

Preparing for the Road Trip



Alright Soulja's here we are. [I've been meaning to do a road trip for a long time](#). I've had a few setbacks which have postponed but not prevented the trip. It's like the saying "No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent."

[Recently I was at a crossroads in life](#) and I talked about the metaphor of rolling water. Joseph once said "how long can rolling waters remain impure?" The idea is that stagnant water becomes polluted but if we keep moving and keep working, revelation will come and we will eventually overcome the obstacles placed in our path. He went on to say man might as well stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it upstream as to hinder the almighty meaning if we keep moving and keep working, God will guide us.

I am not a big fan of religion but I am a big fan of religious freedom. So I want to talk about setbacks. Covid was a bizarre leap through the Twilight Zone. None of us saw that coming. Five years ago none of us would have believed the current attack on our civil liberty would have ever been possible. Now we know. [Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.](#)

[Inflation and the cost of housing has been a colossal blow](#) to not only our standard of living but to our plans and goals. On my mission my parents sent me a poster of an old work horse pulling a heavy load during a blizzard. The caption read, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." In other words, they go to work. There's another allegory about a ship in a storm.

Anyone who has been kayaking knows you need to face the waves head on or they will capsize your boat. The allegory declares that a large ship is greatly benefited by a small helm in times of a storm. That small helm can turn the ship so it faces the waves and is able to ride out the storm. I often tell youth not to be a leaf in the stream. Don't just follow the path of least resistance. Be a boat with a rudder and steer your own course in life. Set goals and work to accomplish those goals. When setbacks occur we need to reassess and set new goals.

[I wanted this road trip to be about a motorcycle journey](#) across North America like Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. I really enjoyed that book when I was young. I rode a motorcycle and I studied the martial arts as well as the philosophies that went along with it. I liked Zen because it was so raw and real. It was a holistic way of thinking outside the box.

I'm also a fan of Martin Luther King and his I have a Dream speech. Martin Luther King believed in the principles of the US Constitution and so do I. Let freedom ring. From the statue of liberty in New York City to Venice beach in LA let freedom ring. From the top of Mount Denali to the bottom of the Grand Canyon, let freedom ring. Martin Luther King talked about the day when every valley shall be exalted and every mountain brought low. I'm not ready for that day because I love hiking in the mountains. I am, however, ready to make the crooked places straight. I'm ready for the day when all the secret works of darkness shall be brought to light.

So here we are. My motorcycle trip begins in Vancouver, BC and heads up to Alaska. That is where this trip begins but my journey began a long time ago. George Christie wrote a memoir and started it off metaphorically as though he was looking through his rear view mirror. I'm not quite there yet. [I've got more memories to make](#) so I'm looking forward and have my eyes on the road ahead but I will talk about where I've been and where we've been because as Daniel Webster declared "He who careth not from whence he came careth little whither he goeth." Or as Bob Marley said, "[In this great future you can't forget your past.](#)"

What is the sound of one hand clapping?

Before we begin the journey we need to discuss what Zen is and what it isn't. Zen isn't really a religion per say it's a philosophy. More accurately it's a way of thinking outside the box. These principles can apply to any religion or activity.

We started off with Zen and the Art of Archery then we evolved into the Inner Game of Tennis. The inner game of tennis was a holistic application of Zen striving to experience the sport intuitively not logically. Now this is not a war between logic and intuition. It's like comparing electrical circuits. One that is set up in series and another set up in parallel.

In a series circuit electricity passes through each light on a string. If one light goes out, they all go out. In a parallel circuit, each light is connected to the power source. If one light goes out, the other lights stay on. This also applies to the difference in the way the left brain and the right brain function. The right brain is driven by intuition and is like a parallel circuit. More than one stimulus is experienced at the same time like a symphony. The left brain is driven by logic and is like a series circuit. It can only process things one at a time. Both thought processes have their time and place.

We remember the Star Wars saga when Obi-Wan Kenobi taught Luke Skywalker to feel instead of think. At the crucial moment when trying to defeat the death star he turned off his navigation equipment and went by the feel. They called it the force which is a bit esoteric but has merit.

Some claim that men tend to be logical while women tend to be emotional. Both have their time and place. Emotions or feelings can be powerful guides in life. Yet sometimes our emotions can blind us to reality. Truth does not contradict logic. Logic is an essential checks and balances to our emotions. However, sometimes logic can have tunnel vision and miss the big picture.

Although Zen tends to be intuitive, it also strives for balance. We often hear the term Zen Buddhism because they go so well together yet [Zen can apply to anything including Christianity](#). I have friends in Vancouver who are Falun Gong. They are Buddhists persecuted by the Communist party of China. To rationalize their torture and murder of the Falun Gong the Communist party defames them.

Even if the defamation was true, which it is not, that would not justify torturing and murdering innocent people for their organs. The Falun Gong believe in the truthfulness of Tao, the virtues of Confucius and the compassion of Buddha. Those are all noble principles. Their crime is to speak the truth and expose the atrocities of Communism. Their banners say the world needs more morality. That is very true. They also say Communism and organ harvesting is a great evil. Indeed they are.

Zen uses riddles called koans to get people thinking. The Falun Gong like to meditate and the Communist party has banned that because they don't want people to question anything or to think for themselves. I've talked about two famous koans about the goose in the bottle and the sound of one hand clapping. I don't think there is one set answer. The purpose is to get one thinking and to see things in a different perspective. To get people to take the blinders off and see the big picture.

What is the sound of one hand clapping? Logically, one hand clapping doesn't make a sound. It is silence. Unless you clap really fast and you hear a swoosh in the wind or unless you clap against another object like an Irish drum. In that case the sound of one hand clapping would be a fine melody so it would. There are [a couple of funny memes](#) out there that imply the sound of one hand clapping [is the sound of someone giving someone a slap](#).

When I was very young I started doing some work with the boken. Boken means wooden sword. It's a wooden katana. We started with the exercise of a thousand cuts which was more to train the mind than the body. It was to help the mind focus on the task at hand without wandering.

To incorporate a sense of tradition into the training the instructor would walk around with a shinai which is a bamboo sword used for sparring in kendo. It makes a loud sound when striking something but doesn't hurt as much as a solid boken. If the instructor saw our minds wandering during the training he would tap us on the top of the trapezius with the end of the shinai.

We would then tilt our head to the side and he would deliver a short sharp blow to the trap with the shinai which would make a loud noise but not create a great deal of pain. We would then respond *domo arigato gozaimasu* which means thank you very much sincerely. We weren't thanking him for hitting us. We were thanking him for bringing our minds back to focus on the task at hand.

Therefore the slap definition of one hand clapping does have merit. The point is to think and to see yourself think thereby seeing yourself outside the box so you can put things into perspective. It's a catch 22. You have to focus on the task at hand but you have to also see the bigger picture while you do it. As I said Zen is all about experiencing life in the moment. However, all of us have to plan for the future. Yet if we spend all our time daydreaming we won't get anything accomplished.

It's like the goose in the bottle koan. They saying goes, a man puts a baby goose in a bottle. As the baby grew it became too large to fit through the neck of the bottle and became trapped. How do you get the goose out of the bottle without killing the goose or breaking the bottle? The answer is there, the goose is out. Most people are like no it's not it's still in the bottle.

During this exercise the practitioner becomes the goose trapped in the bottle. The more they reflect on how to escape the bottle the more they see themselves outside the bottle looking in. At that moment the goose is out. Now for all practical purposes it's still trapped. Yet the koan is addressing the state of mind. [I used this metaphor to describe Clay Roueche's incarceration.](#)

That guy is larger than life. They put him in solitary confinement for almost two years. So what did he do? [He wrote a powerful book about Indominal Virtues.](#) After he got out of solitary he [shared a cell with heavyweight kickboxer Dennis Alexio](#) and had the opportunity of training with him. Then he had [an interview he conducted with Alexio posted online.](#)

Clay also created his own style of martial art and trained a fellow inmate who has since been released and opened a martial arts school up in Clay's memory. Clay also started painting in prison. [Some of those art prints were sold at Blue Lotus in Guildford Mall.](#) He hired a business agent to [put some of those prints on T-shirts and sell them online.](#) For all practical purposes Clay is still sitting in prison but his influence can be felt far beyond his prison cell. Therefore, the goose is out.

Morality in Zen: The struggle between good and evil

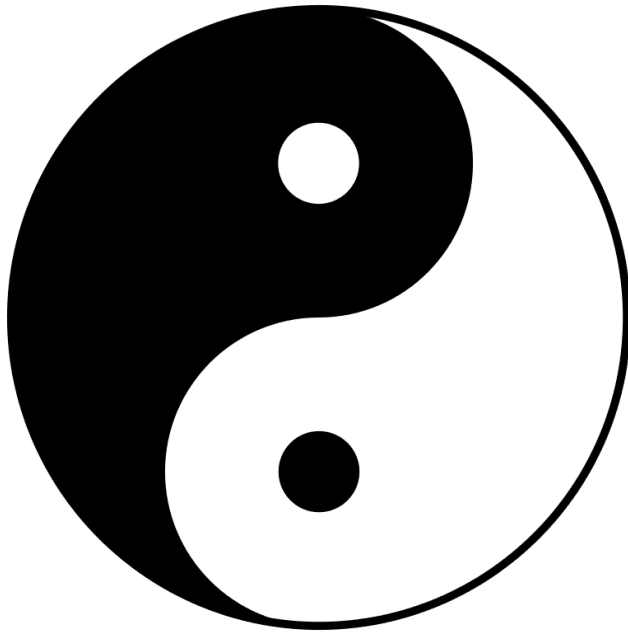
Now I want to talk about morality in Zen. The cover of the book Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance states that it is an Inquiry Into Values. The beginning of the book has a quote that states "And what is good, Phaedrus, And what is not good. Need we ask anyone to tell us these things?" Zen therefore isn't just a form of archery or way of playing tennis, it's also a moral blueprint for life. The Dalai Lama once said "If you can help others, if you can't help them, do no harm to them." That pretty much sums up the purpose of our existence.

When I was with the Guardian Angels I used to have a button on the front of my berret that said my karma ran over my dogma. When I was in New York Lisa Evers took one look at that, rolled her eyes and said "How is it that I can tell which one is the Canadian? That's not something a brother in the City would normally say. I said something polite and respectful and then she said awe, that's why I like Canadians. She was tough but she was sincere and had a good heart.

Karma is a basic concept that states what goes around comes around. As you sow, so shall ye reap. Life does not end at death and we will all give an account for what we do here on earth.

[The theme for the year on my blog is the struggle between good and evil continues](#) because it's always misrepresented. They say the truth is the first casualty in war because both sides think or at least claim to be right. Yet they say in the last days, the gray areas will begin to disappear and the line between good and evil will become much more clear.

Yet we are also told that many will be deceived and when we see the censorship of big tech and the fall of the mainstream media we can all now see why. The yin yang symbol is an important part of the martial arts. Or at least it was before the ground and pound obsession.



When I studied the martial arts, I also studied the philosophy that went along with it. The yin yang symbol consists of a circle which represents the universe without beginning or end. Life does not end at death. It contains two forces, yin and yang - light and dark.

In the west we would call them opposites but that's not always the case. In the east they would call them complements, male and female, speed and power but that too is not always the case.

Male and female are neither good nor evil. Neither is speed or power. The curved line between the two represents the fact that there is not a distinct division between them. One blends into the other. For example light and dark - you get a little bit of light or a lot of light. Noise and silence - you get a little bit of noise or a whole lot of it. You can also get a beautiful symphony.

Good and evil - you get a little bit of evil or a whole lot of it. Now the corresponding dots mean one does not exist without the other. My mother used to always say "There is a little good in the worst of us and a little bad in the best of us and it ill behoves any of us to criticize the rest of us."

This is true but it also goes beyond that. For example noise and silence. If we had never heard a sound before we would never understand what silence was. Likewise if we have never seen the

light, we would never really understand what darkness is and as the saying goes, stars shine in the darkness. Without darkness we would not be able to see the stars shine. It also relates to speed and power. There is no distinct line between the two. Power is not power if it has no motion. Speed doesn't exist unless you're moving something. No matter how fast your punches move, they have some power and no matter how powerful your punches are, they have some speed.

However, we also need to realize that good and evil do in fact exist hence the theme from Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance "And what is good, Phaedrus, And what is not good. Need we ask anyone to tell us these things?" [Therefore we all must choose which road we travel on.](#)

In the epic manual it talked about the journey as opposed to the destination. It also talked about taking the back roads because the real treasures in life are found off the beaten track. That metaphor is very real and has its time and place. Sometimes we need to get somewhere. Other times we need to stop and smell the roses so that life doesn't pass us by while we're here.

So my road trip hasn't started but my journey certainly has and [as we face life's struggles](#) we all need to get to work because work is the means of all accomplishment. There is no joy without it.

