

## BENDING OVER BACKWARD

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By Michael Erlewine ([Michael@Erlewine.net](mailto:Michael@Erlewine.net))

Back in 1964, when I spent a year living in Berkeley, California, I attended some meetings of a group studying the works of Ouspensky and Gurdjieff. One quote from Gurdjieff's "Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson" that stuck in my mind was:

"If you go on a spree, then go the whole hog, including the postage."

The idea is that if you are going to do something, don't scrimp and offer short-services, but go all the way... including paying for the postage.

I find this increasingly relevant as I grow older, and I cite the familiar image of a pebble dropped into a still pool, whose ever widening circles encapsulate more and more of the water surface as they spread outward. Just how much should we give?

And the short answer seems to be: give it all, go all out, and don't be a cheapskate or as the old chestnut-slogan personifies "In for a penny, in for a pound." Life is like that.

I find myself endlessly drawing lines in the sand, lines I declare I won't step over, thus far and no farther, say I. What a joke! What nonsense.

It is clear on thinking for even a few moments that life will in the end take all that we have, every last iota of energy and not even look back. And here I am declaring limits that can't be crossed and then fuming and dwelling on them.

The simple fact is that I don't control all that much of anything, especially what other people do. If they ignore me or hurt my feelings, whether non-intentionally or on purpose, what am I to do about it? What can I do about it? The answer is: not much.

I may like to think I give a lot, but there is always more to give, ever more demanded by life. There is no limit other than death itself, and my understanding is that we sail on beyond even that in the succeeding instant.

So, all my little internal discussions, my deals with myself, where I declare that this person has gone far enough and that I won't put up with any more from them is just more hyperbole. Moreover, it simply is a waste of time, another insult to whatever perceived injury I imagine they have caused me.

The world can't help it. It is as it is, and drawing these non-existent lines is a huge waste of time that signifies nothing other than the futility of railing against the cosmos. In that respect, no one is listening and even a little increased awareness on my part makes this clear. There are no lines that can be drawn and no one to step across them other than myself.

These little threats or promises, made in the mind, when I am disappointed by someone or something go unnoticed in the larger scheme of things. They only add up to more karma I lay on myself. As mentioned, these are in fact just trumped-up insults added to whatever perceived injury I imagine.

Taking notes in my little black book of deeds done by others that hurt my feelings is just a reflection of my inability to do anything about it, and to clearly understand the reality facing me, i.e. that there is no end to the limit of the widening circles in the pond where the pebble is dropped. In the end, everything out there taunting or impinging on me, whatever I imagine hurts or offends, must be embraced and included. So, I tell myself, get on with it.

I will eventually move beyond anything I react to and this by definition. I will embrace it. Stopping to make comments to myself, to register my disapproval or disdain, is just precious time and energy wasted. There is and can be no witness to imagined slights. They only hurt me and prevent my awareness from expanding. It is just me stalling.

I am reminded of the image (we all have seen it) of a human figure ... like a baby in the womb, contrasted with one that is later outwardly bent over backward, with fingers touching toes – a complete inversion. Prepare for that I tell myself.

So, the moral of this story (for me at least) is that I might as well stop taking notes (notice) of all of that out there that hurts or offends me, because it just delays any awareness or realization that is the natural result of this trip I am on called life. And, in the last analysis, there is no one out there to complain to!

Make any sense?

