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Freshman Seminar: Meaning of Life  
Professor Cherkasova

### Collection of Questions and Quotes

#### *Ecclesiastes*

1. *"There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God."*

*(Ecclesiastes, 2.24)*

Why should people even bother to enjoy life or allow for their soul to "enjoy good" if their lives are meaningless and we are all essentially worthless?

2. *"Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better."* *(Ecclesiastes, 7.3)*

I completely disagree with this. When I think of laughter I think of healing, joy, good memories, and love all things that, I believe, strengthen the heart. Sorrow leads to depression, tears, and negativity which, in turn, can ruin the mind and break the heart. It can make the heart weak and fragile. So HOW, Ecclesiastes, is sorrow possibly better than laughter?

#### *Nicomachean Ethics - Aristotle*

1. *"And politics appear to be of this nature; for it is this that ordains which of the sciences should be studied in a state, and which each class of citizens should learn and up to what point they should learn them..."* *(Aristotle, Book 1)*

Though the definition and perception of the word politics has changed over time, I feel as if this quote is still relevant today. Politicians today use their own personal ideas to shift and determine what American citizens are taught about. In regards to the sciences, some politicians have attempted to abolish the topic of evolution from curriculum because it goes against their conservative Christian beliefs of how the earth and humans were first created. It is a serious issue and the fact that politicians are dishonest and some unethical does not help to improve the situation.

2. *"If activities are, as we said, what gives life its character, no happy man can become miserable; for he will never do the acts that are hateful and mean."* (Aristotle, Book I)

But, can't the hateful and mean activities of others towards an individual cause that person to become miserable even though he never engaged in hateful and mean activities himself?

3. *"But this is no doubt difficult and especially in individual cases; for it is not easy to determine both how and with whom and on what provocation and how long one should be angry; for we too sometimes praise those who fall short and call them good-tempered, but sometimes we praise those who get angry and call them manly."* (Aristotle, Book II)

Why do we do this? Like for instance today, why do men who get angry are considered manly, but if a woman expresses her anger she is called crazy? Also a man's aggressive actions towards others, such as rape, is ethically not acceptable without impunity, however society still allows for them to get away with these treacherous acts and they do not receive the punishment they deserve.

4. *"For those who are not angry at the things they should be angry at are thought to be fools, and so are those who are not angry in the right way, at the right time, or with the right persons..."* (Aristotle, Book II)

I don't agree with this. People have the right to express their emotions in whatever way they deem is appropriate. Just because someone did not get angry at something many people are upset by it doesn't mean they are a fool.

### *Epicurus*

1. *"While therefore all pleasure because it is naturally akin to us is good, not all pleasure should be chosen, just as all pain is an evil and yet not all pain is to be shunned." (Epicurus, Letter to Menoecus)*

I agree with this statement because in my past experience pain has made me stronger. It has helped me learn who my true friends were and after that discovery it led me to make more genuine friends that I will always keep in touch with. Pain from failure has helped me become stronger and try to improve and do different things to attain that happiness and self-confidence once again.

2. *"Freedom is the greatest fruit of self-sufficiency." (Epicurus, 77)*

This quote is something I feel like many citizens should take into account when participating in politics and determining which rights people should have or not. Being self-sufficient is to be emotionally and intellectually independent and if people are hindered from having the freedom to make their own decisions and have access to what all people should have, then those people's abilities to be self-sufficient are slim.

### *Epictetus*

1. *"Is your child dead? It is returned. Is your wife dead? She is returned. Is your estate taken away? Well, and is not that likewise returned? 'But he who took it away is a bad man.' What difference is it to you who the giver assigns to take it back?" (Epictetus, 60)*

No, I cannot agree with this. I do not believe this type of mentality should be applied to people's loved ones. They have built an unbreakable bond with their child, and or wife. They have collected years of priceless and precious memories that they will forever cherish. So when they die that person is only left with those beautiful memories in order to forever remember and love that person. So why should someone say simply "they are returned" instead of grieving over the fact they will no longer be able to build and add to these memories that have given them happiness, hope, and love over the years?

2. *"Don't allow your laughter be much, nor on many occasions, nor profuse." (Epictetus, 64)*

I feel like no one can truly contain one's laughter. In my opinion, someone's laughter symbolizes happiness and good times and is something that can always lighten the mood. I personally laugh a lot and I feel like I am a happier person because of it. I feel like my laughter symbolizes that I am happy with where I am, I am surrounded by people I love, and I am enjoying life. I understand that laughing at a funeral, for example, would be wrong, but I feel like profuse laughter doesn't truly exist. I think everyone should embrace their laughter and try to laugh genuinely once a day.

*The Emperor's Handbook - Marcus Aurelius (books 1-5)*

1. *"Because you have chosen not to respect yourself, you have made your happiness subject to the opinions others have of you." (Marcus Aurelius, 28)*

I really liked this quote because I feel like it is an idea I need to learn and embrace so I am not constantly hurt because someone may not like me. In high school, especially, people would think I was not intelligent because I was also a cheerleader even though I was in multiple AP classes and had better grades than most of the individuals saying that about me. I heard one individual say I would be the first person to drop out of our AP Human Geography class because I was the dumbest in the class. Even though I had a 100 in the class for the past 10 weeks I still let that hurtful comment control me and

make me feel sad that because of my extracurriculars people were not respecting me in a way I felt like I deserved. Over time, I feel as though I have grown from this and have tried to ignore other people's opinions of me, but I feel as though I still need some more work before I can finally just disregard people's hurtful comments. I feel as though I will repeatedly reflect on this quote and remember that if I allow other people to get to me I will not be respecting myself.

2. *"The next time you are tempted to complain of your bad luck, remember to apply this maxim: 'Bad luck borne nobly is good luck.'" (Marcus Aurelius, 51)*

Once again, I feel like this quote relates to my own personal ideas that I try to exhibit every day of my life. I have had bad luck in my life, and though it may appear to be trivial to an outsider, I have used that bad luck and used it to make me stronger. When I did not make National Honors Society my sophomore year, I was devastated because I had learned I did not earn a place in the organization because I was not involved in enough clubs within my school. However, I used that rejection to go out my junior year to join and start several clubs, earn 4 leadership positions, and be involved in various community service activities and I was then accepted. Whenever I get disappointed that something does not go the way I wanted or if I am rejected something, I always take that failure and use it to improve and try again because I believe that you should never give up on something you truly want.

*The Emperor's Handbook - Marcus Aurelius (books 6-12)*

1. *"Just because you find the work too hard to do, don't leap to the conclusion that is humanly impossible; but if the work can and should be done by a man, then consider yourself capable of doing it." (Marcus Aurelius, 69)*

I feel like this quote is something I need to keep in mind now that I have started college. I am an interior design major with a business minor and I am constantly feeling

overwhelmed by the homework I am assigned every week. In my drawing class, my teacher assigns 6 hours worth of homework every week and it always makes me feel so exhausted and annoyed and the thought of completing it is something that I dread every day. But as Marcus says “just because [I] find the work too hard to do” does not mean that I can’t do it. I have gotten better since the first week and I have learned to dedicate parts of my day to complete the assignment and I have learned that though I think the homework is very hard and is exhausting, it will help prepare me for the future because I know that in my career I will easily spend more than 6 hours working on a project.

2. *“Above all, there’s no point in worrying.” (Marcus Aurelius, 92)*

I really wish I could be like a true stoic and accept this philosophy and not worry so much. But unfortunately I am not there yet and I feel myself, every day, worrying about my performance in classes, maintaining a 3.5 GPA, and whether or not I will be successful in my future career. However, I am going to try to manage my time more efficiently so hopefully my anxiety will calm down. I realize that there is no point in worrying because what is going to happen will happen and I hope with time I will learn how to control my fears of not being good enough or getting a project done in time and my life will be more stress free.

*Oration on the Dignity of Man - Giovanni Pico della Mirandola*

1. *“The nature of all other creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We have laid down; you, by contrast impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature.” (Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, 74)*

Honestly, I feel like this saying is kind of stupid and naive. I understand that humans are far more sophisticated, wise, and intelligent than any other creature, but why

should we have been the only ones given free will? Doesn't everyone deserve free will whether it's a dog or a person? I also do feel that it's kind of stupid that humans were to be given no restrictions at all because we are more prone to dangerous acts than other creatures. I mean we are single handedly destroying the environment resulting in deforestation, global warming, and climate change. That is just my opinion.

2. *"We have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer."* (Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, 74)

I believe that I was mistaken earlier about the free will that was being granted to humans after reflecting on this quote. I love this idea that humans were free to shape who they wanted to become, however I feel like this type of acceptance and tolerance does not completely exist in society today. I feel like if people try to be free and create someone they believe they were meant to be can be looked down upon depending on what type of aspect of themselves they want to express. For example, the transgender discrimination exists is going against this idea that humans should be free to shape their own being. Hopefully, over time the tolerance of our nation will improve and everyone can finally feel as though they can become their true self without persecution.

*The Ascent of Mont Ventoux - Francesco Petrarch*

1. *"All such qualities, however difficult they are to bear, can be borne at home: loving friendship is able to endure everything; it refuses no burden."* (Francesco Petrarch, 77)

I really like this quote because I feel like it is very accurate when looking at all my friendships I currently have. I feel like there will always be a little part of someone you might dislike or that might annoy you but in the end you remember the qualities that made you both become friends and the qualities you love and appreciate and then those small downsides of that person are not as prominent.

2. *"Would that I might achieve with my mind the journey for which I am longing day and night as I achieved with feet of my body my journey today after overcoming all obstacles."* (Francesco Petrarca, 78)

I feel like this quote because of how it put our life journey into perspective. Our mind always guides us to set goals, wish for tomorrow, and essentially plan out what our future might be like. Our body is what gets us through the day and enables us to accomplish the goals our mind sets for ourselves every day. Our body and our mind, every day, work hand and hand to accomplish the obstacles and difficulties that may come our way.

*Tao Te Ching - Lao Tzu*

1. *"When you are content to be simply yourself and don't compare or compete, everybody will respect you."* (Lao Tzu, 8)

This quote, in my opinion, is an important ideal everybody should attempt to live by throughout their journey. I know that when I compare myself to others, it really just brings up feelings of jealousy and of not being good enough. It makes me feel weak and I end up not even respecting myself. And the same goes with competition. When you are always trying to compete and be the best you can lose friendships and important lessons everyone must learn due to the fact you can simply only focus on yourself and defeating everyone around you. It makes you appear malevolent and unfriendly and will lead to a popular dislike of your personality. So I agree with this quote. I feel as if I could be happy with who I am and not care about the actions and abilities of others I will be able to live a more happy life, one filled with simplicity.

2. *"Success is as dangerous as failure. Hope is as hollow as fear."* (Lao Tzu, 12)



I chose this quote because I feel like it is really relevant to moments I will soon encounter after graduating from college and living in the real world. Success can be as dangerous as failure because it can bring upon toxic feelings and actions that can negatively hurt oneself and others. Success can lead to someone becoming arrogant and prideful by thinking they are better than anyone else and that their success is something others should envy and desire to be. And that can be just as toxic as failure when someone takes their failure in a negative way and lashes out and constantly attempts to bring others down. I believe that sometimes hope is as hollow as fear but only occasionally. I feel as though one can hope for something to occur but they won't do any actions to try and attempt to make that thing happen for themselves. Fear in the same way can hold someone back from accomplishing things they were destined to do and hinders them from taking once in a lifetime opportunities. Both can be caustic and dangerous regardless of their typical connotations.

3. *"Weapons are the tools of violence; all decent men detest them. Weapons are the tools of fear; a decent man will avoid them..."* (Lao Tzu, 31)

I feel that this quote could be very applicable to political arguments that arise today and this quote represents something I personally believe in. I believe that weapons, have and will always, be "tools of violence". They are used to bring fear, death, sadness, and destruction and I agree that all decent men would and should avoid them at all cost. It makes me question why, for example, criminals are allowed to have military grade weapons when their sole purpose is to either murder, rob, or destroy individuals. I feel like all the violence that occurs in our nation is committed by indecent people with weapons and I believe that they should not have these tools of destruction in order to protect the balance, unity, and safety we claim we have.

4. *"Failure is an opportunity. If you blame someone else, there is no end to the blame."* (Lao Tzu, 79)

I have always tried to use moments of failure in my life as an opportunity to make myself stronger and achieve what I once could not before. I feel as though if I were to blame my failures on someone else I would never be able to truly learn how to overcome these obstacles and grow as a person. I have suffered rejection from a sport, a club, and other individuals however I have always used this failure and inability to accomplish my goal to fuel my desire to go back out there and accomplish what I was unable to do earlier. I feel like every individual should learn this life lesson and always keep it in the back of their mind when they are going through difficult times. I am sure I will experience moments of failure in the near future and it will be devastating and make me lose hope, but I know that if I always try to fight and accomplish what I was unable to do before I will be more happy with myself and I will feel more successful.

*The Way of Chuang Tzu - Chuang Tzu*

1. *"You cannot put a big load in a small bag. Nor can you, with a short rope, Draw water from a deep well."* (Chuang Tzu, *Symphony For a Sea Bird*)

This quote reminds me of something I need to keep mind of when going on through my everyday life. I always feel like I try to accomplish the impossible and I constantly take too much work or too much of a load than I can really handle. In the future, I need to be more mindful of how much activities, how many classes, and how many clubs I can take part in while still being able to maintain and achieve the goals I set for myself every day. Gradually, I have been taking this kind of mindset into heart when joining clubs here at Suffolk and I have tried to utilize my AP credits from high school to enable me to have a business minor with my major even though typically it is not common. I feel as long as I remember what is too much work for me to handle I will be able to determine which items I should focus my time on and what type of organizations I should engage myself in.

2. *"But the prize Divides him. He cares. He thinks more of winning Than of shooting- And the need to win Drains him of power."* (Chuang Tzu, *The Need to Win*)

I feel like this quote is extremely relevant to people I encounter in my day-to-day life. I knew people in high school who only cared about being the best at every academic, every test, and being the top of the class and that would result them in being rude, arrogant, and callous towards others. They lost friends because they were constantly trying to prove that they were better than them and that their ability to be number one was far more important than any other aspect of life. I am thankful that I have already learned this lesson and I have second handedly experienced the consequences of simply only wanting to win and be the best all the time.

*Leo Tolstoy*

1. *"You cannot understand the meaning of life so do not think about it, but live,"* (Leo Tolstoy, 98)

This is something I definitely practice in my day-to-day life. Previously I knew that I would never be able to grasp the full concept of what the *meaning of life* possibly could even be so I have never even thought about it until now. I feel through this class I am possibly finally able to explore the possibilities of what the meaning could be and this enlightenment has been very intriguing and something I'm glad I can think about it since I never have before. After this quote the author proceeded to talk about how he would now always think about the meaning of life as being death. I feel as though even though if the meaning truly was to die that it would never really be something I even thought about. I like to enjoy the moments and memories I create every day and I do just "live", and honestly it is great.

2. *"...it was a question without an answer to which one cannot live, as I have found by experience. It was: 'What will come of what I am doing today or shall do tomorrow? What will come of my whole life?'" (Leo Tolstoy, 99)*

These two questions made me start thinking and I was curious at what answer I could come up for myself. I have never thought this way before in my life, in this type of direct format. I feel like I only ask myself "what are you doing tomorrow?" and the response is typically I have these classes and I will have to complete these assignments for homework. I never ask myself what will come of what I am doing today. Perhaps good grades and a good work ethic? However, I am not quite sure what more of an impact my actions could have on anyone other than myself. When it comes to "what will come of my whole life?" I only think of the career I want to have, the goals I have set for the future, and what type of lifestyle I would like to have after graduating. I never ponder what meaning or impact my life will have in the end. It is something I would like to think about more because I found it very intriguing.

*Arthur Schopenhauer*

1. *"It is the good which is negative; in other words, happiness and satisfaction always imply some desire fulfilled, some state of pain brought to an end." (On The Sufferings of the World, 100)*

I completely disagree with Schopenhauer's analysis of good and evil. What is so wrong with happiness? Why is it bad to feel loved, full of hope, and accomplished after working hard to get to this spot in one's life? And why is bringing pain to an end a bad thing? To most people pain is extremely caustic and can bring upon feelings of depression and misery, so why should we try to put ourselves in this situation? I completely disagree that good is negative and evil is positive. I agree that a balance is necessary but there should never be a limit on someone's ability to experience happiness and love.

2. *"He who lives to see two or three generations is like a man who sits some time in the conjurer's booth at a fair, and witnesses the performance twice or thrice in succession."* (On the Sufferings of the World, 101)

Once again I disagree with what the author is trying to convey. Every generation that comes and lives on this planet is vastly different and unique from one another. New innovations are created, progress is made, new beautiful moments are experienced and these are all priceless and different from each generation. I feel that my grandparents loved to watch my parents grow up, then my sister and I, and then possibly our children grow up. Plus, not one person is exactly like another. This is why I do not understand the simile this author is trying to use in his work. It may be a similar "general" performance, but there are so many different unique traits about them.

3. *"Time is that in which all things pass away; it is merely the form under which the will to live.... Has revealed to it that its efforts are in vain..."* (On the Vanity of Existence, 107)

I feel that this makes sense however the way Schopenhauer phrased this accurately captures the human life. I feel that as people grow older they, indeed, realize that their time on Earth is coming to an end and eventually they will no longer be here to experience every precious moment of it. However, I do not believe that at the end of one's life they believe that everything they have ever done, anyone they have ever loved, any memory they have is pointless and worthless. I do not believe one would think that the fact that they lived was to simply pass time and be of value. I would hope that if anyone ever felt this worthless or practiced this philosophy that they would eventually be able to see how meaningful they actually are, not just to themselves, but to many others.

4. *"The scenes of our life are like pictures done in rough mosaic. Looked at close, they produce no effect. There is nothing beautiful to be found in them, unless you stand some distance off."* (On the Vanity of Existence, 108)

I feel like this aspect of what Schopenhauer is trying to describe is brutally accurate. You might look at one scene and remember how terrible it was because you failed, or you lost your job, or you were rejected from something important and you will feel despair and sadness and this moment will overwhelm the overall importance of this moment. If you look at the whole picture you will see that terrible time in your life where you felt pointless or you weren't able to accomplish something the first time will show you how much this event ended up helping you grow stronger as an individual, and accomplish what you had failed at originally and if you had never experienced that period of suffering you would not have ended up in the happy place where you feel accomplished, satisfied, and successful without that individual moment.

*The Myth of Sisyphus - Albert Camus*

1. *"His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing." (Camus, 111).*

I find this quote kind of funny and ironic because it kind of applies to myself and my current aspect on how I live my life. I would for sure say I have a huge amount of passion for life. There is so much I want to explore and achieve and the fact and all my desires and goals lead me to simply kind of not want death to come upon me because there is so much I want to do and I want to make something of myself and experience many, many moments of happiness and bliss. So in a way I am kind of like Sisyphus. However, he got punished for doing some of the things I do in my life. I find that hilarious how someone could simply be trying to enjoy every moment of their life and appreciate and accept all the opportunities that comes across their way and in turn they get tortured for the rest of eternity.

2. *"The workman of today works everyday in his life at the same tasks, and his fate is no less absurd. But it is tragic only at the rare moments when it becomes conscious." (Camus, 111)*

I really appreciate and enjoy Camus comparison where he compares the everyday worker to Sisyphus because it is painfully accurate. A lot of people do the same, monotonous thing every day, sometimes without any passion or hope for something more, and that in itself seems like torture to me. Someone like that, appears to me, that they are being tortured by not having diversity or adventure in their life and will not engage in activities that would make them far happier.

*The Death of Ivan Ilych - Leo Tolstoy*

1. *"Each one thought or felt, 'Well, he's dead but I'm alive!' But the more intimate of Ivan Ilych's acquaintances, his so-called friends, could not think also that they would now have to fulfill the very tiresome demands of propriety...." (The Death of Ivan Ilych, 114)*

I feel like this is very relevant to how a lot of people feel in regards to the passing of someone. If one was not close to that person, one would of course feel that their death is unfortunate but instead of being overwhelmed by sorrow and responsibility they are thankful that they are still alive and they still have more time on this earth. However, people who were closer to the deceased would be overwhelmed by feelings of sorrow and despair but also responsibility. They now have to keep up the act of being sad that someone they were close to has died and now they are in charge of taking care of others who are grieving and making sure everything goes as planned, making their role more difficult to fulfill.

2. *"At school he had done things which had formerly seemed to him very horrid and made him feel disgusted with himself when he did them; but when later he saw that such actions were done by people of good position and that they did not regard them as wrong..." (The Death of Ivan Ilych, 118)*

I feel like many of the people who do things that go against their own personal values and morals will use this as an excuse to justify their behavior. They might be like "Well, my parents do it so that makes it okay because they are good people!" which is not true. They use this tactic to make themselves feel less guilty and they attempt to trick themselves that if many people are doing this action, regardless if it is wrong, that's okay since it appears to be the norm. Regardless of someone is a good person or not if they are doing something awful and against your own personal beliefs and values, do not attempt to convince yourself it's okay just because of who they are.

3. *"What's the use? It makes no difference," he said to himself staring with wide-open eyes into the darkness. 'Death. Yes, death. And none of them knows or wishes to know it and they have no pity for me. Now they are playing.'"* (Tolstoy, 129)

I chose this quote because I feel like when getting close to death, people can feel vengeful and angry that they are not receiving the type of treatment they believe they deserve, even though they never gave respect or appreciation to others when they are healthy. Instead of accepting their guilt, they turn it into anger and attempt to inflict it onto innocent others. Ivan Ilych is a perfect example of this and he actually provides a form of enlightenment towards others on how they should be acting and treating other people during their lifetime.

4. *"Once when Ivan Ilych was sending him away he even said straight out: 'We shall all of us die, so why should I grudge a little trouble?'\_expressing the fact that he did not think his work burdensome, because he was doing it for a dying man and hoped someone would do the same for him when his time came."* (Tolstoy, 133)

I feel like this is common for most individuals to act in the face of death. We all hope that if we are respectful, kind, and attentive to others we will later receive the same behavior when we are in a time of need. In this case, I believe that what Gerasim was doing was good, however, I believe he should have exhausted his efforts on someone



else. Ivan will never be thankful for all the work and dedication Gerasim is putting in to help in and the likelihood of someone recognizing what he is doing for the family is very slim.

*What the Buddha Taught - Walpola Rahula*

1. *“This freedom is necessary, because, according to the Buddha, man’s emancipation depends on his own realization of Truth, and not on benevolent grace of god or any external power as a reward for his obedient good behaviour.” (What the Buddha Taught, 2)*

I agree completely with what the Buddha is saying here. I feel like we are the only ones who can free ourselves and realizes the importance of life. I don’t believe that any God or gods have a role in this because it is our own actions and decisions that get us where we are. People, in my opinion, should not try to act in a way they believe will be praised by God because how are they for sure what God believes falls under the category of good behavior?

2. *“The root of all evil is ignorance and false views. It is an undeniable fact that as long as there is doubt, perplexity, wavering, no progress is possible.” (What the Buddha Taught, 3)*

I also completely agree with this statement as well. I feel like particularly in light of this recent presidential election ignorance has played a huge role in the results of the election. Ignorance has led to the destruction of rights and has lead to violence and malevolent words of what is to come in the future. People like to assume that the best will happen and the lesser of two evils will occur, however, that is definitely and evidently not the truth. Hopefully, over time, the widespread movement of ignorance and false views will dissipate.

3. *“What we call death is the total non-functioning of the physical body... Will, volition, desire, thirst to exist, to continue to become more and more, is a tremendous force that moves whole lives, whole existences, that even moves the whole world.” (What the Buddha Taught, 33)*

I agree with what Buddha is trying to convey here. People die every day, every moment, and though they might have had an impact on the world their death simply signifies another loss of a physical being. The emotions and feelings that all humans experience, that plague our world, and dictate how people live will always continue to exist regardless of how many people die.

4. *“Words are symbols representing things and ideas known to us; and these symbols do not and cannot convey the true nature of even ordinary things. Language is considered deceptive and misleading in the matter of understanding of the Truth.” (What the Buddha Taught, 36)*

This is completely true. People frequently use different phrases or words for manipulation, to hide their true feelings, or lie. All humans do it and therefore one cannot simply rely on language to uncover what that person really means. This problem has also transferred to technology as well. It's often hard to tell if someone is being serious or joking over text and that can lead to whole new plethora of issues.

#### *Zen Parables*

1. *“‘If I work very hard and diligent how long will it take for me to find Zen.’ The Master thought about this, then replied, ‘Ten years.’... ‘But what if I work very, very hard and really apply myself to learn fast -- How long then ?’” Replied the Master, ‘Well, twenty years.’” (Time to Learn, 144)*

I found this parable very interesting because it is the exact opposite of what I have been taught my whole life. People are typically taught if they work super hard they will be able to achieve what they desire much faster. However, the Master is contradicting this

and saying that one must simply plan to go down the path of enlightenment and any attempt to get there faster will simply make the process take longer because they are not following the traditions taught by the Master.

2. *"Cast aside every proper state of mind, oh monks - much less wrong ones - and remember well to leave the raft behind!" (The Great Crossing, 145)*

I really liked the message behind this parable. When you are trying to achieve a path of enlightenment you should not worry about the actions of your competitors. You should focus on your own future decisions and actions and in this story the character was having difficulty achieving that. Instead he was wondering if he should help out others trying to achieve enlightenment or not and that stopped and hindered him from continuing on for a while.