#### A. Our framework – debate should be a site for contest over political proposals. This requires that the affirmative present a predictable plan of action and defends that their policy should be adopted by the United States federal government.

#### B. Our interpretation is most predictable given the wording of the resolution:

#### The topic is defined by the phrase following the colon – the USFG is the agent of the resolution, not the individual debaters

 Webster’s Guide to Grammar and Writing – 2000

 <http://ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/marks/colon.htm>

Use of a colon before a list or an explanation that is preceded by a clause that can stand by itself. Think of the colon as a gate, inviting one to go on… If the introductory phrase preceding the colon is very brief and the clause following the colon represents the real business of the sentence, begin the clause after the colon with a capital letter.

#### “Resolved” expresses intent to implement the plan

#### American Heritage Dictionary 2000

[www.dictionary.com/cgi-bin/dict.pl?term=resolved](http://www.dictionary.com/cgi-bin/dict.pl?term=resolved)

#### To find a solution to; solve …

#### To bring to a usually successful conclusion

#### “Should” denotes an expectation of enacting a plan

 American Heritage Dictionary – 2000 [www.dictionary.com]

 3 Used to express probability or expectation

#### “The USFG” is the government in Washington D.C.

####  Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia 2000 [http://encarta.msn.com]

####  “The federal government of the United States is centered in Washington DC.”

#### and, our definition excludes action by smaller political groups or individuals.

#### Black’s Law Dictionary Seventh Edition Ed. Bryan A. Garner (chief) 1999

Federal government **1.** A national government that exercises some degree of control over smaller political units that have surrendered some degree of power in exchange for the right to participate in

national political matters.

#### Reasons to prefer

#### 1: Policy debate matters – social intelligence and policy-making

**Kadlec and Friedman, ‘7** \*president of Public Agenda, oversees work aimed at helping communities and states build capacity to tackle tough issues in more inclusive, deliberative, and collaborative ways, senior vice president for policy studies at the Work in America Institute, where he directed research and special projects on workplace issues. He was also an adjunct lecturer in political science at Lehman College, a research fellow at the Samuels Center for State and Local Politics, and a practitioner in the field of counseling psychology. He holds a Ph.D. in political science with specializations in political psychology and American politics. \*\*Senior Vice President, Director of Public Engagement Programs and Director of the Center for Advances in Public Engagement, visiting professor and lecturer in the political science departments at the University of Minnesota, Macalester College, Baruch College and Hunter College. She holds Bachelor's degrees in Political Theory & Constitutional Democracy and English Literature from Michigan State University, and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Minnesota. (Alison Kadlec and Will Friedman, Journal of Public Deliberation, 2007, “Deliberative Democracy and the Problem of Power,” Vol. 3, Iss. 1, Art. 8)//CC

Democratic theorists who question whether deliberation can be meaningful in the face of society’s structural inequalities are saying, in effect, that deliberation is bankrupt as a resource for democratic change. In this section we explore what can be done to connect deliberative democracy more successfully to significant processes of social and political change. Such a deliberative democratic theory of change is, we believe, among the field’s most urgent next steps. While we do not claim to offer a fully developed analysis, we do sketch out some lines of thinking and inquiry that we think offer fruitful possibilities. Specifically, we propose in this section to map out two interrelated dimensions of democratic change that flow—or can flow—from deliberative practice. The first involves the ongoing maturation of civic capacity through the development of particular habits of inquiry and communication that we sum up in John Dewey’s phrase “social intelligence.” 15 In essence we argue that well-designed deliberative democratic experience nurtures social intelligence and that this in turn facilitates very real forms and processes of democratic change apart from this or that specific problem or policy debate. Indeed, we are here speaking of ongoing processes that can meaningfully transform the very context and dynamics that surround any given policy debate. The second dimension of deliberative change concerns the more episodic but equally important realm of concrete public problem-solving. Here, specific, public issues are confronted and attended to via deliberatively inspired and informed actions. Such problem-solving is designed to set in motion new collaborations and solutions to effect change. Change, in turn, will inevitably tend to bump up against resistance, from simple inertia and calcified habits to undermining actions by those who fear losing control, status or resources. The process of countering such resistance we will explore via a notion of “deliberative democratic activism.”

2: **Our framework preserves switch side debate, which is key to critical thinking—the impact is extinction**

**Harrigan 8** (Casey, Associate Director of Debate at UGA, Master’s in Communications – Wake Forest U., “A Defense of Switch Side Debate”, Master’s thesis at Wake Forest, Department of Communication, May, pp. 6-9)

Additionally, there are social benefits to the practice of requiring students to debate both sides of controversial issues. Dating back to the Greek rhetorical tradition, great value has been placed on the benefit of testing each argument relative to all others in the marketplace of ideas. Like those who argue on behalf of the efficiency-maximizing benefits of free market competition, it is believed that arguments are most rigorously tested (and conceivably refined and improved) when compared to all available alternatives. Even for beliefs that have seemingly been ingrained in consensus opinion or in cases where the public at-large is unlikely to accept a particular position, it has been argued that they should remain open for public discussion and deliberation (Mill, 1975). Along these lines, the greatest benefit of switching sides, which goes to the heart of contemporary debate, is its inducement of critical thinking. Defined as "reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (Ennis, 1987, p.10), critical thinking learned through debate teaches students not just how advocate and argue, but how to decide as well. Each and every student, whether in debate or (more likely) at some later point in life, will be placed in the position of the decision-maker. Faced with competing options whose costs and benefits are initially unclear, critical thinking is necessary to assess all the possible outcomes of each choice, compare their relative merits, and arrive at some final decision about which is preferable. In some instances, such as choosing whether to eat Chinese or Indian food for dinner, the importance of making the correct decision is minor. For many other decisions, however, the implications of choosing an imprudent course of action are potentially grave. As Robert Crawford notes, there are "issues of unsurpassed important in the daily lives of millions upon millions of people...being decided to a considerable extent by the power of public speaking" (2003). Although the days of the Cold War are over, and the risk that "The next Pearl Harbor could be 'compounded by hydrogen" (Ehninger and Brockriede, 1978, p.3) is greatly reduced, the manipulation of public support before the invasion of Iraq in 2003 points to the continuing necessity of training a well-informed and critically-aware public (Zarefsky, 2007). In the absence of debate-trained critical thinking, ignorant but ambitious politicians and persuasive but nefarious leaders would be much more likely to draw the country, and possibly the world, into conflicts with incalculable losses in terms of human well-being. Given the myriad threats of global proportions that will require incisive solutions, including global warming, the spread of pandemic diseases, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cultivating a robust and effective society of critical decision-makers is essential. As Louis Rene Beres writes, "with such learning, we Americans could prepare...not as immobilized objects of false contentment, but as authentic citizens of an endangered planet" (2003). Thus, it is not surprising that critical thinking has been called "the highest educational goal of the activity" (Parcher, 1998). While arguing from conviction can foster limited critical thinking skills, the element of switching sides is necessary to sharpen debate's critical edge and ensure that decisions are made in a reasoned manner instead of being driven by ideology. Debaters trained in SSD are more likely to evaluate both sides of an argument before arriving at a conclusion and are less likely to dismiss potential arguments based on his or her prior beliefs (Muir 1993). In addition, debating both sides teaches "conceptual flexibility," where decision-makers are more likely to reflect upon the beliefs that are held before coming to a final opinion (Muir, 1993, p,290). Exposed to many arguments on each side of an issue, debaters learn that public policy is characterized by extraordinary complexity that requires careful consideration before action. Finally, these arguments are confirmed by preponderance of empirical research demonstrating a link between competitive SSD and critical thinking (Allen, Berkowitz, Hunt and Louden, 1999; Colbert, 2002, p.82).

#### 3: Fairness – its impossible to debate on the negative against an affirmative team that can just show up and say whatever they want. We can never be prepared enough to debate them on a topic that wasn’t predictable under the resolution.

#### 4: Resolutional Focus – it’s good because otherwise we might just end up debating the same K over and over again. It forces people to do original research and think about new areas of literature.

### Buddhism

**Desire creates the illusion of the self and suffering that defines the human condition. Our only capacity is thus to affirm the extermination of this desire in the face of perpetual death and impermanent reality**

**DOLLIMORE 1998** (Jonathan Dollimore 1998 (Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture, p 54-56.)

Siddhartha Gautama (560-477 BC) was a prince who, because of his high privilege, encountered suffering and death relatively late in life. Legend tells us that when he did eventually encounter them the trauma was the greater, and changed his life: he became Buddha, the Enlightened One. In the religion he founded, life is experienced as a permanent intrinsic unsatisfactoriness manifested as suffering (dukkha) and pain: birth is painful, old age is painful, sickness is painful, death is painful, sorrow, lamentation, dejection, and despair are painful. Contact with unpleasant things is painful, not getting what one wishes is painful. In short the five groups of grasping [the elements, skandbasy which make up a person] are painful. ('Sermon at Benares', in Burtt, p. 30) Everything about life involves suffering and dissatisfaction, a sense of lack. If we strive to overcome that lack we fail, and suffering becomes marked by a renewed craving, now intensified by an acute sense of loss. Suffering derives directly from the fact that everything that exists is radically mutable. In particular, happiness, if it is achieved, cannot last. Suffering haunts happiness from the outside and the inside. Where Buddhism differs from Western religions is in the full acceptance of mutability; happiness lies in achieving that acceptance. Suffering is perpetuated by, and inseparable from, ignorance, and mitigated by wisdom. The deepest ignorance is to fail to see, or to disavow, the fact that everything that exists is mutable and transient. The force of this position may be seen, again, in contrast with Christianity; for the Buddhist the source of suffering is ignorance rather than sin. And the real source of suffering is desire (kama) or craving (tanha, literally 'thirst'), both of which are intrinsic to, constitutive of, humankind. There is a Buddhist doctrine of 'conditioned arising' or 'dependent origination' which asserts that everything that exists is dependent on certain prevailing conditions; nothing is intrinsically self-sufficient, independent or stable. This is especially true of selfhood. Buddhism completely denies the idea of a transcendent or autonomous self so powerful in Western religion and philosophy. To believe that there is some essential inner self or consciousness which is the real me, ultimately identifiable apart from everything that happens to me, is an illusion: What we call a personality is just an individual stream of becoming; a cross-section of it at any given moment in an aggregate of the five skandhas which (as long as it continues) are in unstable and unceasing interaction with each other, (p. 86) There is no I. Even to believe in an I which possesses emotions (albeit helplessly) is mistaken. One of the problems with desire, and why it cannot make us happy, is that it presupposes a self which does not exist; at the core of our being we are empty. Everything that constitutes the individual is marked by the unsatisfactoriness and suffering which is dukkha. Nor is there such a thing as the soul. The person is only a fleeting series of discontinuous states held together by desire, by craving. When desire is extinguished the person is dissolved. Since life and suffering are synonymous, the extinction of desire is the goal of human endeavor. Until that happens we continue to exist through a series of rebirths. It is not death as such which is deplored, but rebirth; it is not death but rebirth which we must escape. So much so that in some early texts rebirth is described as 'redeath'. Desire perpetuates life, which is synonymous with suffering, and which leads to death. Desire perpetuates death; it keeps one dying. The self is merged with ultimate reality not by identifying the core of the self (soul/essence) with ultimate reality (God/the universal) but by extinguishing self into non-being (nirvana). This is the aspect of Buddhism which has fascinated Western philosophers like Schopenhauer and artists like Wagner; with whatever degree of misinterpretation, they have been drawn by the ideas of empowerment through renunciation, nullification and quiescence; of the apparent ability to move freely with the mutability and change which arc the apparent cause of suffering; of choosing freely not to pursue the illusion of freedom, in a sense to eliminate the illusion of self; of becoming discontinuous, mindless. Not to escape mutability but to become it; not to just go with the flow of endless change, but to become it. To achieve the state of nirvana - that is, a state of being which is essentially empty of desire and striving. The wisdom of Buddhism does not desire to transcend change or to affirm an essential ultimate relationship of self to the absolute and unchanging (Platonic forms, the Christian God); nor does the Buddhist desire to die or to cease to be (the death drive): he or she does not desire annihilation but rather learns how to cease desiring. Nirvana is the utter cessation of desire or craving; it means extinction.

#### The solution to the world’s problem lies in the recognition that there is no solution – suffering and conflict aren't external obstacles, instead they are internal blockages – we must accept the world as it comes to us or we are doomed to the path of Don Quixote, fighting imaginary windmills for all eternity

**Khema 94**  (Ayya, 1994, Buddhist monk, “All of us beset by Birth, Decay, and Death.” Buddhism Today, <http://www.buddhismtoday.com/english/philosophy/thera/003-allofus-5.htm>)

#### If you have ever read Don Quixote, you'll remember that he was fighting windmills. Everybody is doing just that, fighting windmills. Don Quixote was the figment of a writer's imagination, a man who believed himself to be a great warrior. He thought that every windmill he met was an enemy and started battling with it. That's exactly what we are doing within our own hearts and that's why this story has such an everlasting appeal. It tells us about ourselves. Writers and poets who have survived their own lifetimes have always told human beings about themselves. Mostly people don't listen, because it doesn't help when somebody else tells us what's wrong with us and few care to hear it. One has to find out for oneself and most people don't want to do that either. What does it really mean to fight windmills? It means fighting nothing important or real, just imaginary enemies and battles. All quite trifling matters, which we build into something solid and formidable in our minds. We say: "I can't stand that," so we start fighting, and "I don't like him," and a battle ensues, and "I feel so unhappy," and the inner war is raging. We hardly ever know what we're so unhappy about. The weather, the food, the people, the work, the leisure, the country, anything at all will usually do. Why does this happen to us? Because of the resistance to actually letting go and becoming what we really are, namely nothing. Nobody cares to be that. Everybody wants to be something or somebody even if it's only Don Quixote fighting windmills. Somebody who knows and acts and will become something else, someone who has certain attributes, views, opinions and ideas. Even patently wrong views are held onto tightly, because it makes the "me" more solid. It seems negative and depressing to be nobody and have nothing. We have to find out for ourselves that it is the most exhilarating and liberating feeling we can ever have. But because we fear that windmills might attack, we don't want to let go. Why can't we have peace in the world? Because nobody wants to disarm. Not a single country is ready to sign a disarmament pact, which all of us bemoan. But have we ever looked to see whether we, ourselves, have actually disarmed? When we haven't done so, why wonder that nobody else is ready for it either? Nobody wants to be the first one without weapons; others might win. Does it really matter? If there is nobody there, who can be conquered? How can there be a victory over nobody? Let those who fight win every war, all that matters is to have peace in one's own heart. As long as we are resisting and rejecting and continue to find all sorts of rational excuses to keep on doing that there has to be warfare. War manifests externally in violence, aggression and killing. But how does it reveal itself internally? We have an arsenal within us, not of guns and atomic bombs, but having the same effect. And the one who gets hurt is always the one who is shooting, namely oneself. Sometimes another person comes within firing range and if he or she isn't careful enough, he or she is wounded. That's a regrettable accident. The main blasts are the bombs which go off in one's own heart. Where they are detonated, that's the disaster area. The arsenal which we carry around within ourselves consists of our ill will and anger, our desires and cravings. The only criterion is that we don't feel peaceful inside. We need not believe in anything, we can just find out whether there is peace and joy in our heart. If they are lacking, most people try to find them outside of themselves. That's how all wars start. It is always the other country's fault and if one can't find anyone to blame then one needs more "Lebensraum," more room for expansion, more territorial sovereignty. In personal terms, one needs more entertainment, more pleasure, more comfort, more distractions for the mind. If one can't find anyone else to blame for one's lack of peace, then one believes it to be an unfulfilled need. Who is that person, who needs more? A figment of our own imagination, fighting windmills. That "more" is never ending. One can go from country to country, from person to person. There are billions of people on this globe; it's hardly likely that we will want to see every one of them, or even one-hundredth, a lifetime wouldn't be enough to do so. We may choose twenty or thirty people and then go from one to the next and back again, moving from one activity to another, from one idea to another. We are fighting against our own dukkha and don't want to admit that the windmills in our heart are self-generated. We believe somebody put them up against us, and by moving we can escape from them. Few people come to the final conclusion that these windmills are imaginary, that one can remove them by not endowing them with strength and importance. That we can open our hearts without fear and gently, gradually let go of our preconceived notions and opinions, views and ideas, suppressions and conditioned responses. When all that is removed, what does one have left? A large, open space, which one can fill with whatever one likes. If one has good sense, one will fill it with love, compassion and equanimity. Then there is nothing left to fight. Only joy and peacefulness remain, which cannot be found outside of oneself. It is quite impossible to take anything from outside and put it into oneself. There is no opening in us through which peace can enter. We have to start within and work outward. Unless that becomes clear to us, we will always find another crusade

#### Our impacts outweigh – voting negative breaks the shackles of the ego through embracing its annihilation

Perreira 10 – Ph.D. candidate at UC Santa Barbara

(Todd LeRoy, ““Die before you die”: Death Meditation as Spiritual Technology of the Self in Islam and Buddhism”, The Muslim World Vol 100, Issue 2-3, 247-267, dml)

In Theravada Buddhism, death (marana ) is understood simply as the “interruption of the life faculty included within [the limits of] a single becoming (existence).” Buddhism distinguishes between two types of death: timely and untimely. A death determined by the “exhaustion of merit or the exhaustion of the life span” is considered a timely death whereas a death determined by “kamma (Skt. karma) that interrupts [other, life-producing] kamma” is regarded as an untimely death. 52 Human birth and death are, like all other phenomena, subjected to an impersonal principal of causation known as paticca samuppada - ¯ , “dependent origination.” Buddhism regards the idea of a permanent soul or atta (Skt. a¯tman) as a mental projection which has no corresponding reality and, as such, is dangerous for it leads to false notions of “me” and “mine.” The view that the self has an inner essence or eternal soul is nurtured on what are called the “three poisons” — greed, hatred, and delusion, around which the wheel of birth and death (samsara ¯ ) turns. According to the Buddha’s analysis what, by convention, is called the “self” is, in fact, constituted by the congeries of ﬁve aggregates or khandhas (matter, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness) which, in relation to paticca samuppada - ¯ or the law of cause and effect, are inherently impermanent. This explains why corpse meditation has long been, and continues to be, a practice vital to Buddhism: “For all its grave stillness there is nothing more dynamic than a corpse.” 53 It is the event of impermanence taking place before the eyes of the meditator. The corpse therefore serves as the ideal object lesson: to “die” before you die is to die to false notions of an enduring self. In spite of these two radically different perspectives both Islam and Buddhism agree that the central human predicament is not death but the unsatisfactoriness that results from our identiﬁcation with a self that hankers for the things of this world. According to al-Ghaza¯ l ı¯ the cause of this dissatisfaction is rooted in ignorance due to: (1) lengthy hopes and (2) desire for the things of this world. By lengthy hopes he means we generally go about our lives under the pretext that we can expect to enjoy a long and healthy life. To maintain this fantasy, we plunge ourselves into the pursuit of pleasure, wealth, and prestige and, in the process, become so “engrossed” we fail to recognize how brief and ephemeral these frivolities are in actuality. The Buddha offered an analogous perspective. The term he designated for the unsatisfactoriness of life is dukkha or suffering and it conveys a similar notion in that its cause is attributed to a thirsting or craving (tanha ) for sense pleasures that ultimately entrap us in the rounds of birth and death. And, as in Suﬁsm, it is the failure to penetrate the veil of ignorance (avijja¯) that keeps us from knowing the true nature of the self. Whether it is a question of gaining insight into the insubstantial nature of the “self ” (anatta), as in the case of the Buddhism, or, a need to effect a decisive break with that aspect of the “self ” (nafs) “engrossed” in worldly affairs and lengthy hopes as we ﬁnd in Suﬁsm, what is apparent in both traditions is that the experience of dying before dying seems to introduce two new forms of experience which were previously absent. The ﬁrst — that of introspection — appears to be linked to a new knowledge of how one/I/you/we should live our lives while the other is primarily one of interrogation — the minute level of scrutiny required of one who goes to battle with his[/her] own demons. This occurs at the very moment in al-Ghaza¯ l ı¯’s spiritual biography when, for the ﬁrst time, he conducts an examination of his motives for teaching and it culminates in the anxiety attack that robs him of the ability to speak in the lecture hall. In the case of Ajahn Chah this process of introspection and interrogation takes the form of an internal dialogue, one that is not willed but arises spontaneously at the moment he is seized with terror to the point of paralysis and is forced to confront the basis for his fears of death. In both cases, and this is signiﬁcant, each man temporarily loses the ability to control his external voice and, in the process, gains a new possibility for giving space over in his life to the authority of an interior voice. Thus, to access this new ﬁeld of experience one must be willing to submit to a practice of “dying” to those aspects of the self that otherwise stand in the way of spiritual development. There is also the possibility that an intimate knowledge of death and dying may, in fact, be an important vector through which notions of the ethical life are transmitted within the boundaries and parameters of a given tradition. If this is the case, if dying before dying contributes to the formation of oneself as an ethical subject, if it is generative of experiencing or imagining a new sense subjectivity, or at least new possibilities for reforming the old sense of self, then it appears to be a process of identity formation that is both morally compelling and expansive. By “dying” one rehearses, as it were, a role inscribed in the narrative ethics transmitted and performed by countless virtuosi through the ages. We saw how the ordination procedure of a new monk, together with his ﬁrst instruction in meditation, reenacts the Buddha’s response to his own confrontation with death by choosing to go forth with the Great Renunciation. Al-Ghaza¯ l ı¯’s ethical interiorization begins with his recognition that God, through the call of the inner voice beckoning him to take to the road, compelled him to renounce (i.e., “die”) to his attachment to a comfortable teaching post in what was then one of the most prestigious centers of learning in the world. New research into his life suggests this decision to turn away from the comforts of worldly life toward a life of “seclusion” (‘uzla) may also have been prompted by reports about the life of the Prophet Muhammad and about al-Ash‘arı¯, who, like other ﬁgures of Islam, had a life-changing experience at the age of forty. 54 Because turning one’s life around at age forty is a recurring motif in Muslim biographies, if true, this would conﬁrm that his decision to abandon his teaching post and embrace a mystical path of seclusion can also be understood in terms of Flood’s idea of asceticism, that is, as the “internalizing of tradition” and the shaping of the narrative of one’s life in accordance with the narrative of tradition. 55

#### Use the ballot to engage in meditative affirmation of the status quo.

**Astma 6 –** Professor of Philosophy at Columbia College

(Stephen, “Against Transcendentalism: Monty Python’s The Meaning of Life and Buddhism”, *Monty Python and Philosophy* ebook copy, dml)

Upon close inspection, Buddha shows, paradise crumbles. The atman, on the other hand, is a no show. The Buddha thinks that atman is nowhere to be found except in the literary inventions of Hinduism and the confusions of its followers. Buddhism, contrary to all dualistic theories, asserts that **we are not made up of two metaphysically different parts**, a permanent spirit and an impermanent body. Buddhism breaks with most religions, East and West, by recognizing that we are each a finite tangle of qualities, all of which eventually exhaust themselves, and none of which, conscious or other, carries on independently. All humans, according to Buddha, are composed of the five aggregates (khandas ); body (rupa), feeling (vedana), perception (sanna), dispositions or volitional tendencies (sankhara) and consciousness (vinnana). If the Buddha was standing around in the battlefield setting of the Bhagavad Gita, he would certainly chime-in and object to Krishna’s irresponsible claim that a permanent soul resides in Arjuna and his enemies. Show me this permanent entity, the Buddha would demand. Is the body permanent? Are feelings permanent? What about perceptions, or dispositions, or even consciousness? The Buddha says “If there really existed the atman, there would be also something that belonged to this atman. As however, in truth and reality, neither an atman nor anything belonging to an atman can be found, is it not really an utter fool’s doctrine to say: This is the world, this am I; after death I shall be permanent, persisting and eternal?” (Mijjhima Nikaya) Buddha examines all the elements of the human being, finds that they are all fleeting, and finds no additional permanent entity or soul amidst the tangle of human faculties. There is no ghost in the machine. What’s So Grotesque about That? In their rejection of transcendentalism, Buddhism and Monty Python converge in their celebrations of the grotesque. The Python crew seems to relish the disgusting facts of human biology and they take every opportunity to render them through special effects. Throughout Monty Python’s The Meaning of Life, blood spurts, vomit spews, babies explode from birth canals, decapitated heads abound, and limbs putrefy. Theravada Buddhism also celebrates the revolting, treating it as a meditation focus for contemplating the lack of permanence. The transcendentalist consoles herself with the idea that this physical body may decay and perish, but an eternal soul will outlast the material melt-down—not so for the Buddha. In an attempt to undercut human vanity and demonstrate the impermanence of all things, Buddhist scriptures are filled with nauseating details about rotting carcasses and putrid flesh. In the Anguttara Nikaya, for example, the scripture asks, “Did you never see in the world the corpse of a man or a woman, one or two or three days after death, swollen up, blue-black in color, and full of corruption? And did the thought never come to you that you also are subject to death, that you cannot escape it?” (III, 35) When I was at a monastery in Southern Thailand, I chanced upon some reproductions of “dhamma paintings” from the mid-nineteenth century. These pictures were from a Chaiya manuscript discovered nearby, and they depicted, in detail, the “Ten Reflections on Foulness” (asubha kammatthana). The paintings illustrate the various uses of corpses as objects for contemplating impermanence. Following the great Theravadan philosopher Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga text (“Path of Purification”), the artist rendered decaying corpses in rather comprehensive stages of dismemberment and putrification. According to Buddhaghosa, staring at a bloated corpse will be particularly useful to me if I’m feeling overly attached and arrogant about the shape and morphology of my body. If instead I’m feeling snobby or bigoted about my skin’s color or complexion, I should focus on the livid corpse that ranges from green to blue-black in color. Or, if I mistakenly feel that my body is my own, I am to rectify this error by meditating on a worm-infested corpse (puluvaka). As Buddhaghosa explains, “The body is shared by many and creatures live in dependence on (all parts and organs) and feed (on them). And there they are born, grow old, and die, evacuate and pass water; and the body is their maternity home, their hospital, their charnel ground, their privy and their urinal.” Buddhist “mindfulness” (meditational awareness) about the body is being aware of its transience, its brevity, its fugacity. The physical body is slowly macerating, and to try to hold onto it or recompose it is a pipe-dream. The single issue that invited comment from film reviewers when Monty Python’s The Meaning of Life was released was its wallow in the grotesque. One exclaimed that the film’s “ramshackle bouts of surreal physical comedy—a clotted mass of frenzied bodies, debris, mud, and gore—induce feelings of revolt and despair.”53 In light of the film’s critique of transcendentalism, however, this reviewer got it just backward. Far from despairing, the Pythons aimed to smash the deceptive veneer of puritanical snobbery that devalues the flesh and overvalues the invisible spirit. Like Buddhism, Python asks us to “say yes” to our true nature, **filled as it is with impermanence and unpleasantness.** At first this may seem jarring and disturbing, but in the long run **it is preferable to self-deception through figmentary transcendent reality**. Buddha’s rejection of a permanent transcendental soul is known as the anatta, or “no-self ” doctrine (and the companion doctrine that rejects the idea of a permanent God is called paticca samuppada, or “dependent arising,” because it denies the need for any transcendent uncaused cause). The most important Buddhist critique of the transcendental soul finds place in Monty Python’s The Meaning of Life. It is the idea that belief in unseen, eternal, and divine realities ultimately **distracts us from our own humanity**. Transcendentalism **dehumanizes us by feeding selfish craving**. If we embrace a worldview that pivots on the idea that we will attain immortality, then we are going to be overly concerned with our soul’s protection and its future fate. We become **more concerned with saving our own souls** than valuing and attending to the needs of those around us. Simply put, belief in a soul and a heaven of blissful happiness actually **makes you less ethical in this life**. The rejection of souls, heaven, and God, does not lead, as so many critics contend, to bleak egoistic nihilism. Many transcendentalists foretell a gloomy picture without the security of otherworldly meaning, predicting rampant hedonism (pure pleasure seeking) or nihilistic apathy. The Buddha disagrees and thinks that these life patterns are to be avoided as much as otherworldly dogmatism. The extremes, excesses, and general sufferings of the hedonist strategy and the nihilist strategy are revealed in the film. Terry’s Jones’s Mr. Creosote, for instance, is the giant embodiment of the crass pursuit of sensual gratification. After gorging himself on multiple servings of food and wine at a fancy French restaurant, his unchecked desire for the pleasures of chocolate puts him over the edge. Though he claims he can eat no more, Cleese easily seduces him with a single, small, “vaffer-thin” chocolate mint. Mr. Creosote then begins to inflate and he soon explodes, showering the restaurant in his blood and entrails. Obviously, such hedonism and self-gratification is not an appropriate fall-back for those who reject transcendental metaphysics and ethics. Nor is it appropriate to give oneself over to despair or indifference. The folly of that is illustrated in the movie’s gruesome portrayal of a liver transplant. After Graham Chapman starts the bloody business of removing this poor chap’s liver in his dining room, his partner, Cleese, chats up the man’s wife (Terry Jones in drag) in the kitchen. Cleese asks if she too would give up her liver, but she replies, “No . . . I don’t want to die.” Cleese perseveres and introduces her to Eric Idle, who steps out of her refrigerator and commences a musical tour of the sublime immensity of the universe and the tiny insignificance of her life: Just remember that you’re standing on a planet that’s evolving And revolving at nine hundred miles an hour, That’s orbiting at nineteen miles a second, so it’s reckoned, A sun that is the source of all our power. The sun and you and me and all the stars that we can see, Are moving at a million miles a day In an outer spiral arm, at forty thousand miles an hour, Of the galaxy we call the Milky Way. The Universe itself keeps on expanding and expanding In all of the directions it can whizz As fast as it can go, at the speed of light you know, Twelve million miles a minute, and that’s the fastest speed there is. So remember when you’re feeling very small and insecure How amazingly unlikely is your birth And pray that there’s intelligent life somewhere up in space Because there’s bugger all down here on earth. “Makes you feel so sort of insignificant, doesn’t it?” Cleese and Chapman ask. “Can we have your liver then?” She gives in—“Yeah. All right, you talked me into it”—and the two doctors set upon her with their knives. Just as Mr. Creosote succumbs to sensual overindulgence, this housewife opts for a groundless underindulgence. Just because she realizes she lives in an almost infinitely large universe, that is no reason for her to think that her life is worthless in itself and not worth continuing. This is what the extreme nihilist does (indeed, this is what nihilism is all about), and the Python crew is showing us the absurdity of it. Life **does not become meaningless** once you give up the idea that you are playing a role in a transcendentally planned drama. The values of family, work, love, understanding, simple pleasures, and peace, **don’t go away** once you reject transcendent meaning. Nor does the woman’s natural desire for self-preservation and the avoidance of suffering evaporate once she realizes her own finitude. Transcendental dogmatism is dehumanizing, but so are the opposing extremes of hedonism and nihilistic skepticism. The Buddha made this point explicitly when he argued for a Middle Way between all opposing extremes. Just as **one should find a middle way** between the slaveries of excessive indulgence and excessive asceticism (self-denial), so too one must avoid embracing both absolutist worldviews (like Palin’s toadying transcendentalist chaplain) and relativist worldviews (where all values and meanings are leveled or negated). The Buddha’s Middle Way doctrine seeks to reclaim human values and meaning by avoiding overly rigid blind faith and also avoiding distracting speculations about matters that are remote from lived experience. Back Down to Earth So, what are these more down-to-earth human values that must be rescued from transcendental flights-of-fancy and nihilistic negativity? In light of the film’s critique of transcendentalism, the extremely modest list of values offered at the end as final “answers” to the meaning of life make good sense. They are introduced by Palin (in drag) as he interrupts the Vegas-style celebration of perpetual Christmas. “Well, that’s the end of the film,” she announces. “Now here’s the Meaning of Life.” She opens an envelope and reads, “Well, it’s nothing special. Try and be nice to people, avoid eating fat, read a good book every now and then, get some walking in, and try and live together in peace and harmony with people of all creeds and nations.” This rather modest sounding list makes perfect sense if we no longer pine for some more grand transcendental meaning. Once we dispatch both the otherworldly values (toadying to God and conserving our sperm, for example) and the otherworldly “realities” which ground those values (soul, heaven, God), then **matters of meaning become markedly more pragmatic and demystified**. Like Buddha’s philosophy, the essential goals in life become attempts to realize moderation, actualize one’s potential, and reduce suffering. When we try to make issues of ultimate meaning more melodramatic than this, we end up with the distracting and dehumanizing edifices of transcendentalism. The Buddha offers us Four Noble Truths that can be used to fight these temptations and distractions. First, he says “All life is suffering, or all life is unsatisfactory (dukkha).” This seems pessimistic at first, but he’s simply pointing out that to have a biological body is to be subject to pain, illness, and eventually death. To have family and friends means that we are open to inevitable loss, disappointment, and also betrayal. But more importantly, even when we feel joy and happiness, these too are transient experiences that will fade because all things are impermanent. Second, the Buddha says “Suffering is caused by craving or attachment.” When we have a pleasurable experience we try to repeat it over and over or try to hang on to it and turn it into a permanent thing. Sensual experiences are not themselves the causes of suffering—they are inherently neutral phenomena. It is the psychological state of craving that rises up in the wake of sensations which causes us to have unrealistic expectations of those feelings—sending us chasing after fleeting experiences that cannot be possessed. The Third Noble Truth states that the cure for suffering is non-attachment or the cessation of craving. In the Samyutta Nikaya text, the Buddha says that the wise person “regards the delightful and pleasurable things of this world as impermanent, unsatisfactory and without atman (any permanent essence), as a disease and sorrow—it is he who overcomes the craving” (12:66). And the Fourth Noble Truth is an eight-fold path that helps the follower to steer a Middle Way of ethical moderation. Following the simple eight-fold path, which contains simple recommendations similar those listed at the end of Monty Python’s The Meaning of Life, allows the follower to overcome egoistic craving. Perhaps the most important craving that must be overcome, according to Buddha, is the craving for immortality. The Buddha claimed that giving up transcendental tendencies would help us to better see the people all around us who need our help. We would become more compassionate, he argued, because we would not be distracted by cravings for the “other world.” Mind the Mindfulness As the Pythons suggest, however, not all dehumanizing distraction comes from “above.” Often, we lose sight of compassion and humane living by drowning ourselves in a sea of trivial diversions. In existential terms, we lose our “authentic self ” in the unimportant hustle and bustle of everyday matters. Consider again the executives of the Very Big Corporation of America. Later in the film, we learn that just before they were attacked by the mutineers sailing the Crimson Permanent Assurance they were having a meeting about “Item Six on the Agenda, the Meaning of Life.” The board chairman, Graham Chapman, turns things over to Michael Palin: “Now Harry, you’ve had some thoughts on this.” “That’s right, yeah. I’ve had a team working on this over the past few weeks,” Palin explains in his best American accent: What we’ve come up with can be reduced to two fundamental concepts. One, people are not wearing enough hats. Two, matter is energy; in the Universe there are many energy fields which we cannot normally perceive. Some energies have a spiritual source which act upon a person’s soul. However, this soul does not exist ab initio, as orthodox Christianity teaches; it has to be brought into existence by a process of guided self-observation. However, this is rarely achieved owing to man’s unique ability to be distracted from spiritual matters by everyday trivia. The other Board members sit quietly through Palin’s impressive and important report. But, they need clarification about one of the more important points: “What was that about hats again?” one of them asks. Distraction reigns again in Part IV, Middle Age, when the hyper-pleasant, smiley, and vapid American couple (Palin and, in drag, Idle) are served up a “philosophy conversation” in the form of flashcard prompts. The waiter (Cleese) tries to get the insipid couple started on their philosophy conversation by asking, “Did you ever wonder why we’re here?” They fail utterly to stay on topic. “Oh! I never knew that Schopenhauer was a philosopher,” Idle exclaims. Palin responds, “Yeah. . . . He’s the one that begins with an S. WIFE: “Oh.” HUSBAND: “Um [pause] . . . like Nietzsche.” WIFE: “Does Nietzsche begin with an S?” HUSBAND: “There’s an S in Nietzsche.” WIFE: “Oh wow! Yes there is. Do all philosophers have an S in them?” HUSBAND: “Yeah I think most of them do.” WIFE: “Oh! Does that mean [the popular singer] Selina Jones is a philosopher?” HUSBAND: “Yeah, Right. She could be. She sings about the meaning of life.” WIFE: “Yeah, that’s right, but I don’t think she writes her own material.” HUSBAND: “No. Maybe Schopenhauer writes her material?” WIFE: “No. Burt Bacharach writes it.” HUSBAND: “There’s no S in Burt Bacharach.” If we combine this tedious conversation and the Boardroom’s fascination with hats, the results of Palin’s research begins to make sense. Human beings must “create” their “souls” day-by-day (rather than simply discover them, ready made) through “a process of guided self-observation.” The great enemy of this process, these sketches show, **is distraction**. This is a conception of the soul that the Buddha could agree with. It embraces impermanence, avoids transcendentalist metaphysics, and accepts the view that we must actively cultivate our “souls.” This is the point of Buddhist “mindfulness” (sati)—a powerful meditation that cuts through the dehumanizing distractions. There’s nothing mystical or particularly fancy about it. **You can do it in your daily activities as well as in isolated contemplation**. It just requires you to focus your mind and senses in the present moment, and to resist the mind’s natural tendency to wander off into the past or future, **to replay events or imagine scenarios that fill our minds** with worries, regrets, hopes or cravings. Mindfulness is a state of awareness that comes from training and discipline, a state that shuts out the drifting distractions of life and reveals the uniqueness of each present moment. In doing this careful attending, one can become more present in his or her own life. Mindfulness helps to rehumanize a person by taking their head out of the clouds. And according to Buddhism it reconnects us better with our compassionate hearts by revealing other human beings as just human beings. Once the distractions of trivia, or theoretical, transcendental, or ideological overlays are removed, **we may become better able to know ourselves** and compassionately recognize ourselves in others. We may even come to learn that, in fact, we should all wear more hats. But **we will only know for sure if we are less distracted and more mindful**.

#### Hermann Hesse explains the alternative in his book Siddhartha –

"I'm not kidding. I'm telling you what I've found. Knowledge can be conveyed, but not wisdom. It can be found, it can be lived, it is possible to be carried by it, miracles can be performed with it, but it cannot be expressed in words and taught. This was what I, even as a young man, sometimes suspected, what has driven me away from the teachers. I have found a thought, Govinda, which you'll again regard as a joke or foolishness, but which is my best thought. It says: The opposite of every truth is just as true! That's like this: any truth can only be expressed and put into words when it is one-sided. Everything is one-sided which can be thought with thoughts and said with words, it's all one-sided, all just one half, all lacks completeness, roundness, oneness. When the exalted Gotama spoke in his teachings of the world, he had to divide it into Sansara and Nirvana, into deception and truth, into suffering and salvation. It cannot be done differently, there is no other way for him who wants to teach. But the world itself, what exists around us and inside of us, is never one-sided. A person or an act is never entirely Sansara or entirely Nirvana, a person is never entirely holy or entirely sinful. It does really seem like this, because we are subject to deception, as if time was something real. Time is not real, Govinda, I have experienced this often and often again. And if time is not real, then the gap which seems to be between the world and the eternity, between suffering and blissfulness, between evil and good, is also a deception." "How come?" asked Govinda timidly. "Listen well, my dear, listen well! The sinner, which I am and which you are, is a sinner, but in times to come he will be Brahma again, he will reach the Nirvana, will be Buddha—and now see: these 'times to come' are a deception, are only a parable! The sinner is not on his way to become a Buddha, he is not in the process of developing, though our capacity for thinking does not know how else to picture these things. No, within the sinner is now and today already the future Buddha, his future is already all there, you have to worship in him, in you, in everyone the Buddha which is coming into being, the possible, the hidden Buddha. The world, my friend Govinda, is not imperfect, or on a slow path towards perfection: no, it is perfect in every moment, all sin already carries the divine forgiveness in itself, all small children already have the old person in themselves, all infants already have death, all dying people the eternal life. It is not possible for any person to see how far another one has already progressed on his path; in the robber and dice-gambler, the Buddha is waiting; in the Brahman, the robber is waiting. In deep meditation, there is the possibility to put time out of existence, to see all life which was, is, and will be as if it was simultaneous, and there everything is good, everything is perfect, everything is Brahman. Therefore, I see whatever exists as good, death is to me like life, sin like holiness, wisdom like foolishness, everything has to be as it is, everything only requires my consent, only my willingness, my loving agreement, to be good for me, to do nothing but work for my benefit, to be unable to ever harm me. I have experienced on my body and on my soul that I needed sin very much, I needed lust, the desire for possessions, vanity, and needed the most shameful despair, in order to learn how to give up all resistance, in order to learn how to love the world, in order to stop comparing it to some world I wished, I imagined, some kind of perfection I had made up, but to leave it as it is and to love it and to enjoy being a part of it.—These, oh Govinda, are some of the thoughts which have come into my mind." Siddhartha bent down, picked up a stone from the ground, and weighed it in his hand. "This here," he said playing with it, "is a stone, and will, after a certain time, perhaps turn into soil, and will turn from soil into a plant or animal or human being. In the past, I would have said: This stone is just a stone, it is worthless, it belongs to the world of the Maja; but because it might be able to become also a human being and a spirit in the cycle of transformations, therefore I also grant it importance. Thus, I would perhaps have thought in the past. But today I think: this stone is a stone, it is also animal, it is also god, it is also Buddha, I do not venerate and love it because it could turn into this or that, but rather because it is already and always everything— and it is this very fact, that it is a stone, that it appears to me now and today as a stone, this is why I love it and see worth and purpose in each of its veins and cavities, in the yellow, in the gray, in the hardness, in the sound it makes when I knock at it, in the dryness or wetness of its surface. There are stones which feel like oil or soap, and others like leaves, others like sand, and every one is special and prays the Om in its own way, each one is Brahman, but simultaneously and just as much it is a stone, is oily or juicy, and this is this very fact which I like and regard as wonderful and worthy of worship.— But let me speak no more of this. The words are not good for the secret meaning, everything always becomes a bit different, as soon as it is put into words, gets distorted a bit, a bit silly—yes, and this is also very good, and I like it a lot, I also very much agree with this, that this what is one man's treasure and wisdom always sounds like foolishness to another person." Govinda listened silently. "Why have you told me this about the stone?" he asked hesitantly after a pause. "I did it without any specific intention. Or perhaps what I meant was, that love this very stone, and the river, and all these things we are looking at and from which we can learn. I can love a stone, Govinda, and also a tree or a piece of bark. This are things, and things can be loved. But I cannot love words. Therefore, teachings are no good for me, they have no hardness, no softness, no colours, no edges, no smell, no taste, they have nothing but words. Perhaps it are these which keep you from finding peace, perhaps it are the many words. Because salvation and virtue as well, Sansara and Nirvana as well, are mere words, Govinda. There is no thing which would be Nirvana; there is just the word Nirvana." Quoth Govinda: "Not just a word, my friend, is Nirvana. It is a thought." Siddhartha continued: "A thought, it might be so. I must confess to you, my dear: I don't differentiate much between thoughts and words. To be honest, I also have no high opinion of thoughts. I have a better opinion of things. Here on this ferry-boat, for instance, a man has been my predecessor and teacher, a holy man, who has for many years simply believed in the river, nothing else. He had noticed that the river's spoke to him, he learned from it, it educated and taught him, the river seemed to be a god to him, for many years he did not know that every wind, every cloud, every bird, every beetle was just as divine and knows just as much and can teach just as much as the worshipped river. But when this holy man went into the forests, he knew everything, knew more than you and me, without teachers, without books, only because he had believed in the river." Govinda said: "But is that what you call `things', actually something real, something which has existence? Isn't it just a deception of the Maja, just an image and illusion? Your stone, your tree, your river— are they actually a reality?" "This too," spoke Siddhartha, "I do not care very much about. Let the things be illusions or not, after all I would then also be an illusion, and thus they are always like me. This is what makes them so dear and worthy of veneration for me: they are like me. Therefore, I can love them. And this is now a teaching you will laugh about: love, oh Govinda, seems to me to be the most important thing of all. To thoroughly understand the world, to explain it, to despise it, may be the thing great thinkers do. But I'm only interested in being able to love the world, not to despise it, not to hate it and me, to be able to look upon it and me and all beings with love and admiration and great respect." "This I understand," spoke Govinda. "But this very thing was discovered by the exalted one to be a deception. He commands benevolence, clemency, sympathy, tolerance, but not love; he forbade us to tie our heart in love to earthly things." "I know it," said Siddhartha; his smile shone golden. "I know it, Govinda. And behold, with this we are right in the middle of the thicket of opinions, in the dispute about words. For I cannot deny, my words of love are in a contradiction, a seeming contradiction with Gotama's words. For this very reason, I distrust in words so much, for I know, this contradiction is a deception. I know that I am in agreement with Gotama. How should he not know love, he, who has discovered all elements of human existence in their transitoriness, in their meaninglessness, and yet loved people thus much, to use a long, laborious life only to help them, to teach them! Even with him, even with your great teacher, I prefer the thing over the words, place more importance on his acts and life than on his speeches, more on the gestures of his hand than his opinions. Not in his speech, not in his thoughts, I see his greatness, only in his actions, in his life." For a long time, the two old men said nothing. Then spoke Govinda, while bowing for a farewell: "I thank you, Siddhartha, for telling me some of your thoughts. They are partially strange thoughts, not all have been instantly understandable to me. This being as it may, I thank you, and I wish you to have calm days." (But secretly he thought to himself: This Siddhartha is a bizarre person, he expresses bizarre thoughts, his teachings sound foolish. So differently sound the exalted one's pure teachings, clearer, purer, more comprehensible, nothing strange, foolish, or silly is contained in them. But different from his thoughts seemed to me Siddhartha's hands and feet, his eyes, his forehead, his breath, his smile, his greeting, his walk. Never again, after our exalted Gotama has become one with the Nirvana, never since then have I met a person of whom I felt: this is a holy man! Only him, this Siddhartha, I have found to be like this. May his teachings be strange, may his words sound foolish; out of his gaze and his hand, his skin and his hair, out of every part of him shines a purity, shines a calmness, shines a cheerfulness and mildness and holiness, which I have seen in no other person since the final death of our exalted teacher.) As Govinda thought like this, and there was a conflict in his heart, he once again bowed to Siddhartha, drawn by love. Deeply he bowed to him who was calmly sitting. "Siddhartha," he spoke, "we have become old men. It is unlikely for one of us to see the other again in this incarnation. I see, beloved, that you have found peace. I confess that I haven't found it. Tell me, oh honourable one, one more word, give me something on my way which I can grasp, which I can understand! Give me something to be with me on my path. It it often hard, my path, often dark, Siddhartha." Siddhartha said nothing and looked at him with the ever unchanged, quiet smile. Govinda stared at his face, with fear, with yearning, suffering, and the eternal search was visible in his look, eternal not-finding. Siddhartha saw it and smiled. "Bent down to me!" he whispered quietly in Govinda's ear. "Bend down to me! Like this, even closer! Very close! Kiss my forehead, Govinda!" But while Govinda with astonishment, and yet drawn by great love and expectation, obeyed his words, bent down closely to him and touched his forehead with his lips, something miraculous happened to him. While his thoughts were still dwelling on Siddhartha's wondrous words, while he was still struggling in vain and with reluctance to think away time, to imagine Nirvana and Sansara as one, while even a certain contempt for the words of his friend was fighting in him against an immense love and veneration, this happened to him: He no longer saw the face of his friend Siddhartha, instead he saw other faces, many, a long sequence, a flowing river of faces, of hundreds, of thousands, which all came and disappeared, and yet all seemed to be there simultaneously, which all constantly changed and renewed themselves, and which were still all Siddhartha. He saw the face of a fish, a carp, with an infinitely painfully opened mouth, the face of a dying fish, with fading eyes—he saw the face of a new-born child, red and full of wrinkles, distorted from crying— he saw the face of a murderer, he saw him plunging a knife into the body of another person—he saw, in the same second, this criminal in bondage, kneeling and his head being chopped off by the executioner with one blow of his sword—he saw the bodies of men and women, naked in positions and cramps of frenzied love—he saw corpses stretched out, motionless, cold, void— he saw the heads of animals, of boars, of crocodiles, of elephants, of bulls, of birds—he saw gods, saw Krishna, saw Agni—he saw all of these figures and faces in a thousand relationships with one another, each one helping the other, loving it, hating it, destroying it, giving re-birth to it, each one was a will to die, a passionately painful confession of transitoriness, and yet none of them died, each one only transformed, was always re-born, received evermore a new face, without any time having passed between the one and the other face—and all of these figures and faces rested, flowed, generated themselves, floated along and merged with each other, and they were all constantly covered by something thin, without individuality of its own, but yet existing, like a thin glass or ice, like a transparent skin, a shell or mold or mask of water, and this mask was smiling, and this mask was Siddhartha's smiling face, which he, Govinda, in this very same moment touched with his lips. And, Govinda saw it like this, this smile of the mask, this smile of oneness above the flowing forms, this smile of simultaneousness above the thousand births and deaths, this smile of Siddhartha was precisely the same, was precisely of the same kind as the quiet, delicate, impenetrable, perhaps benevolent, perhaps mocking, wise, thousand-fold smile of Gotama, the Buddha, as he had seen it himself with great respect a hundred times. Like this, Govinda knew, the perfected ones are smiling. Not knowing any more whether time existed, whether the vision had lasted a second or a hundred years, not knowing any more whether there existed a Siddhartha, a Gotama, a me and a you, feeling in his innermost self as if he had been wounded by a divine arrow, the injury of which tasted sweet, being enchanted and dissolved in his innermost self, Govinda still stood for a little while bent over Siddhartha's quiet face, which he had just kissed, which had just been the scene of all manifestations, all transformations, all existence. The face was unchanged, after under its surface the depth of the thousandfoldness had closed up again, he smiled silently, smiled quietly and softly, perhaps very benevolently, perhaps very mockingly, precisely as he used to smile, the exalted one. Deeply, Govinda bowed; tears he knew nothing of, ran down his old face; like a fire burnt the feeling of the most intimate love, the humblest veneration in his heart. Deeply, he bowed, touching the ground, before him who was sitting motionlessly, whose smile reminded him of everything he had ever loved in his life, what had ever been valuable and holy to him in his life.