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***THOUGHT-PROVOKING THOUGHTS
ABOUT LIVING ...***

**A collection of epigrams about living,
plus observations of people and life
around the world**

by

DEREK PARTRIDGE

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***A SMILE IS MY PASSPORT or... if it's Friday, it must be
Rangoon, Bangkok and Hong Kong!
Around the world in 33 days... to 24 countries***

***Retire? Heck no!
LIVING LIFE IN REVERSE
..... around the world***

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PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL was the title under which this book was first published in 1970. A cocktail is a blended mixture of different ingredients. Not every cocktail pleases every palate: so with this chapter... and the whole book. The prefix of "Philosof" implies that the book is a sort of philosophical Molotov cocktail. A Molotov cocktail is a home-made bomb, which is highly volatile and disruptive. It is "pleasing" to one side and distinctly "displeasing" to the other. Many of my words are volatile and may disrupt; some will please and others will just as surely displease. But the book has been designed to serve as a companion and guide for all who must negotiate the tortuous journey of life. It should stimulate—or provoke—thought, self-appraisal and consideration for others... the routes to personal happiness and international understanding.

I am but one tiny grain of sand, trying to make myself heard in the vast desert of this world. With this book, my intention is

to create an oasis to give passing travelers food for thought and refreshment from a well of happiness. Its contents are the first seeds to be planted. Hopefully they will take root and grow in the shifting desert sands... the grains of humanity.

LIFE...

Love

Integrity

Friendship

Enthusiasm

Moments...

...what is life but a series of passing moments, the pearls of time strung together by the thread of living. Moments... gone, now and just ahead... memory, actuality and anticipation.

The most important moment... now

Any moment that is not lived in its allotted time, then has to be lived with forever... as the moment that could have been... but never was.

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Life... one-way traffic to a stop sign

Time passes as quickly or as slowly as we let it... it's up to us how, and how much we fill the one-way moments of a lifetime.

The happiness seed

Somewhere in any moment of happiness may lie the seed of its further growth, but it's not always easy either to recognize it or to nurture its development.

The unburdened tree

Memories consist of people, things and activities, which once filled our every moment, but which no longer do and may never again; such is the pageant of changes which comprise the growth and development of living. And, just as sometimes a tree will grow the better for a little pruning of branches which have served their purpose, so must certain people and things fade from the scene of our current activities, so that we may grow, unfettered by bearing the burdens of the past.

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Time

How can we ever treat the passing minutes so casually and off-handedly, that they slip by, unnoticed, into hours, days and even... years? Our lives slip away as subtly but surely as the sand which runs through the narrow neck of the hour glass. One day we stop and look... and find there are more spent grains in the bottom... than fresh ones waiting at the top.

A child lets sand run through his fingers; with equal casualness, many drop-outs from life, frequent street-corners, bars, and beaches while *their* sands run out, with so little to show for their passing. The only mark some of them will leave on this world, is where their feet have scuffed the sidewalk or the equally imperceptible mark on the bar they leaned against. *How do you fill an empty person?*

Timekeeping... or is it losing?

How kindly time adjusts its own clock within us: we still talk of yesterday's memories... when they're already *yesteryear's*.

Honest timekeeping

Rather than telling people that we don't have time to do something... wouldn't it be more honest to say that we don't *choose* to take the time to do it, because we will usually find time to do whatever we really want to do.

Now... and then

In the emptiness or unhappiness of today, we turn to our yesterdays for solace and security, or to our tomorrows for hope and promise... for the past, being known, offers security... while the future, being unknown, looms as a frightening new adventure, fraught with menacing pitfalls. The solution is to delete the "frightening" and then embark on any new adventure with courage, in the spirit of discovery, excitement... and hope.

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Random jottings

The prerogative of choice usually carries the obligation of responsibility.

The essence of beauty is simplicity. How simple is the beauty of life... and how complex its ugliness.

Enthusiasm is the most contagious of all non-toxic diseases and it is a pure joy to watch the spread of this benign epidemic.

Every eye should know tears... but none too many. Every heart should experience pain... but none too much.

Doing nothing is the most tiring "activity" a person can indulge in.

Ignorance always speaks loudest!

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Violence... the Creator's creation?

Why is not only violence, but also the enjoyment of it, so deeply ingrained in man's intrinsic nature—even from childhood—that it appears almost impossible to exorcize it? *And answer came there none.* But its destructive savagery seems to make a mockery of what is called His *Creation*.

... or man's?

I wonder if many adults' indifference to violence—both in inflicting it and condoning its infliction on children, animals and other adults—stems, at least in part, from comic books and cartoon movies. These media constantly portray people and creatures being subjected to the most appalling kinds of violence, such as: being pushed off buildings and cliffs, steam-roller-flattened, burned, shot (complete with holes), dismembered, cut in half, decapitated, pulled apart, drowned, electrocuted, poisoned, gassed.

The variety is endless, but the conclusion is always identical: within a couple of frames, the character recovers completely, totally unaffected by the violence to which it's been subjected. If children's minds are so conditioned to the inconsequential ineffectiveness of violence... is it any wonder that some of them will mete it out to others, both as children and adults, without ever considering that their actions could have *real* consequences?

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

More random jottings

Man clings to life as a flame clings to a wick when threatened by the wind, for the spark of life is so easily extinguished.

Thought knows no boundaries, until expressed in words—written or spoken—when it can lose its freedom to some men's fear of truth and progress.

Some “modern thinking” considers that any “old” idea must be outdated and worthless, while any “new” idea must be good. Old ideas, tried and having passed the test of time, can still be valid despite their age, while new ideas *may* be... but not simply because of their novelty.

Growing up is when a puppy, following centuries of inbred instinct, lifts its leg for the first time... and falls over!

The most valuable endowment nature can make to any person, is to equip him—or her—with common sense. It does not seem to be a quality that can be acquired subsequently and the gap between academic or technical intelligence and common sense can be an awesome chasm.

Some people walk as if they have somewhere to go and a purpose for going there. Others walk as if they were going nowhere in particular and have even given up all hope of ever getting anywhere.

A teacher must be able to say and demonstrate the same facts and theories in a variety of different ways... until he finds the key which unlocks each individual's understanding.

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Conscience: conditioned inhibitions.

"To make a long story short..." Isn't it amazing how adept some people are at making a short story... long?

Shouldn't the art of communication be the ability to clearly convey a maximum of information, using a minimum of words? Yet many radio DJs spew out inane and inconsequential verbiage, thus managing to convey a minimum of information, using a maximum of words. They excel in the "art" of saying less with more words than anyone else!

Many disappointments make up a dream fulfilled.

At times, the "best looking" person can not only look ugly to himself, but even to others - while the "ugliest" can look positively beautiful. It all depends on the beauty—or ugliness—inside.

People who are impressed by appearances... deserve to be deceived by them.

Good luck could be described as having the ability to recognize—and so take advantage of—the fortuitous circumstances which capricious fortune places us in... as and when her whim so dictates.

Would it be reasonable to refer to a transsexual as... a change of corporate image?

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Discipline too, will be reaped as it is sowed

Unless we have *just* discipline applied to us by parents and teachers, during our childhood, how can we possibly be expected to apply self-discipline in our adolescent and adult years? Discipline would then be a most unwelcome stranger. However, without self-discipline, anyone is lost, of little use to himself or anyone else. Indulgent permissiveness is the greatest disservice parents can mistakenly lavish on their impressionable offspring. Self-discipline should usually result from the application of just discipline, but even more certainly will self-destruction be the offspring of permissiveness.

Belated charity... the great conscience cleanser

As many rich people's meeting with what they believe to be their "maker" becomes more imminent, they do a gradual about-face and start giving back (via sometimes questionable charities) the money they've made—by undoubtedly sometimes questionable means—to the impoverished masses. Naturally, they make sure it's tax exempt.

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Con Men

The skill of the confidence man is so simple that it can be divided into three stereotypical stages: 1. He listens to you express your hopes, fears and desires. 2. As faithfully as a tape recorder, he then feeds you back promises of exactly what he now knows you want to hear. 3. When, after a while, you begin to have doubts as nothing materializes, he succeeds in coming up with a series of convincing reasons, as to why things aren't working out *exactly* as expected. This way, he can keep you on a string indefinitely, as *you* never want to sever the string which *you* still want to believe will turn out to be a golden thread... the very belief he so graciously, charmingly and oh, so easily caters to.

What often distinguishes the con man from the legitimate businessman—assuming each to be equally endowed with qualities of charm and graceful persuasion—is the con man's lack of attention to meticulous detail. That represents far too much trouble for him and would make his life unbearably tedious. But it's also how you can detect him and catch him out... ***IF*** you can take off the rose-colored spectacles for long enough to view him in his true light, instead of playing into his hands by glossing over his “unimportant” (important), “little” (big), “oversights” (discrepancies)... because you so desperately want it to be that way.

Oh for the clarity of hindsight... beforehand!

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Further random jottings

Understanding a problem is the first step towards its constructive correction, and a small nucleus of people—infecting others with positive ideas and actions—can, in time, change notions... and nations.

O.K., so you're usually right... just don't be so damned obvious about it! That doesn't win friends!

Good advertising can persuade people to buy something once. If the product is good, it's all you have to do. If it's bad, it's all you'll be able to do.

A jack-of-all-trades is supposed to learn less and less about more and more and so should end up knowing nothing about everything. By the same token, a specialist must then be someone who learns more and more about less and less... and ends up knowing everything about nothing!

The climate of the weather, wherever we happen to be, is far less important than the climate of the people.

In every anticipated situation that faces us in life, somewhere between the wildest pipe dreams of our exuberant optimism and the most dreaded forebodings of our blackest pessimism... lies its reality.

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Accidents

People always think they happen to *someone else* and never realize that in the impersonal world of statistics, *they* are just as likely to be that *someone else...* as any other person!

That warped prankster... Fate

Fate's somewhat ironic sense of humor decrees that some people get what they want, but don't necessarily deserve—while others get what they deserve—and almost certainly don't want!

Natural enemies...

is an expression all too frequently used; why do we not hear “natural friends”? Years of inbred, but no longer relevant conditioning cause the cat to regard the dog as a natural enemy. So a cat will attack a puppy—who has yet to realize that a cat is supposed to be its natural enemy—and who just wants to play with what—to him—is a new-found friend in his world of daily new discoveries. But, when puppies and kittens grow up in the same household, natural enmity gives way to natural friendship. How many analogies can be drawn for certain other natural enemies in nature's kingdom... and, among the supposedly reasoning races of man's world? Ever watched black and white kids playing together?

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Kids

One of the greatest “crimes” a child can commit, is to be different. It leads to total exclusion and isolation from the rest, who, in turn, will “gang up” on the differing offender.

One of most children's basic rules of life: rules—adult version—are made to be broken. It's all part of the eternal war games between freedom-loving youth and restriction-imposing adult authority.

The day a child accepts that the age and experience of his parents might just give them a fighting chance of occasionally being right... is a major step in growing up.

How often do we hear an adult (ourselves?) describing a child as: "That ——— brat!" Can memory really fade so soon from yesterday's, or even yesteryear's “brat”?

Youth's open road

You've probably noticed children waving to you from the back of a car or bus, but you don't often see an adult doing this. Kids have a basic, friendly, open desire for contact and communication with their fellow human beings... and haven't yet learned to be afraid of expressing it.

The age of discrimination

Great as the differences are between them, children seem to discriminate far less against adults, than vice versa.

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The un-bilical cord

A mother sent an exasperated note to her son: "If only you could regard me as a woman, not as a mother..." By return came the *cri de coeur*: "Fine... if you'll treat me as a man, not as a son..."

Advanced, normal and backward

Often we hear a child described as being: "Very advanced for his age in some ways and quite backward in others". It rarely seems to occur to people that the child may just be normal in "other ways" and not "backward", in comparison to the ways in which he is "advanced".

Gang bravado

Several inferiority complexes banded together out of mutual fear, which add up to one very obnoxious and frequently aggressive collective ego.

People have a lot in common with the cactus... bristling, protective outsides and soft, defenseless insides.

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Selfish business... selfless art

What some businessmen create is mostly for themselves. It is often at the expense or exploitation of others, although there is also some—almost incidental—benefit of employment. However, the employees are often merely contributing to what the businessmen are basically creating for themselves only: money, power and position.

Most artists (in the widest sense of the term) create basically to give enjoyment to others. Naturally they derive a sense of satisfaction and achievement for themselves... but at no one else's expense. Rarely—in the true artist—is the work performed primarily for commercial considerations.

"All that glitters..." ...is often just that: glitter

The ultimate irony of man's materialistic greed must surely be gold. With a tremendous expenditure of energy, human resources and risk to life and limb, man digs out of the bowels of the earth—where it is guarded by nature—a very attractive, but not especially essential metal. Further energy and resources are then expended in refining it. Once this lengthy and costly process is completed, another huge hole is dug (eg: Fort Knox) and the refined metal is put *back* into the earth... where it is now guarded by man. The ultimate irony really is that approximately 80 per cent of all the gold now reposing in vaults has no *official* value... now that money is no longer based on the gold standard!

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

The hypocritic oath

When one reads of sick people and even emergency cases being turned away from some hospitals... for lack of proof of ability to pay, one wonders if some doctors' oaths are more hypocritic(al) than Hippocratic. So much of the medical profession is fixated on money, that a staggering \$100 Billion of medical fraud is perpetrated annually by some HMOs and other medical "professionals".

Enforced national dishonesty

The economic and taxation policies of many governments make it very hard for the average citizen to remain honest. Instead, he is almost obliged to cheat, lie and deceive... merely in order to retain enough of what he has earned to maintain a reasonable standard of living, rather than just a level of existence.

Some jobs

Pills of forgetfulness... whose effects last precisely from 9 to 5.

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Beauty and the (Business) Beast

Although almost equal numbers of boys and girls are purely physically attractive, the same is not true of adults, where physically attractive women outnumber men. Why? Our faces eloquently reflect what has gone on inside our minds. What some men are either obliged to do—or choose to do—in their pursuit of power and money, etches itself there with indelible ugliness. Of course, nowadays... there are a lot more women in the workplace...

Life's plowshare... self-inflicted

To stay young-looking and thinking, we must have internal peace and fulfillment. Turmoil and frustration not only eat out our insides, but etch their aging furrows deep into our faces.

The distorted reflection of intoxication

Some people drink so much that they not only lose control of themselves, but also think they're the wittiest, most intelligent people in the group. If they could only see how pathetically stupid they really look, from then on, most of them would drink no more than they could handle and still retain control of themselves. The Japanese police have a very effective way of dealing with this problem: they video-tape the buffoon's party or bar antics... then pop him in a cell to cool off overnight and in the morning, have him view the tape... in the presence of his wife!

Really... Raleigh!

Would you ever roll up some old, dead leaves, stick them in your mouth and set fire to them? "Of course not!" Well, it's good to know you don't smoke...!

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Tasteless acquisition of the unnatural

Alcohol and tobacco are often referred to as “acquired tastes”... how many people have lived to rue the day they “acquired” them? Their acquisition is rarely even a matter of taste, but more often of expediency for business or social purposes, so as not to be “left out” or “different”. It is a sad commentary on “accepted” social behavior that the non-smoker and non-drinker—who have only remained true to their *natural* tastes—are considered to be the odd-ones-out and “put-down” for it... instead of vice versa. Fortunately, there is now an ever-growing trend to regard the “nons” as the accepted, normal ones.

Health nuts

Another fashionable put-down is: "You're not one of those health food nuts, are you?" If not a fanatic devotee of what can become an exaggerated cult, one can respond by asking innocently: "Oh, I suppose that means you must be one of those ill-health nuts?" (which is really nutty!) What is wrong with taking reasonable care of one's health through the critically important factor of diet? The consequences of not doing so are most apparent all around, with America's current 66% obesity rate soaring. They are painful enough to observe... how much more so must they be to have to live with?

Calculation

Is it really more admirable in a man and more despicable in a woman? If so, why? Possibly another aspect of male influence and self-bias in setting “accepted” behavior patterns.

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Loneliness... or solitude?

"Lonely Are The Brave"... are they? Solitude should never be confused with loneliness... the former is a voluntary state.

Instant compatibility

You can know some people more deeply in five minutes... than others you have "known" for five years. Why and how? Having compatible astrological signs has always proved true for me. Carry-over from a previous incarnation is going into the realms of possible, but unprovable fantasy. The fact remains that there is an uncannily strong, same wave-length communication instantly established between some people. Equally certainly, there are others with whom one could spend an eternity... without ever feeling comfortable or even wanting to communicate!

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Responsible communication

When someone ends a sentence with: "You know what I mean..." (a frequent characteristic of New York cab drivers!): what they are saying is that they don't have much idea what they mean and are desperately hoping that you will, so as to extricate themselves from their inability to properly express themselves! Sometimes I can't resist answering with a callously naïve: "No?", for the only way they are ever going to learn to communicate fully with other people is by being obliged to undertake the responsibility of expressing themselves... by themselves.

5 down... about 6,495 to go!

As communication and fostering it among others is one of my aims in life, I equipped myself with five languages. However, that still leaves me approximately 6,495 other languages I don't know! (Nigeria alone has some 350 different ethnic groups, speaking 427 mutually incomprehensible languages!) So I am no stranger to the depressingly helpless feeling of being cut off from people within touching distance. This enables me to readily understand the frustration of people who do not have the gift of expressing themselves easily... because I am not able to express myself—in other languages—with the same ease as in my native tongue. It's the same feeling: knowing in your mind what you want to say... but being unable to put it into words to convey the thought to someone else.

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Communication... as she is spoke or writ

However, when someone wistfully expresses a desire to be able to write, I ask, seemingly facetiously: "Can you talk?" Following their indignant affirmative, I explain that writing is simply transferring or putting down the spoken word onto paper. I never "learned" to write, except by writing letters, which almost everyone does to family, friends and business associates. Just as with letters, the majority of spoken communication is on a one-to-one basis... so is the majority of written matter read by one person at a time... a direct and very personal communication link. It really is as simple as the writer "talking"—via the medium of the pen or typewriter—to the reader.

It's the same when working in radio or television and "talking to the camera". You are speaking to one or two people in the privacy of their homes... that the homes (or readers) may number in thousands or millions, should in no way affect the basic one-to-one communication between the presenter and each individual viewer, listener... or reader.

Written matter should, ideally, neither insult the intelligence of the better educated, nor fail to reach the lesser-educated. Writers, who deliberately use long, obscure words just to show how clever they are, defeat the whole purpose of communication: the simple sharing of ideas and information with *all* people. With my own writing, I attempt—by reading it aloud—to ensure that generally the written words come across just as if I was speaking to someone.

I try to adhere to the great orator Churchill's guidance: "Broadly speaking the short words are the best, and the old words, when short, are best of all." Also, this excellent advice, of unknown origin: "Put it before them briefly so they will read it, clearly so they will appreciate it, picturesquely so they will remember it and, above all, accurately so they will be guided by its light."

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Irrational distortion

It's astounding, the totally irrational fear some people—especially many women—have of small animals and even tinier insects. If that's the way they react to creatures so small and almost always quite harmless...how might they react to the appearance of some horrendous creature, as proportionally larger than themselves as they are to the tiny creatures? If anyone has the right to be petrified, surely it is the little creatures, whose lives can be extinguished by one deliberate or careless step on the part of the “terrified”, monster human being.

Rational distortion

We look in magazines and laugh at caricature drawings. Then one day we see that “caricature” walking down the street... and stop laughing. Life can play some cruel tricks on people, but people seem to have an even greater capacity for distorting themselves... by the ways they choose to live their lives.

Civilization...

a thin veneer, acquired over the ages, which can be stripped away in seconds to expose the baser elements of human nature. One of civilization's basest inventions—the bomb—can destroy in a moment, what took centuries to create.

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Thoughts on tears... the well-spring of the spirit?

We should learn the value of tears and never feel ashamed of them. After all, what are they but the manifestation of the opposite emotion to the one which makes us smile... although they can express happiness too. Tears are often considered the province of women, but a discerning woman will realize that it can sometimes take a real man to cry. Never hold back tears—unless there's a very good reason for doing so—or you'll only get up-tight, bottle it up and blow up another time. Ideally, when you feel, whatever you feel... show it.

Tears

A child cries when young and hurt at play; a baby cries when younger and cannot have its way. Adults cry in pain, anger, fear or frustration... but the most beautiful tears are those of happiness or, for people who achieve greatness, especially in the face of adversity.

A mother's tears when she loses her daughter in marriage — or her son in battle.

Among the saddest tears... those which show—but never flow—from an animal's eyes... and... the eloquent, un-cried tears of people, who have seen or experienced too much pain and hurt, to be able to cry any more...

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Ecological crimes

In the past, man committed many ecological crimes within the broad scope of: excessive depletion of natural resources without replacement; direct, deliberate destruction of wildlife and its habitats; indirect destruction of the same (and ourselves) by a myriad of pollutants... mainly through ignorance. Tragically, most are irreversible.

Today, no executives (and few individuals) can claim ignorance of the destructive effects of their corporate actions. That they continue to commit the same crimes, forces one to the inescapable conclusion that they do so for one reason: indiscriminately inconsiderate commercial greed. It is small consolation that the perpetrators of these outrages against nature and humanity condemn themselves—and their families—to the same (not so) long-term fate as the rest of us... for their short-term profit.

A more recent ecological crime is over-producing people. Even this has commercial overtones. Every new baby represents another consumer... which lights up dollar signs in the eyes of marketing men.

Consumption is a disease that wastes the human body. The addiction to worshipping the Almighty Buck at the altar of the great god Consumer does the same to the body of any country.

Ecological jottings

In forests, as yet untouched by man's destructive hand, all creatures live out their lives in perfect harmony, undisrupted and unsullied by nature's black sheep: an intruder described as *sapiens*. How sadly often has that so-called wisdom become perverted and destructive.

One reads of the proud achievements of those who have "reclaimed" land... perhaps without considering the resultant destruction of vital elements in the complex, delicate and inter-dependent ecological structure.

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Man's all too simple means of entering this world is fast becoming an equally easy passport into the next, as he persists in over-breeding himself out of existence... at the 2006 rate of 4.5 babies *per second* worldwide. His wondrous creation is growing into his horrendous self-destruction.

"Make love, not babies" is a pertinent and timely slogan. It is also an admirable and essential attitude for resolving today's acute overpopulation problem.

Some artists' impressions try to improve on nature... and fail. Most industries' "impressions" *don't try to improve . . .* and are far more successful.

Every time journalists (such as I) write articles and a paper publishes say a million and a half copies... 4000 trees have to die to print them... ouch!

Tranquility is a golden sunset, mirrored in a lake, punctuated by swallows and crowned with lazily drifting clouds.

Perfection is a leaf, a snowflake, a crystal... perfection is a feather, a sea shell, a butterfly's wing... perfection is an eagle's soar, a cat's prowl, a salmon's leap... perfection is spring's green, autumn's gold, winter's white... perfection... is all of nature... *let's keep it that way.*

I wrote these observations on the environment over 40 years ago, long before it was politically correct to do so! I strongly recommend viewing Al Gore's film: "An Inconvenient Truth" and Tom Brokaw's NBC documentary on "Global Warming".

If all the roofs in Los Angeles were painted white—instead of black—which would reflect, rather than absorb heat... air conditioners would not be needed!

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Ecology... a new religion?

Religions could make quite a case for a Creator through a study of ecology (the inter-relationship of all aspects of nature). Before man entered the scene—and started changing it—*someone* (?) had the whole intricate scheme beautifully planned. It's hard to see where man fits in. He is one of the world's most easily renewable resources, but the least easily supportable.

Allowing him to “develop” so far may have been *his* one mistake. Could be why *he* doesn't make *his* presence very apparent nowadays!

The power of life and death

To kill birds and animals for the protection of crops (when all other means have proved ineffective), to kill to protect one's life or to eat is one matter, but to kill for *the pure pleasure of killing*—and call it a sport—each person must satisfy his own conscience. One fact should be too obvious to mention, but still seems to need pointing out: the “game little sporting bird or animal” does not willingly offer its life in the interests of sport, the decision is the sportsman's... the creature has no choice. I seriously question our “right” to take life for no better reason than to derive pleasure from it... seems a pretty morbid way to enjoy oneself.

Few people give a moment's thought... before deliberately killing a spider caught in the bath or carelessly extinguishing the life of an ant under a misplaced foot. Obviously we can't watch every step, but millions of tiny, *harmless* creatures are killed through irrational fear, easily avoidable carelessness, or, by those sadly warped specimens of humanity who delight in senseless killing.

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

The collectors of death

Other people derive pleasure from collecting dead creatures. They range from butterfly collectors and fur-laden women to big-game hunters. I used to collect butterflies, but after it became obvious that life was infinitely more beautiful than death, I did my "collecting" with a camera. Some big-game hunters have ego problems. One way they can prove what big, brave macho-men they are, is by killing "ferocious" (provoked) or "docile" (petrified) animals, placed in their sights by professional hunters... who also protect their fearless clients from the perils of faulty marksmanship.

Culling, when there is an excess of game in an area, has to be acceptable, but usually the need to deal with that imbalance has been created by man's interference upsetting nature's carefully calculated balance.

When I was younger, I killed many birds and animals officially classified as pests or vermin by the British Ministry of Agriculture. Although I immensely enjoyed being outdoors, studying and pitting my wits against the instincts of wild creatures, I never enjoyed the killing. Even from the day I started, I knew that one day I would kill no more... except to eat, or to protect crops, but certainly not for pleasure. That day came many years ago and since, it's been only targets and clay pigeons. I've handled firearms for some 60 years, becoming expert with some, proficient with all, including the use of handguns, rifles and shotguns for self-defence. As Chairman of the British International Shooting Board and a member of the British Team, the above views are not those of the occasionally hysterical, sometimes uninformed anti-blood sports brigade.

Life and death in nature

As a general rule—with few exceptions—nature's creatures only kill for food, as and when it is needed, or for survival. Very few species kill for pleasure—as man does—even fewer wantonly... as man does... and none for commercial gain!

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

SUVs... Selfish Unnecessary Vehicles

These gas guzzlers spew out much more carbon dioxide than cars into the atmosphere, significantly increasing environmental pollution and global warming. Because of their height, drivers in normal cars behind can't see through them to traffic conditions ahead and at night, their headlights dazzle us in our rear-view mirrors. When backing out of a parking lot, these ugly, bloated vehicles obscure our view, thus causing potential hazards to pedestrians and other cars. Most SUV drivers seem committed to passing any other vehicle on the road... irrespective of its speed, to cut in and out of traffic lanes without signaling and generally to drive more recklessly and inconsiderately than anyone else. Some of these road-hogs graduated to Hummers, a civilian (but certainly not civilized) version of the military Humvee. To protect ourselves from these monsters and their ill-mannered drivers... perhaps the rest of us should consider APCs (Armored Personnel Carriers) or even... tanks! Why not... it follows the same non-logic! And anyway, what the heck was wrong with station wagons?

The sure way to end all wars... for ever

Although I served as a Radar Officer in the Royal Air Force, I dislike—in a purely idealistic sense—the base cause of things military, because, of all man's stupidities, destruction of one's own kind is the most stupid, and, practiced virtually only by man (not so) kind! Of course, the defense of one's country against unprovoked attack is justifiable, but most wars have been started by greedy rulers, politicians, religious fanatics or terrorists... who rarely risked their own lives in the killing they initiated. If military service for the world's armed forces was restricted to those *over* the age of fifty... the major international war games would probably cease to exist!

Anti-military “soldiers”

It's ironic that among the younger “with-it” set are some of the most vociferous anti-militarists... who parade around, adorned in surplus or pseudo-military uniforms and insignia!

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Reincarnation

I'm inclined to consider the possibility of some form of reincarnation. The limitations of my human mind can find no other acceptable explanation for certain facts I have observed, others I have read about and even some factors in myself. To illustrate the point, some extreme examples: child geniuses, playing the classics or doing higher calculus at the age of four or five. A study of parental lineage dismisses the possibility of the knowledge being inherited. It is also certain that they didn't have time to *learn* their extraordinary degrees of skill in a couple of years. The standards they often attain usually take the best part of a lifetime for "normal" people.

So... from where did their skills originate? The only half-way reasonable explanation to me is that they were the result of another existence or existences. The following example illustrates the point: a four year-old black infant prodigy could perform the most complex maneuvers on a set of drums, far in excess of almost all existing professional drummers. I watched him play; the sounds he produced were magnificent, his manual dexterity unbelievable. However, the most remarkable aspect was the child's *total detachment*. He looked dumb and bored, and stared vacantly around with his mouth open, as if totally divorced from what his hands compelled him to do.

In my early teens, I would be discussing fairly profound aspects of psychology and behavior patterns with startled adults, who would ask if I had been reading Professor so-and-so. I always had to admit ignorance of the existence of these learned experts. It seemed that I (and many like me) had come into this world with a store of information and knowledge about subjects with which we had never had the slightest exposure. The sequel to these experiences is perhaps revealing.

As I became exposed to various facets of life, I found my experiences of people and their behavior tied up with what I had already instinctively known about them... but *before* I had had any practical experience on which to base these inbuilt theories. So, until someone produces a more acceptable-to-the-limitations-of-the-human-mind theory to explain where the knowledge came from, I will continue to believe in—at least—the possibility of reincarnation!

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Soul and death

Webster's dictionary defines "soul" as: "The spiritual, non-material part of man's being; the immortal part, that which survives after the death of the body". I wonder who their source of information was to enable them to be so categorically sure about it surviving after death? I don't know if I have a soul and no one could ever prove that I, or anyone else, really does. But, if I equate soul with mind, a "non-material part", which I know I have... it *can* make some sense.

When the body is asleep, it is—apart from the reduced activity of the vital organs—in the nearest comparable state to death. In this condition, however, the *mind* is free to wander the known world and other worlds of fantasy (?)... sometimes aimlessly and sometimes with direction. Could it not be a reasonable assumption—and acceptable within the limitations of our comprehension—that this is exactly what happens at death? The mind/soul once more departs its temporary housing, just as it can do each night, only this time it doesn't return... but, where does it go?!

Academic learning... or the school of Life?

It's usually better to learn firsthand for ourselves—whenever possible—rather than by listening to a second party... telling us about a third party's experiences.

PHILOSOF COCKTAIL

Those who try to be most “with it”... are generally those most “without it”. What exactly is “it”? Coca Cola purports to know... because they mindlessly claim that “Coke is *it!*”!

A worry is only as big... as we let it be... and happiness... is just a smile away.