint themselves with what is to be found without; and so growing up in a constant attention to outward sensations, seldom make any considerable reflection on what passes within them, till they come to be of riper years; and some scarce ever at all.

9. *The soul begins to have ideas when it begins to perceive.* To ask, at what time a man has first any ideas, is to ask, when he begins to perceive;- having ideas, and perception, being the same thing. I know it is an opinion, that the soul always thinks, and that it has the actual perception of ideas in itself constantly, as long as it exists; and that actual thinking is as inseparable from the soul as actual extension is from the body; which if true, to inquire after the beginning of a man's ideas is the same as to inquire after the beginning of his soul. For, by this account, soul and its ideas, as body and its extension, will begin to exist both at the same time.

10. *The soul thinks not always; for this wants proofs.* But whether the soul be supposed to exist antecedent to, or coeval with, or some time after the first rudiments of organization, or the beginnings of life in the body, I leave to be disputed by those who have better thought of that matter. I confess myself to have one of those dull souls, that doth not perceive itself always to contemplate ideas; nor can conceive it any more necessary for the soul always to think, than for the body always to move: the perception of ideas being (as I conceive) to the soul, what motion is to the body; not its essence, but one of its operations. And therefore, though thinking be supposed never so much the proper action of the soul, yet it is not necessary to suppose that it should be always thinking, always in action. That, perhaps, is the privilege of the infinite Author and Preserver of all things, who "never slumbers nor sleeps;" but is not competent to any finite being, at least not to the soul of man. We know certainly, by experience, that we sometimes think; and thence draw this infallible consequence, - that there is something in us that has a power to think. But whether that substance perpetually thinks or no, we can be no further assured than experience informs us. For, to say that actual thinking is essential to the soul, and inseparable from it, is to beg what is in question, and not to prove it by reason;- which is necessary to be done, if it be not a self-evident proposition. But whether this, "That the soul always thinks," be a self-evident proposition, that everybody assents to at first hearing, I appeal to mankind. It is doubted whether I thought at all last night or no. The question being about a matter of fact, it is begging it to bring, as a proof for it, an hypothesis, which is the very thing in dispute: by which way one may prove anything, and it is but supposing that all watches, whilst the balance beats, think, and it is sufficiently proved, and past doubt, that my watch thought all last night. But he that would not deceive himself, ought to build his hypothesis on matter of fact, and make it out by sensible experience, and not presume on matter of fact, because of his hypothesis, that is, because he supposes it to be so; which way of proving amounts to this, that I must necessarily think all last night, because another supposes I always think, though I myself cannot perceive that I always do so.

But men in love with their opinions may not only suppose what is in question, but allege wrong matter of fact. How else could any one make it an inference of mine, that a thing is not, because we are not sensible of it in our sleep? I do not say there is no soul in a man, because he is not sensible of it in his sleep; but I do say, he cannot think at any time, waking or sleeping: without being sensible of it. Our being sensible of it is not necessary to anything but to our thoughts; and to them it is; and to them it always will be necessary, till we can think without being conscious of it.

## **The Way Home—Making Heaven on Earth** (excerpt) **Madis Senner**

The following book excerpt is from *The Way Home—Making Heaven on Earth*, pages 166-168, by Madis Senner, O Books:

[http://www.o-books.com/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=639](http://www.o-books.com/product_info.php?products_id=639).

After detailing the mystical world and explaining how humankind has trapped itself in a web of its own making, Madis offers four meditations to help us break free and advance our collective consciousness. The following tells how we can give added strength to those meditations.

### **Be the change we wish to see**

It is not enough that we mediate and pray on these four meditations (God, Love, Mother Earth, Heaven on Earth.) We must take them to heart and make them part of our life in all that we do. Our thoughts, actions and speech need to be reflective of and give strength to these meditations. As with praying ceaselessly we must make thought, speech and action reflective of the prayer. We must be the change we want to be.

Many associate Mahatma Gandhi with the statement that “We must be the change we wish to see.” Scholars who have written biographies of Gandhi<sup>1</sup> have told me that they were not able to find where Gandhi said this. In his *Satyagraha* Gandhi talks about merging the mind with action.<sup>2</sup> I believe that this phrase may have been coined by Sri Aurobindo’s the Mother, Mirra Alfassa, in speaking about the spiritual life and how it can become a contagion that can sweep others up with its radiating love: “If one sincerely wants to help others and the world, the best thing one can do is to be oneself what one wants others to be – not only as an example, but

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Deats; [Mahatma Gandhi Nonviolent Liberator](#)

<sup>2</sup> Page 44; [Satyagraha: Nonviolent Resistance](#); Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand; Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, India 1958

because one becomes a centre of radiating power which, by the very fact that it exists, compels the rest of the world to transform itself."<sup>3</sup>

Both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were contemporaries of Gandhi and spent a lot of time in spiritual efforts to win freedom for India, end to WWII and bring about world peace. Sri Aurobindo was a nationally known political activist in his youth who headed the underground Jugantar party that advocated independence for India before his spiritual rebirth.

Similarly Thich Nhat Hanh says that when we marry mind, body and speech much is possible: "We have to pray with our body, speech and mind and with our daily life. With mindfulness, our body, speech, and mind can become one. In the state of oneness of body, speech, and mind, we can produce the energy of faith and love necessary to change a difficult situation."<sup>4</sup> When we unite mind, action and speech on a particular thought or effort we are focusing our attention as we if we are meditating. It is such focused attention that gives power to the effort. Just as with meditation, when we become absorbed with what we are thinking about distractions melt away, knowledge and understanding flow. The concentrative effort of uniting thought, action and speech on one particular effort, or thought creates a very powerful thought form. When someone that has developed their spiritual strength focuses their thoughts, actions and speech on one thing, much is possible. When several people do it anything is possible.

### **Merge action with thought**

It is merging of action with thought (intention) that makes a ritual or ceremony powerful. Take for example, the Christian communion. Jesus tells us: "While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.' Then he took a

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<sup>3</sup> Page 417 The Mother Collected Works Volume 9; Alfassa, Mirra, The Mother; Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, <http://sriurobindoashram.info/Default.aspx?1=234>

<sup>4</sup> Page 41 The Energy of Prayer, How to Deepen your Spiritual Practice; Hanh, Thich Nhat; Parallax Press, Berkeley, Calif., 2006

cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, 'This is my blood of the-covenant, which is poured out for many.'<sup>5</sup>

It is the process of symbolically eating bread that is the body of Christ and drinking the wine that is the blood of Christ that give power to the ritual. These physical actions reinforce the taking of Jesus into your life. Similarly the Native American purification ritual or sweat lodge relies on the physical action of sweating to reinforce the process of purification. You are trying to purify yourself mentally, spiritually and physically.

We must practice what we preach and try to make sure that our words, actions and thoughts are one.

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Madis Senner is sentient of Mother Earth and thought forms and maintains a listing of sacred sites in upstate NY where he believes Mother Earth soul resides. [www.MotherEarthPrayers.org](http://www.MotherEarthPrayers.org). His book *The Way Home—Making Heaven on Earth* details our dynamic relationship with Mother Earth and our dynamic relationship with her and each other: [http://www.obooks.com/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=639](http://www.obooks.com/product_info.php?products_id=639).

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<sup>5</sup> Mark 14.22-24

# Healing Back Twinges

## Betsy Otter Thompson

### *Healing Through Introspection*

I believe in the power of action/reaction physics. I call these physics The Mirror Theory. The Mirror Theory helps me to understand the emotional acting out I have done toward others since the acting out I do comes back in whatever way catches my attention. If I am kind to others, I feel that kindness in others. If I am critical, criticism is felt.

Whether I speak of someone I know, someone I've read about, heard about, or seen about, the mirror returns regardless; and it returns because emotionally, all hearts are one. Therefore, whatever I give to others, I give to myself. Because of these physics, I become feel ill-at-ease as soon as I make another feel ill-at-ease. And since ill-at-ease is dis-ease, dis-ease becomes disease.

My body is a tool to help me recognize my emotional choices. To demonstrate how this works, I share the following experience:

Several years ago, I had twinges in my back. In my effort to heal that pain, I went to a chiropractor. His solution worked temporarily but the twinges continued. Then I took up yoga. Yoga made my body stronger and improved my muscle tone, but the twinges continued. At this point, I decided to see if the mirror theory could help me.

The first question I asked myself was: what does my back represent to my body? *Well, it represents the physical support allowing me to walk and function as an upright human being.* From there, I went to the concept that if my back was not supporting me in the way it was supposed to, maybe I wasn't supporting others in the way I should be. Several questions popped up as I tried to answer this question:

- Am I the friend to others that I want others to be to me?
- Do I nag instead of praise?
- Am I appreciative of the people around me?
- Am I critical and condescending?
- Am I helpful to co-workers, or do I blame them for all the mistakes that happen?

It didn't take long to realize that I was not supportive; I was nagging under the pretext of constructive criticism. To stay consciously aware of the action I needed to take instead, I put

post-its around the house reminding me to help my friends, encourage my children, and compliment my co-workers. Believe it or not, two weeks later, the twinges were gone.

How could my attitude make such a difference? Even today, I'm not sure that I understand the mechanics of this transformation; I only know it happened. Why didn't I try it sooner? Because I got distracted by the acting out of others. Finding the answer wasn't difficult; it took honesty, however, or the willingness to look at what I was doing instead of what others were doing. I had to remember that when I looked in a mirror, the person I saw was me. Not the people I'm related to, not my friends, not co-workers.... me.

As I have gone on and used this theory more, I've learned that thought alone does not create, whether that thought is positive or negative. On the other hand, if I give that thought away, or intentionally impose it upon another, it does create. This may seem like a small distinction but, in the reality of emotion, it is huge. For instance, if I hold a boomerang in my hand for a long time, it gets heavy (negative thought usually does) and feels uncomfortable (negative thought always does), but other than that, I don't create discomfort. On the other hand, if I throw that boomerang out into space, it whips back with horrendous force to the energy it sprang from.

As I live this process, I try not to judge myself; everyone has dark moments once in a while. And since I know that action behind my thought is the key to emotional stability, I initiate the following routine to get the negative out of my mind and out of my body in a healthy way:

When someone hurts my feelings or makes me angry (pretty much the same thing), I wait until I am alone and then I kick a pillow, pretending the pillow is the person who hurt my feelings. Kicking is often accompanied by a lot of screaming, yelling, and cursing. Not a pretty picture, but after my solitary tantrum, I'm able to look at these emotions and understand what they are. Once I know what they are, I can remember when I gave them to someone else. Until they're out, however, they're too overwhelming to view objectively. When I can't view them objectively, I view them subjectively. When I view them subjectively, I make other people the source of the problem. When I make others the source of the problem, I want them to change.

More importantly, until I am objective, I don't have any power over the situation. Power comes from realizing that I am the source of the problem since I gave that problem to someone else. As soon as I understand that, I can take a different action to get what I prefer.

Betsy Otter Thompson worked as an Account Executive at radio stations and as an Executive Assistant to the President of Warner Bros. Betsy is the author of six books and lives in the USA. *Walking Through Illusion*, by Betsy Otter Thompson, is coming out in the spring (pub date May 28, 2010). See: [www.o-books.com](http://www.o-books.com). It features a series of interconnected stories about biblical people who either knew Jesus or knew of him, and were influenced by him in one way or another. It is not a book about Christianity; it is about people who lived long before Christianity began. It is the author's belief that we don't take our beliefs with us when we leave here, we take the love we found from having them.

[www.betsythompson.com](http://www.betsythompson.com)



## **The Pirate: A Christmas Eve Story**

**Brian Joseph**

*It was Christmas Eve and James was home from college. He had just finished helping his mother clear the supper table and was talking about his plans for the coming summer after he graduated. His fourteen year old sister entered the kitchen, "Are you guys ready? Dad wants to read the story." Mom smiled, "Okay give us another minute or two." James couldn't remember how old he was the first time that he had heard his Dad read the story. The story had been written by his great-grandfather and the reading of it was part of the family's annual Christmas Eve.*

*This year just as they did every year James, his sister, and his parents would gather in the living room. Dad sat with the small leather bound book in one hand and the pocket watch in the other just as he did every year. James sat there looking at his Dad as he opened the watch. "Still works after all these years." Mom entered the living room and placed a tray of cookies and hot cocoa on the coffee table. His sister picked up a cookie and said, "Okay we're all ready Dad." Dad opened the book and looked at the hand written words that had been put there many years before and began to read.*

The year was 1931, and work was hard to come by. I was twenty years old and counted myself fortunate to have found work in the small factory where I met the Pirate. That is what he called himself and he looked and acted the part. He wore a black patch that covered his right eye. There were about thirty of us who worked there, and we were all subjected to the Pirate's meanness six days a week. The Pirate had a name for everyone. The names were all derogatory and based on what the Pirate saw as a defect. There was one man who had been born with one leg shorter than the other. The Pirate called him Limp. Another whom he called Four Eyes. One he simply called Ugly. The Pirate never used anyone's real name. Part of working at the factory was being nick named by the Pirate within the first week or two of employment..

The name that he gave me was Worm. It had started out as Book Worm when he saw me reading in the warehouse during my half hour lunch. It wasn't long before he shortened it to Worm. I had discovered Kierkegaard quite by accident while browsing in a used book store. After reading his *Works of Love* I wanted to read everything that he had written. The Pirate taunted me on a daily basis, often making derogatory remarks about what I was reading. These remarks were usually based on a twisting of the words in the title. *Sickness Unto Death* became *Sickness in the Head*. His comments wore at me. One day he came up to me as I was moving some boxes and said, "You are one very sick in the head person you garbage Worm. Go crawl in the dirt." He walked away laughing. It was his Pirate laugh. It was usually heard after a comment that the Pirate found extra amusing.

We tolerated this stuff from the Pirate because we needed work. When the Pirate was out of hearing range there was plenty that was said about him. The few who did tell him off directly were fired on the spot. The Pirate called it 'walking the plank'. On one occasion a worker named Fred who the Pirate called Screwball was out for two days. When he returned the Pirate asked him where he had been. When Fred told him that he had been out because his brother had died the Pirate looked at him and bellowed, "Your brother, not you so you should have been here!"

Fred said nothing. I was standing nearby and said, "Come on Pirate lighten up." The Pirate glared at me. "Shut your trap Worm or you walk the plank. Don't mouth off to me. Didn't your mamma teach you to respect your elders. Maybe you didn't have a mamma. Maybe someone just cut a worm in half and you are one part." I was quiet. I needed work.

I continued my readings of Kierkegaard. I had been fed up with institutionalized religion and its hypocrisy. Kierkegaard resonated with me. He wrote of the power of love and how being a Christian was more than adopting the label or attending a church. Through his writings he became my teacher. There was a dilemma about this because my feelings for the Pirate were anything but love. In fact there were times when I hated the Pirate. There were times when I wanted to pummel him. I controlled myself but this hatred was growing inside me and it contradicted what I had been learning from my teacher.

I had been working at the factory for about eight months. One day after several gruesome encounters with the Pirate I sat in my small room weeping. I had had enough. I couldn't take it anymore. I needed to do something. I had searched for work elsewhere with no luck. If I left it would likely mean living on the street. I had no one. Both of my parents had died years before and I had been fending for myself for the last four years. In my despair I sought solace in the New Testament. I opened it at random and as my eyes fell upon the page I read the words that were to guide me on my course of action. It was Matthew 5:44, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

The following day during lunch I sat in the warehouse reading Kierkegaard's, *Either / Or*. The Pirate passed by and bellowed, "What are you reading Worm?" When I showed him the title he laughed. "Either or what? Either you respect the Pirate or you walk the plank" He walked off laughing to himself. I wondered what could turn a person into a man like the Pirate and returned to my reading. Once again words jumped out at me, "perhaps he sighs at the thought that he is loved by nobody and does not reflect that he is loved by God." That night when I prayed I prayed for the Pirate. The idea of what I was to do germinated in my sleep. I woke in the middle of the night and there it was in my head.

Four weeks later on Christmas Eve the factory shut down an hour early. The factory owner who I had never seen before showed up and passed a turkey out to every worker. After he had left most of the workers sat around two tables drinking punch that was heavily spiked with rum. The Pirate was far off from everyone else counting stacked boxes. I decided that it was a good opportunity to do what I had planned.

I walked towards where he was and he stopped and turned to look at me. "What is it, don't worms like punch?" I reached into my jacket pocket and pulled out the small box. It was wrapped in plain brown paper. I handed it to him. "Merry Christmas Pirate". He took it in his hand stood there silent for a moment as if puzzled. "Whats this?" He said it loudly. Loud enough so that the men sitting drinking punch quieted their conversations and looked towards us. I spoke softly. "Its a gift." The Pirate got louder. "A gift, what is this some kind of joke. It won't be funny when you walk the plank!" I turned to walk away and he shouted at me. "Halt Worm." I turned back to look at him. He tore off the paper and looked at the box. "Some kind of joke worm?" I

said nothing. He opened the box slowly and took out the pocket watch. It had cost me more than a weeks pay and I wondered if he would fling it or toss it on the floor and step on it but he didn't. Instead he raised his voice. "What is this, a broken watch?" I continued to speak softly. "No, open it." The Pirate pressed at the pin on top of the watch and it sprung open. His eye drifted towards the inscription that I had the jeweler inscribe, "The Pirate 12/24/31 God Loves You". I turned and started to walk away. The Pirate began to let loose a stream of profanities that ended with, "What are you crazy?" I was about eight feet away and turned to face him. "No, I'm a Christian."

We both stood silent for a moment. Then I noticed it. It started as a tiny tear dripping from his left eye. It quickly grew into a stream. I stepped towards him and reached out my hand to shake his but he was dazed and just stood there. I stepped closer and he murmured, "I'm sorry." I reached out and hugged him. At first he just stood there limp as his tears flowed onto my shoulder. Then he lifted his arms and wrapped them around me and cried like a baby. I held him as he whispered through his tears. "I'm really sorry." I held him tighter and whispered. "Its okay. God loves you." When I stepped back he stood there silent, then turned and walked away.

On the next work day the Pirate was somewhat quiet. He remained that way throughout the week. Mid way through the following week he started to yell at Fred. "Hey Screwball..." Fred cut him short. "Hey Pirate what time is it?" The Pirate reached in his pocket, pulled out the watch, told Fred the time, and walked away. Fred's method was used from time to time by others who would ask the Pirate what time it was just as he was launching into a tirade. As the weeks passed the Pirate became gentler. Once when a worker returned after being out for a day the Pirate asked where he had been. When he said he had been throwing up and had been really sick the Pirate said, "Okay, I hope you feel better."

It was a Sunday in early March of 1932, I was walking through the park when I noticed the Pirate sitting on a bench. He was breaking off pieces from a loaf of bread and feeding them to the pigeons. He had not noticed me. He sat there talking to the pigeons. "Its okay there's plenty more, share." When he did notice me a look of embarrassment came over his face as if he had been caught picking his nose. I sat down next to him. "It's okay Pirate. Saint Francis talked to birds too." He continued to feed the birds as he spoke. "I'm far from a saint. I don't even go to church." He handed me a chunk of bread. " Pirate, you are in church. God's house does not have walls. Going to a church does not make a person a Christian anymore than sitting in a tree makes a person a bird. Kierkegaard said that man in all his cunning knew that the only way to try to destroy Christianity was to declare, we are all Christians." I started to bite into the bread when he stopped me with, "Not for you for the birds." I joked with him. "You know they might eat me. Birds eat worms." He giggled. "You know Worm, you think a lot."

I returned to the park the same time the following Sunday. There he was sitting on the same bench feeding the pigeons. It was on this day that he told me how he had become the Pirate. His mother had died when he was 10. His father who had a taste for liquor and a mean streak had taken to drinking heavier after his mother had died. The Pirate had a sister who was 4 years older than him. When she was 15 she received a severe beating from their father. She left home and took to selling her body on the street. The Pirate loved animals. When he was 14 years old he found a stray puppy on the street and fed it half of his sandwich. It was a few days before

Christmas. The puppy followed him home and he pleaded with his father to let him keep the puppy. His father reluctantly agreed. On Christmas Eve his father drank himself into a stupor. When the puppy wet on the floor his father got up and kicked at it repeatedly. The Pirate tried to get between his father and the puppy. His father picked up a whiskey bottle and smashed it across the Pirate's face. That was how he lost his right eye. When he left the hospital he was put in a children's home. He ran away after two days. The factory owner found him sleeping in the back doorway of the factory and took the Pirate under his wing. That had been 26 years before, and the Pirate had worked there since then.

I continued to meet the Pirate in the park every Sunday for the next six months. We talked. We became friends. In September 1932 I left for the west coast. There was promise of work in Oregon as part of President Roosevelt's Work Projects Administration. During our last Sunday in the park the Pirate handed me what looked to be a book wrapped in plain brown paper. I looked at the package and was about to open it when he said, "Save it for the train ride." I thanked him. As we shook hands he put his other hand on my shoulder. "You know Worm, I don't really know who I am anymore." There were tears in his eye. I put my hand on his shoulder and said, "I think you'll figure it out."

While on the train the next day I removed the wrapping from the gift that he had given me. It was a leather bound copy of Kierkegaard's, *The Concept of Dread*. There was a handwritten inscription inside the front cover. It read: *Thank You, from the Pirate?* About six months later I received a post card from him. It said, *"I'm not much of a writer. Hope all is well."* I wrote him once but we lost touch with each other.

I returned to the east coast during the holiday season of 1942. By that time I was married with one child. My wife's mother lived back east and she had wanted to see her grandchild. The day before Christmas I decided to pay a surprise visit to the old factory to see the Pirate. When I arrived I was greeted by Fred. When I asked where the Pirate was he said, "Jim passed away three months ago. He spent most of his free time with his kids until he took ill a few months before he died." I asked if Fred had gotten married and Fred said, "No, but he called them his kids. They were the kids at the children's home. Jim's children's home. Jim had some money you know. He lived pretty frugal and worked many years. He had a home built just for those kids. Imagine that, the Pirate a philanthropist. You should stop by and see it, nice place, not far from here."

I did go to the home. It was a large house standing where I remembered an empty lot had been. The sign outside read: *Jim Muldoon's Home for Children*. I stood there for a few minutes marveling. It was the nicest building in the area. I must have been noticed. A man opened the front door and walked down the steps towards me. *"Can I help you?"* I told him that I had been a friend of Jim's and he invited me in and showed me to the living room. I noticed a large portrait of the Pirate hanging on the wall. The man introduced himself as the manager of the home and began to talk about Jim and all he had done for the kids that he called his children. As we spoke a boy who looked to be about 14 years old entered the room. He had a long scar that stretched across the left side of his face. The manager introduced me as a friend of Jim's. The boy stepped forward and shook my hand. "Mr. Jim, he saved my life. A good man, best person I ever

met." The manager told me that Jim was survived by a sister who helped out at the home at times. "She lives two blocks down, number 42, first floor."

I went to see the Pirate's sister. She asked who I was before opening the door. When I said, "Jim's friend." She asked which one. I stated my name and she opened the door. "Come in, come in. Jim told me about you." We sat at the kitchen table drinking tea as she talked proudly of her brother. Mid way through a sentence she stopped and said, "Wait." She got up and walked into another room returning a minute later with the pocket watch in her hand. "Jim would have wanted you to have this. He used to say that he had been frozen in time until you gave him this watch." She placed it in my hand, and I opened it and looked at the inscription. She told me how Jim had helped her turn her own life around. "He wanted nothing in return. Towards the end when he got sick he even made his own burial arrangements, picked out his own headstone. A finer brother no one could ask for."

She told me what cemetery Jim had been buried in and gave directions to his grave site. I planned to visit it sometime before I went back out west, but as I stepped out into the brisk air, I felt a compulsion to visit it right then. Perhaps because it was Christmas Eve and the anniversary of that day eleven years before when I had given him the watch that I now held in my pocket. I took a bus to where the cemetery was. As I walked the three blocks from the bus stop to the cemetery it began to snow. There was about a half hour left before dark when I arrived at the cemetery. The wind had picked up and snow was sticking to the headstones. I wondered if I would find his name. I did manage to find it and knelt beside it to pray as the snow continued to fall. The lower part of his headstone was covered with snow. I brushed the snow off with my glove. The epitaph was a quote from Kierkegaard:

*"I am as it were, an agent in the service of the Highest."*

Tears streamed down my cheeks and mixed with snow as I felt about the grace bestowing power of Love.

*Dad closed the book. There were a few moments of silence as there were every year after Dad read the Christmas Eve story. Dad looked at James, "Next year you can read the story." He placed the small book in the palm of his hand, put the watch on top, and held it out to James. "Its yours now. Pass it on."*

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