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Philosophy in a Different Key: My Philosophy in Song

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PHILOSOPHY IN A DIFFERENT KEY: MY PHILOSOPHY IN SONG

Don Viney



Philosophy in a Different Key: My Philosophy in Song by Don Viney

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Preface

Two of the blessings of my life are the joy I take in singing and the knowledge that there are people who take pleasure in listening to me sing. I began university as a music major but eventually switched to something easier: philosophy. I began teaching philosophy in graduate school in 1977. Since 1984 I have been a philosophy professor. I am occasionally asked whether my role as a philosopher has any bearing on my hobby as a singer-song writer. The answer is that much (though by no means all) of what I have composed expresses my philosophical convictions, beginning with the influences of my family on my life.

I was raised by parents who valued music. My mother, Wynona “Noni” Viney, was an expert pianist and a fine singer who cherished close harmonies. My father, Wayne Viney, also sings well. In their first years of marriage, they were hired by churches as a music director and pianist. Neither chose music as a career, but they taught me to think of music as integral to life and they nurtured the seeds of talent that they found in me. Our home was filled with music of many kinds—choral, instrumental, symphonic, operatic, gospel, folk, pop, and, of course, Broadway musicals. There is some truth in the remark of one of my colleagues that I grew up in a musical. In some fashion, I was “born to sing.”

A few years ago, my life was turned upside down by a traumatic event. One day, with only my pets as company, I vented my anger and frustration, screaming at the top of my lungs. The poor animals were frightened and I damaged my voice so badly that I did not think that it would recover. A musician friend counselled patience, saying my voice would heal. She was correct. I could not have anticipated the intensity of joy I felt upon singing again. It was a lesson in appreciating what one has, while one has it. It was also a lesson in what I owe to others. I often sing alone, but I love *the wisdom of harmonies*. One cannot sing the “Hallelujah Chorus” by oneself. Teilhard de Chardin was fond of saying of love, “Union differentiates.” Music is not the only way of achieving that sort of differentiating union, but I rejoice that it is open to me and that it is an opening for me to share with others. It has been my good fortune to have performed my music not only for audiences locally, but also in venues far from home, in France (at the St.-Brieuc Public Library and at the Sorbonne in Paris) and in Germany (Dallgow).

I claim no great originality in philosophy. My songs are my own, but I am often expressing what I have learned from others. I hope I have added something

novel, interesting, and aesthetically pleasing to the work of those who most influenced me. One may detect, even in the title of this document, a debt to a previous philosopher, Susanne K. Langer, whose book *Philosophy in a New Key* (1942) is rightly considered a classic.

I do not remember a time when I was not drawn to what is known as “process-relational philosophy,” sometimes abbreviated as “process philosophy.” Process thought emphasizes the dynamic processes in nature and in human life, including the ways that relationships create novelty and often serve to refresh the zest for living. I agree with my former teacher, Donald Crosby, that *novelty* is as metaphysically foundational as *order*. Yet, with such freedom as novelty supports, there is risk, and hence, not everything necessarily happens for the best. But it can, and sometimes it does, and that must suffice for human flourishing. I *do not* believe that everything happens for a reason, but *I do* believe that anything that happens can become a reason, or part of a reason, for improving our lot.

Although religious sensibilities are evident in some of my songs, I hope that no one can find dogmatism in them. I endeavor to live in the spirit of what Harry Emerson Fosdick called “adventurous religion” and what Alfred North Whitehead called “adventures of ideas.” One of the attractions of process-relational thinking is that God is conceived in dynamic terms. Charles Hartshorne, modifying a statement from Rabbi Abraham Heschel, called God “the most *and best* moved mover.” Conceiving God in those terms seems to me the best way to conceive the divine *chesed* (loving kindness) so characteristic of biblical prophets.

I composed my first song in the early 1970s; however, all but three of the songs listed here were written after 2008, my fifty-fifth birthday—the vast majority of what I have composed was written since then. What follows are the lyrics to some of my songs. For each song, I’ve made comments that provide context, an explanation of the sources that I’ve used for inspiration, and what I was thinking in composing the piece. Six of the songs are set to the music of other composers. I thank Susan Marchant for transcribing and engraving three of the songs included here. For the light it might shed on my music, I’ve included a description of five books and authors that have been pivotal in my thinking. MP3s of the songs are available at: https://digitalcommons.pittstate.edu/phil_faculty/44/.

Don Viney
September 24, 2020

An American Story

What is this land of America, so many travel there?
I'm leaving Montreal, my dear, though I love that city fair.

I sailed the Mississippi up and down from Illinois
To ferry the supplies for the Union soldier boys
We moved out west after the war to prairies rich and grand
And we made our home in the heart of the great American land.

The night shines brightly overhead, the wind sings us a song,
We'll build a life in this new land and we'll raise a family strong.

America is a place they say with space enough for all,
It's less a place and more a dream, but you can hear her call:
"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses," cried she
"Send the wretched, the homeless, and the tempest-tossed to me."

No patriotic fog or mist must blind us to the cost
To those betrayed, displaced, enslaved, and countless lives were lost.
Cast light upon our darkness, let no history remand
The storied lives, who fought and died upon the American land.

The night shines brightly overhead, the wind sings us a song,
We'll build a life in this new land and we'll raise a family strong.

Now that we are older, our sons and daughters grown,
And they, with sons and daughters, and families of their own.
The fabric of the nation in a million woven strands,
There shines forth the promises of a great American land.

The night shines brightly overhead, the wind sings us a song,
We'll build a life in this new land and we'll raise a family strong.
We'll build a life in this new land and we'll raise our families strong.

The opening verses pay tribute to Charles Viney (1836/43 – 1902), my great-great grandfather, who moved from Toronto (not Montreal) to Illinois and served with the Union army during the Civil War, ferrying supplies on the Mississippi, before moving with his wife, Augusta (née Worthen), to Wichita, Kansas. The song also expresses my love for America at its greatest—when it is open to immigrants and reflective about its checkered past. The last lines of the second quatrain are from Emma Lazarus’ “The New Colossus” at the Statue of Liberty in New York City.

This song has a peculiar origin. My wife encouraged me to learn Bruce Springsteen’s “Immigrant Song,” an epic song to which I was certain I could not do justice. I am no Springsteen, and besides, I don’t have a backup band. In the final analysis, I did borrow the first line of Springsteen’s song—“What is this land of America? So many travel there.”—but inspiration took me in a somewhat different direction. My wife jokes that I stole her song.



Some of Charles Viney’s descendants: Back row: Maeve Cummings [my wife], Don Viney, Mary Klass [Mike’s wife], Wayne Viney [my father], Mike Viney [my brother], Seth Viney [Mike’s son]; Front row: Marcus Viney [Mike’s son] (with Junie), Jude Viney, Ari Viney [children of Seth and Terace], Walter Smith, Allie Smith, Jenny Smith [my daughter and her children]

Orpha's Song

At seventeen she married.
The century was new.
Full of hope to build a life,
to raise a family too.
The two of them went westward
to the Colorado hills
to the mining town of Calcite,
their dreams there to fulfill.

Refrain:

Say a prayer, and face the test,
And to heaven leave the rest.
There's no room to be faint of heart.
See your journey to the end.
Leave behind what might have been.
It's not too late to make another start.

In time she had two children,
and another on the way,
Life, it's true, was rugged,
but these were happy days.
until the seasons turned around,
not four years since she'd wed.
water from a poisoned well
left her beloved dead.

Say a prayer, and face the test . . .

Fifty-five years later
to the ghost town she returned.
She stood awhile remembering
how here her heart had burned.
She smiled, no feelings of regret,
when all was said and done,
this town was not the end of her,
her life had just begun.

Say a prayer, and face the test . . .



Orpha (Brown) Buxton, Summer 1965



Wayne and Orpha Brown
unknown date



**Orpha and Wayne Brown and their children, Ruth and Grace
Calcite Colorado, 1909**

“Orpha’s Song” is a true story from the early life of my great grandmother, Orpha Adaline Buxton [née Sawhill] (1889-1978). She married Arthur Wayne Brown (1883-1910) in Wichita, Kansas in 1906. The two moved to Calcite in southern Colorado where Wayne clerked for the mines. They had three children, the second was the mother of my father, Wayne Viney. Wayne Brown and Orpha’s younger sister, also named Grace (1891-1977), drank from a contaminated well. Grace survived but Wayne died in a Pueblo, Colorado hospital. Orpha did not go to the funeral because her third child was ill and he was not expected to live—although he did. Orpha returned to Wichita, married Theodore Buxton (1877-1949), and bore five more children. All of her children survived her. In 1965, while she visited family in Pueblo, conversation turned to her days in Calcite. The town was not on the road maps but, following the contours of the hills and of her memory, she guided them to her old homestead. Although she found the foundation of her house, nothing remained standing in the town except a single bread oven. I was twelve years old and I was there. The experience was one of the most memorable of my childhood. The refrain expresses her philosophy, and mine. The music of “Orpha’s Song” is Brendan Graham’s haunting melody, “Isle of Hope, Isle of Tear.”

The Sun-Slanted Skies of November

The sun-slanted skies of November,
The leaves and the grass turned to brown.
And we, heading north on the highway,
Return to my parents' hometown.

The farmers, their families, remember,
At Grandma's they'd all gather 'round.
A blessing and heads bowing to pray,
And then pass the food all around.

Freshly baked goods set before us,
The stories, the kidding, the sounds,
An atmosphere smelling of heaven,
And none but a mock gentle frown.

A Wesleyan grace for a chorus,
The giving of thanks did abound.
Music and laughter, the leaven,
A sweet memory to have found.

The sun-slanted skies of November,
Leaves and the grass turned to brown.
And we, heading north on the highway,
Return to my parents' hometown.

Until I was thirteen, my family would spend the Thanksgiving holiday in Wichita, Kansas and have Thanksgiving meal at Grandma (Orpha) Buxton's house. It was about a three-and-a-half-hour drive north from where we lived in central Oklahoma. Mom and Dad were raised in Wichita and most of their families were in that area and in the little farming community of Kechi nearby. Thanks to Mom, there was always piano accompaniment to what we sang. Thanks to Grandma and many others, there was always plenty of food. Harsh words and squabbles were unknown, I've often thought that these gatherings were like a tangent, where heaven and earth touched.

Many of my attitudes, if not my actual philosophical views, are informed by the example of my mother, Wynona “Noni” Viney (1934-2009). A talented pianist and singer who spent her life teaching small children in the Head Start program, she invariably approached life with compassion, joy, and determination. Even on the day of her death, through her pain, she laughed. I wrote the following trilogy of songs in her memory.



Noni Viney, Christmas 1996

The Music of Her Life

Laughter that would hide no guile, sparkling just like your smile.
 What we'd give to laugh with you like the way we used to do.
 Your fingers played across the keys, improvising with such ease.
 How we miss your gaiety, like the way it used to be,

We have our day in the sun. All too soon the day is done.
 Who we were and dreamed to be—fugitives of memory.
 You're no longer by our sides. Who you were still abides.
 On other voices, other tongues, the music of your life is sung.

Children smiling everywhere, choral voices fill the air.
 Trouble is a stranger here. Nothing more for you to fear.
 These our hopes, that you may find gentleness and peace of mind.
 In the measure that you loved, may you in turn feel loved.

Horizons Far From Sight

Stars are circling round about, the day as in the night,
 Counted and uncounted, unseen just as bright,
 Reminding us of horizons away and far from sight,
 Distant suns and galaxies of fire and of light.

We hope not knowing if we're wrong or if we're right.
 We rise on small, frail wings, but boldly take to flight.

Beneath the layers of each life, hidden from our eyes,
 There's a hearth aglow with warmth when embers seem to die.
 As great the revolutions of the earth and sky,
 In the heart of matter something greater lies.

We are the stuff of stars that came to question why,
 We strive to dream the dreams on which we can rely.

The planets breathe, the oceans teem, and the atoms leap.
 The universe, as though alive, never seems to sleep.
 What we have cherished is so very hard for us to keep.
 What we've sown is, at last, for others to reap.

We learn to laugh, to love, and then we learn to weep.
 We feel the currents as we try to sound the deep.

This song sets the problem of death within a cosmic context, emphasizing bold flights of the imagination in the face of unanswered questions and in view of the staggering fecundity of nature. It expresses the faith that we are indeed children of this universe but not, as it were, abandoned by it like cosmic orphans.

A Sleeping Star

What will fit in the blink of an eye,
expanses of sky,
a sleeping star?
Searching with the breath of a sigh
when we say good-bye
for where you are.

Gentle the waves of a life lived well.
Happy the ebb and the flow.
Charmed by its rhythms, caught in its spell,
we feel the undertow.

Quietly, the evening draws nigh.
We're born, so we die,
a whisper, gone.
Joy, the seed in tears that we cry
will grow by and by
and greet the dawn.

The opening lines of this song contrast the brevity of life with the richness of experience that characterizes every life, like my mother's, that is well-lived. Hers was a gentle spirit which charmed those who knew her, yet the tug of her personality, like an unseen "undertow" continues to exert its "spell." The image of a sleeping star may capture something of the sense that her "light" continues even in death.

I chose George Deleure's theme from "Joe Versus the Volcano" for the melody of this song. For the longest time, this tune stayed with my mother, but she forgot where she had heard it. She would play it on the piano and ask others if they recognized it. One day, my brother brought the film to the house for us to watch. Mom was delighted to finally identify the source of her memory. Putting lyrics to a tune she loved so well, seemed to me a fitting tribute to her spirit.

Song of the Rockies

I'll sing a song of the Rockies out west,
the mountains where I used to roam.
I'll sing a song of a life deeply blessed;
I'll sing a song of my home.

High in the hills, by night or by day,
the vista would take your breath away.

No air so crisp, no water so clear,
the sunlight would dance on the stream.
If I tell the truth of a family so dear,
you'll say it sounds like a dream.

Nevertheless, my yesterdays,
glow like the dawn of today.

Shadows of the past, outlines of futures,
we live in the half-light between,
ever upon the verge of the dawn,
facing horizons unseen.

Don't get me wrong, I'd never go back.
I'd not raise the past from the dead.
That is because there is nothing I lack,
From those days to face days ahead.

Present no more, it's real just the same
the embers remain after the flame.

Shadows of the past . . .

I'll sing a song of the Rockies out west
the mountains where I used to roam.
I'll sing a song of a life deeply blessed;
I'll sing a song of my home.
I'll sing a song of my home.

*My family moved from
Oklahoma to Colorado
in the summer of 1966.
For the longest time, I
considered myself to
have dual citizenship.
Though it has been
many years since I
lived in either state, I
occasionally get
nostalgic for the high
country. It was on one
such occasion, while
visiting my wife's
brother's family in
Bristol, England, that
I began composing
this song.*

In March 1952, a month after my mother and father were married and eleven months before I was born, my father composed a hymn titled "I'll live with him." My mother produced a musical score for the hymn, written for piano. My father says that she would often play the hymn in church services. In 2016, I recovered the musical score, which was in my mother's music cabinet. Mom and Dad had long since abandoned the fundamentalist theology expressed in Dad's lyrics. Despite a very brief flirtation with fundamentalism, I never accepted its principles. However, I considered the music of the hymn to be worth preserving, so my father suggested that I give the tune different lyrics. I wrote lyrics that reflect thoughts about my mother and I retitled the piece, "Her Graceful Ways."

Her Graceful Ways

Sometimes I feel that she is here beside me,
Her gentle touch, her presence soft and kind.
She taught me love, a love that knows no boundaries,
The secret of the beauty of her mind.

If I could tell her how she lives within me still
A flame so warm, a light that never dies,
Perhaps she knows, and I yet hope that I will
See her again and meet her smiling eyes.

Her graceful ways affected all around her,
Like music scored for every voice to sing.
Never a word designed to hurt or injure,
Only her laughter and its joyful ring.

If I could tell her how she lives within me still
A flame so warm, a light that never dies
Perhaps she knows, and I yet hope that I will
See her again and meet her smiling eyes.
See her again and meet her smiling eyes.

Her Graceful Ways

Lyrics: Don Viney
(C, capo 3 in A)

Music: Wayne Viney

Moderato A

The musical score is written for guitar and voice. It consists of three systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a single treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The tempo is marked 'Moderato'. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a key signature change to one sharp. The second system contains the first two lines of lyrics. The third system contains the final line of lyrics. Chord symbols (A, E, A, E7, A, D) are placed above the vocal line to indicate the harmony. The piano accompaniment features arpeggiated chords and flowing sixteenth-note patterns.

Some-times I
Her grace-ful

feel that she is here be - side me, Her gen - tle
ways af - fect - ed all a - round her, Like mu - sic

touch, her pre-sence soft and kind. She taught me love, a love that knows no
scored for ev' - ry voice to sing. Nev - er a word de-signed to hurt or

Moderato

A E A E7 A D

A F#m E⁷ A

bound-ries, The se-cret of the beau-ty of her mind. If I could
in-jure, On-ly her laugh-ter and its joy-ful ring. If I could

A E E⁷ E

tell her how she lives with-in me still A flame so
tell her how she lives with-in me still A flame so

A

warm, a light that nev-er dies, Per-haps she knows, and I yet hope that
warm, a light that nev-er dies, Per-haps she knows, and I yet hope that

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is for the vocal line, and the bottom staff is for the piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line has two verses of lyrics. The piano accompaniment features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Chord symbols are placed above the vocal staff: D, A, E7, and A.

Chord Symbols: D, A, E7, A

Vocal Lyrics:

I will _____ See her a - gain and meet her smi - ling eyes.
 I will _____ See her a - gain and meet her smi - ling eyes.

Wayne Viney originally composed this music in March 1952, a month after he had been wed to Wynona (Noni) Viney (born, Wentworth). Noni created the piano score. The piece was originally composed as a hymn. The lyrics as they appear here were written in June 2018 in loving memory of Noni Viney.



My mother at the piano



Noni and Wayne Viney, February 23, 1952

Far Away From Stephen's Green

She left home at the age of nineteen
 bound for a country she'd never seen.
 Far away from familiar faces
 Far away from Stephen's Green.
 Was it duty to her father's business
 or the wander lust of youth?
 Did she know or did it matter?
 She might not know, to tell the truth.

[Italicized words sung
 as counterpoint to chorus]

But the future is unknown.
 A father's plans can break in two.
 And now his daughter fully grown
 considered what she had to do.

*Where to turn, what to do?
 The choices always seem too few.
 Who am I? Who are you?
 Can we forgive each other too?*

Back home her mother, bedridden then,
 sent her children to unite again,
 They came to live with her eldest daughter
 and to follow where she'd been.
 Looking back, it seems unlikely
 this story would have a happy end.
 Yet, scattered across three countries
 They're still as close as they were then.

With the future comes a past.
 But does the past a future make?
 Even when the die is cast,
 There are other roads to take.

*What becomes of what we've made?
 Of what we've made and left unmade?
 When we from memory fade
 who we have been will yet remain.*

She left home at the age of nineteen
 bound for a country she'd never seen.
 Far away from familiar faces
 Far away from Stephen's Green.

I have learned much from my wife, Maeve Cummings, and from her family, especially her mother, Dolores “Abi” Lyons (1933-2018). This song tells Maeve’s story, the tale of a young girl from Dublin who makes her way in the world, from Ireland, to Germany, and later, the United States of America. Maeve has extended my family, as well as my identity, far beyond the borders of America. A musical inspiration of this piece is Cat Stevens’ “Father and Son” from his 1970 album Tea for the Tillerman, with its haunting contrapuntal conversation between father and son.



**Maeve Cummings and her mother,
Dolores “Abi” Lyons, Dallgow, Germany,
Summer 2017**



**Don Viney and Maeve Cummings,
Germany, 2008**

It takes a thought to laugh, it takes a brain to cry

I run a classroom, babe,
I teach philosophy.
I raise a lot more questions
than there can answers be.
If your mind starts a-buzzin'
like a hive of bees
just try readin' Plato
and follow Socrates.

There's a lot to be said
for Aristotle's thought.
At least that's what the sainted
Thomas Aquinas taught.
Reason neatly tied
with faith in a knot
If it don't unravel,
you'll know for sure what's what.

There's a brain in a vat somewhere,
you wonder if it's you.
Someone's feedin' your mind, babe,
with what you think is true.
If you've got no body,
there's nothing you can do,
just remember Descartes,
and the *cogito* too.

Your dogmatic slumber,
is disturbed by Hume.
All your doubts and questions
are easily exhumed.
Every cause is a fiction,
certainties entombed,
Even science is a casualty,
religion also doomed.

Pure reason self-destructs
in Kant's antinomies.
But there's still God and freedom
and immortality.
You can always depend
on practicalities
and transcendental conditions
of sensibility.

Are your decisions free babe
or fated by the past?
Is there a contradiction
that you just can't get passed?
Don't ya sweat it babe,
it doesn't have to last,
Nietzsche's will-to-power
is a dynamite blast.

If you're puzzled by
the language games we play
Wittgenstein can help
with what he has to say.
You're a fly in a bottle
tryin' to find your way,
He'll show you the exit,
or you'll be there all day.

What flavor ya gonna pick,
what theory will you choose?
Don't sit out the game babe,
you've got nothing to lose.
Where to begin,
there's a million clues?
But logic's a must babe,
you've got to pay your dues

This song is a light-hearted treatment of various philosophers and their ideas. It would require a paragraph or more for each stanza to explain the ideas expressed here. Suffice it to say, that for the most part, these are persons and concepts I teach to lure students into the world of philosophical questions. The final stanza points out that one of the necessary tools of the trade of philosophy is formal logic, a class I once taught on a regular basis. The lyrics are set to the tune of Bob Dylan's "It takes a lot to laugh, it takes a train to cry."



Don Viney, Jim Boyd, Bernard Rollin, and Donald Crosby, June 18, 2016, Fort Collins, Colorado. Boyd, Rollin, and Crosby were three of the professors at Colorado State University who had the greatest influence on me.

Jules Lequyer (1814-1862) drowned in the bay of St.-Brieuc in Brittany. His was a troubled spirit, tormented by philosophical thoughts on freedom and by his love for Anne Deszille, who twice refused his hand in marriage. The last page that he wrote allegorizes his struggles. Within a lonely pine whipped by the wind from the sea [Lequyer himself] there seeps a resin that glows phosphorescent [his philosophical and literary work]. It must be properly molded to assume its true shape [Lequyer dreams of publishing his work]. A drop falls to the ground revealing a drop of blood, a ferocious wound [perhaps Lequyer's unrequited love, associated in his mind with the failure of his work]. If only the branch can extend itself, the drop will not fall and the resin will illuminate the branch and the tree. Lequyer concludes: "It is necessary to tell the tree to once more lift its . . ."

The Last Page of Jules Lequyer

Along the coast of Breton France
winter blows in from the bay.
A lonely pine, its branches outstretched
who can its anguish allay?

Swimming, this bold traveler braves,
freedom's abyss and the waves.

Its trunk is gnarled; its top is bowed,
but resin within it still flows.
If it can be gathered and molded, it will
shine with an unequaled glow.

Love unrequited, a desperate cry:
remnants of a glory denied.

Glinting, some sap falls to the earth—
blood from the tree—like a tear.
Tell it to reach its branch for the sky
though storm clouds are gathering near.

Note: Lequyer wrote to Anne Deszille: "Bold traveler in the worlds of thought, I have explored more than one route. I have sounded more than one abyss."

Note: Lequyer's last words: "Adieu, Nanine." [his name for Anne]

Lequyer confused his dreams of philosophical success with his love of Deszille. In February 1862, he swam to the limits of his strength in the bay of St.-Brieuc, and did not return. Much debate surrounded his death, some calling it suicide, others calling it a cry of desperation to God to preserve his dreams of glory. Based on an account of his final days, it is clear that he was having a mental breakdown that mixed visions and religious exaltation.

I translated the original version of “The Last Page of Jules Lequyer” into French—Myriam Krepps and Goulven Le Brech helped me to avoid infelicities and grammatical mistakes. As in the original, the quatrains are identical to or closely parallel Lequyer’s own words. I have here provided a translation to show its close relation to the English original.

La dernière page de Jules Lequyer

Le long de la côte bretonne du nord
Je vois un pin solitaire—
ses branches, ses aiguilles, agitées au vent,
l’hiver souffle de la mer.

Along the north coast of Brittany
I see a solitary pine—its branches
its needles, whipped by the wind,
winter blows in from the sea.

Sondant l’abîme de la liberté,
le nageur vers les vagues s’est jeté.

Sounding the abyss of freedom, the
swimmer throws himself to the waves.

La tête penchée, le tronc rugueux,
toujours une résine rare coule.
Elle jettera des lueurs inégales
si on la préserve et la moule.

Bowed head, gnarled trunk,
always a resin flows.
It will cast an unequaled glow
If it can be preserved and moulded.

Amour sans retour, cri désespéré,
vestige d’une gloire refusée.

Unrequited love, desperate cry
remnant of a glory denied.

La sève lumineuse tombe sur la terre:
Larmes des yeux qui se baissent.
Dites à l’arbre d’étendre sa branche
bien que les orages apparaissent.

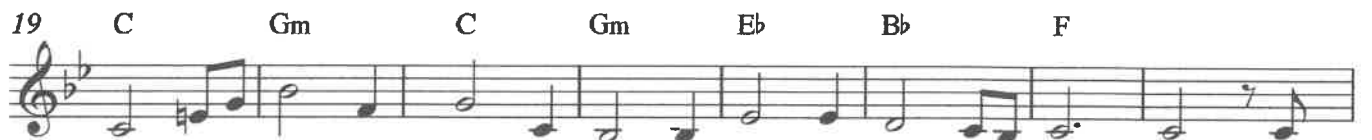
The luminous sap falls to the earth:
Tears from downcast eyes.
Tell the tree to extend its branch
‘though the storms are appearing.

La Dernière Page de Jules Lequyer

Don Viney
Music & Lyrics



1. Le



long de la côte bre - tonne du nord, je vois un pin so-li- taire____ ses



branches, ses ai - guilles a - gi - tées au vent, l'hi - ver souf - fle de la mer.____



____ Son-dant l'a - bîme____ de la li-ber-té,____ le na-geur vers les vagues



____ s'est je - té.____ 2. La tête pen-chée, le tronc ru-gueux, tou -



jours une ré - sine ra - re coule.____ Elle jet-ter - a des lu -

53 C Gm Bb Dm G F
 eurs in - é - gales si on la pré - serve et la moule.

59 Eb G Ab
 A-mour sans re - tour, - cri

65 Bb Ab Am⁷(add 11)/E D(sus4) C
 dé - ses - pé - ré, - ves - tige - d'une gloire re - fu - sée.

72 Cm⁷ F C Eb Bb F C Cm⁷

81 F C Eb Bb C
 3. La

89 C Gm C Gm Eb Bb F
 sève lu - mi - neuse tombe sur la terre: Larmes des yeux qui se baissent.

97 C Gm C Gm Eb
 Dites à l'arb - re d'é - tend - re sa branche bien que les o -

102 Bb C C⁹(no 3rd) C
 rages ap - pa raissent. -



Jules Lequyer, based on the grave monument, by Michelle Bakay

Few life stories can match that of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) for drama, passion, and intellectual ferment. The piety of his Catholic upbringing along with an early interest in geology set him on a collision course with the Church of his time but also presented an opportunity for creative transformation within the religious community as a whole. A Jesuit priest, a decorated veteran of World War I, and a distinguished scientist, Teilhard lived through some of the great crises of the twentieth century. Best known during his life as a member of the team that discovered Peking Man and as the priest who embraced evolution, he was ever restless to convey his vision of cosmogenesis, the creative unfolding of the universe. For Teilhard, the physical universe, permeated to its most elementary parts by “the within” of experience, crossed the threshold of thought in human evolution and is destined to converge on a supremely personal “Omega Point.” Omega, of which Teilhard sometimes whispered, is God considered as the lure to unification with others and with creation itself in what Teilhard called “the divine milieu”—a present reality and a future promise.

Teilhard’s works secured his reputation as a world-class thinker and visionary. To be sure, from the beginning, some religious writers as well as a couple of well-known scientists questioned the value of his thought. Teilhard anticipated that he would be criticized as offering, on the one hand, something less than religious orthodoxy (or even something heretical) and, on the other hand, something more than science (or even something opposed to it). Teilhard advocated, above all, a way of seeing the world, a new perspective that invites one to transcend disciplinary boundaries by considering humanity not as an anomalous branch on an evolutionary bush but as the shoot of an evolutionary tree through which is most visible the inner workings of the cosmos, divinely transformed at its heart. Darwin left his own religious thinking in what he described as a “muddle,” unable to completely agree with either theism or atheism. For his part, Teilhard sought to give evolution its God.

In 1927, Teilhard wrote to his friend Ida Treat that he wished he could translate his vision into music. My aim is not so audacious, although I hope that something of Teilhard survives in my composition beyond the words themselves.

The images of the lyrics are drawn, more or less directly, from Teilhard’s own words. He wrote, “The day will come when, after mastering the ether, the winds, gravitation, we will capture for God the energies of love.—And then, for a



Teilhard de Chardin by Michelle Bakay

second time in the history of the world, Man will have discovered Fire.” In the French verse, I’ve adapted Teilhard’s language: « Quelque jour, après l’éther, les vents, les marées, la gravitation, nous capterons, pour Dieu, les énergies de l’amour.—Et alors, une deuxième fois dans l’histoire du Monde, l’Homme aura trouvé le Feu ». Teilhard de Chardin, « L’Evolution de la Chasteté, » (1934), Les Directions de l’Avenir (Paris : Éditions de Seuil, 1973), p. 92.

The phrase “l’union différencie” is drawn directly from Teilhard. For Teilhard, true love unites in such a way as to augment rather than to diminish the personalities of those caught in its Fire. He writes, “In whatever domain . . . Union differentiates.” Teilhard de Chardin, The Human Phenomenon, translated by Sarah Appleton-Weber (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), p. 186.

Teilhard’s Fire

Come the day, when mastering
The winds, the tides, and space,
Gravity itself, its secrets known.
We will tap, release, for God,
Love’s energies entire,
Hearts of others cherished as our own.
And then for a second time,
In the history of the world,
We’ll have once again
Discovered fire.

As sun is scattered in the rain
Just so is love divine:
No two droplets quite the same
Yet, in union shine.

Quelque jour, après l’espace,
Les vents et les marées,
Et même la gravitation,
Nous capterons, pour Dieu,
Les énergies de l’amour,
C’est l’étoile de nos espérances.
Et alors, une deuxième fois
Dans l’histoire du Monde,
Nous aurons encore trouvé le Feu.

L’amour divin aura grandi
En nous, et par lequel
L’union différencie—
Un rêve universel.

And then for a second time,
In the history of the world,
We’ll have once again
Discovered fire.

Reason it Through

You should think for yourself and not let someone else
think for you or tell you what's true.
Don't you be a fool, let your dignity rule.
All you need is to reason it through.

Refrain: Reason it through
 and you know if you do,
 you will gain self-respect,
 just to reason it through.

When authorities reign and your mind is in chains
and you never question what they do.
There is one remedy for your soul's malady,
use logic and reason it through.

Your faith you can bet that God gets upset
with everyone Gentile and Jew,
asking to be absolved with their problems unsolved
just because they'd not reason it through.

When religious folk say that you should obey
and sit without questions in pews,
just remember it's odd that a brain given by God
would be told not to reason it through.

What sets you above the sheep and the dove
is the convoluted brain given you.
You should make use of it, you should not be a twit;
use logic and reason it through.

Don't be given to think that your faith is the link
that is weakest in reasoning you do.
No god of the gaps will save the collapse
of dogmas you won't reason through.

*Faith and trust are
rightly the themes of
many hymns, but it
seems to me that
reason too often takes
a backseat where
spirituality is
concerned, as though
faith alone should be
the guide of life and
theology. With so many
philosophies, religions,
faiths, creeds, and
theologies on offer,
one must also "reason
it through."*

*This is the second
earliest song in this
collection, written in
1996. It is sung to
the tune of Daniel
Towner's "Trust
and Obey."*

Donut Song

I went into the donut shop and ate a donut whole,
 Then I began to wonder, did I eat the donut's hole?
 'Cause if-n you don't eat it, where in heaven does it go?
 Does the donut, *ipso facto*, include the donut's hole?

The hole that's in the center is nothin' don't ya know
 So you're really eatin' nothin' if ya eat the donut's hole.
 It's a puzzle for consumption, how nothin' tastes so good,
 As somethin' that has nothin' in the center as it should.

The dimensions of the food are crafted ever so
 —a torus self-enclosed to make a little tube of dough—
 giving the appearance in the middle of a hole,
 yet the hole is not a part of the donut as a whole.

The hole that's in the center is nothin' don't ya know
 So you're really eatin' nothin' if ya eat the donut's hole.
 It's a puzzle for consumption, how nothin' tastes so good,
 As somethin' that has nothin' in the center as it should.

There's a question rather deep, concerning parts and wholes:
 Are the parts just equal to or are they lesser than the whole?
 But a donut hole is not a part of the pastry as a whole
 Speaking mereologically, that's not the *status quo*.

The hole that's in the center is nothin' don't ya know
 So you're really eatin' nothin' if ya eat the donut's hole.
 It's a puzzle for consumption, how nothin' tastes so good,
 As somethin' that has nothin' in the center as it should.

*The ontological
 question of holes
 —not unrelated to
 the question of
 nonbeing—
 provides the
 basis of this
 playful medita-
 tion on donuts,
 parts, and wholes,
 and holes. It
 delights me to put
 Latin phrases and
 words like “torus”
 or “mereological”
 in a song about
 donuts.*

A famous philosophical question is “Why is there something rather than nothing?” I maintain that the question should be answered: “Because something must be, for the idea of absolute nonbeing is the idea of, literally, nothing. I composed the rhyme in the 1980s, and later set it to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”

Nothing

| | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Nothing is, | If nothing is, | Nothing’s not |
| As nothing was, | Then what it does | And that’s because, |
| And as nothing that will be. | Is of no concern to me. | There’s nothing it could be. |

* * * * *

I wrote “Gun Philosophy” as a response to the epidemic of gun violence in America. I mention names of my family members and I draw on actual cases for the lyrics. The person shot in Denver (actually, in Westminster) was Rev. Regina Falletti Kobak (1950-1991), my former student and a friend. Her estranged husband—himself a minister—gunned her down in the church parking lot after a Bible study class. The young man shot in Texas was Tyler Viney (1977-2001), son of my father’s half-brother, Walt Viney and the grandson of Maxine Viney (1912-2001) who lived to hear of Tyler’s murder. I do not advocate the abolition of firearms, but there are those who fear that liberals like me want to take their guns away. I’d prefer, if possible, to take away their love of guns. The NRA, feeding their paranoia, has opposed every reasonable bit of legislation that would limit the sort of guns that citizens can own and the ammunition they can use. There is no undoing the carnage enabled by the NRA’s intransience. The problem is compounded by conspiracy theorists who, for example, deny that a slaughter like Sandy Hook ever happened. I dare say that I will not live to see the day when so many Americans have less love for their “right to bear arms” than they do for the countless victims and victim’s families that could have been spared the misery of gun violence.

Gun Philosophy

When I was a boy, I had toys,
 And some of them were guns.
 I'd shoot only bad guys
 For the bad things they had done,
 For the bad things they had done.
 I never shot Aunt Ginny,
 My cousins or Uncle Joe,
 I never inadvertently,
 Shot myself you know.
 I never shot my mother,
 Or my baby brother Mike,
 I never, even accidentally,
 Shot someone I liked.

Could I kill another, even my brother?
 A thought that weighs a ton.
 Be the Cain to his Abel,
 When all is said and done,
 Of the human race I'm one.

Now I know there is crime, all the time,
 And I know what's been done.
 Heroes, victims, villains,
 And many had their guns.
 And many had their guns.
 I recall a pastor
 In Denver, killed his wife.
 A young man shot in Texas,
 Breakin' up a fight.
 If there's a silver bullet
 I kinda doubt that it will come
 From forging lots of weapons
 Or the barrel of a gun.

Could I kill another

Now that I'm a man, I have plans
 But none include a gun.
 Soldiers and police have
 my respect, but I'm not one.
 I don't even shoot for fun.
 I'll never shoot my friends
 Nor the people I don't like.
 I'll never shoot at shadows
 That move about at night.
 I'll never shoot my father,
 Or the woman who's my wife.
 In fact, I'll never accidentally
 Shoot someone I like.

When I was a boy, I had toys,
 And some of them were guns.
 I'd shoot only bad guys
 For the bad things they had done.
 For the bad things they had done.

Potty Seat Song

I wish I had a potty seat—'cause I don't have one yet—
so I could sit above the bowl, and not get my bottom wet.
The seat should have a little shield—I shan't pee as I please—
and a small cake of deodorant in case I cut the cheese.

The sound effects are not polite, so I will pass them by,
but you can just imagine them; it's easy if you try.
A trumpet blast, staccato style, a very squeaky flute—
Wind instruments of varied kinds or anything that toots.

Rooty-toot-toot and fuity-toot-toot and too-rah-loorah-loo
if I am on my potty seat my aim is always true.

Once I sat upon the pot, there to my business do,
but I was just not big enough and so I fell right through.
It causes me to shutter and, so embarrassed, blush,
to think of what would happen if the toilet were to flush.

I doubt that I'd be scarred for life should my training go awry.
No emotional constipation would develop by and by;
but it couldn't hurt to have a special seat to potty through
when nature calls and I must make a visit to the loo.

Rooty-toot-toot and fruity-toot-toot and too-rah-loorah-loo
if I am on my potty seat my aim is always true.

Humans are the only beasts who train their young ones thus.
What other creature that we know raises such a fuss?
So consider my request, a humble plea to be well-placed,
I'll sit upon a porcelain throne and join the human race.

Rooty-toot-toot and fruity-toot-toot and too-rah-loorah-loo
if I am on my potty seat my aim is always true.

*This song was
inspired by
watching my
grandson,
Walter Lee
Smith, ne-
gotiate a new
potty seat.
It called to
mind my own
experience of
being rescued
by my aunt
and mother—
see the third
quatrain.
Aristotle said
that we are
rational
animals, but
we best re-
member how
incongruous
the genus
and species
can be.*

This song recounts a controversy that began in Pittsburg, Kansas in 2016 when a large “God Bless America” sign on the Post Office was removed because it violated a federal law against posting religious messages on federal buildings.

God Bless the First Amendment

There’s a controversy brewin’ in a southeast Kansas town.
A sign on the U.S. Postal Office had to be taken down.
Some veterans had put it there some fifteen years ago,
but someone finally noticed it and so it had to go.

“God Bless America” in bright red, white, and blue.
Provide whatever concept of God you think is true.
Does he love it when you wave the flag, Old Glory to unveil?
Invoke the Glory of the Lord, post letters to the mail.

But now there is a backlash, and patriotism swells:
who dare question Americans’ right to claim God for themselves?
So “God Bless America” now sprouts in many yards,
provided by Jake’s Fireworks on two by three foot cards.

I suspect it is a statement of what some folks suppose,
that God’s also a patriot and we’re the ones he chose.
But I can’t help but wonderin’ how someone claims to know
that God is really on their side more than their friends and foes.

*This is an
additional
verse that
is not part of
the original
recording.*

Can a skeptic be a patriot, non-Christians, Muslims, Jews?
Was the Bill of Rights extracted from the Holy Bible too?
The founders just could not agree on a creed for all to say.
We’ve had freedom of religion from their time to this day.

“God Bless the First Amendment,” is a sign I’d like to see.
What better way to celebrate with a smile that we’re free?
Free to be religious or to non-religious be,
“God Bless the First Amendment” a sight I’d like to see. Amen.

Captain of the Cosmos

The Captain of the Cosmos is
Our good Captain too.
In all of cosmic space and time
We're His beloved few.

Our book is the best
That has ever been writ
Though some don't believe
They are so full of it.

He laid down the law for us
Our duty to obey
Clearly there is nothing more
For us to say.

His middle name is Mercy
He'd never raise a stink.
Provided you submit
And agree with what we think.

He's the greatest of captains
The world has ever seen.
And if you don't believe it,
We'll blow you all to smithereens.

The Captain of the cosmos is
So peaceful we can tell.
His followers get Paradise,
The rest forever burn in . . . well.

Perhaps the message of "Captain of the Cosmos" is clear enough: Religions based on fear, intimidation, and the threat of violence are parochial expressions of the all-to-human glorification of brute force. They may try to disguise their theology with talk of a just and merciful God, but they are little more than theological versions of "might makes right." Alfred North Whitehead understood the problem better than most. He wrote, "The worship of glory arising from power is not only dangerous: it arises from a barbaric conception of God. I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the bones of those slaughtered because of men intoxicated by its attraction. This view of the universe, in the guise of an Eastern empire ruled by a glorious tyrant, may have served its purpose. In its historical setting, it marks a religious ascent. [Psalm 24] gives us its noblest expression. The other side comes out in the psalms expressing hate, psalms now generally withdrawn from public worship. The glorification of power has broken more hearts than it has healed." Whitehead, Religion in the Making (New York: Macmillan, 1926), p. 55. I used the tune of the Kingston Trio's "Merry Minuet" for this song.

A New Rubayyat

And who can then, I ask, rejoice?
And who pray then can grieve?
Who never made the smallest choice
Save by the Maker's leave?

Sorry, I think, would be our lot,
a play rigged in advance,
the entire story and the plot
and nothing left to chance.

What'er small thing do we create
the Maker has not done?
What hand have we in our own fate
the Maker's left undone?

What game of human genius this:
a power unsurpassed?
Not one surprise and nothing missed,
the future like the past.

The divine is no unfeeling stone,
no cries or tears can touch.
Whenever we feel we're alone,
there's one who feels as much.

What tiny freedoms we possess,
how little they may be,
are really nothing more nor less
than shares of deity.

In The Rubayyat, Omar Khayyam (1048-1131) reflects as an older man how he had solved many puzzles, but was unable to unravel "the Master-Knot of Human Fate." He is revulsed at the thought of a God who decides our destinies based on the way God has made us. Hartshorne maintained that no other writer of the early Middle Ages so precisely criticized classical religion by striking at its two most vulnerable points: the commitment to unqualified theological determinism and belief in endless posthumous careers.

My song extends Khayyam's thoughts by asking what a theology would look like that takes account of his criticisms. The first three quatrains repeat Khayyam's complaints. The last three propose a concept of God for whom the future is not like the past (i.e. not solely eternal), who is affected by the weal and woe of the creatures (i.e. not entirely impassible), and whose creative freedom is reflected in the "tiny freedoms we possess" (i.e. with contingent qualities). I borrow "game of human genius" from Lequyer. A consequence of this theology is that one can dispense with the superstition that, from a divine perspective, chance events never occur. Chance entails the unforeseen, the tragic, the comic, the beautiful.

The Raft of the Little I Know

(for Wayne Viney)

Well, I'm thinkin' about the springtime,
in the midst of a wintertime snow.
And I'm pinin' for the longer days,
when the gentle breezes blow.
And I'm longin' for the sunshine,
for to bask in its yellow glow.
I'm floatin' on a sea of ignorance
on the raft of the little I know.

It's a cold and dark December
but I'm thinkin' 'bout the month of May.
For every mean, unkind word or deed
there's a price that someone pays.
We make ourselves in part
by what we do and think and say.
We never ever really merely follow a path,
we must also make our way.

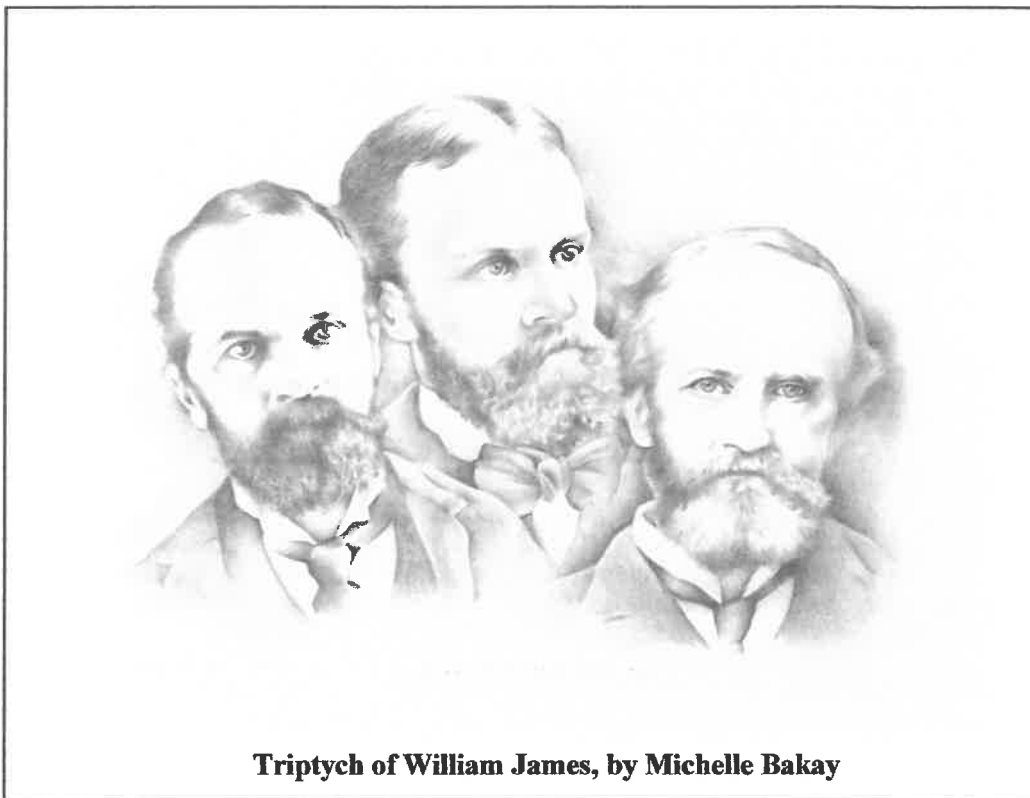
Well, I'm drinkin' in the universe,
the beauty in each part,
and I'm dreamin' about the treasures
that are deep in the human heart,
deep in the human heart.

I'm thinkin' about the peaceful days
midst the sounds of the cries of war.
But I wonder how many are thinkin' about
what's really worth fightin' for.
Must we repeat the same mistakes
today and forevermore?
Not all for good that may be done
has ever been done before.

Well, I'm thinkin' about the sunshine,
with the dark clouds overhead.
And I'm wonderin' if great power,
can to great love be wed.
Whatever storms befall us,
where some great fool has led,
May we brave the winds,
the blasts of air,
and say what must be said.

[Repeat chorus and first verse.]

William James (1842-1910) believed that the universe is not completely finished but is ever in the making, and we, as parts of that universe, are part-makers of it. He added, however, that our science is a drop, our ignorance a sea. I modified that image for this song. Jamesian ideas are also expressed by saying that we are part-makers of our own characters and that the paths we follow are partly our own doing. But we make something in others as well, and not always for the good: “someone pays” for our misdeeds. For James, values are ideals that we make actual by our decisions. He was against all demagoguery (alluded to here as the “great fool”). The power of great leaders is not in the force they wield but in the virtue they inspire. James sought a “moral equivalent of war” that engenders courage and loyalty, minus the carnage. He was a meliorist. The future is not a field of possibility exhausted by past achievements. “Not all for good that may be done . . .” I dedicated this song to my father—a first-rate James scholar—who was living the lessons of James’s philosophy before he found them articulated there.



Triptych of William James, by Michelle Bakay

The Singer Never Sings in Vain

I raised my voice to Heav'n above,
 Pray, let me hear your lovely song.
 And Heav'n replied, My name is Love,
 It's lovely if you sing along.
 It's lovelier if you sing along.
 It's lovelier if you sing along.
 It's lovelier if you sing along.
 So sing along with me.

'Twas not composed simply for me,
 this song you ask for me to sing.
 I most delight in harmonies,
 the sounds that many voices bring,
 the sounds that many voices bring,
 the sounds that many voices bring,
 the sounds that many voices bring,
 the sounds that many voices bring,
 So sing along with me.

I am Maker but also Made
 I am the Mover and Moved.
 To risk discord, be not afraid—
 What surer way can love be proved?

I am the light midst the shadows you see,
 the stars glimpsed through the leafy tree
 I am the rest before the "amen,"
 the way a thousand voices blend.
 the way a thousand voices blend,
 the way a thousand voices blend,
 the way a thousand voices blend,
 the way a thousand voices blend,
 So sing along with me.

And when the silence gathers 'round,
 Listen for the soft refrain.
 It echoes ev'n when there's no sound,
 The singer never sings in vain.
 The singer never sings in vain.
 The singer never sings in vain.
 The singer never sings in vain.
 The singer never sings in vain.
 So sing along with me.

I am the Maker but also Made,
 I am the Mover and Moved.
 To risk discord, be not afraid—
 What surer way can love be proved?

[Repeat first verse.]

I long to find in hymns and in music expressions of process-relational types of thinking. Classical theology has had its share of hymn writers, but now it is time to make new music which reflects, I hope, a healthier and more rationally and emotionally compelling vision of God. Those are some of the goals in the more religious songs that I compose. As I mentioned in the preface, Hartshorne was fond of calling God “the most and best moved mover.”

*Hartshorne wrote, “Rabbi [Abraham] Heschel has said what some Christians ought to have said long before . . . : ‘God is the most moved mover’. By adding two words, these six words virtually cover the subject to perfection: God is the most *and best* moved mover. Surely of the ancient Greeks, Plato came closest to this. It precisely corrects Aristotle just where he was most definitely wrong, but where he was followed all too definitely by nearly two millennia of writers in the three principal schools of Western theology.”*



Charles Hartshorne
by Michelle Bakay

Hartshorne also emphasizes God’s memory which ensures that nothing we do is entirely in vain. In addition to Hartshorne’s phraseology, I have borrowed from a letter from Voltaire to Frederick the Great in which he speaks of his doubts and of his belief in God: “‘tis a light that strikes me amid a thousand shadows.” The line about “stars glimpsed through the leafy tree” is inspired by Georgia O’Keefe’s painting, the Lawrence Tree. The idea of a musical rest before the “amen” is an allusion to Arthur Sullivan’s “Lost Chord,” lyrics by Adelaine Anne Proctor. “My name is Love” alludes to I John 4:7, “God is love” and calls to mind a line from Charles Wesley’s “Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown”—“thy name is Love.”

The Singer Never Sings in Vain

Words & Music by Don Viney

A D A E A A D

8 A G E A D I raised my voice to Heav'n a - bove, Pray

12 A E A A D let me hear your love - ly song. And Heav'n re - plied, My name is Love, It's

16 A G E A D love - ly if you sing a - long. It's love - li - er if you sing a - long. It's

20 A E A love - li - er if you sing a - long. It's love - li - er if you sing a - long. So

26 sing a - long with me. 'Twas not com - posed sim - ply for me, this

30 song you ask for me to sing. I most de - light in har - mo - nies, the

33 sounds that ma - ny voi - ces bring, the sounds that ma - ny voi -

36 - ces bring, the sounds that ma - ny voi - ces bring, the

sounds that ma - ny voi - ces bring, So sing a - long with

39  me._____ I am the Ma - ker but al - so Made; I am the Mo - ver and

45  Moved. To risk dis - cord, be not a - fraid. What sur - er way can love be

49  proved?_____ I am the light_ midst the sha - dows you see, the

54  stars glimpsed through the leaf - y tree, I am the rest be -

57  fore the "a - men," the way a thou - sand voi - ces blend. The way a thou - sand voi -

61  - ces blend, the way a thou - sand voi - ces blend, the way a thou - sand voi -

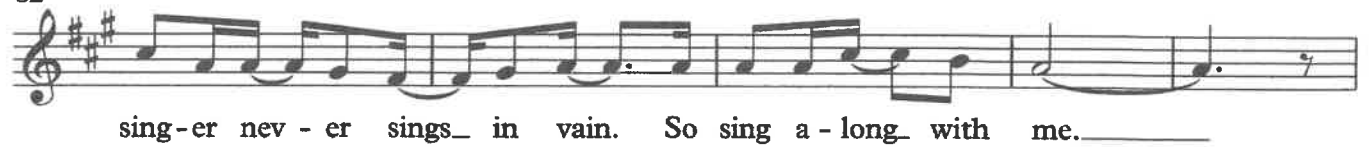
65  - ces blend, So sing a - long with me._____ And when the si - lence

71  ga - thers 'round, Lis - ten for_ the soft re - frain. It ech - oes ev'n_ when

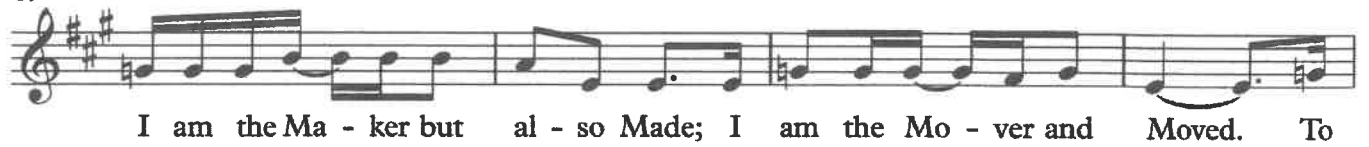
75  there's no sound, The sing - er nev - er sings in vain. The sing - er nev - er sings

79  _ in vain. The sing - er nev - er sings_ in vain. The

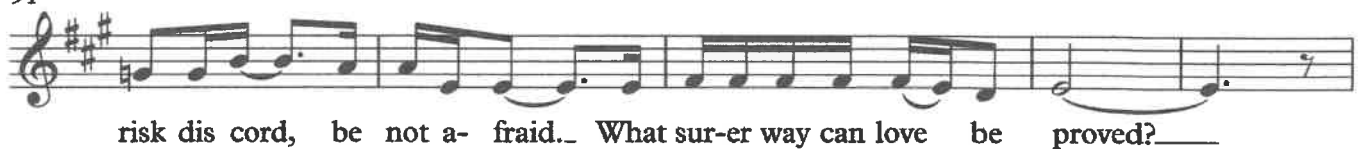
82



87



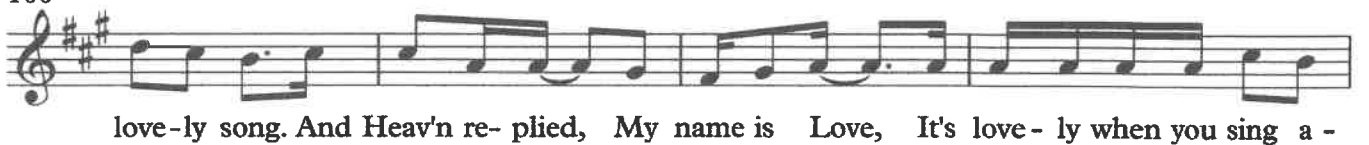
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96



100



104



108



111





Michelle Bakay and Noni Viney



Wayne and Noni Viney, photo by Mike Viney

Higher Ground

Have you ever climbed a mountain peak,
gained perspective on the world?
The plains, the valleys, the rivers, and creeks,
before you there unfurled.
Have you sought out in one another,
what's highest in them, in you,
done for others what you'd have others
in kindness do for you?
In kindness do for you, my friend,
no thought for what you're due,
Done for others what you'd have others
in kindness do for you?

Can you shed your prejudice and hate,
your indifference sacrifice,
care for the stranger at your gate,
show mercy, let it suffice?
It's not so hard to understand
this journey from the start
Open your fists, extend your hands,
offer your contrite hearts.
Offer your contrite hearts, my friends,
join your paths apart,
Open your fists, extend your hands,
offer your contrite hearts.

Your sun is a star
that is gleaming at night.
But there's more than one,
some unseen, just as bright.

*I've been told by two women
that this song is a sermon. I
accept that it can be so
construed. I've never been a
fan of the classic creeds,
which invariably omit what
is vital in religion and include
much of its most objectionable
elements. I care deeply about
the Scriptures of the world's
religions, but I have absolutely
no use for "Bible belief" (or
Qur'an belief, or Book of
Mormon belief). If one cannot
see such works as humanly
made, then one must mis-
takenly characterize one of the
most distinctive of human
characteristics—to sense a
divine presence in our lives.
But the "sense" is imperfect
and can only be rightly dis-
cerned by paying attention to
what is highest in ourselves.*

It's easier said than done I know:
 just hear the victims' cries.
 But from all great traditions flow,
 some truths mixed in with lies.
 Take care in thought, and word, and deed,
 the gods of vengeance quell.
 Bury your superstitious creeds,
 raise up good-will as well.
 Raise up good-will as well, my friend,
 ring freedom's joyous bell,
 Bury your superstitious creeds,
 raise up good-will as well.

The holy book does not exist
 that's holy through and through.
 Yet, through the errors, still the gist
 is clear as day, and true.
 How peculiar is the blindness,
 and not see, how odd:
 Seek justice and love kindness,
 and walk humbly with your God.
 Walk humbly with your God, my friend,
 Walk humbly where you trod.
 See justice and love kindness,
 and walk humbly with your God.

Your sun is a star
 that is gleaming at night.
 But there's more than one,
 some unseen, just as bright.

Have you ever climbed a mountain peak,
 gained perspective on the world?

*The idea of offering
 "contrite hearts" alludes to
 Psalm 51:17. The words in
 the final verse are from
 Micah 6:8, which many
 rabbis view as a summary
 of all the Mitzvot, the
 commandments.*

Heart of All Hearts

Lost in the heavens, circling around,
 Mute in their course, with no complaint or sound,
 Earth and ourselves, the very stuff of stars
 Dimly aware, reflect on what we are.

Is there a Life, larger than our noisy days,
 Close as the night yet so very far away?

Meteors in the dark, no sooner here than gone,
 A memory no mortal can keep.
 Each one its own deep,
 Each whispers, "I belong."
 A brief breath of life is what we will have drawn.

The length of night's watch measures out the pain
 Of each broken life, of all that seems in vain,
 Each day that dawns, another life will end,
 Each fall of night, another life begins.

Is there a Soul, everlasting, ever wise,
 One in whose memory we will never die?

Meteors in the dark, no sooner here than gone,
 A memory no mortal can keep.
 Each one its own deep,
 Each whispers, "I belong."
 A brief breath of life is all we will have drawn.

Under the sun, it's said, nothing's ever new,
 Yet once was a time when the sun itself was new.
 Forever the past remains the way it was,
 Growing so slowly by what the present does.

Heart of All Hearts of all that has been and will be.
 Use what is worthy—all we can offer Thee.

Both William James and Albert Camus spoke of the tension between our desire that our lives amount to something, however small, and the apparent indifference of the universe. It is this tension that these lyrics express and address using metaphors drawn from astronomy. The refrain likens our lives to the line in the sky made by a meteor as it falls to earth. Despite our very fugitive existence, we long to be at home in the universe. Each individual is a “deep” containing depths of unexpressed longing and feeling. The first verse characterizes the cosmos in its unthinking, but regular, movements, as encompassed by a larger Life, near but paradoxically unattainable. The second verse speaks to ways that our lives are unsatisfactory, in need of healing—the third and fourth lines are a cry of despair at the endless wheel of samsara. Resolution is found in the final verse in two ways: The “wheel” has direction. If even the sun was once new, it cannot be true that there is nothing new under the sun. Deeds once done cannot be changed—the past “remains the way it was” but, by increments, it is added to by what we accomplish in the present—“what the present does.” More important is that the “Heart of All Hearts”—the “Life” mentioned in the opening verse—can gather our accomplishments and even our failures into its life. In the words of a Jewish prayer, our days may in this way, by God’s grace, be endowed with abiding worth. As the refrain says, no mortal can retain the memory of who we have been and what we have done, but the one addressed as “Thee” answers our plea for significance.

Oh No, Oh Yeah

Oh no, oh yeah,
Oh no, oh yeah,
Oh no, oh yeah.

If we are molded as You say,
like clay unfree and dead,
then we're shaped to be this way,
to say everything we've said.

"Who are you to question?"
said the potter to the pot,
"Prepare me your confession,
and give thanks for what you've got.

Oh no, oh yeah,
Oh no, oh yeah,
Oh no, oh yeah.

The potter makes the clay,
all his wonders to achieve.
Let not the pot dismay
its sole task is to believe."

The dictates of Your art,
So unerringly obeyed.
Fill every wondering heart,
With the questions that you made.

Oh no, oh yeah,
Oh no, oh yeah,
Oh no, oh yeah.

I'm so grateful You inspire
This lump of clay to ask,
This weak mind to inquire—
And I marvel at the task.

I'm ignorant, I confess,
how a wad of clay can feel,
or question nothing less,
than what is and is not real.

Oh no, oh yeah,
Oh no, oh yeah,
Oh no, oh yeah.

*This song is an ironic reply to Romans 9:19-22. The analogy of potter/God to clay pot/people has long bothered me. It's also there in Isaiah 64 and Jeremiah 18. Jeremiah's use of the analogy emphasizes God's shaping Israel because of its waywardness. Paul's use of the analogy harkens back to Exodus and God hardening Pharaoh's heart, another difficult idea. When Paul asks who we are to question, I want to reply, who are we **not** to question, especially when we're made to be the way we are, taking the analogy as it seems to be intended. Paul flirts with theological determinism, walking along its precipice and at any moment seeming almost to tip to the side and fall into the abyss.*

The Spring in His Step

To tell you the truth there's no fountain of youth
 The years flyin' by make him dizzy.
 Blessings all counted, adventures recounted
 Sure, this growin' old is not for sissies.

The shock and surprise you can see in his eyes
 When the mirror shows how he appears.
 The wrinkles and sags, the grey hair and the bags
 His mind plumb forgot to count the years.

He knows where he's been, and he will not pretend
 The beginning is closer than the end.
 There may be a hitch in his get-along yet,
 But watch for the spring that is still in his step.

They say there's no gain if there isn't the pain
 He's had more than his share, I'm afraid.
 The time that has flown and the seeds that he's sewn,
 He wonders at the differences he made.

He grins at his reflection, asking the questions:
 What's left in this old fella's noodle?
 In history's span, just a flash in the pan?
 The caboose in the whole kitten-caboodle?

He knows where he's been, and he will not pretend,
 His winter must soon come to an end.
 There may be a hitch in his get-along yet,
 But watch for the spring that is still in his step.

The meaning of this song is perhaps self-explanatory. The experience of looking in a mirror in your later years and seeing the person you have become can be a bit disconcerting, but not unpleasant, and certainly not without its humorous side.

Sunshine in that Little Girl's Smile

She came a long way from the Emerald Isle,
 The youngest of her kin.
 Sunshine in that little girl's smile,
 But her mettle was never thin.
 In another land, in another tongue
 Far away from the home she knew
 The life she'd live had just begun,
 For herself and her family too.

Day builds onto day,
 Face them, come what may.

They had a little flat in a very large town,
 When a couple of thugs broke in,
 They struck her mother and she fell down,
 But determined they wouldn't win,
 The girl leapt on the nearest one
 And she left him with a scar.
 Beware, oh thief, you haven't won,
 For we know just who you are.

Day builds onto day,
 Face them, come what may.

For the better part of the girl's childhood,
 Her father was an absentee.
 She was never quite clear just where he stood,
 Did his words and deeds agree?
 How could a man, what'er lifestyle
 Be away for months on end?
 The sunshine in that little girl's smile
 Forgave the father's sins.

Day builds onto day,
 Face them, come what may.

The story told here is of no single individual; it is, rather, a fiction that blends the stories of three individuals, including my wife and daughter. The second verse recounts the true story of Fiona, my wife's sister, when she was eleven years old. She attacked one of the men who had broken into the apartment and who had struck her mother. The men were later apprehended by the police. Each of the women represented here is animated by the same spirit and faces life with the same fortitude and magnanimity.

Suitors arrived and they went out
Was any man worth the prize?
She never was looking for a master stout,
Just an equal in her eyes.
You can't impress, by might beguile,
No trinkets can win her heart,
The girl with the sunshine in her smile
Is a woman now, worlds apart.
 Day builds onto day
 Face them, come what may.

She loved, and laughed, and was tempered by
The challenges that she faced.
She didn't look back, and she didn't ask why
Regret not to her taste.
The sunshine in that little girl's smile,
Never faltered as she grew.
No shadow could stay for a very long while
Before the sun shone through.
 Day builds onto day,
 Face them, come what may.

And When I Go

And when I go, there goes only a part of me,
Your warmth remains with me when I have gone.
And when I cry, there cries just a part of me,
The rest is laughing with you, although I am alone.

Years go by so fast, but the hours seem so slow,
Such a hurry to get nowhere, to and fro.
In latitude and longitude
There's something of an attitude,
Memories keep you near where 'er I go.

And when I go, there goes only a part of me,
Your warmth remains with me when I have gone.
And when I cry, there cries just a part of me,
The rest is laughing with you, although I am alone.

What's lost of what we've loved, I simply do not know
So many from whom we've learned, to whom we owe,
Smiles so long ago we knew
Long forgotten may yet renew
The secret springs of kindness in our souls.

And when I go, there goes only a part of me,
Your warmth remains with me when I have gone.
And when I cry, there cries just a part of me,
The rest is laughing with you, although I am alone.

The lyrics of the chorus are inspired by Peter Maffay's "So bist du" (So are you), a German song to which my sister-in-law, Fiona Jurtan, introduced me. The philosophy I accept is one in which it is not only true to say that we are in the world but that the world is in us. More importantly, our individualities are not wholly isolated from each other; they interpenetrate in such a way that each of us contributes, to a greater or lesser extent, to the individuality of every other person we meet. Our own creative responses to others are who we become. In this way, we make ourselves and we make each other.



Don Viney and Lee Gleeson, Dublin, Ireland, June 26, 2018

The lead vocal on "And When I Go" is Lee Gleeson, one of my wife's cousins who is a professional singer. We sang the song on June 9, 2018 at the memorial service for my mother-in-law, Delores "Abi" Lyons (see above, page 15), in Dallgow, Germany. Later in the month, on June 26th, Lee and I teamed up in Dublin, Ireland at Cormac Moore's studio to make a recording of the song.

Gather 'Round

Oh gather 'round, while you're around
The days are fleeting, they fly away.
So gather 'round, gather 'round, while they're around.

Oh you're a part of every heart
That you hear beating every day.
So gather 'round, gather 'round, while they're around.

Voices whisper in the night, "You're made to seek the light."
It flickers in the shadows, but you know they are right.

Find all the faces, in all the places,
Whose very greeting, your ills allay,
And gather 'round, gather 'round, while they're around.

Find every friend, time and again,
In all your meetings along the way
And gather 'round, gather 'round, while they're around.

Voices whisper in the night, "You're made to seek the light."
It flickers in the shadows, but you know they are right.

Oh gather 'round, while you're around
The days are fleeting, they fly away.
So gather 'round, gather 'round, while they're around.

Belated Farewell

Oh I miss the way that he could make a guitar sing,
 As if his songs had sprouted their own wings.
 Oh I miss the strains of “Rocky Mountain High”
 How your spirit, like an eagle, could fly.

You could reminisce of home, visit the past,
 You could love all the good things that cannot last,
 You could let the daily cares go for a while,
 Trade the smirks of cynicism for a smile.

You could breathe the mountain tops and prairies wide,
 You could ride upon the wake, Calypso’s tide,
 You could fall in love again, board a plane, and say “good-bye”
 Remembering what it is to laugh and cry.

Oh, I miss his zest for life both great and small,
 Forests, rivers, country roads, one and all,
 Oh, I love to sing his songs now and again,
 So contagious, everybody joining in.

The imperfections of his innocence well known
 Like the faults within us all we’ve not outgrown.
 But he understood that on this earth we’re guests,
 With no more right to all its blessings than the rest.

You could breathe the mountain tops and prairies wide,
 You could ride upon the wake, Calypso’s tide,
 You could fall in love again, board a plane, and say “good-bye”
 Remembering what it is to laugh and cry.

*John Denver
 (1943-1997) was
 becoming popular
 in 1971 when I
 was a senior in
 High School. I
 came to love his
 music for its
 melodies. His
 positive spirit
 was in-
 fectionous.*

*I’ve always
 accepted with
 gratitude the
 compliment that
 I remind some
 people of him
 in my voice and
 in my music. This
 song, composed
 in 2017, is my
 tribute to the man
 and his music. I
 allude to five of
 his songs
 in these
 lyrics.*

The following is a Disneyesque song inspired by the walks that my wife and I often take around Lakeside Park in Pittsburg, Kansas. The graceful flight of the geese is contrasted with what they deposit on the ground, and this serves as a metaphor for the sublime and the ridiculous aspects of nature and society that permeate our lives.

The Ducks Want Somethin' to Eat

We're walkin' up the street today
To see the ducks around the pond.
The birds, the squirrels, and the kids at play,
A bench to sit upon.
There's a smile upon the face of every
Creature that we meet,
It's a friendly place in every way,
And the ducks want somethin' to eat.
Yes, the ducks want somethin' to eat.

The geese make for such contrast
On land and in the air,
Chevrons in the sky so vast,
Watch where you're steppin' there!

It's just a trip on down the glade,
Castin' fish lines in the lake,
It's a lazy day and in the shade,
It's hard to stay awake.
There are people havin' picnics
and there's sandwiches and sweets,
There's a couple spoonin' on the swings,
And the ducks want somethin' to eat.
Yes, the ducks want somethin' to eat.

Is it my imagination
Hearing music in the air,
Just a hint of a sensation
Of a chorus singing there?
There's a symphony of noises
In the honks, the quacks, the tweets,
From birds of varied voices,
And the ducks want somethin' to eat.
Yes, the ducks want somethin' to eat.

The geese make for such contrast
On the land and in the air,
Chevrons in the sky so vast,
Watch where you're steppin' there!

The sun goes up, the sun goes down
And the politicians tweet.
The seasons yearly make their rounds,
Disgruntled voters bleat.
Nature's laws seem not to change,
Forever to repeat.
Human nature stays the same,
And the ducks want somethin' to eat.
Yes, the ducks want somethin' to eat.

Take This Advice

Wake up late; never be on time.
 Don't brush your teeth or wash of grime.
 Think only of yourself; be the first in line.
 Don't share your toys, tell your friends, "They're mine."

Refrain: Take this advice and believe you me,
 You'll be your own worst enemy.

Be unfriendly and say naughty words.
 Stick out your tongue and make fun of nerds.
 Never mind teachers and ignore your folks.
 Fight with your brother, give your sister a poke.

Never forgive when you've been bilked.
 When you're at fault don't admit your guilt.
 Be true when you must but lie when you're able.
 Eat with your elbows on the table.

Be the very best at nothing you do.
 Be mediocre in all things too.
 Always say "can't," "never," and "no."
 Be the backbone of the *status quo*.

Never be thankful for what you've got.
 Be a sourpuss and complain a lot.
 Frown and grumble; make a pouty face.
 Be a party-pooper and a pantywaist.

*I composed this
 ditty, August 12,
 1990, to be sung
 for children at the
 First United
 Methodist Church
 in Pittsburg,
 Kansas.*

Be a grump. Be a louse.
 Be stingy. Be a grouse.
 Lie like a rug.
 Crawl like a bug.

Take this advice
 and believe you me,
 you'll be your own
 worst enemy.

Take This Advice

(for Children's Sharing,
First United Methodist Church,
Pittsburg, Kansas, August 12, 1990)

1 1. Wake up late ne-ver be on time. Don't brush your teeth or wash off grime. Think

5 on-ly of your-self, be the first in line. Don't share your toys, tell your friends "They're mine."

Refrain

9 Take this ad-vice and be - lieve you me, you'll be your own worst en-em-y.

13 2. Be un-friend-ly and say naugh-ty words. Stick out your tongue and make fun of nerds.

17 Ne-ver mind teachers and ig - nore your folks. Fight with your brother give your sister a poke.

21 3. Ne-ver for-give when you've been bilked. When you're at fault don't ad - mit your guilt. Be

25 true when you must and lie when you're able. Eat with your el-bows on the table.

29 4. Be a grump, be a louse, be sting-y, be a grouse. Lie like a rug. Crawl like a bug.

Hunting Beaver

My name is Jean-Jacques LeBon.
I've long trapped the beaver alone.
Before I am gone,

I've a story to tell
of the love for a
 mademoiselle, ouiselle,
of the love for a mademoiselle.

I went with my good friend, before,
oft known by his nickname 'Castor,'
after critters that built

 the dams in the dell.
We hunted them,
 their pelts to sell, to sell,
we hunted them, their pelts to sell.

A life for the brave and the bold;
the winters are bitterly cold.
No female companions,
 the truth I can tell,
We trappers were lonely
 as hell, as hell,
we trappers were lonely as hell.

This land is so wild and untame
Castor gave the mountains their name.
He exclaimed when he saw them,
 "Elles sont si belles,
comme les unes sur ma chère
 Michelle, Michelle,
like the ones on my dearest Michelle."

He christened them 'Les Grandes Tetons'
or my name's not Jean-Jacques LeBon
to honor the ones that
 that he missed and loved well,
the twin peaks on his
 demoiselle, oiselle,
the twin peaks on his demoiselle.

Castor addressed me, "LeBon,
henceforth you will be on your own.
You're a good man indeed,
 and I know you mean well,
but you're no substitute
 for Michelle, Michelle,
You're no substitute for Michelle."

Still hunting for beaver he fled.
Far back in Québec he was wed.
When you see les montagnes,
 remember them well,
Castor and his dearest
 Michelle, Michelle,
Castor and his dearest Michelle.

It is a fact that mountains are often named for a woman's anatomy. Guizhou province in southern China has twin mounds known as Dual Breast Mountain; in South Africa, near the east coast, there are Sheba's Breasts; in Aberdeenshire, Scotland there is Beinn Chìachan, Gaelic for Mountain of Breasts; in south central Colorado there are the Wahatoya Mountains (Ute for Breast of the Earth); and in northern Wyoming there are the famous Grand Tetons (French for Great Breasts) and the Trois Tetons (Three Breasts). I do not know how the Grand Tetons came by their name, but that did not prevent me from writing a back-story for how it might have happened.

I close this collection with the first song I composed, April 22, 1971. If my memory is correct, the inspiration of the song came from images in a French poem, "Il pleure dans mon cœur," by Paul Verlaine. In 2010, I played a benefit concert in Dallgow, Germany to help raise money for restoring historic buildings in the area. The two-day event, called "Dallgower Kulturtage 2010," included artists and musicians of all kinds. I was the last of the musicians to perform. When I finished singing "Rain" a man shouted out, "Zwölf Punkte." I was gratified to learn that this means, "12 points," the highest value awarded in the Eurovision Song Contest. The concert was uplifting for another reason: the audience demanded an encore.

Rain

The streets are black mirrors reflecting the city lights.
 Silvery mirages blend into rainbows of the night.
 Rain, falling down. Rain, falling down.

Raindrops streak my windowpane in long and flowing tears.
 A dewy scent fills the air, cleaning all that's near.
 Rain, falling down. Rain, falling down.

And coming to a silent stop across the moonlit sky,
 clouds faded by the dark roll along and cease to cry.
 Rain, falling down. Rain, falling down.

Five books that shaped my life and career

So many books and novels have fueled my passion for the life of the mind and opened new perspectives. There are the likes of Antoine de St.-Exupéry (*The Little Prince*), Chaucer, (*The Canterbury Tales*), Herman Melville, (*Moby-Dick*), Frank Herbert (*Dune*), Chaim Potok, (*The Chosen*), Elie Wiesel (*Night*), and more. To narrow the list to five is almost absurd, but here I have specifically targeted works that speak to my religious and philosophical interests. So often, for me, it was an author, more than books, that had the greatest effect on me. In the case of the first authors listed here, I read most of their books and was more greatly influenced by the entire corpus of their writing than by a single book that each had written. For this reason, I've picked books from them that are representative of their influence upon me. I have been lucky enough to meet two of the authors listed here, Hartshorne and Ruether. (I took the photos of them that are printed here; my artist friend, Michelle Bakay, made the portrait of Lequyer.)

Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Adventurous Religion and Other Essays* (1946)



Harry Emerson Fosdick

Of all the books and sermons of H. E. Fosdick (1878-1969) that I read, this is the one I remember most, perhaps because the title sums up the excitement I felt (and still feel) in thinking of religion in dynamic, developmental, and even revisionary terms. For me, Fosdick put to rest once and for all every narrow and pinched fundamentalism. What drew me to Fosdick's adventurous religion is not only the invitation to be informed by the best that the sciences have to offer, but also to serve as a resource for a courageous approach to life that finds what is highest in the universe reflected in what is deepest in ourselves.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Human Phenomenon* (1955)



Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

The opening section of Teilhard's *magnum opus* is titled "To See" (Voir). Teilhard (1881-1955) helped me to see human beings in evolutionary terms, not only physically and mentally, but cosmically and spiritually (i.e. as related to the divine). Once I saw the point of saying "Co-extensive with their Without, there is a Within of things," I ceased being tempted by mind-body dualism or by mere materialism or physicalism and I embraced Teilhard's form of panpsychism. I would eventually find more philosophically astute defenses of the doctrine, but Teilhard opened my eyes to the possibilities. He also taught me to appreciate mysticism in the sense of trying *to feel* the evolutionary movement of the universe, *to feel* the reality of its temporal structure.

Charles Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (1970)



Charles Hartshorne

I fell in love with the world of philosophy before I understood it. Hartshorne (1897-2000) gave me a more global understanding of philosophy's ideas and of the importance of thinking of philosophy as a conversation across the centuries that actually yields fruit. It impressed me that every page seemed to have an argument. The idea of deity defended in this book and in his classic *The Divine Relativity* (1948) addressed the major obstacles to theism that had challenged me in the works of Bertrand Russell and Antony Flew (and later in J. L. Mackie). While they were busy blowing smoke into old churches, Hartshorne (and others of his school) were rethinking philosophical theology in refreshingly creative ways.

Jules Lequier, *Œuvres complètes* (1952)



Jules Lequier

"Bold traveler in the worlds of thought. . . . I have sounded more than one abyss," so wrote Jules Lequier or Lequyer (1814-1862) to Anne Deszille, the object of his unrequited love. The abyss into which he peered was human freedom in the sense of a creative act that is not the unconditional result of its causal past. In Lequyer I found a philosopher who, without sacrificing logical rigor, exhibited great passion and supreme literary gifts, a "poet-philosopher." In addition, I considered Lequyer to have correctly analyzed what is important about freedom and to have traced its implications most imaginatively and thoroughly. This little-known philosopher had influenced great philosophers even as his name fell into obscurity. Thanks to Hartshorne, I learned of Lequyer and he is no longer as unknown as he once was. What a treasure to find and share with others!

Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (1983)



Rosemary Radford Ruether

I met Rosemary Ruether (b. 1936) in November 1985 when she visited Pittsburg, Kansas to give a public lecture. In preparation for her visit, I read *Sexism and God-Talk*. That book was a turning point in my thinking about theology and philosophy. I began to examine these subjects and their history, for the first time, through "the feminist lens." It was a lesson I should have learned from Hartshorne that sexism is embedded even in the language we use to talk about humans and the divine. I was a slow learner. As to the history of ideas: as a freshly minted Ph.D., I would have been unable to name even five great women philosophers or theologians or their distinctive contributions to these disciplines. Ruether changed all of this by enlarging my field of vision.



**Playing a benefit for the Dallerer Kulturtage,
Dallgow, Germany
June 5, 2010**



**Playing "La dernière page" at the École
Normale Supérieure, Paris, September 30,
2014, and playing for French school children.**



**Playing at the Bicknell Center for the Arts,
Spring Convocation, Pittsburg, Kansas
January 26, 2017**



**Playing at the Pittsburg Public Library
September 30, 2018**

Philosophy in a Different Key: My Philosophy in Song is a compilation of the lyrics of some of the songs I have composed—occasionally as lyrics put to the tunes that others have written—that most nearly express my views as a philosopher and as a teacher of philosophy. For each song, I’ve made comments that provide context, an explanation of the sources that I’ve used for inspiration, and what I was thinking in composing the piece.

Don Viney