

Sense Of Substance

When I consider things that swirl through space
From my worm's view to rims of Universe,
As rocks and gasses in unconscious race
Traverse the Curve of Time, each in its course,

I am amazed that I can reach that far
By senses I'm endowed with. But I shrink
To crowding creatures, far from any star,
That tickle my attention at each blink.

Though some may argue that a thing I feel
and deem to be of substance is illusion—
That only the ethereal is real,
Not physical—I laugh at such conclusion

And wallow in the savory delight
Of touch and taste and smell and sound and sight.

Malnutrition

I wish I could say
that I was brought up
by God-fearing atheist parents,

but voices were raised
to glorify God
in orthodox show of adherence.

Same voices were raised
in anger, but not
to strangers, for the sake of appearance.

Inquisitive probes
of logical thought
were thwarted by creed's interference.

Instilled was the faith
with efforts to shield
from ecclesiastical errants.

The cobwebs' dark screen
resisted attempts
to peer into rational clearance.

Their heavenly crowns
were hoped to be earned
by gray lives of earthly forbearance.

I wish I were reared
by daylight of reason,
not doctrinal, dark perseverance.

I wish I could say
that I was brought up
by God-fearing atheist parents.

A Vision

Under the rafters, in the night,
A mouseling, young and carefree,
Was startled by a sudden flight
Of a bat into the belfry.

Surprised, she quickly scurried down
To cellar from this stranger,
And breathless she whispered, "Mom,
I have just seen an angel!"

Golden Calf

And Man created God in his own image.
In his own image he created him.
Him in his own image he created.
No matter how you phrase it or how often,
It remains
That Man created God in his own image.
Male and female created he them.

No matter what you call them:
Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, or Krishna,
Horus, Osiris, Isis, or Ra,
Moloch, Baal, Astarte, or Dagon,
Odin, Loki, Freya, or Frigga.
Cronus, Zeus, Apollo, or Hera,
Jupiter, Neptune, Janus, or Vestra,
Thunderbird, Pele, or Ahura-Mazda,
Allah, Jehovah, Juju, or Mumbo,

They all were fashioned in the mind of Man.
Each is a Golden Calf molded for worship,
Each an insurance borne out of fear,
Wrapped in a padding of ignorance and mystery,
Each an excuse to murder a thinker,
Each an excuse to annihilate neighbors,
Each with absurd explanations of life
And lies of outrageous rewards after death.

Gray Hereafter Everafter

Some, with rapturous visions of postmortem vacations,
Hope to catch God's attention by self-flagellations.

While mouthing high praise for His bounty—it's funny—
They insult Him by spurning His wine, milk and honey.

No wings, harps, or haloes, or heavenly robes
Await these ascetics and hedonophobes.

The just disappointment they'll meet after death
Will eternally reek from their pious gray breath.

Just As Well

His name was Yeshua. He walked
on rocky trails of Galilee,
Judea and Samaria;
some even said
he walked on water.

He taught strange things
that went against the grain
of human nature:
to love your enemies
and turn the other cheek.

His parables made sense,
but promise of God's Kingdom
his twelve Disciples,
Pharisees, and Consuls,
all had misunderstood.

And when his words of nuisance
broke the backs of camels
who couldn't pass through Needle's Eye,
the priests aroused the mob
to ask the Romans that they put him
to painful and disgraceful death.

Those in whose heads his words still lingered,
convinced God's Kingdom was at hand,
spread wide distorted gospel,
established rituals and temples,
and called him Son of God and God.

Then with the sign of fish and cross,
and in the name of truth and love,
they conquered nations, roasted rebels—
those who had dared to question
the right they claimed came from above.

They preached convincing lies to children
of stupid, gullible and simple people,
and taught them fear of life and afterlife
for nigh two thousand years.

* * *

She walked the streets of northern Egypt,
but never claimed to walk on water,
a daughter full of grace and beauty,
and more—of learning and of wisdom.
Hypatia was her name.

She mocked the hypocrites of Yeshua.
The rusty creakings of the priests
were not a match to silver tongue

of Pagan Philosophers.

And when they could no longer stand
the City's Prelate in her sway,
they wrung their cloaks, they gnashed their teeth
and plotted to destroy her.

So, Cyril, bishop of the land
(who's now proclaimed to be a saint),
with priests aroused the mob
to pick up oyster tiles and flay her
to painful and disgraceful death.

* * *

The good and truth have not prevailed.
A mob will take up eager arms
to follow those who shout the loudest
to rally them with lies and vengeance
and slanderous alarms.

The Good Man's life was worth a thousand
of mobsters, those who nailed him silent.
And each of those who used perverse devotion
to him as reason to snuff out
the Light of Alexandria
did not amount to thousandth part of her.

* * *

The Man is worshipped, misremembered;
his name is used in crimes and lies,
but more than a billion silly people
pretend they follow in his ways.

The Woman almost is forgotten,
and maybe that is just as well,
because as human records tell:
intents and memories are rotten—
a thousand holy wars were fought in
the names of martyrs. All were hell!

We Prayed for You

“Thank God you’re out of jail. We heard that you were given a lengthy sentence for protesting against the Government, or something of that sort. But now you’re out, I see. Well, you look good. Oh no, I’m sorry, I don’t mean to say that it was good for you—it must have been quite awful: locked in a prison and all that. But still, thank God you’re out. We prayed for you. Almighty God has heard our supplication and worked a miracle to set you free.”

Are you referring to the same Almighty who in his wisdom let me be abducted and held in prison helpless and abandoned? Is he the one who deafened judges’ ears to pleas of reason and demands for justice? And was it his design to make me suffer pernicious vengeance by the hand of State, rewarding me for patriotic conscience, for bringing fatted bureaucrats to task of living up to sacred Constitution?

Is he the one who played a joke on Job, that hapless and bewildered servant who in his guileless and naïve devotion could not find reason for descent of plagues upon his head in spite of curious counsel?

We’re told that God rewarded in the end this steadfast victim of a pointless test. That enigmatic exercise revealed that fickle God plays games beyond a reason to be explained by wisest of his creatures. Tormented and exasperated soul of Job was crushed and driven to repentance, although not one of his three old advisors, not Eliphaz, not Bildad, and not Zophar, nor Elihu, the young one, nor himself were able to find a reason to repent, except to curse the day that he was born. When the Almighty’s list of works debased all vestiges of human dignity, the men were silenced, and poor Job was moved to beg forgiveness for his own existence.

That God demean himself to meet a challenge by a Fallen Angel is beyond contempt. That he should deign to sacrifice his creature to satisfy the slander of a traitor, a loser in celestial coup d’état, does not bespeak secure omnipotence.

A question that was raised is whether man

may judge the actions of a God who made him.
From me you'll hear a loud, resounding "Yes!"
If I in fatalistic acquiescence
resign my life without demanding justice
from God by saying that his perfect will
is too incomprehensible for me,
and stand in silent stupor in his shadow,
what moral sense should summon me to bow?

Is God unable to communicate
his purpose clearly to my feeble mind?
If so, I cannot then believe he's perfect.
If so, the burden must be laid on him.

I cannot claim he's just when I see justice,
then when I see injustice, simply say,
"It is God's will, it's not right for me to question."
My human sense of right cannot employ
elastic rule to gauge such mystic God.

So he rewarded Job for bearing boils
and standing loss of family and cattle—
with generous replenishment of wealth—
more children and superfluous sheep and camels.
New daughters even rated proper names:
Jemima, Kez and Keren were all beauties.
But former three, as well as seven brothers,
remain forgotten, nameless in the rubble,
along with servants smitten by Chaldeans.

The bountiful new blessings were perhaps
enough to make Job think his tribulations
were worth enduring, that's if he forgot
his slaughtered children, animals and servants.

But being a bit more sensitive than God,
I look beyond myopic moral focus
of this heroic painted tale of faith,
into the faint obligatory strokes
on the periphery behind the figure
who is the subject of this panorama.

My eye falls on the slaughtered serfs and children.
There is no mention of a cause to damn them.
According to the Writ, their lives were pious.
But even still, Job offered sacrifices
on their behalf to satisfy demands
for adoration by the righteous God.
The offerings were pleasing to the Lord.
Then what's the cause for their obliteration?

Those souls seemed insignificant in God's
intent to furnish feeble proof to Satan,
not worthy of the same consideration
as showered on the patriarchal male.
What had they done that they deserved extinction?

Why were their lives considered less than equal
to his, which found redemption after torture?

What sort of spirit is your Mighty Master?
What conscience and what sense of right compels him
to toy with human lives for his amusement
by wreaking vengeance on those helpless creatures
who resolutely follow his commands?

Why should I thank him for unlocking chains
which he had wrapped around my wrists and ankles?
If you should be assaulted (God forbid)
by someone clubbing blows to smash your bones,
should he get tired or have had his fill,
would you then thank him if he stop the beating?

If we expect our fellow human beings,
driven by selfish traits and faulty reason,
to curb their passions and pursue their aims
without committing harm to one another,
how can we hold Almighty God exempt,
pretending that although he holds all power
in his omnipotent and perfect hand,
he's not responsible for any evil?

How can the measures set for lowly humans,
with our imperfect wisdom, greed and malice,
with apelike traits producing lethal weapons,
be more demanding than the ones that guide
the absolutely unencumbered will
of what, you say, is good and perfect God?

If you give thanks to him for all your blessings,
you must give thanks to him for all your pain.
For all that happens, pleasant and distressing,
attribute equal credit: loss and gain.

But as for me, both kindness and abuse
that come my way I'll store on crowded shelf
of life experience in my mind and not confuse
the human acts with acts of God, and I refuse,
refuse to worship someone lower than myself.

Get Real

Whoever told you that your life is sacred?
You are but one of some six billion ants.
Drink a full cup, then exit nobly naked
Without anthropocentric arrogance.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

ANATOLE TARÀS LUBOVICH was born on March 9, 1937, in Rivne, Ukraine. During World War II, Anatole and his family were interned in a labor camp and following the war lived in refugee camps in Germany. By the time the family emigrated to the United States in 1950, Anatole had become fluent in several languages and had developed his lifelong love of words. He studied 14 languages, but had a particular passion for English which he spoke and wrote with precision, wit and elegance. He loved literature, particularly poetry and the plays of Shakespeare. He received a degree in musical theater from San Francisco State University. Anatole acted in numerous theatrical and musical productions in the Bay Area and also directed several plays. He was a great lover of opera, especially the works of Verdi and Donizetti.

Anatole worked for many years as an engineer and a teacher, but it is as a poet that he will most be remembered. He was published in anthologies and journals, was featured at readings, and won several awards, including both first prize in poetry and first prize in music in the World Esperanto Association Worldwide Art and Literature Competition in 2002. Anatole translated poetry into English from Ukrainian and other languages. He also invented a new metric form he called the *undula*.

In 1995, Anatole founded the Not-Yet-Dead Poets' Society in Redwood City. The NYDPS continues to sponsor weekly poetry readings. He was a member Waverly Writers in the Bay Area, the Sacramento Poetry Center, Chaparral Poets, and the Foothill Bibliophile Society. His large library contained many volumes related to the works of Shakespeare.

In addition to his literary and theatrical affiliations, Anatole was active in the Humanist Association of the Greater Sacramento Area. He was a member of the Esperanto League of North America, past president of the Sunnyvale Stamp Society, a member of the Royal Philatelic Society (London), and a life member of Friends of the Western Philatelic Library. Anatole was an Eagle Scout and for many years acted in the capacity of Scoutmaster and Commissioner. While in the U.S. Army, he was a member of a Cossack dance troupe.

Anatole Lubovich passed away on November 16, 2005, in Sacramento, California.