



# The Law That Counts

At years end, it is common to reflect on the past. What has been achieved? What and who has been lost?

The 'Holiday Season' even with all it's hype and hypocrisy brings family and community into focus. The two elements in our lives that we relate with daily, and absurdly, often cause us most of our trials and tribulations.

This time around, change seems to be the watchword, whether for better or worse, change is on the horizon, demanding flexibility, reorganizing, and planning.

For successful, positive change, and a healthy relationship to family and community, clear and direct communication is always necessary- and from my observations is the most fraught and difficult thing for most to achieve.

As a species we rely on each other to survive and thrive, our whole social structure is based on building a complex structure of interaction- **'The Social Contract'** that ties us together in a common bond is based on mutual understanding and common interests, and yet, from petty misunderstanding to outright intentional misdirection, we too often find ourselves at cross purposes, and in conflict- A conflict that contradicts our most basic aspirations- **harmony and accord in our relations with our fellow humans.**

That we are too many is a given, my recent foray into the maw of urbanity confirms this for me once again. It seems clear to me that choosing a life-path that requires daily traffic jams and nerve jangling time pressures, while wading through the dense flood of expectations and desires that define our consumer culture, deadens compassion, callouses emotions, and denies connections.

Some of the burgeoning cohort of service providers that define our interactions, either by corporate policy or sheer desperation, manage to maintain cheerful, helpful attitudes, finding solace in the moments between actual work that make that path acceptable- the casual banter, and *bonhomie* that make a life of service tolerable.

The specters of chaos that loom over all- a loss of Productivity, Jobs, Economic viability- seem out

of the control of anyone reasonable, and downright subverted by the intentions of self serving plutocrats.

As a child- A running 'joke' around this time was the top of my Christmas list: **'World Peace'**- *After all, how could that ever happen?*

Once, a long time ago, I was a Boy Scout, and the Motto **'Be Prepared'** is instilled deep in my psyche. Though I must admit my scout career was less than stellar, as my nonconformity found me lacking a drive to "advance" and placed me amongst the ranks of ne'er-do-well outcasts. But the frequent hikes, and camping trips help secure a sense of place for me in the natural world.

I recently came across a reference to the **Scout Law** and recognized, that yes, I actually was, and I guess by extension, still am, a good scout- for a Scout is:

**TRUSTWORTHY**- tells the truth and keeps promises.

**LOYAL**- true to family, friends.

**HELPFUL**- volunteers to help others without expecting a reward.

**FRIENDLY**- A friend to everyone, even people who are very different from him.

**COURTEOUS**- polite to everyone.

**KIND**- treats others as he wants to be treated.

**OBEDIENT**- follows the rules of family, and Universal laws.

**CHEERFUL**- looks for the bright side of life.

**THRIFTY**- uses time, property, and natural resources wisely.

**BRAVE**-can face danger even if he is afraid. He stands for what is right.

**CLEAN**- keeps his body and mind fit.

**REVERENT**- faithful in his spiritual ideals, and respects the beliefs of others.

Despite the Quasi-militaristic trappings of the **Boy Scouts**- Not bad guidelines for living amongst others. If only everyone signed on to uphold these ideals, what a **Wonderful Life** (cue the Angel Bells) it could be.

Or as Rocker Nick Lowe once put it:

**"What's so funny 'bout peace love and understanding?"**

**-Joshua Golden**

## THE ANGEL IN THIS

*The Angel in this nativity*

*drifts upward handful of smoke*

*thistle wings in the prosaic fields*

*My feet are blistered*

*so many miles to miracle*

*& I shift the child's weight*

*psalm in her sleeping*

*My arms ache*

*The angels of the thistle & fire*

*carry nothing with them*

*pure spirals of praise*

*in the winter sunlight, light*

*as tomorrow*

*Me, I bring my slow dance*

*This shuffle weighted with children*

*Stable*

*chapel, may be too far away*

*we enter*

*the nearest meadow, smallest acorn,*

*singing*

*Kathy Epling*

## IF WE KNEW A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE

*Heart's rest, there are few answers*

*This season of bleached fields*

*burrs catch my hem, children grab hands.*

*I don't count the questions. Day can*

*let's pretend, be easy as berries, lust*

*crushed to the hungry tongue*

*If we don't sleep nights, neither do stars*

*or the solid trees, far apart*

*houses: marriage, death, secrets.*

*It is a hard journey. Touch me.*

*Kathy Epling*



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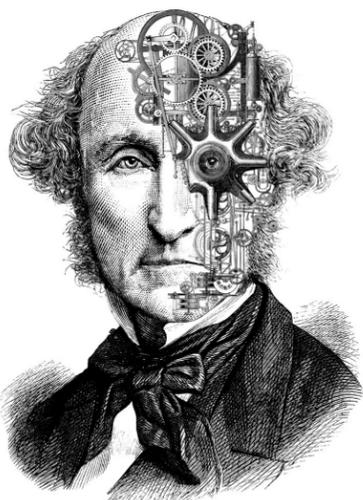
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We are free to prisoners. Hope for the best.



# A Season of Forgiveness?



**The idea of a "Forgiveness Season"** in cold December when there is Mercury Retrograde, isn't so easy to me as it was when it first appeared in the idealistic seventies: *Start off forgiving God and the Universe and end up forgiving yourself*, or maybe the other way around. Just a simple list where items could be checked off with an ironic laugh and a feeling of superiority.

**The side that wasn't much emphasized, if at all by me, was what we have to be forgiven for.** That requires a different kind of memory: admitting fault, accepting blame, making restitution? In order to "forgive and forget" as the saying goes, we must first remember. PTSD time. Remembering what was done to us comes quickly. It's folded into our sorrows and our rages. The traumas which were our shield have ended as armor of our dysfunctional personalities.

**To activate a Forgiveness impulse**, we have no explosive trigger here, as with our Traumas. In fact our traumas are meant to mask our "sins," our karmic transgressions. Forgiving ourselves was easy then because we were always the victim. If you are an intellectual leftist like myself, you

have always been in the right. Guilt here is easily projected onto others whose behaviors are so much more toxic than our own meager efforts. Racism, Classism, Nationalism, Sexism, Speciesism and more were being identified, categorized, itemized. And in those old revolutionary times this was a fighting agenda we took out into the world to browbeat and belabor others with - after our own brief and mostly insincere confessions set the table.

**The solidarity of consciousness raising groups empowered us.** Now our solidarity depends on the threat from the rise of fascism and the death of the planet. Pretty solid, you would think. But there seems to be one entity we were only just learning to Hate in the idealistic seventies: Our Own Species. In the most fundamental way, we are stymied because so many of us hate ourselves - the humans. In reading a recent text from a Local on Patrol leader, we are warned not to assume that any of us are in a category exempt from hate. We not be bums, but there is a whole string of categories that are not safe from being hated. The new Fascism won't be merely anti-semitic, though it is, or anti-woman, though it is, or anti-Black, though it is, or anti-intellectual, though it is, - it will be *anti-Humanic*, to coin a phrase. The ongoing fight then is for Human Rights for a species which it is widely believed deserves no rights. Or to put it back in the middle between God and Us: we need to *Love our Species*. Sort of Higher Cosmic Self-love. What a task in the Age of Narcissism.

**Paul Encimer AKA the PeoplesWhistle**