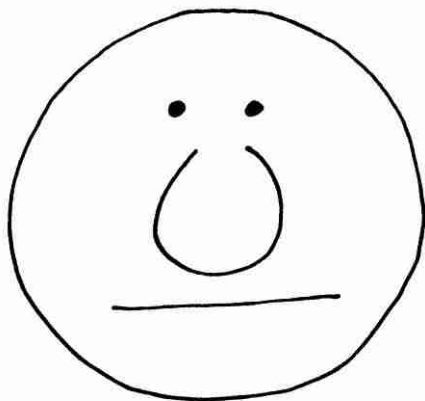




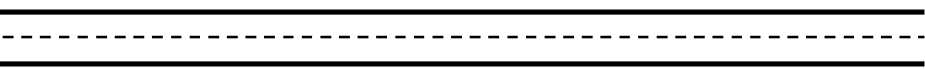
OMOLOM



COMOLOM.COM

**Church Of the More Or Less
Obvious Metaphor**

by Ben Pondrin





Incipit COMOLOM

absit invidia

“COMOLOM takes the heart and the guts of all major religions, tosses them in a crock pot, then distills them down into their sticky essence.

COMOLOM will no doubt revolutionize the very notion of God – and save considerable reading time in the bargain.”

“COMOLOM is not for the faint of heart or the simple of mind.”

“Religion without all the trappings.”

“The Unabomba is no COMOLOMA.”



“COMOLOM says, ‘Give us half an hour, and we’ll give you half a religion.’ And COMOLOM delivers.”

An excerpt from the COMOLOM Prayer:

*Hey, hey, life’s a lark
What was the deal with Joan of Arc?
What would you like us to absorb
While we’re hanging out
on this earthly orb?*

“Osama is not a COMOLOMA.”

COMOLOM – which rhymes with
"Mom, Oh, Mom," – is half a religion;
the reader is obliged to supply the
other half.

Made in Montana



COMOLOM

P.O. Box 376

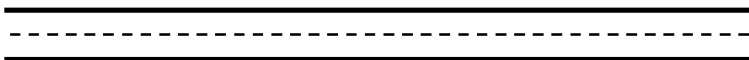
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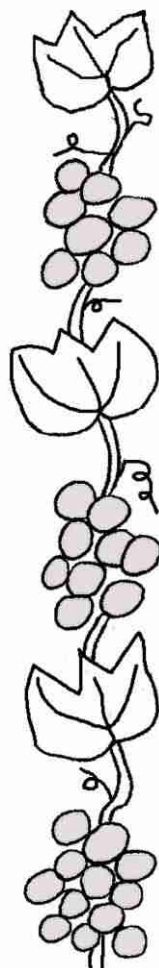




DEDICATION

COMOLOM is dedicated to all the faithful throughout history who chose to be burned at the stake, beheaded, drowned, drawn and quartered or otherwise tortured and put to death rather than compromise their beliefs. Now *that's* faith! These folks were definitely martyrs.

It's a shame they didn't have Grand Precept #3 to fall back on. COMOLOM requires no such theatrics.



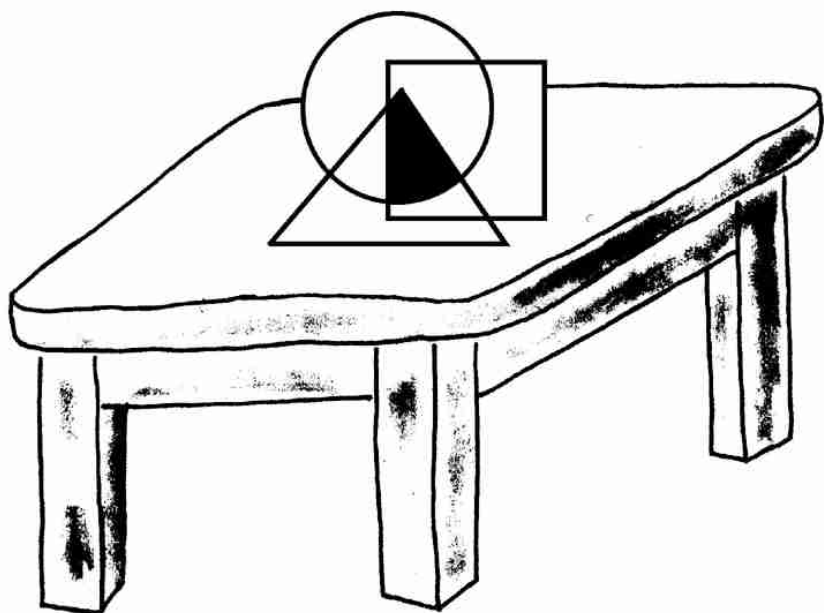




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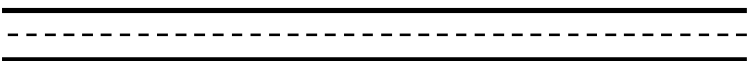
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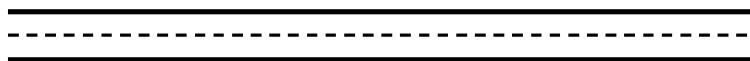
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The Eight Grand Precepts



PART I

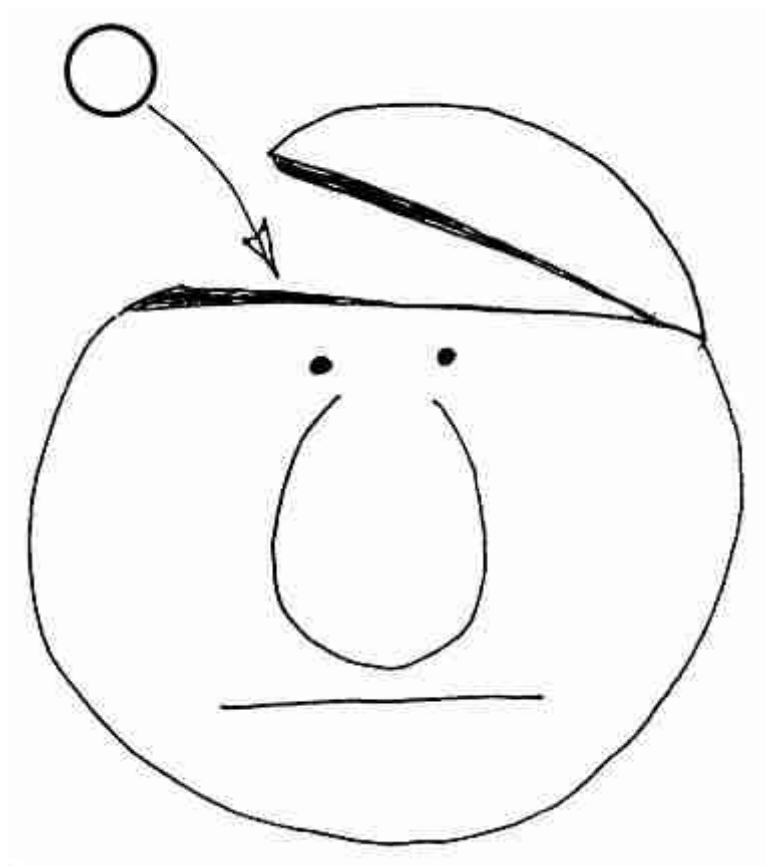


The Grand Precepts are the foundation, the bricks, the very cornerstone of COMOLOM. Eight Grand Precepts light the road and lighten the load.

Sit tibi terra levis.



he Eight
Grand Precepts
of
COMOLOM





Grand Precept #1:

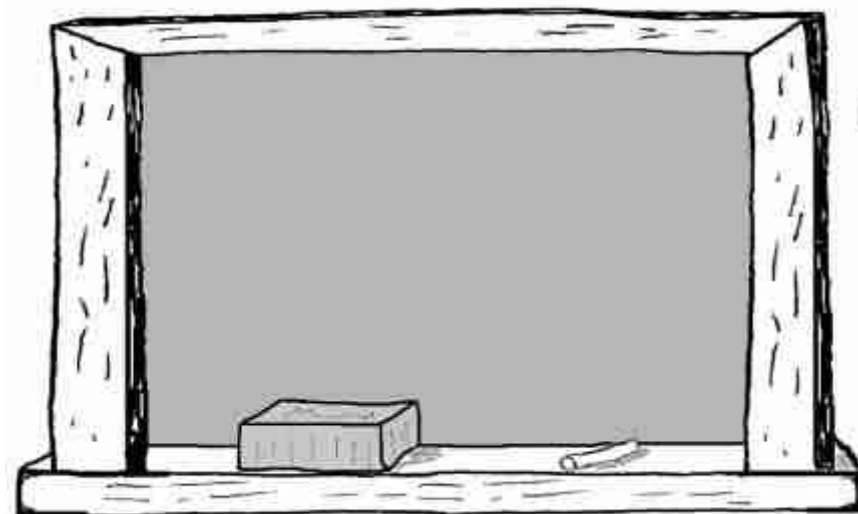
WE KNOW NOTHING.

The Pope, the Dalai Lama, The Elders of the Church, the Rabbi, the Vicar, the Reverend, the Guru, the Priest, the Pastor, the Medicine Man, the Witch Doctor, the Family Doctor, the Shaman, the Seer, the Wizard, the Bartender, and your Aunt Martha all know exactly the same amount about God. And they all know exactly as much as we all know about God. That is to say, when it comes to God, we're all even: we all know squat. All we can do is guess.



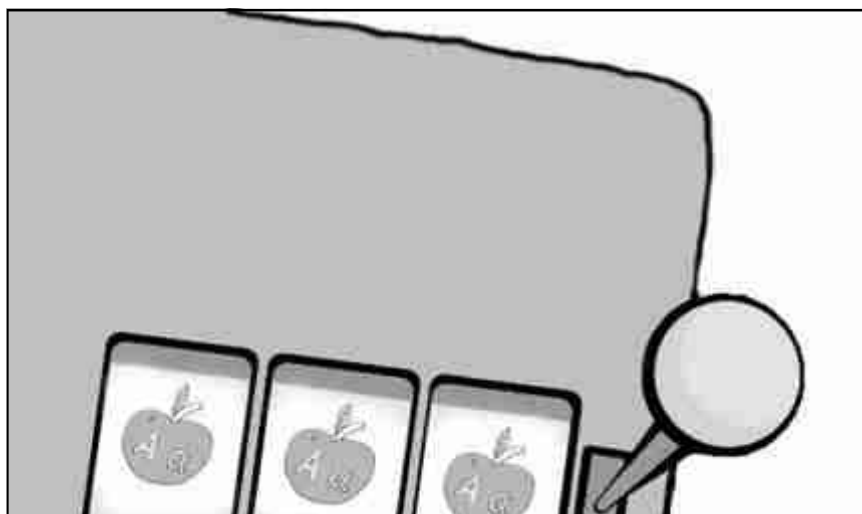
Of course, there have always been philosophers and scholars who have devoted their lives to asking questions about why we are here. And there have always been thinkers who have poured themselves into finding the meaning of life. But let's be honest here: even the wisest, most educated guess is still a guess, a Presumptuous Assumption.

COMOLOM teaches that we are all capable of ministering to ourselves, our loved ones, and our buddies. And although wise guesses are fun to read and interesting to ponder, you and I can guess as well as the next guy. For free. □



Tabula rasa.



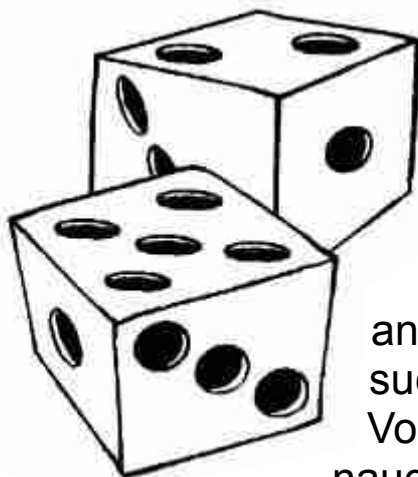




Grand Precept #2:

WHY GAMBLE? PLAY IT SAFE.

It behooves us to assume there is a God simply to hedge our bets. What have we got to lose? If God



does NOT exist then life has no point, and our believing in God risks nothing. We

shall all turn to ash, and the ash shall be sucked into the Great Void, and all is for naught anyway. So what?



On the other hand, if we decide NOT to believe in God, and it turns out there IS a God, and He¹ happens to be the *LEAST* LITTLE BIT snippy on Judgment Day, we might have bought ourselves an eternity of unnecessary trouble and gnashing of teeth.

COMOLOM assumes there is a God because we don't recommend playing keno with our souls. Besides, if we're right and there is a God, we can say, "I told you so." (If we're wrong, who's going to know?) Of course, we're not absolutely sure about any of this. But then, how could we be sure? How could anyone be sure? That's OK. COMOLOM prefers to error on the safe side. □

1. Purely for convenience we will call God a "Him" though we have no proof that He is male or of any gender whatsoever.



Respice finem.





Grand Precept #3:

IF YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY
SURE, YOU'RE
ABSOLUTELY NUTS.

COMOLOM respectfully suggests that if you're absolutely 100 percent sure about ANY issue connected with "the spirit," you're off your nut. Face the music: You cannot know that God exists. You cannot know His plan for your life. You cannot know The Reason you're here. Also, in the same way, you cannot know *with certainty*¹ that God does NOT exist. And you cannot know there is NO plan for your life.

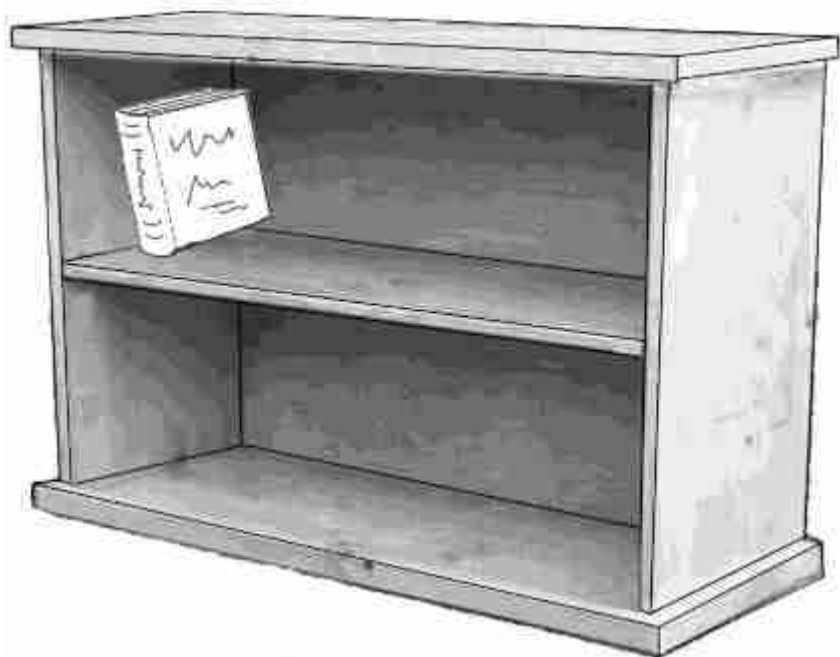
1. COMOLOM spells "certainty" v-e-r-y d-a-n-g-e-r-o-u-s

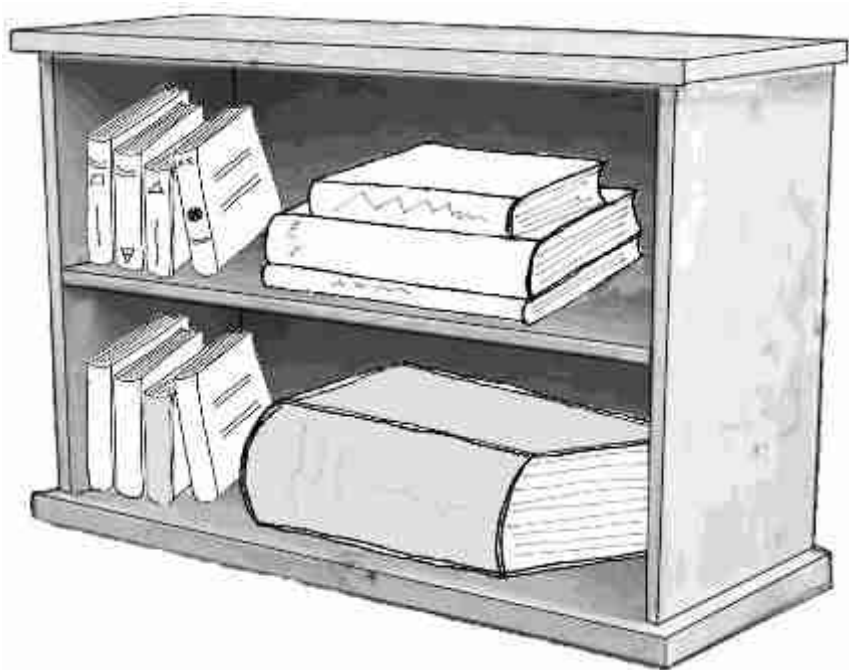


Whether you're devoutly religious or you're devoutly atheistic COMOLOM says that you're doing it wrong, wrong, wrong. You MUST have doubts. You MUST be skeptical. You MUST be filled with starry-eyed wonder. The proper religious stance is one of utter, complete, dumb-founded, total befuddlement.

ANY pronouncement from ANY individual displaying ANY sense of certainly about ANYthing associated with God and The Hereafter must be heard with several gazillion grains of salt. □

Timeo hominem unius libri.







Grand Precept #4:

DOUBT THE WRITTEN WORD, ANY WRITTEN WORD.

Although different religious groups tell us that God has revealed himself through “inspired” literature such as the Bible, the Koran, the Vedas, the Talmud or the Sports Weekly, COMOLOM must remain skeptical due to the fact that God’s words are always — without exception — written down,





recorded, and passed on by human beings. Even decent, well-meaning men and women have a long and thorough history of having a hard time keeping a story straight. As of yet no books have been found signed, “Yours Truly, God,” though we can be sure if such a book were to pop up nowadays, CNN would be right on top of it.

COMOLOM suggests that God is probably not prejudiced, so He would never send His message to only one single group. *If God wanted to let us ALL know what He’s up to, it stands to reason He’d come up with a more equitable method of communicating with us than through some collection of books written by a bunch of goat ropers with sand in their shorts.*

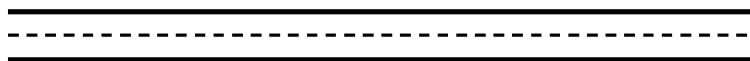
To be fair, it is within the realm of possibility that God has chosen to reveal Himself through one or more of the above mentioned volumes. It is within the same realm of possibility that He has not. □



aA bB cC dD eE fF
gG hH iI jJ kK lL
mM nN oO pP qQ rR
sS tT uU vV wW xX
yY zZ

Etgay ethay ointpay?

Doctus cum libro.





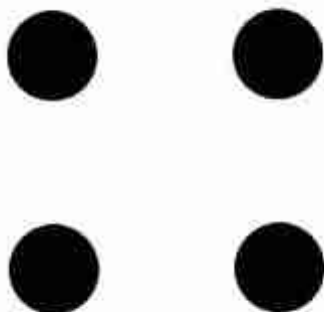
A is to B
as
C is to D



Grand Precept #5:

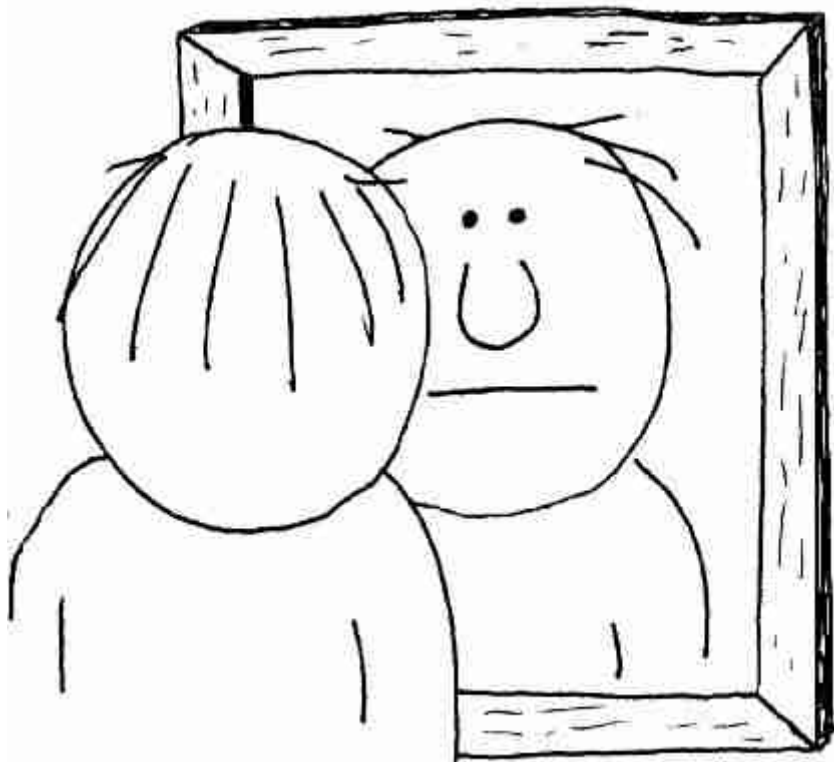
WATCH FOR THE METAPHORS.

COMOLOM believes that God is constantly “speaking” to us by means of More Or Less Obvious Metaphors. Even a severely addled individual knows that the physical world is positively bursting at the seams with metaphors, those tangible in-your-face realities that speak so powerfully to our guts that they wedge themselves





into our everyday speech. *Every single human language bubbles over with metaphors:* stormy moods, shining a light on the subject, boiling mad, summer/winter romance, melting pot, magnetic attraction,



Non semper ea sunt quae videntur.



walking on thin ice, the chicken or the egg, sunny disposition, stuck in the mud, like a fish out of water, pure as the driven snow, bird's-eye view, creating a smoke screen, throwing the baby out with the bath water, comparing apples with oranges and so on.

In the real, physical, hands-on world we experience life through our five senses. We SEE and FEEL and HEAR and TASTE and SMELL. But COMOLOM says our five senses are mere interpreters. COMOLOM asks us to read between the lines, to watch for the metaphors.

COMOLOM recommends we pay close attention to the physical world, because it's talking to us. *We must keep our eyes open for the spiritual messages buried within the metaphors, which are buried in the physical world.* (Poets have always known this.) Can you see the spiritual message in the following metaphors? — The grass is

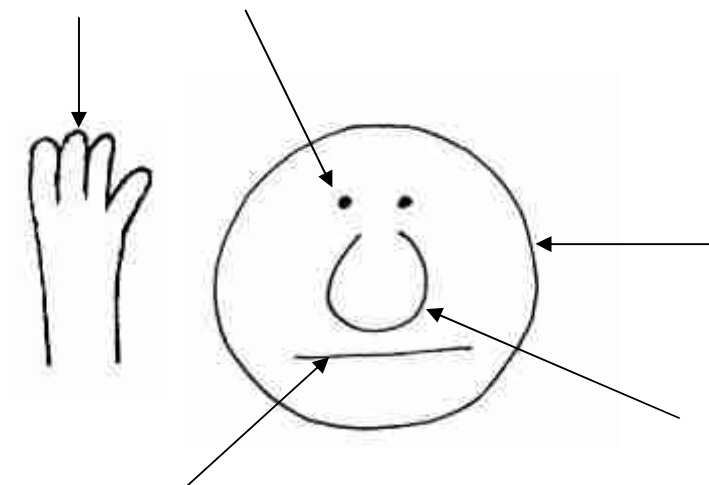


always greener on the other side of the fence; seeing light at the end of the tunnel; thorns on a rose bush; a pearl in an oyster; getting your house in order; getting your ducks in a row; making a mountain out of a mole hill; reflecting on your past; a hard row to hoe; coming to a fork in the road.

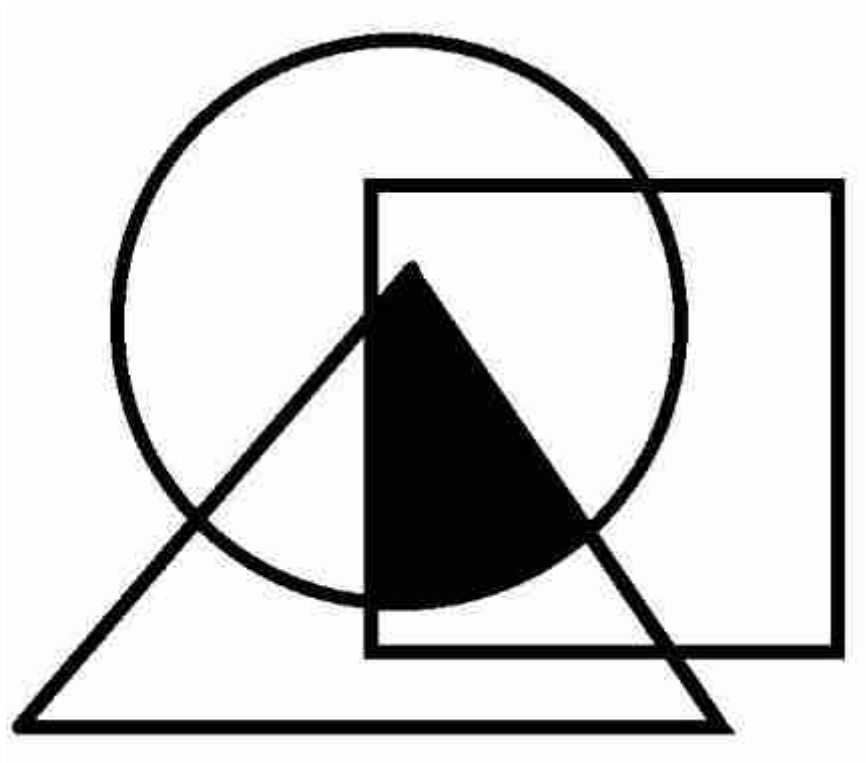
Yes, every single human language bubbles over with metaphors. And bubbling over is itself a metaphor. □



Mere Interpreters



Veritas simplex oratio est.





Grand Precept #6:

LOOK FOR THE OVERLAP.

COMOLOM does not wish to diminish, replace or supplant any religion. This would require a war or two, which would be both expensive and life-threatening. And besides, our side is too small to win at this time. COMOLOM wishes to be the switchboard into which all religions are welcome to plug. COMOLOM seeks to be the island in a sea of speculation, that “common ground” upon which we all might stand. (Metaphor?) Believe as much or as little as you wish from “your” religion, then



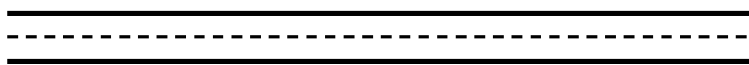
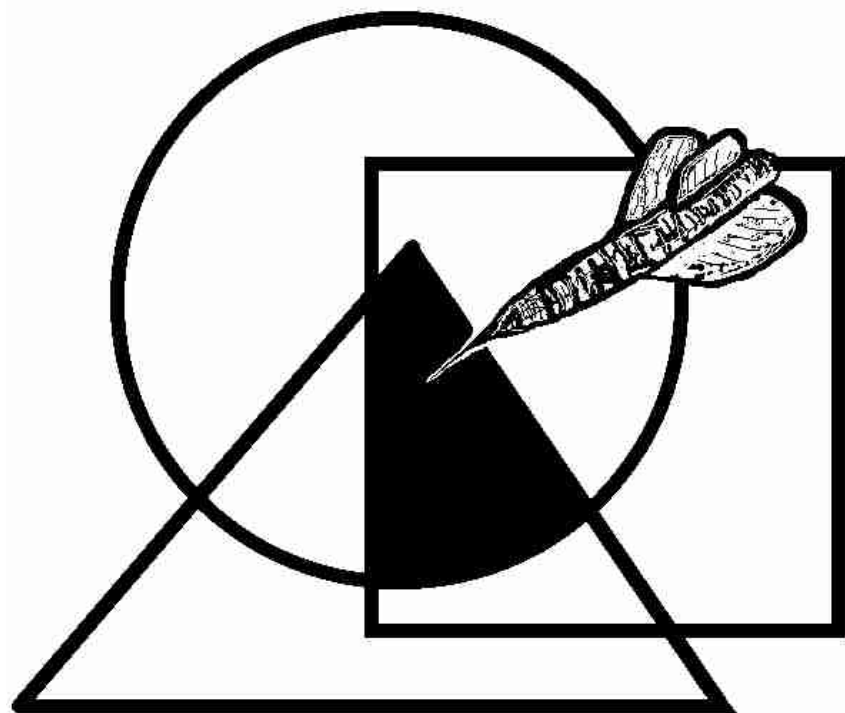
come to COMOLOM to find the part that overlaps all other religions.

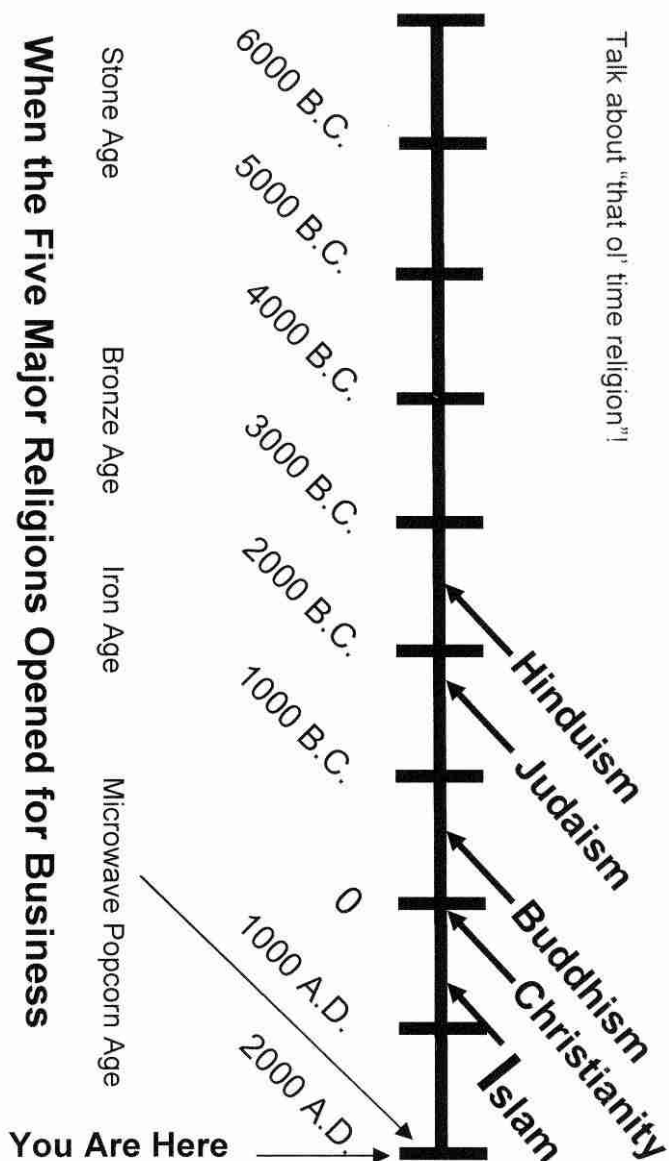
COMOLOM believes that God doesn't care one iota what religion you call yourself as long as you get The Point.

It's absolutely imperative that you get The Point.

COMOLOM asks us to stop acting like children assuming “our” religion is the correct, anointed one, and all others are pretenders. Just who do we think we are? How could we be wise enough to make such a judgment? This mentality is the death of us. It has to stop. □

In medio tutissimus ibis.







Grand Precept #7:

LEARN SOME HISTORY.

COMOLOM suggests we study history in general and the history of the world's major religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism) in particular. Study your own specific religion. Where did it come from? How did its rituals begin? Note the similarities between other religions and yours.

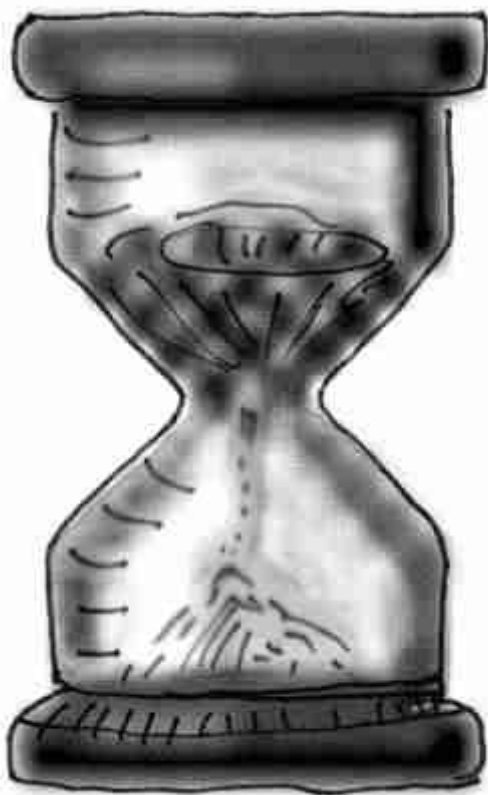
If your religion discourages you from asking questions about its past, its founders, and the development of its theology, you should feel personally offended; then you

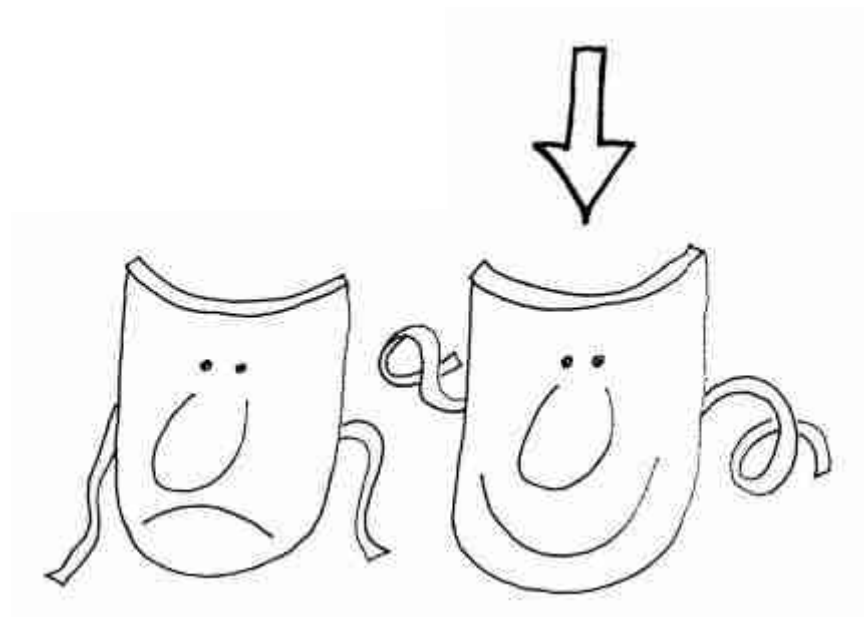


should ask twice as many questions. Would you buy stock in a company that told you to “have faith,” that told you never to go to the Better Business Bureau? Faith is a virtue, but ignorance has no redeeming features.

God knows you have to ask questions before you get The Point. It’s not only OK; it may be required. □

Respice, adspice, prospice.







Grand Precept #8:

BE PREPARED
TO LAUGH.

COMOLOM suspects that God is a cosmic joker. We see abundant proof:

the platypus,
the slug,
the tree sloth,
poison ivy,
icebergs,
sex,
fireflies,
flatulence,
tobacco,

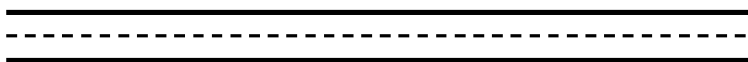


the size of the universe,
peyote,
mosquitoes,
fermented hops,
golf ball-sized hail,
laughing gas,
electric eels,
volcanoes,
fleas,
sunburns,
laughing hyenas
and the clap.

To say God works in mysterious ways is to make, shall we say, an extraordinary understatement. Actually, God may be slightly off the wall. □



Castigat ridendo mores.







PART II



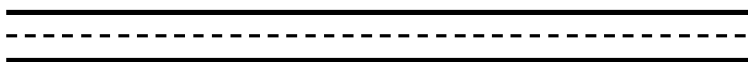
Human beings have always asked questions like, What is Life? Why am I Here? What's it All About? Why Me? and that old standby, What's the Point?

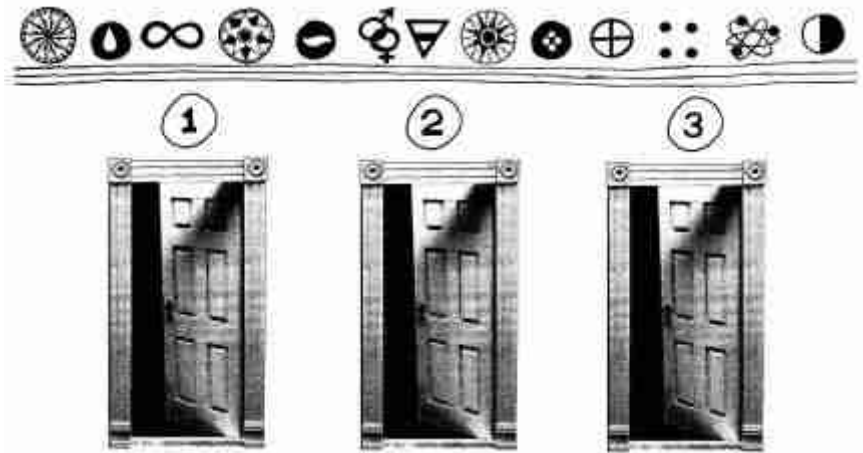
Omne trinum est perfectum.



hat's the
Point?

The
Three
Possibilities:





1. Life has No Point.

2. Life is a Lesson.

3. Life is a Test.



Possibility #1:

LIFE HAS NO POINT
WHATSOEVER.

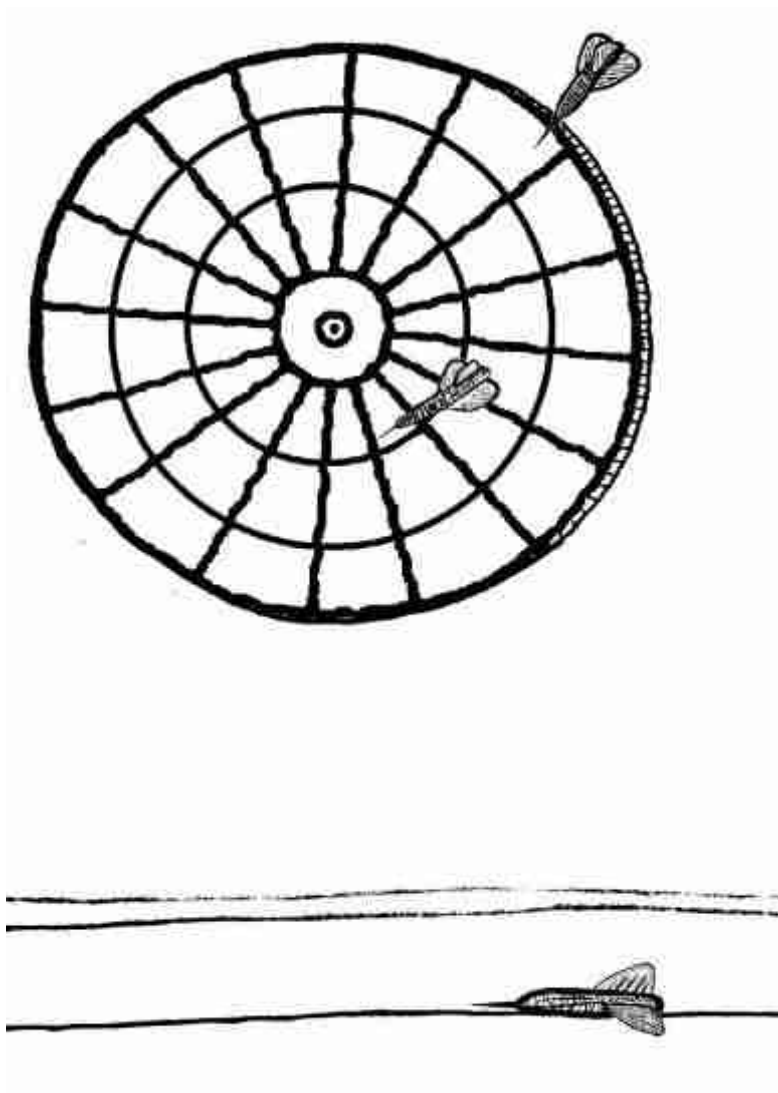
God may or may not exist. Who cares? Don't sweat it. Do what you want. Have as much fun as you can, or sit in the corner and cry. What's the difference? It doesn't matter whether you're Mother Teresa or Charlie Manson; just be yourself.

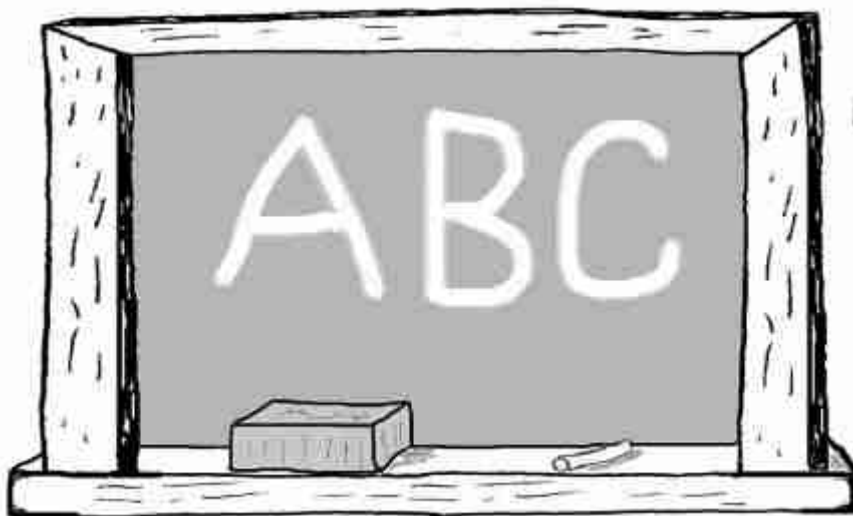
Don't waste time looking for a Point because there is No Point. But remember, even the very word "point" is a metaphor. (A *physical* point is the sharp end of an object like a dart; a *metaphorical* point is a sharp

idea that strikes home. Sharp beats dull. Pointed beats blunt. On target beats off target. Getting The Point beats not getting The Point. Get The Point?)

BEWARE: Before choosing Possibility #1, see Grand Precept #2. ▲

Vanitas vanitatum, omnis vanitas.







Possibility #2:

LIFE IS A LESSON.

Here we are on this entertaining little orb called earth. We have friends and loved-ones. We watch the sun come up and go down. We watch summer and winter trade places again and again. We experience life and death, joy and pain, sun and rain, real life and the movies.

We work and play and fight and complain. We help and hurt. We build and destroy. We make love. We make masterpieces. We make mistakes. We

usually do the best we can. We muddle through life's comedy and tragedy.

Even if we're complete idiots we eventually learn a thing or two.

Is it possible God set things up so we couldn't help but learn a few basic lessons? Maybe life is a short list of lessons we are all expected to master. Maybe all the metaphors are different ways of saying more or less the same thing, pointing in more or less the same direction, teaching more or less the same lessons over and over and over and over and over and over and over again.

Maybe God feels we have thick heads so He must be redundant. Maybe God feels we have thick heads so He must be redundant.

Maybe metaphors are God's way of speaking to us in a "universal language," a language that Polynesians, Portuguese, and

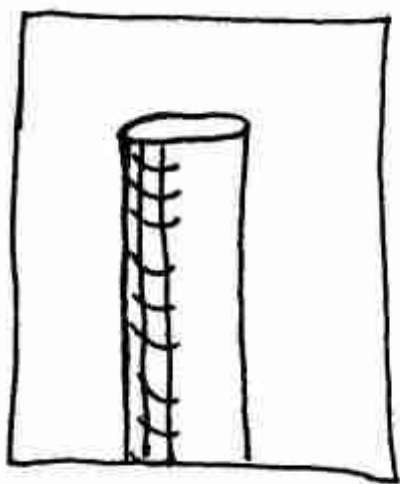


Rap Singers can understand. Maybe metaphors speak the same message in 2000 A.D. as they did in 2000 B.C. Maybe metaphors are “lessons for everyone for all time.”

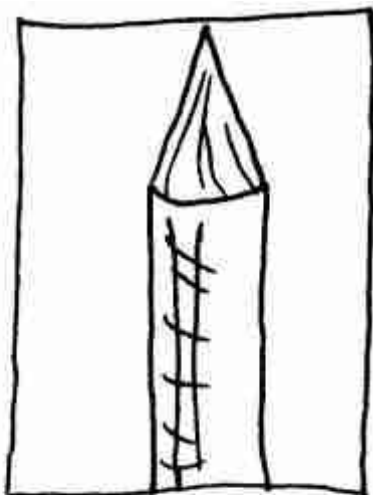
If life is indeed a lesson then it's safe to assume that we should keep our eyes open and absorb as much as possible. If life is a LESSON then obviously God is requiring us to take this class. Maybe we should be taking notes. Maybe we get extra credit — extra points, if you will — for asking questions.

Get The Point yet? ▲

Ope et consilio.



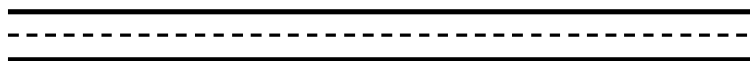
NO POINT

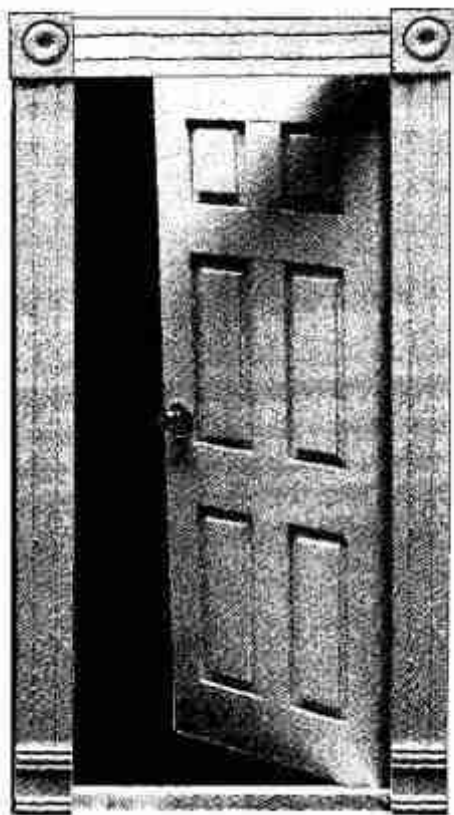


POINT



Get The Point?







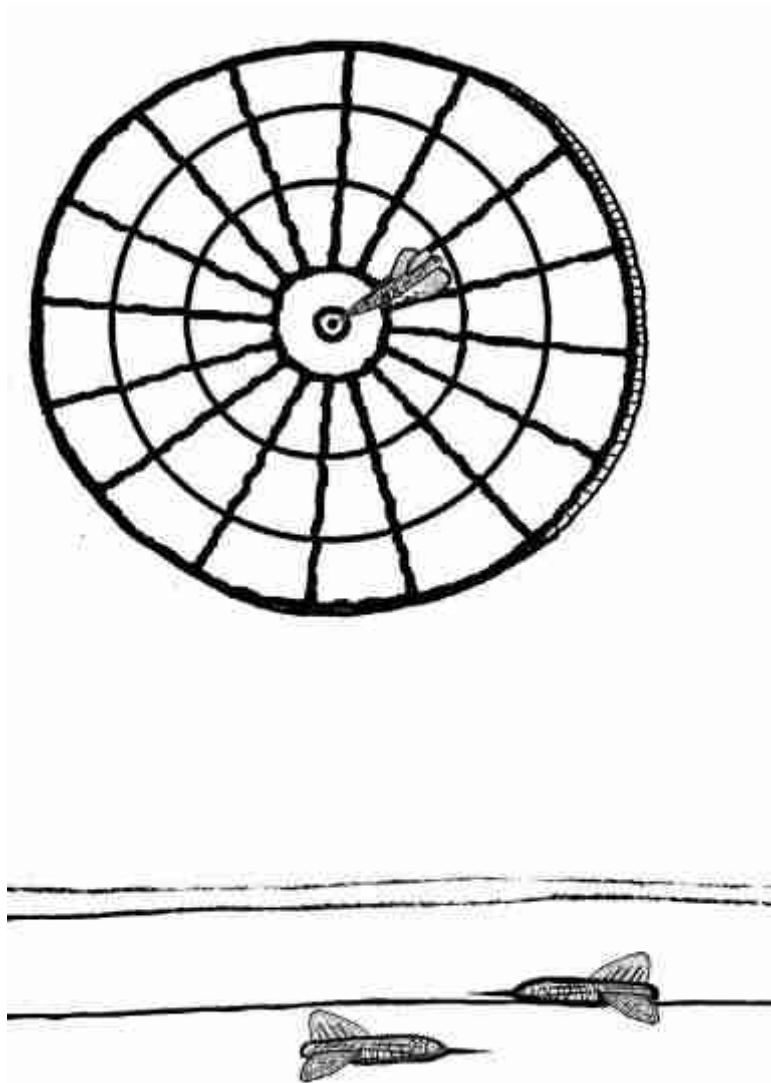
Possibility #3:

LIFE IS A TEST.

This possibility is the same as LIFE IS A LESSON except that after the lesson there's a test. If LIFE IS A TEST, then, first of all, we must learn our lessons. At some point we must be ready for the test. Is it a pass/fail test, or do we get letter grades? Is it an essay test or multiple choice? What happens if we fail? Has anyone ever gotten a perfect score?

Is the test a bunch of little tests “mixed in” with our life — like a bunch of pop quizzes — where we are graded continually on how we live our lives? Or do we take the test after we die? If we fail are we allowed (or required) to repeat the class? And most important: Is the test open book? ▲

Ignis aurum probat, miseria fortes viros.





The Ten Most Obvious Metaphors



PART III

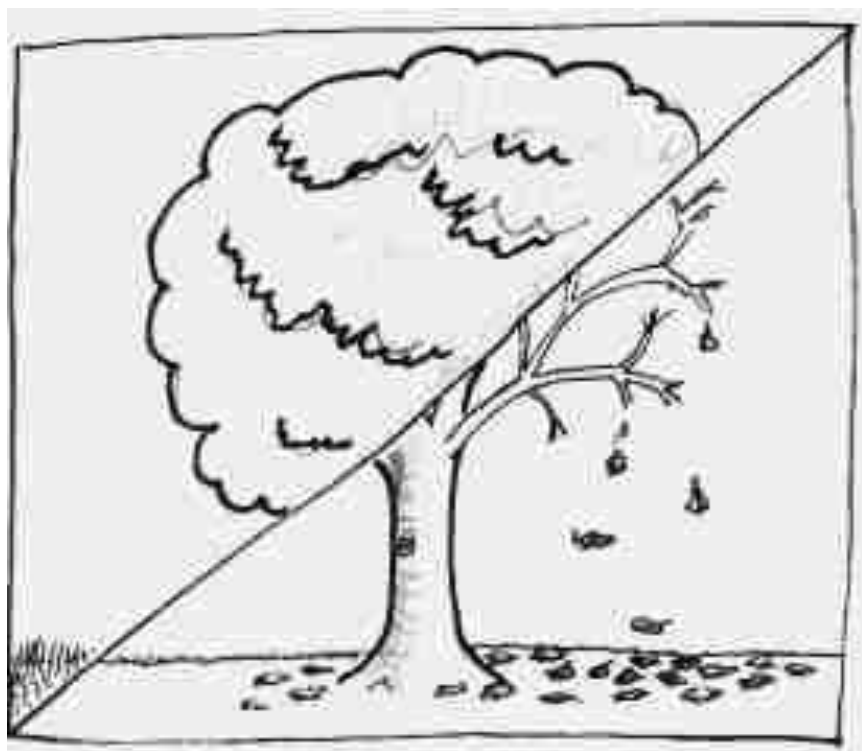


More or less obvious metaphors are all around us. Metaphors are anchored in the physical world but speak the language of the spirit.

Est modus in rebus.



he Ten Most Obvious Metaphors





Most Obvious Metaphor #1

THE SEASONS

The seasons come and go. It's a never-ending circle. Every year is a replay of last. At least the ants (if not the grasshoppers) have figured that out.

The seasons are talking to us. That's More Or Less Obvious. *COMOLOM suggests that God is mirroring our lives with the seasons.* Spring is birth. Summer is the prime of life. Fall is the twilight years. Winter is the end. You can see that, can't



you? The Iroquois, the Pharaohs, the Zuni and Neanderthal Man all understood.

Most religions celebrate the seasons of the year in parallel with celebrating the human experience from birth to death. For





instance, human fertility is associated with fertility of the soil, and most religions have a spring ritual similar to Easter that glorifies spring's rebirth at planting time. As their special way of saying, "Thank you in advance for a bountiful harvest," the Aztecs ripped the hearts out of thousands of virgins each spring. Hiding Easter eggs is more our style today.

Every day is a miniature year with miniature seasons.

Sun up,

noontime,

sundown,

nighttime.

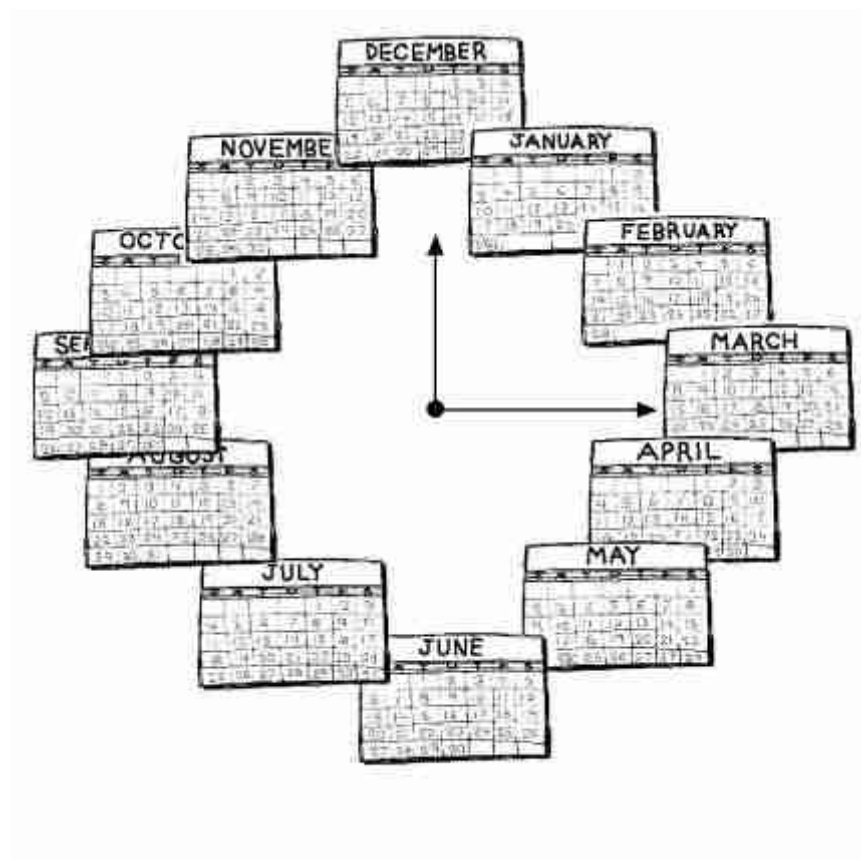


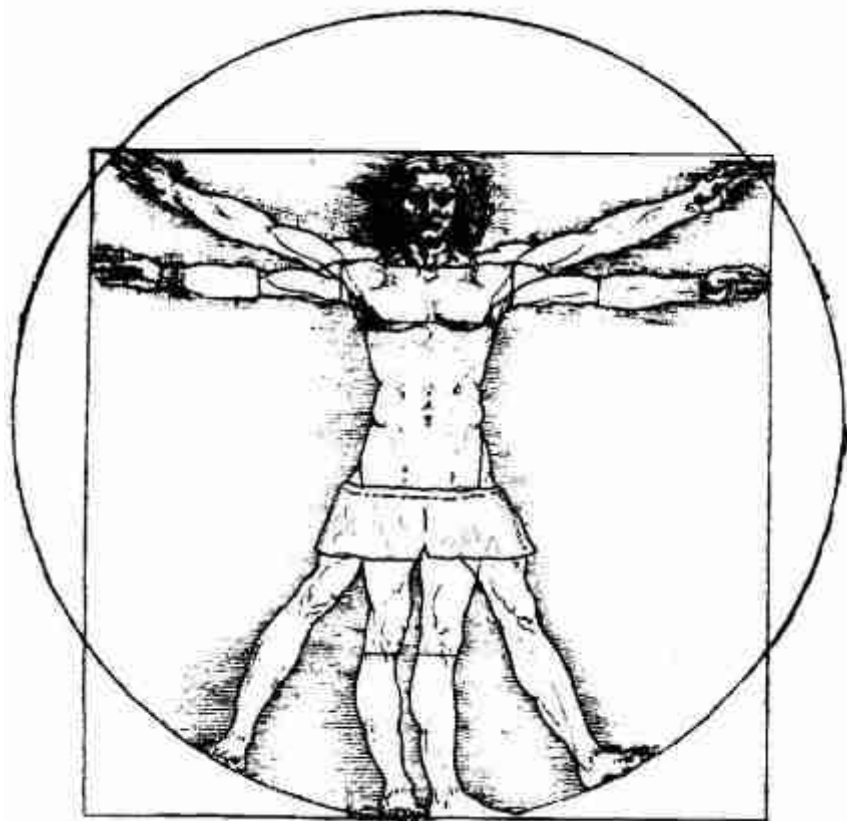
Again, God holds a mirror up to our lives. Sun up is birth and awakening. Noon is the warm and lusty prime of life. Sundown is the beginning of the end. Darkness is the end when we close our eyes to sleep.

Life is a spinning wheel, a procession of the seasons. Tomorrow will eventually become yesterday. So plant now if you want to harvest later. Plan for winter because you know it's coming.

The season metaphor is filled with lectures, warnings and comforting counsel. Do you hear the counsel? ■

Horas non numero nisi serenas.



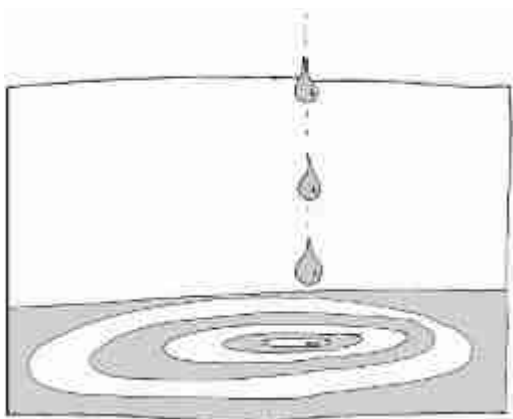




Most Obvious Metaphor #2

THE CIRCLE

The days and the seasons are an unbroken circle. Human generations — life and death — are a circle.



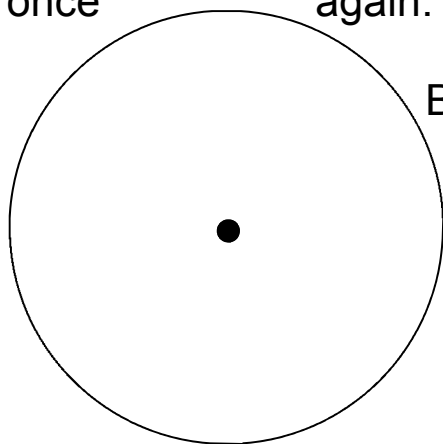
Childhood, adolescence, adulthood, old age. The birth of the new generation, the passing of the old. Again and again. Around and around.



An ecosystem is a circle. Elements from the earth are taken up by the roots of a tree. The tree drops its leaves. The circle is completed as the leaves decompose, and the elements return to the earth.

A cow eats some grass, then dumps its “load” on the earth. The load dissolves and becomes fertilizer for the next generation of grass, which is eaten in turn by the next generation of cow. A circle. Bizarre but true.

Rain falls on the mountains, makes its way to the river and flows into the sea. Then it evaporates and becomes a rain cloud once again. Full circle.



Blood moves through your body from heart to fingertip and back again. It's even called “circulation.”



The circle is beautiful to a mathematician. A circle is a curved line, every part of which is equidistant from one single, solitary, fixed center point. One point. ONE POINT. Get it? A circle is wondrously unique to geometry. (COMOLOM assumes that mathematical geniuses like Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking are able to see many, many more metaphors than we can.)

The circle is visible everywhere in nature: ripples in a pond, Saturn's rings, peaches, bubbles, raindrops, the onion, the sun and the moon. The circle, in its perfection, has been worshipped from the earliest times. Stonehenge is a bunch of huge rocks arranged in a circle. The Aztec calendar is a golden circle. The teepee, coin, lifesaver, and wedding ring are all circles. The pizza is a circle. The Frisbee is a circle. A doughnut is a circle. A campfire is a circle. Recycling is a circle. Reincarnation is a circle. Hurricanes and tornados are circles. Water spins down



the drain in a circle. We circle the wagons. We circle the correct answer. We talk about a circle of close friends, the Arctic Circle and the vicious circle.

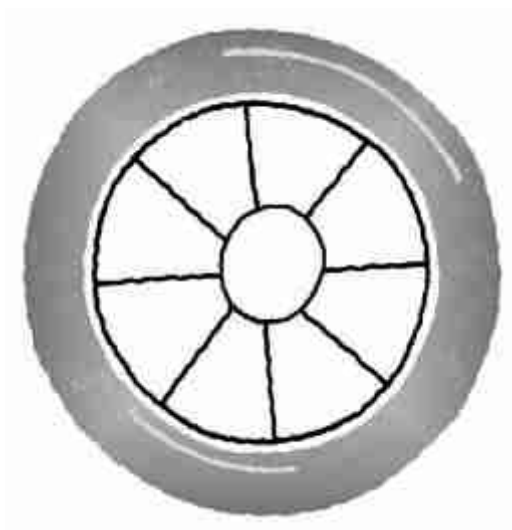
Electrons circle the neutrons. The moon circles the earth. The planets circle¹ the sun. The sun is The Point in the center² of the circle. The Point is the source of light. Why do you suppose our ancestors were sun worshippers?

On this little globe you can't throw anything away. And what you give away, you get back. It comes full circle. (So be careful what you give.)

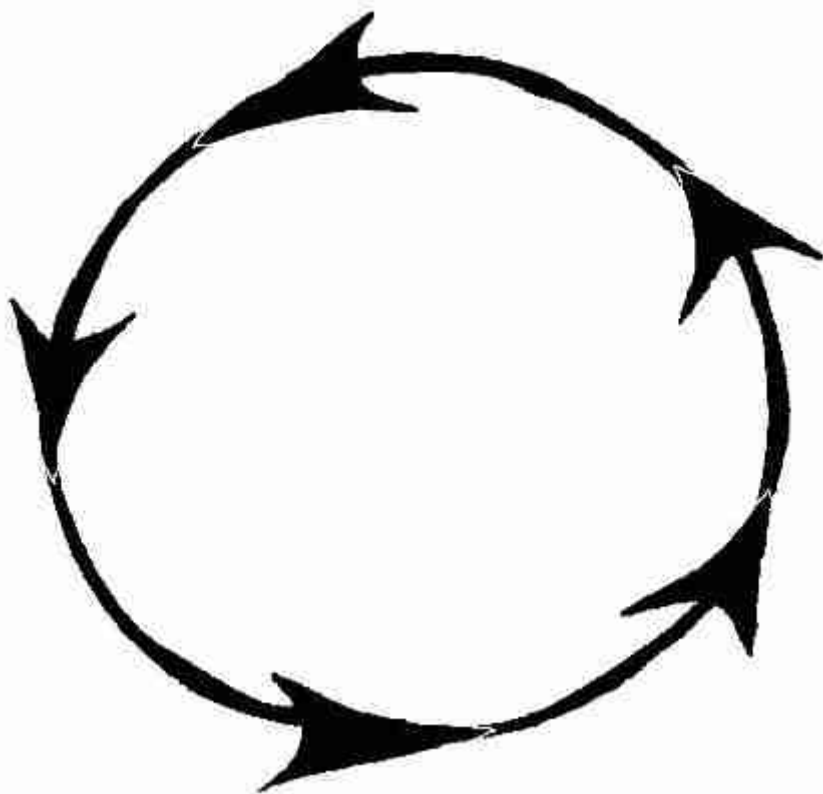
The circle is the essence of symmetry, order and balance. What comes around, goes around. ●

1. An ellipse is just a warped circle.

2. More or less.



Terra es, terram ibis.





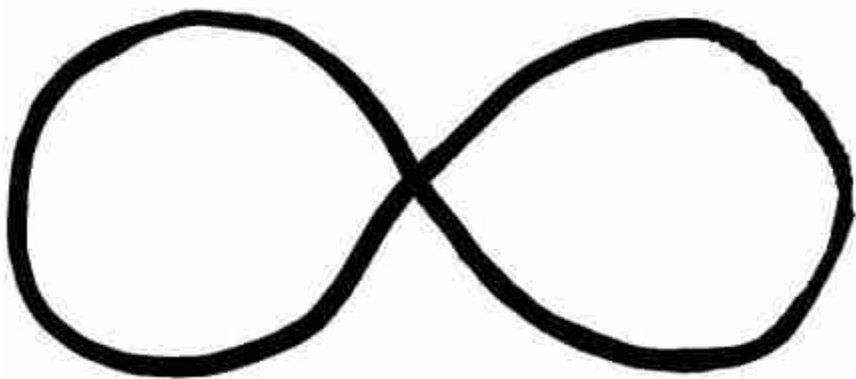
Most Obvious Metaphor #3

I INFINITY

OK . . . Ready? Think about how big the universe is. Try to comprehend the “end” of the universe, that place so far away that nothing is beyond it. Got it? Now ask yourself what’s just on the other side of that. Wow... Next, try to imagine the beginning or the end of time. Hard, isn’t it? We can’t know whether time has a beginning or an end... Think about the tiny world of atoms, of electrons and neutrons and protons and



quarks. Now ask yourself what THEY are made of. Ouch, that hurts the brain. Why? Because all these things are beyond our brain's ability to comprehend. We are mystified, perplexed, and a bit frustrated.



Never, forever and always are hard to compute.

What if God is like a systems engineer, and we are like a bunch of one-year-old babies in diapers? Imagine the difficulty God would have communicating some of His more complex ideas. Maybe infinity,



eternity, and all things “beyond comprehension” are God’s metaphor for “Take my word for it, you guys just wouldn’t get it.” Maybe this metaphor should come to mind when we’re trying to grasp why bad things happen to good people; why life seems unfair; why young children are hurt or killed in car accidents; why starvation and misery go on and on. Maybe it's not possible to explain or understand IN WORDS why famines and earthquakes happen.

Maybe God wants us to be in awe.
COMOLOM believes that a continual





state of awe is acceptable if not downright prudent. COMOLOM wallows in awe.

The infinity metaphor seems to be saying, “Ask if you want, but don’t get mad when you don’t understand the answer. Don’t stop looking for answers, but don’t assume that ALL the answers are available to you. Some things will always be beyond logic, just beyond your reach. Try not to be too judgmental because – no matter how much you learn – you’ll never have all the facts.” ■

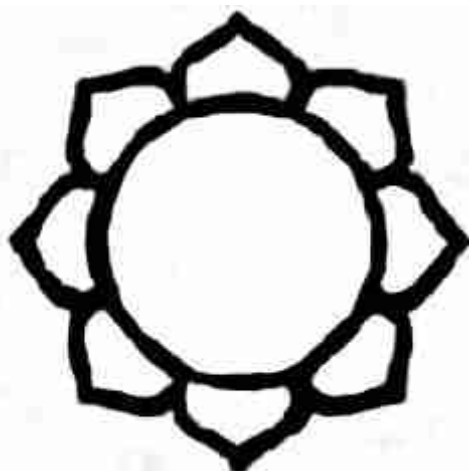
Et nunc et semper.

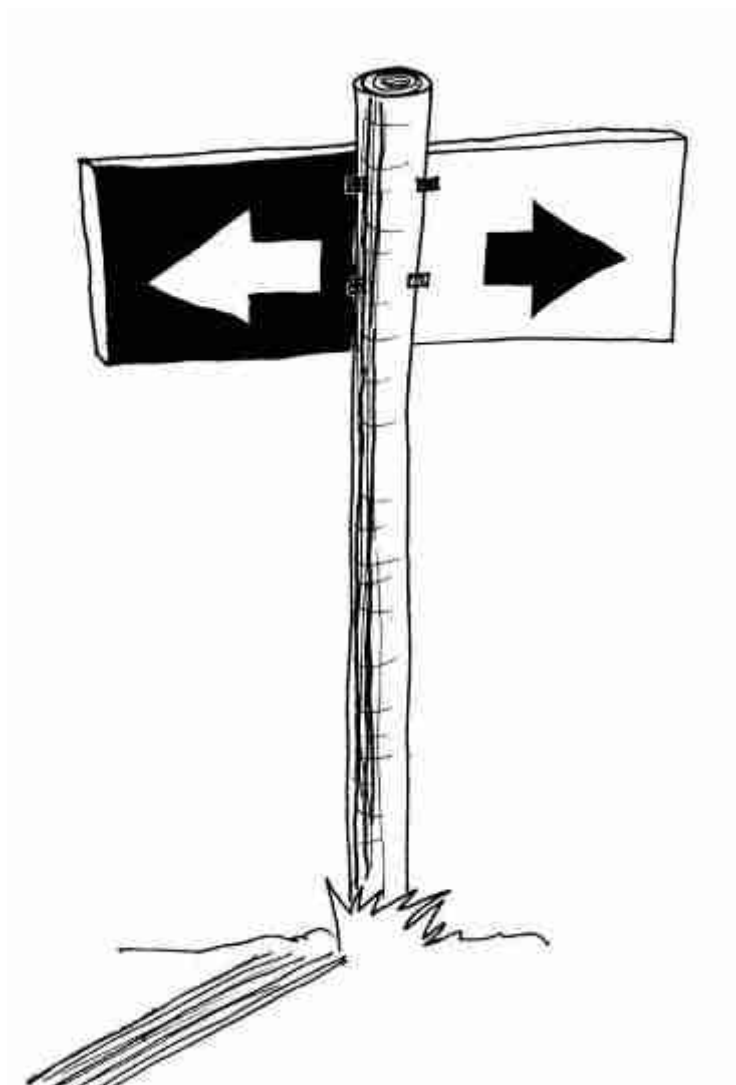


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Most Obvious Metaphor #4

LIGHT AND DARK

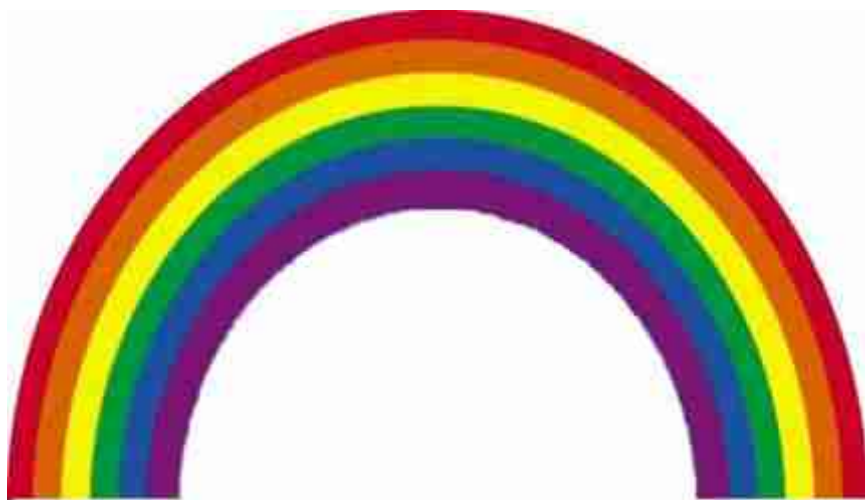
By all means, let there be light. You can see in the light. You are blind in the dark. They say Jesus is The Light. The Devil is the Prince of Darkness. (Not surprisingly, other religions say the same things about their good guys and bad guys.) Light is warm. Darkness is cold. Plants grow in the light. They don't grow in the dark.

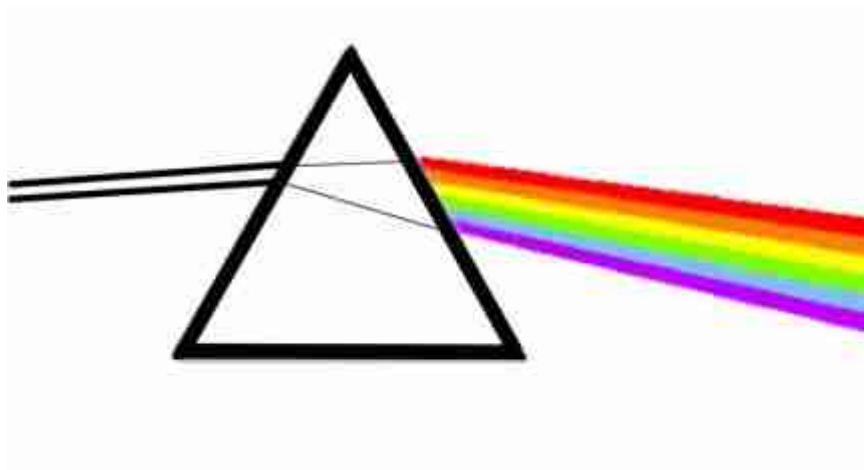
If you cover grass with a piece of wood, and light is shut out, the grass shrivels and



dies. Light is nourishment. Light is warmth and rejuvenation. Light is energy and vigor and life.

A scientist will tell you that white light is made up of all colors. You can use a prism (or raindrops) to break white light into the colors of the rainbow. Colors add zest and spice to our physical world. White is pure. White is bright. White is milk and snow. White is clean and fresh and new.





On the other hand, Black is the absence of all colors. Black is death and destruction. Nothingness. The void, the abyss, the night, the dark. A deep, bottomless pit. A black hole.

Good guys wear white hats; bad guys wear black. God is traditionally pictured with white hair and a spotless white bathrobe. Angels have white wings. Witches, warlocks, vampires and bikers prefer basic black. That's the Yin and the Yang of it.



The light/dark metaphor offers a clear choice: Light beats dark; life beats death; warmth beats cold; seeing beats blindness; flowers beat charcoal.

Sometimes there's a middle ground called "the gray area," but everyone knows the difference between black and white.

You are asked to choose between two ends of the spectrum. Only truly marginal folks with missing brain chemicals choose the dark side. ■

In lumine tuo videbimus lumen.

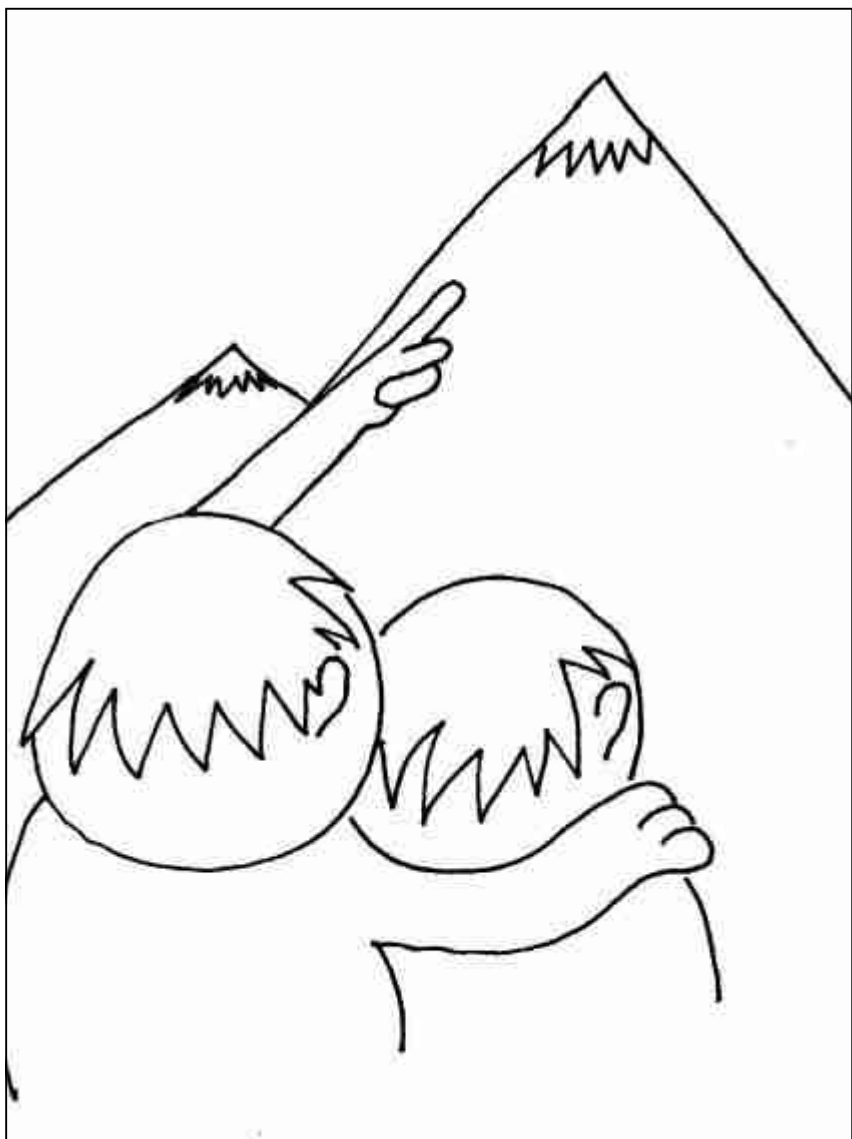


White

Black

The Gray Area

(Look for the overlap)



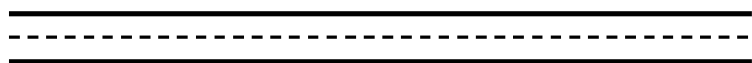


Most Obvious Metaphor #5

TTEACHER AND STUDENT

COMOLOM sees a special metaphoric relationship between teacher and student. A teacher is the guardian of civilization's treasures. A teacher holds knowledge and culture safe, then passes them on to the student. A teacher enlightens and lights the way. The student listens, learns, and finally climbs to the next level.

Parent and child are teacher and student. The parent educates and disciplines the

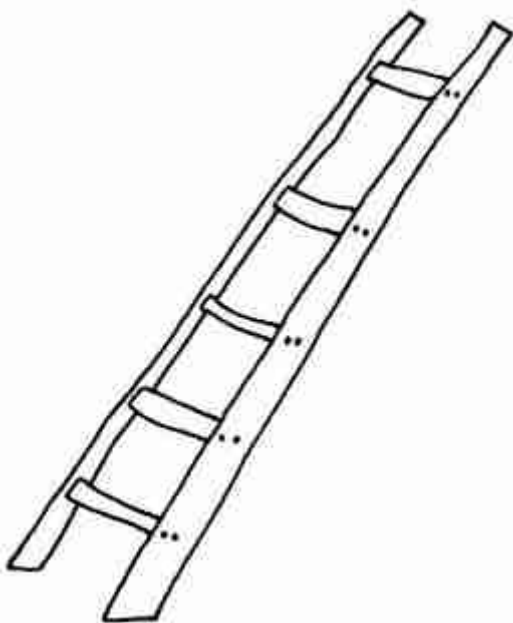


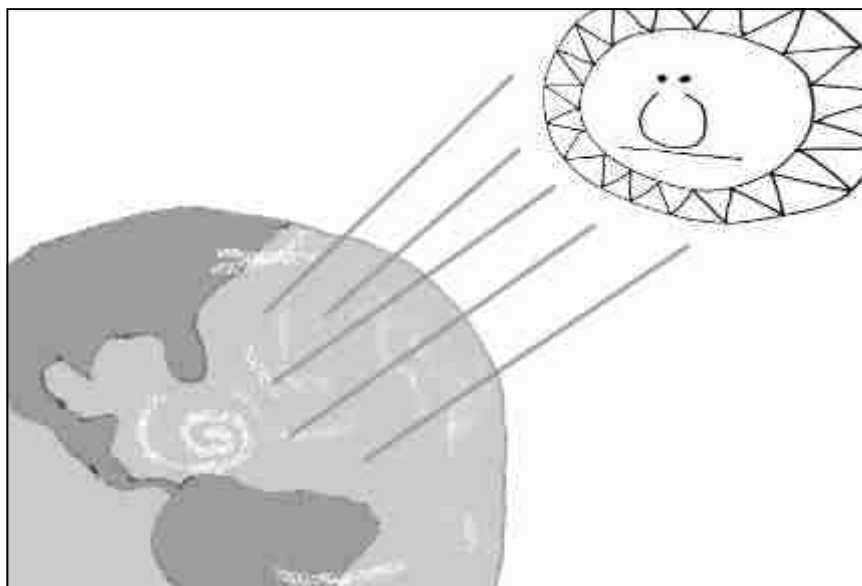


child. The parent passes on virtues along with vices. The parent teaches a love or an aversion to learning, a love or an aversion to other human beings, a love or an aversion to life. The parent teaches either reason and compassion — or ignorance, violence and bigotry. The child learns more and more, then eventually moves away from home. In a real sense, home is school.

Someday
student will
become teacher,
and child will
become parent.

COMOLOM
teaches that
each and every





human being is always a teacher and always a student.

Life is a classroom where you teach by word and deed, and you never, ever stop learning.

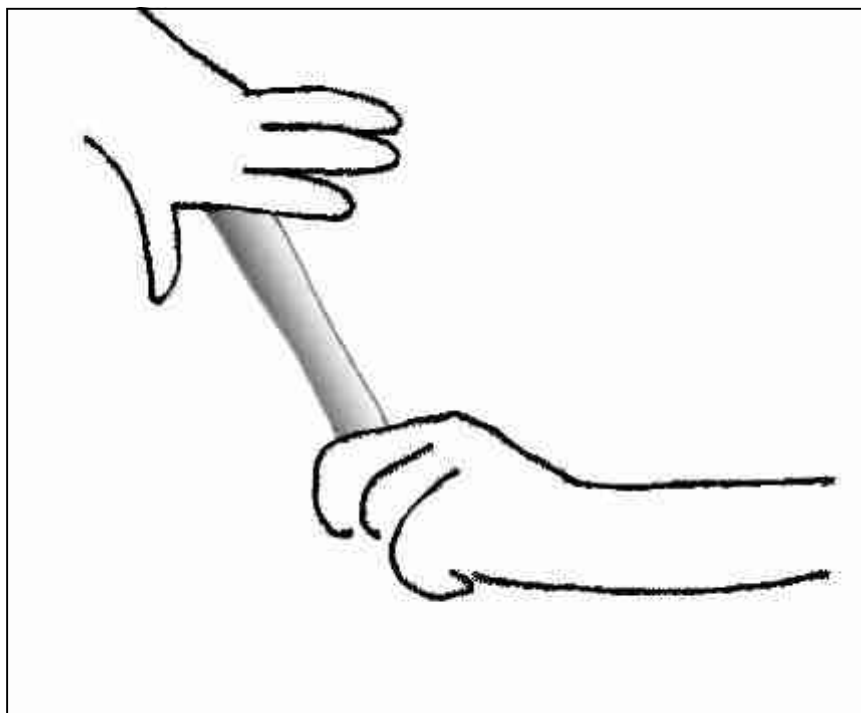
We all start as students and graduate to become teachers. We absorb and reflect the light.

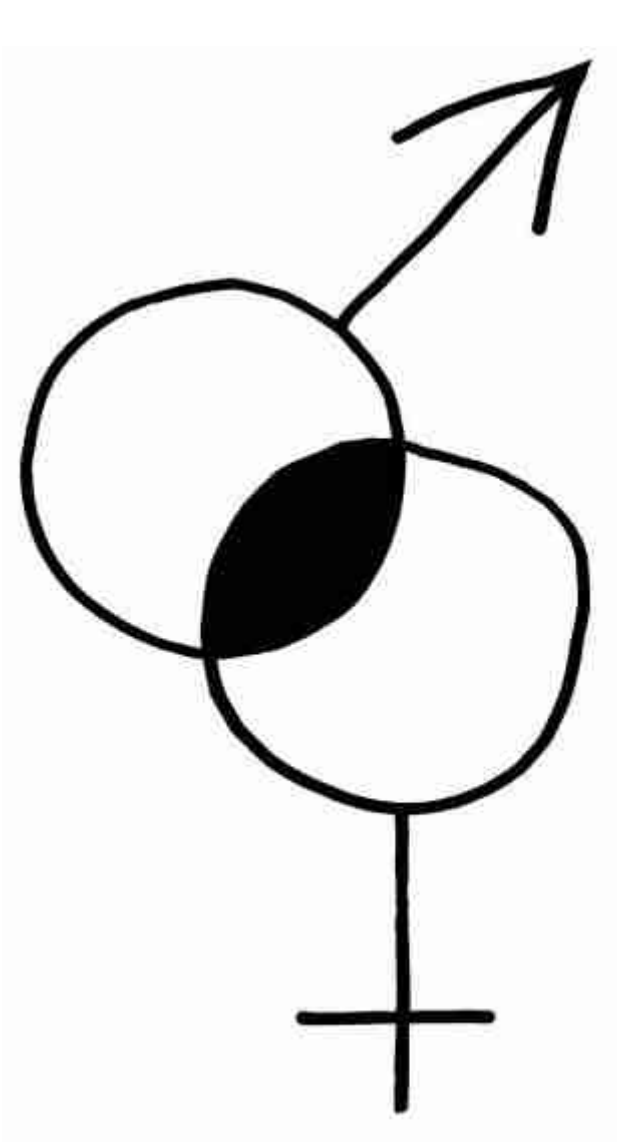


The Teacher/Student relationship may be a metaphor for God's relationship to man. If He is the Ultimate Teacher, then we are the eager (or spit wad-throwing) students.

In the classroom an inattentive student hurts everyone, but he hurts himself most of all. ■

Docendo discimus.





Look for the overlap indeed!



Most Obvious Metaphor #6

S_{EX}

COMOLOM recognizes that sex can have vast entertainment value. At the same time we acknowledge that sex is truly weird. Let's put it this way: If you were God sitting around one day trying to conjure up a method by which human beings would get together to produce the next generation, let's just say that sex as we know it would not be the first approach that would spring to mind. Maybe a special dance. Maybe a



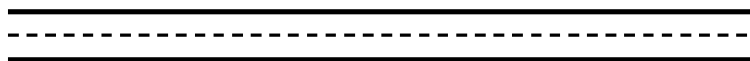
zippy kiss. Maybe even a secret handshake.

While sex is unquestionably strange, it requires an extraordinary level of intimacy for man and woman. And sex is an unmistakable metaphor for “two becoming one.” Sex is a union, a melding of two beings. The result of that union is sometimes a brand new human being.

Men and women are each half of the whole, complements to each other. Each brings strengths and weaknesses to the union. It's almost as if The Big Match Maker in the Sky is saying, “Go ahead and be intimate and have fun, *but be responsible*, because you will reap what you sow. Along with the pleasure must come some pain. Go ahead and frolic your brains out, but one day you will have teenagers in your home.” ■



Tempus ludendi.



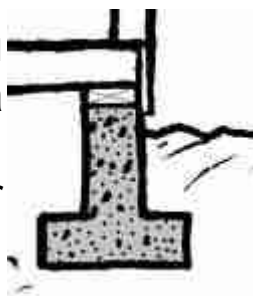




Most Obvious Metaphor #7

THE FOUNDATION

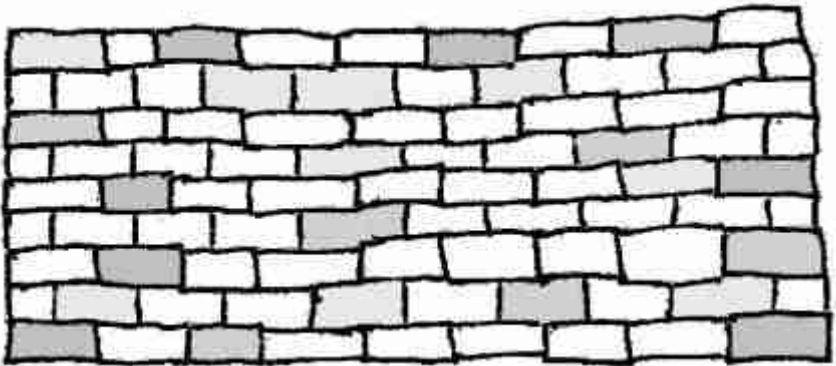
The first order of business in constructing a home is building the foundation. Find a good location with stable ground. No bogs or mushy earth. Then, before you lay down a floor and stand up the walls, you construct a solid foundation, a firm base upon which to build. If you do a poor job on your foundation it will shift and

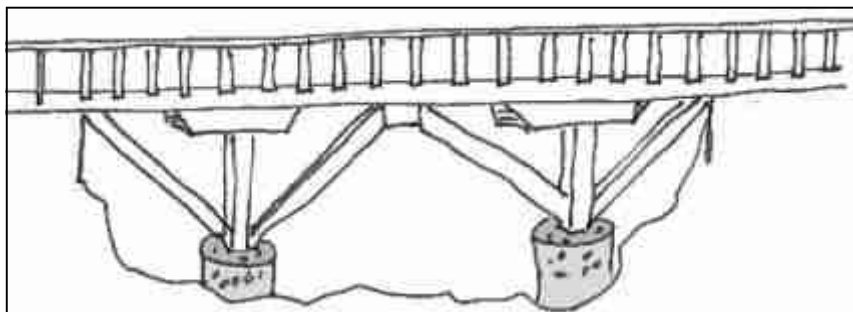




move. Your home will tilt and sink. When the floor eventually touches the earth it will rot. A gorgeous home on a cheap foundation might look fine at first, but it won't stand the test of time.

It's always more expensive to fix or replace a foundation than it would have been to build it correctly in the first place. Always. The foundation is mostly hidden and almost invisible, so it is often





overlooked. Big mistake. It must be built with care.

Families, societies, whole civilizations are built upon foundations. Values are a foundation. Morals are a foundation. Trust and loyalty and fidelity are foundations.

Education is a foundation. Reason is a foundation. Work is a foundation. Law is a foundation. Tolerance is a foundation. Faith, hope and charity are foundations. And families are the foundation of a society.

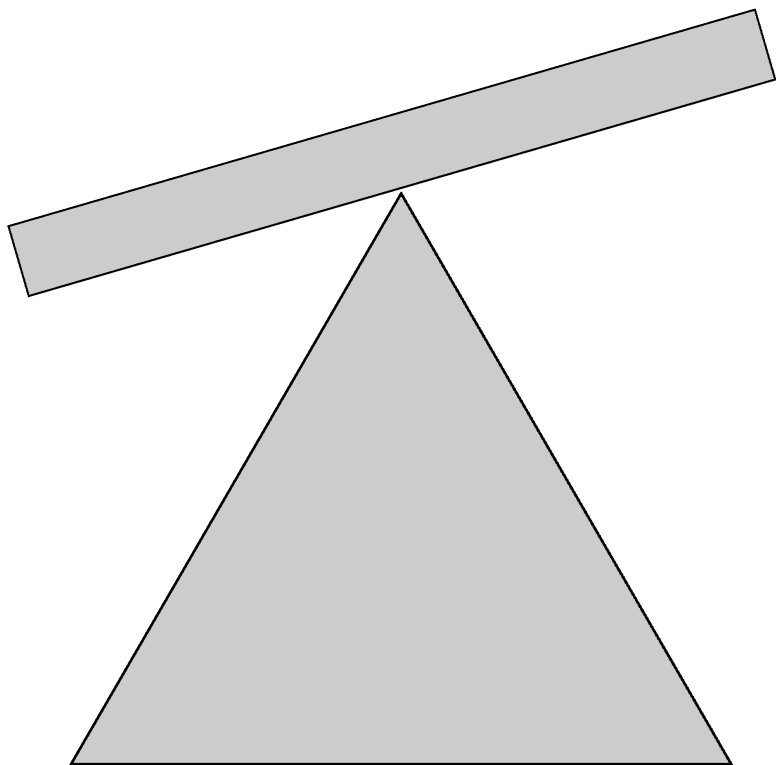


Build a cheap foundation at your peril. Saving time and money on the foundation is false economy. Don't try to build a mansion upon a foundation of rotten stumps.

The foundation metaphor says, "know your priorities." Don't be penny-wise and pound-foolish. Start with first things first. ■

Terra firma.







Most Obvious Metaphor #8

B_{ALANCE}

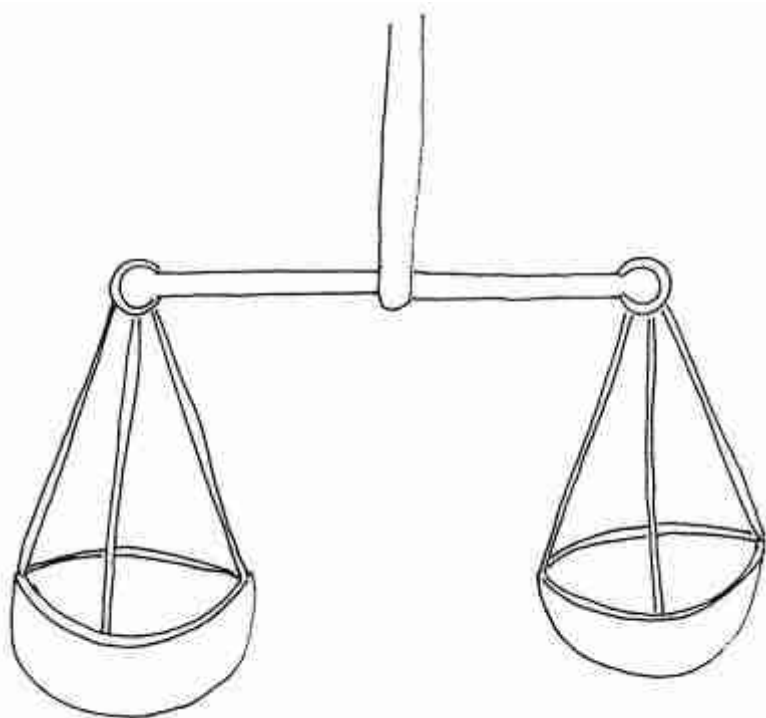
Earth's atmosphere includes oxygen, nitrogen and carbon dioxide in delicate balance. The planets spin around the sun in perpetual balance. A species' population will starve if it doesn't stay in balance. A farmer performs a pH test on the soil. The pH must be in balance. If the soil is too acidic or too basic, nothing will grow. Parents must balance love and discipline as they raise their children. Too much love and too little



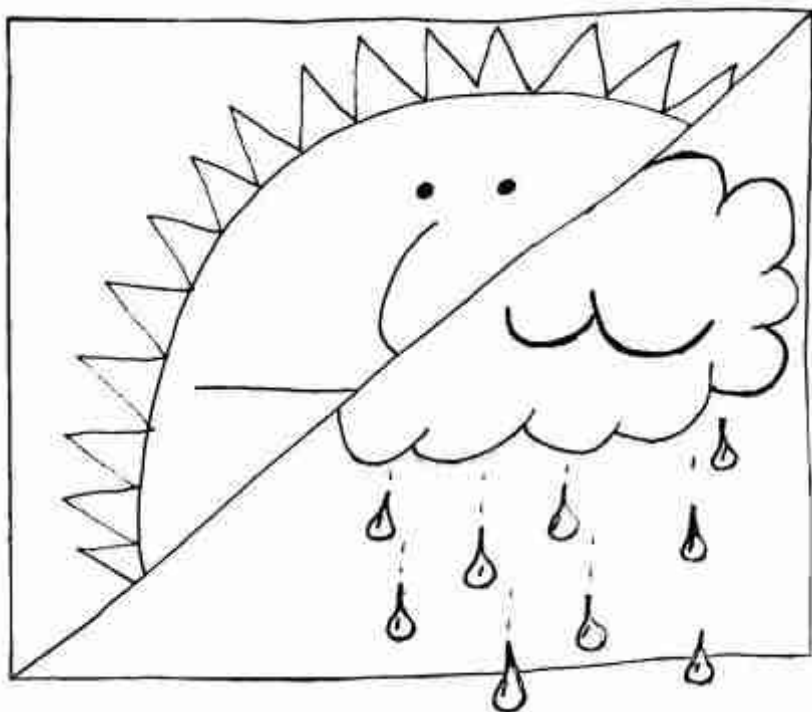
discipline makes a spoiled brat. Too little love and too much discipline makes a bank robber. Balance is the essence of architecture, music and the tightrope act. Even a checkbook must be balanced.

Human beings must balance their lives between business and family, between work and play, between doing and thinking. A mathematical equation is in balance.

The Balance metaphor says, “Don’t overdo it.” The early Greeks urged moderation in all things. Balance is somewhere in the middle, a happy medium. We know very well when we’ve stepped over the line, when we’ve tipped the balance. Balance reminds us to move back to the middle, back to the center. Balance is fairness, compromise, moderation. Balance is the scales of justice. Middle ground. Common ground. Stable ground. ■



Justitia omnibus.

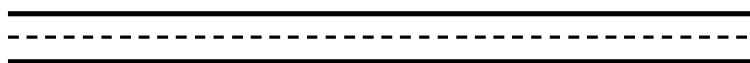




Most Obvious Metaphor #9

WEATHER

Early man had reason to see God as an unpredictable, grumpy guy. The Big Guy in the Sky might have a tantrum of thunder and lightning one day followed by a calming, mild rain shower the next. He could pelt your crops with hail and sandstorms. Or He could cool you off with a quiet wind. He might send a tornado to suck up your herd of goats. Or He might send a month of sunny days. Who could know?



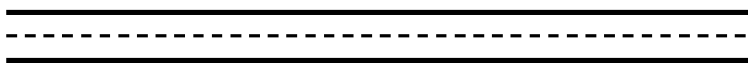
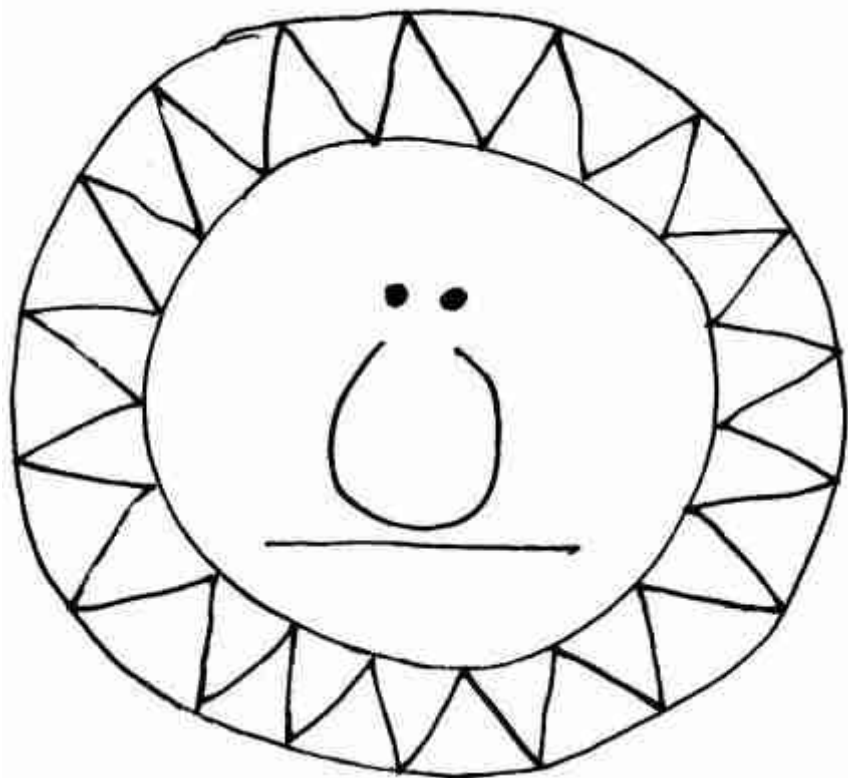


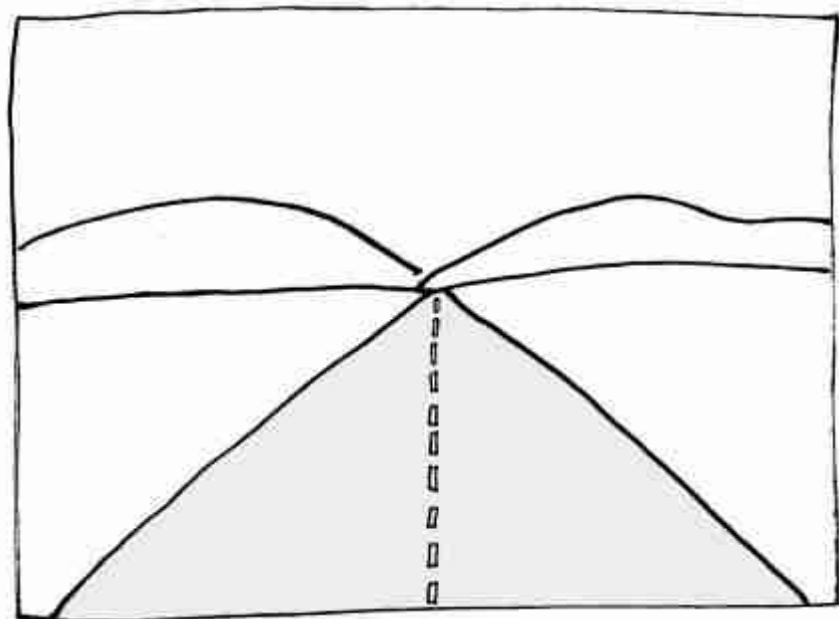
Misty. Foggy. Cloudy. Withering, blistering heat. Hazy. Rainy. Stormy. Frosty cold. Bright and sunny. Brisk and blustery. Absolutely crystal clear.

Weather may be a More Or Less Obvious Metaphor for our emotions, our mood swings, our changes. Weather is unpredictable. Kind of like us.

Weather may be a metaphor for change in general. Change is inevitable. Go with the flow. Weather the storm. Don't spit in the wind. Get through bad weather. Wait for good. Every cloud has a silver lining. Well, almost every cloud. ■

Sol lucet omnibus.



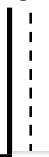




Most Obvious Metaphor #10

THE JOURNEY

Make no mistake about it: Life is a journey. We talk about the road not taken, the path to riches, the highway to heaven. We speak of happy trails and a long day's journey into night. We wonder when our paths will cross again. We are fellow travelers on the road to who-the-heck-knows-where. And it's no walk in the park.





Our journey, our “trip” probably has a destination. So, where are we going? Are we headed down the right road? Have we made any wrong turns?

While you’re making bread, stop and smell the flour. Concentrate right now on the journey, not just the destination. Slow down and watch for speed bumps. Hold the wheel firmly.

And don't burn too many bridges. ▣

Via trita, via tuta.





The Four Presumptuous Assumptions



PART IV

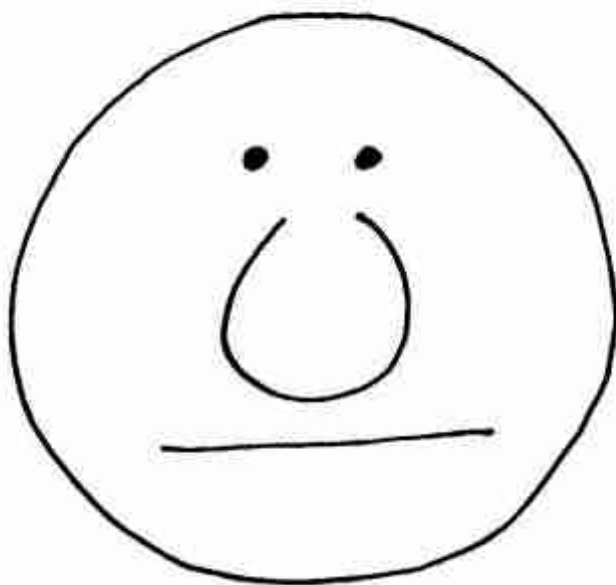


**T h e P r e s u m p t u o u s
Assumptions are just that. We
have no proof, only precepts,
possibilities, and More Or Less
Obvious Metaphors.**

Ipse dixit.



he Four Presumptuous Assumptions



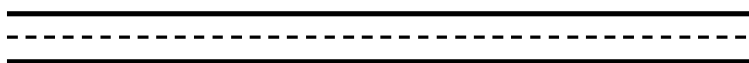


Assumption #1:

THERE'S SOMETHING
GOING ON.

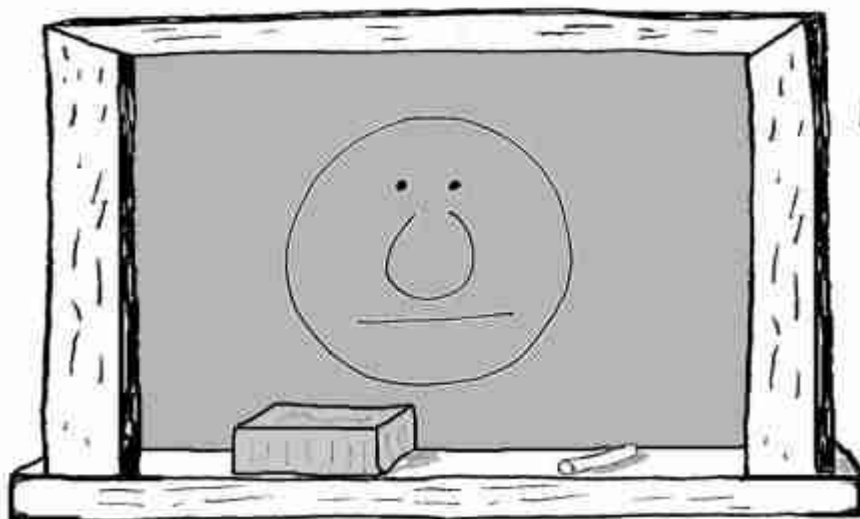
There's something going on that we can't quite put our finger on. COMOLOM assumes there IS a god. The Grand Precept #2 tells us we have nothing to lose. Besides, if life is a lesson, then there must be *some* teacher. Maybe the metaphors are God's flash cards.

Maybe God looks like Santa Claus but probably not. Maybe God looks like a rock. Maybe God is part of every spark of life,



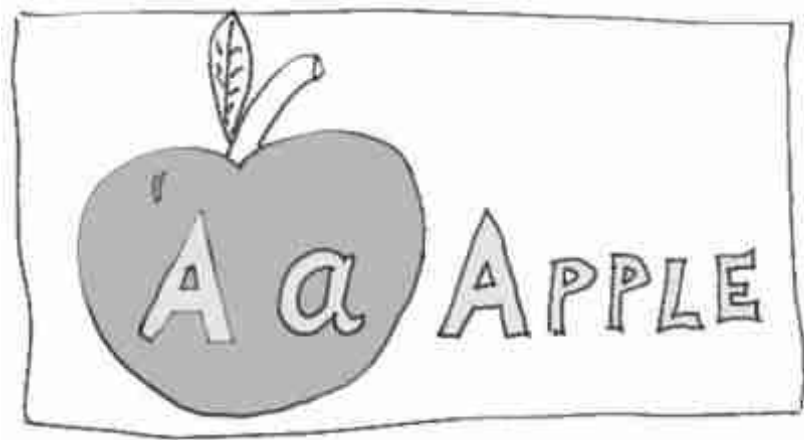


every force everywhere on earth,
everywhere in the universe. Every toad.
Every amoebae. Every blade of grass.
Every comet. Every speck of cosmic grit.
Maybe God is inside you and me and the
bag lady on the corner. Who knows?





Maybe metaphors are God's flashcards



If you're certain who God is and what He's up to, get over it. Be faithful to your religion's definition of God if your faith comforts you. But remember that doubt isn't a crime; it's a prime ingredient to learning.

Shed your certainty.

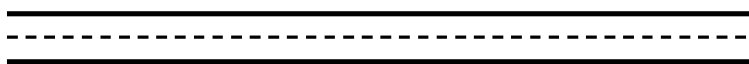
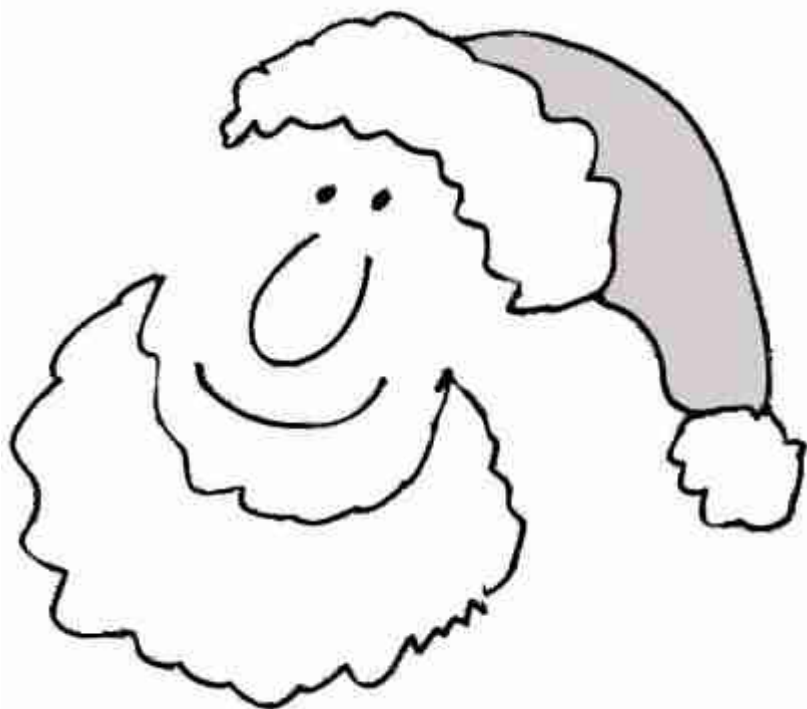
If you're sure there is no God because a nice God wouldn't allow wars to happen,

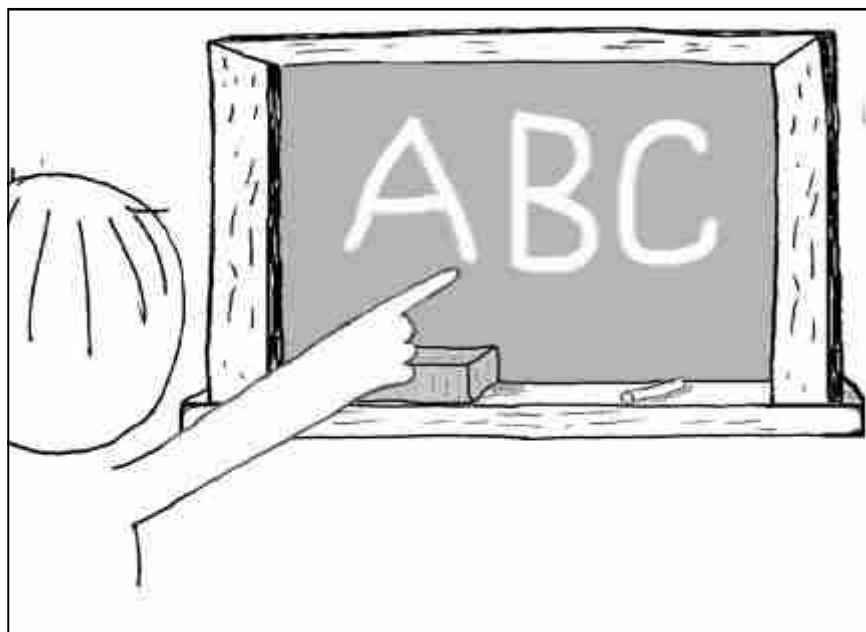


snap out of it. Who said God was nice? If you can't prove God's existence with reason, then you can't prove God's nonexistence with reason. The teeter-totter tips both ways.

Cultivate open-minded doubt. +

Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei.







Assumption #2:

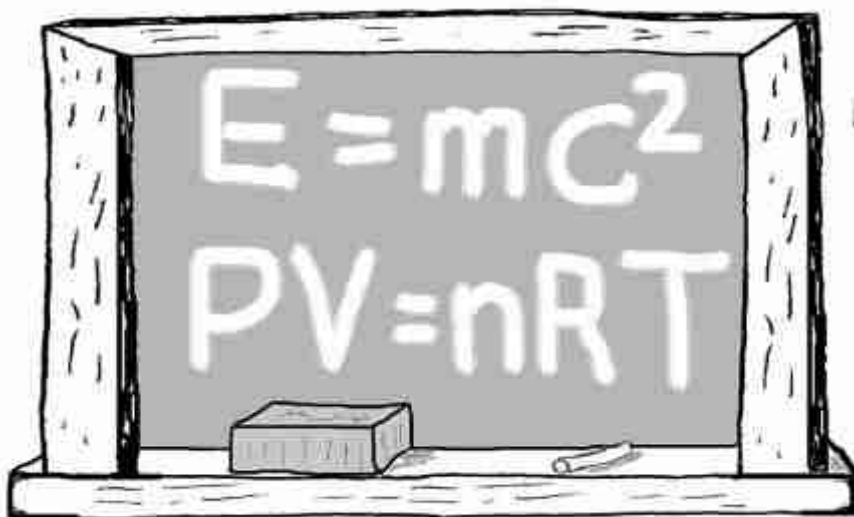
WE ARE HERE
TO LEARN.

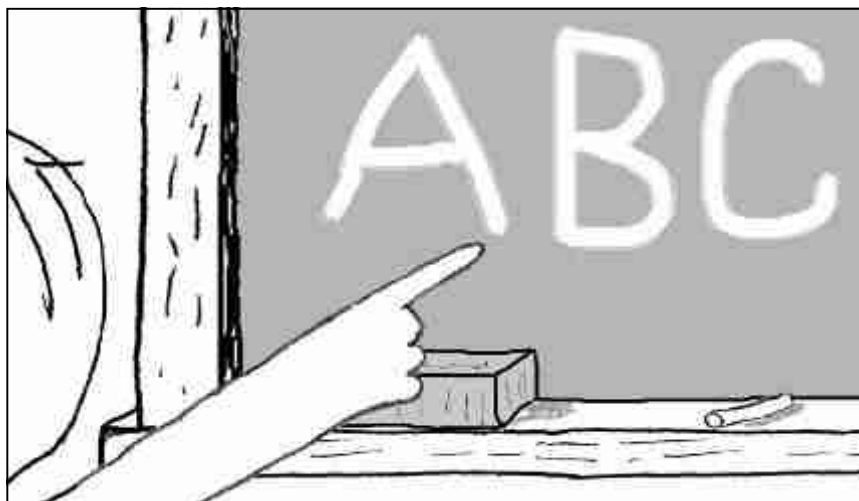
COMOLOM assumes we're here to "learn our lessons." Life may be a lesson, or life may be a test. But either way it's class time. Listen up. Ask. Doubt. Seek and ye just might find. Learn. Look for the overlap. Watch for the metaphors.

Enlightenment is work. Acquiring wisdom takes time. Fan the flame and pass it on.



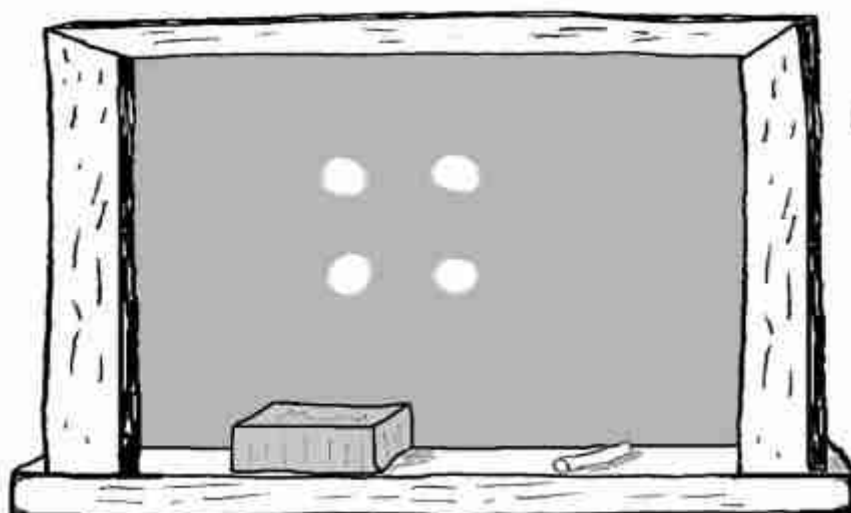
Ignorance and stupidity are at the root of much of the world's evils. Child abuse, racism and superstition all fester in the darkness, wither away in the light. Knowledge opens doors.





We burn our hands on the stove until something clicks, and we finally get The Point. We learn. We travel one step at a time. We climb one rung at a time. We build one brick at a time. +

***Homo doctus in se semper divitias
habet. Parva leves capiunt animas.***





Assumption #3:

METAPHORS WILL POINT THE WAY.

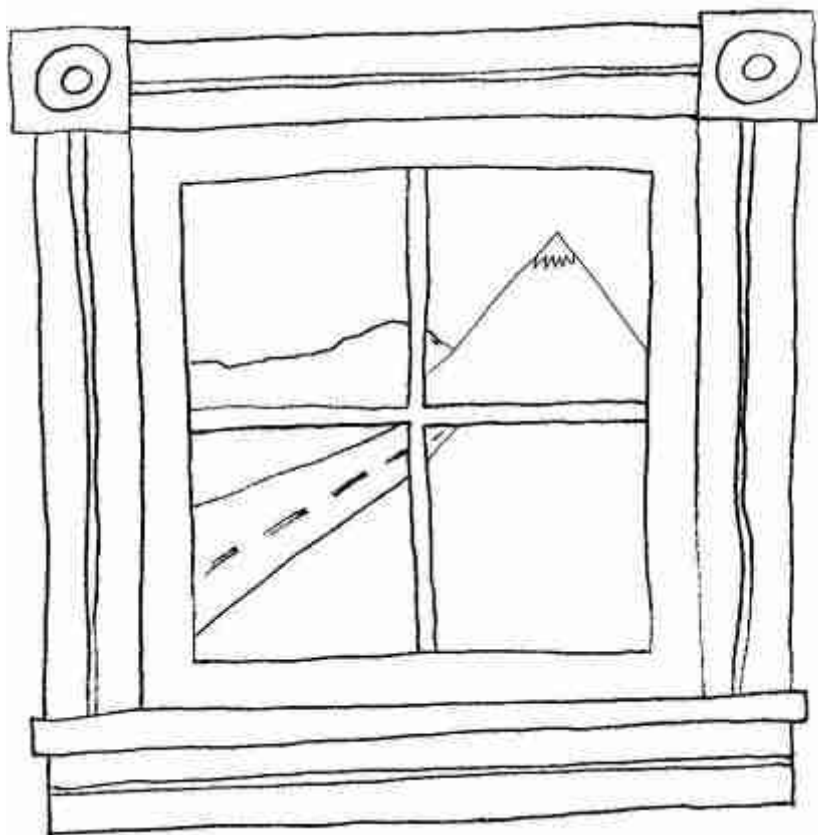
COMOLOM assumes that metaphors are God's pointers. A pointer is a tip, a hint, a bit of useful information. A pointer points the way.

A metaphor is a road sign,
a mountain top,
a favorable wind.

A metaphor is fertile ground,
solid rock,
the sands of time.



On the eve of the championship game a basketball player says, “We’re on the brink, man, on the edge of having it all. We’re so close, man, we can taste it. We can see light at the end of the tunnel. Everyone on our





team has to step up to the next level. We have a chance to grab that brass ring.”

Obviously he’s not talking about tasting it or light in a tunnel or brass rings. He’s using metaphors to talk about an upcoming challenge.

COMOLOM finds ten metaphors more or less obvious. But every living, breathing human being will see his own. An accountant will see metaphors about saving for a rainy day and about high-risk investments. A linguist will see metaphors about the importance of communication and about the beauty and richness of diversity. A football player will see metaphors about the value of teamwork and about the lucky bounce that wins the game. A prison guard, a mother, a chemist, a nurse and a fly fisherman will all see their own metaphors. And their metaphors will point the way. +

***Non nova sed nove. Vel caeco
appareat.***



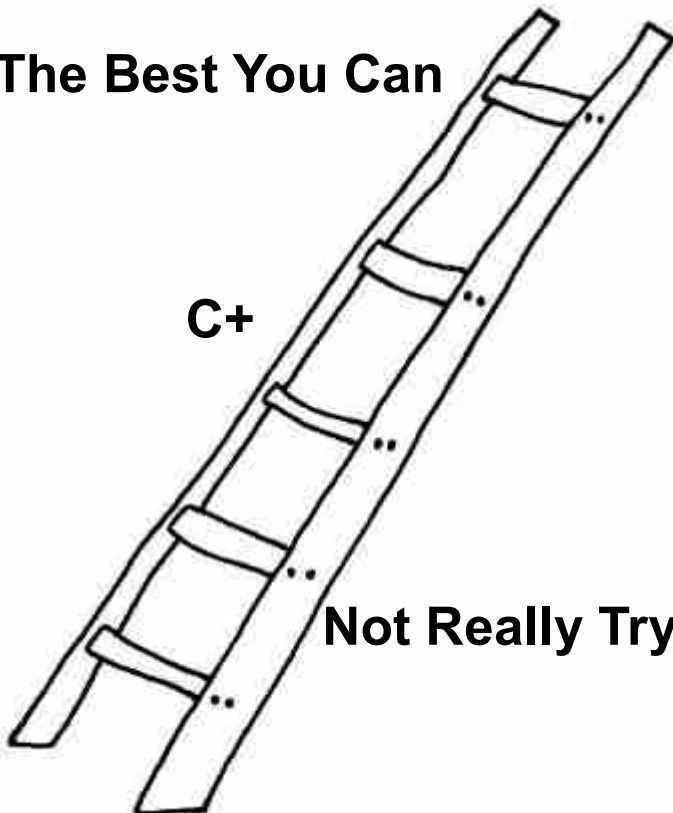
Absolute Perfection

The Best You Can

C+

Not Really Trying

You Might be Scum with Legs





Assumption #4:

DOING THE BEST YOU
CAN IS ENOUGH.

Learning to see your metaphors is a lifelong journey. Keep your eyes open wide. Walk, don't run. Smell the roses, but learn from the thorns. When you fall down, get up and brush yourself off. Set your sights, and start again. Brave the storms. It's not over till the fat lady sings. Maybe not even then.

We are not passive bystanders in life. We are responsible for some small part of the world around us. Only YOU know how you



can best impact your world for the better. So do it. Perfection is not in the cards. Just do the best you can. Give it an honest effort.

Doing the best you can is no small potatoes. COMOLOM says doing the best you can is enough. It has to be enough. +

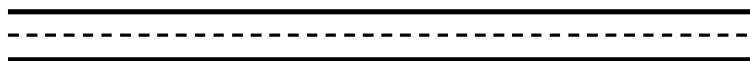
***Stillicidi casus lapidem cavat.
Omnem movere lapidem.***



So there you have it...

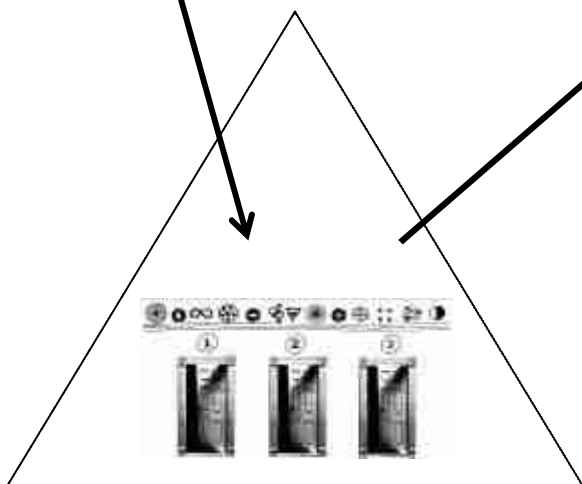
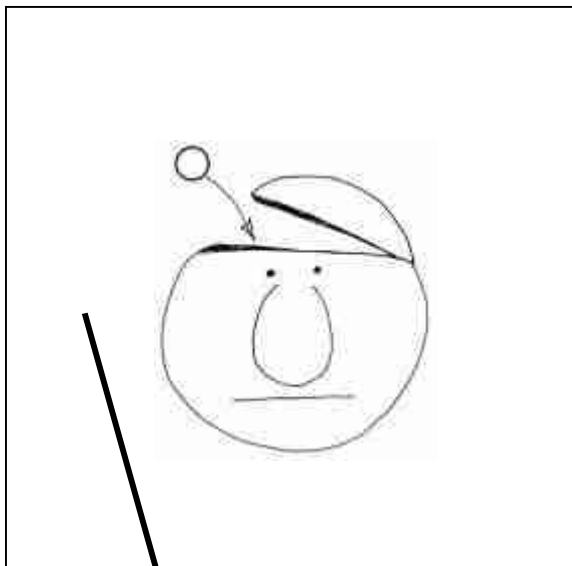
- 1. There's Something Going On.**
- 2. We're Here to Learn.**
- 3. Metaphors Will Point the Way.**
- 4. Doing the Best You Can is Enough.**

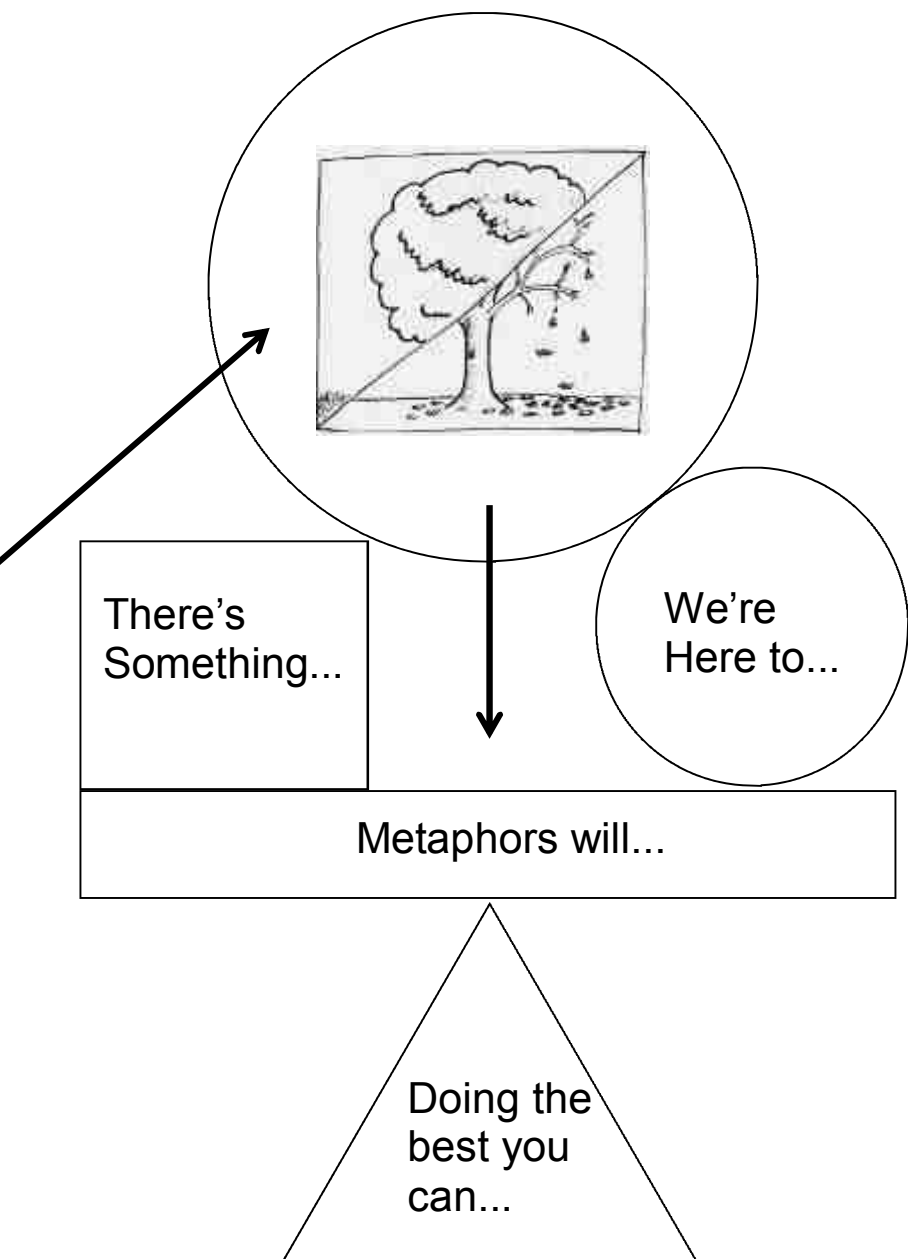
COMOLOM presumes.





Go With the Flow







I.

**We know nothing,
so play it safe.
Don't be absolutely sure;
celebrate your doubts.
Look for the overlap,
watch for the metaphors.
Learn and laugh.**

II.

Ponder the Possible Points.

III.

**Meditate on the
Multitude of Metaphors.**

IV.

**Assume the Assumptions.
Then...
Go with the Flow.**



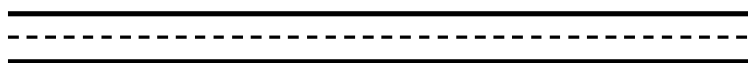
8 Precepts

3 Possible Points

10 Most Obvious Metaphors

and

4 Presumptuous Assumptions



? The One Big Question



PART V

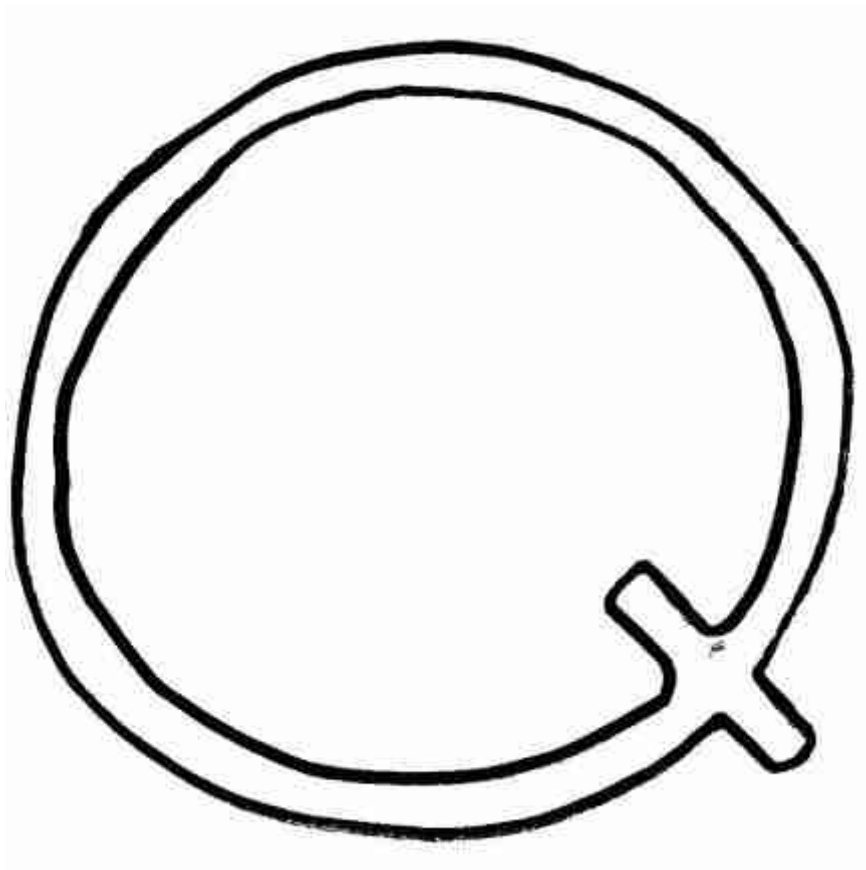
The One Big Question is a sideline, a quick side trip, a short journey to ask The Question no one wants to ask. Ready or not, COMOLOM sees the Biggest Lesson coming up on the horizon.

*De pilo pendet. Ultima forsan.
Res in cardine est. Intelligenti
pauca.*

*Vigilate et orate. Novissima
verba.*



he One Big Question



Mox nox in rem. Panem et circenses.



COMOLOM is guessing that man will never reach perfection. Still, a glance at the history books suggests we're moving in the right direction. Sure, man has his problems, but we shouldn't be too hard on ourselves. Remember, two thousand years ago we fed inmates to the lions. Four hundred years ago we barbecued anyone who dared make his own smart-aleck guesses about God.

Although many human beings today are barbaric and superstitious, still, all in all, we compare favorably with our ancestors from any bygone era. For those who doubt that man is becoming more civilized, look back at the 13th and 14th centuries: the Black Plague, the Hundred Years War, the Children's Crusade. These folks shouldn't have been allowed to use sharp knives.

We're one big dysfunctional family. But we ARE a family. National borders don't matter. Skin color doesn't matter. And for God's sake, deep down, what we call "religion" doesn't matter either. If there is a God, then only He knows for sure what He's up to. If life is a lesson, fine. If you keep up with your homework and do the best you can, you have nothing to worry about.

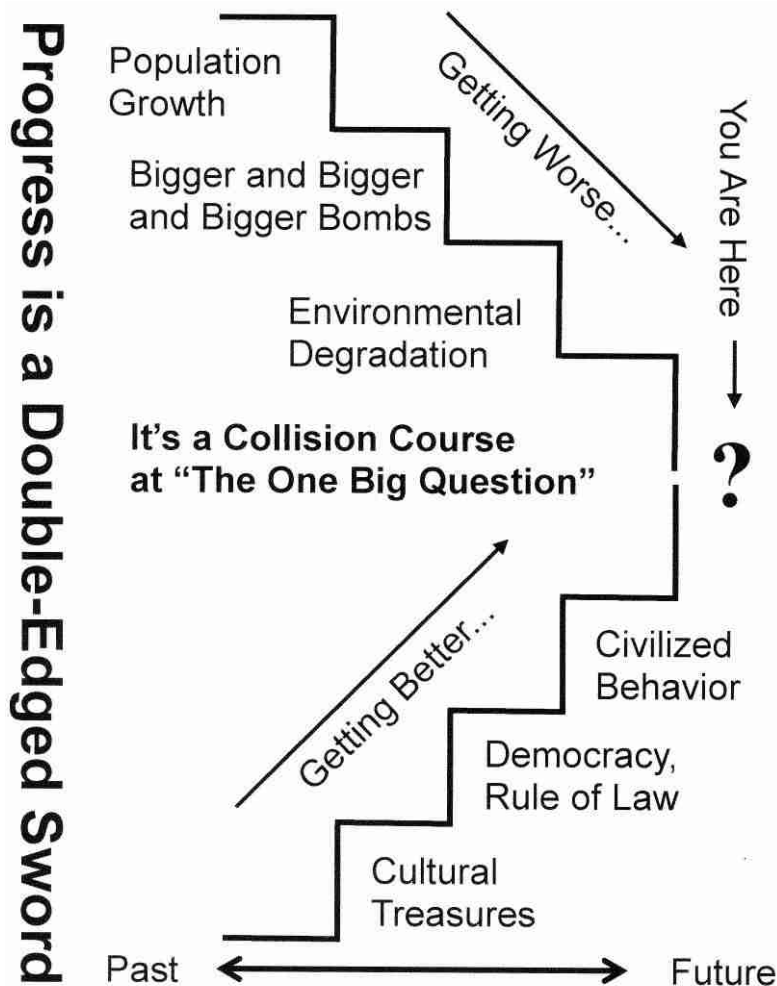
COMOLOM hopes you will think about what you choose to believe. Ask questions. Judge patiently and carefully. Learn a little. Laugh a lot. Don't whine; it won't do you any good. We're all in this life-thing together. Life is sometimes a bed of roses and sometimes a sack of manure.

Maybe that's The Point.

Appreciate the treasure of being alive. Considering the alternative, it's not a bad deal. From Baptists to Buddhists, all human



beings are unique, special, one-of-a-kind wonders. Even if you're a complete creep, at least you're a *unique* creep. So hang in there.



But now...

The One Big Question is at hand. The Great Race approaches the finish line. The Grand Experiment we call civilization must now put up or shut up. It's the bottom of the ninth, the two minute warning.

YES, STEP BY
STEP MAN IS
DEFINITELY
BECOMING
MORE CIVILIZED
WITH EACH
PASSING YEAR:

Child labor laws,
Social Security,
concern for the
environment,
concern for human rights, more democracy,
eyeglasses, hearing aids, higher life
expectancy, cell phones, artificial hearts,
refrigerators, air bags, voting rights, thermal
underwear, Snickers bars.

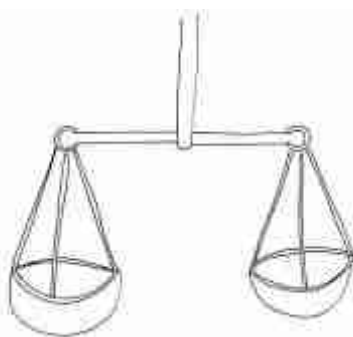




But population pressure and mankind's ability to destroy the earth have also increased.

Now it's a race to see which side wins.

A s s u m i n g
C O M O L O M ' s
P r e s u m p t u o u s
Assumptions are close
to correct, that there is
a God, that we are
here to learn, that He is
pointing the way by

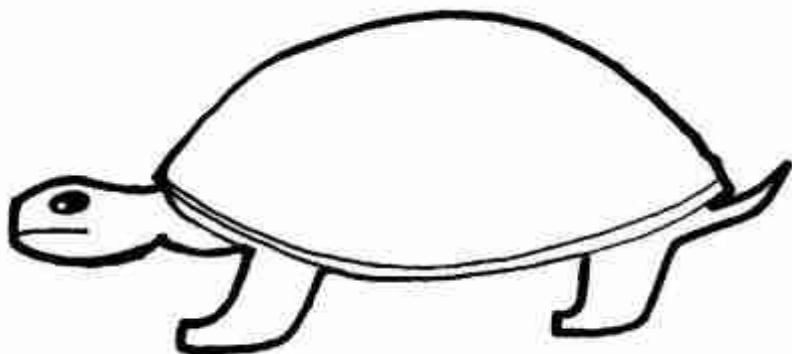


means of More Or Less Obvious Metaphors,
and most presumptuous of all, that we're
half correct in deciphering those metaphors,
then we know exactly what we must do.

We must tend to the foundations. We
must put this world in balance. We must be
teacher and student. We must look for the
overlap. We must wallow in awe.



Never in history has mankind's extinction been assured if he didn't get his act together. There has always been time to worry about it tomorrow. Until now. We are



at a crossroads. We are out on a limb. We have painted ourselves in a corner.

Yes, we must answer the One Big Question or it will answer itself:

Will man civilize himself before he soils his nest beyond repair?



COMOLOM sure hopes so, and we want to be optimistic, but we're not about to bet the farm on it.

Read COMOLOM a second time for increased comprehension and deep hidden meaning. If you enjoyed COMOLOM we ask you to spread the word. Tell like-spirited friends to go to the website and download a copy. Or burn the PDF(s) to a CD and make as many copies as you like. Hand them out to those you feel would appreciate COMOLOM. For those who wouldn't get it, don't waste the CD. For those who distribute 10 copies or more, God will make a special place for you in heaven. (If you believe that one, please see Grand Precept #4.) Thank you. Look for the overlap. Watch for the metaphors at work and play.

B. Pondrin





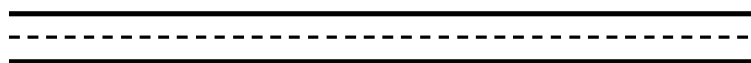
PART VI

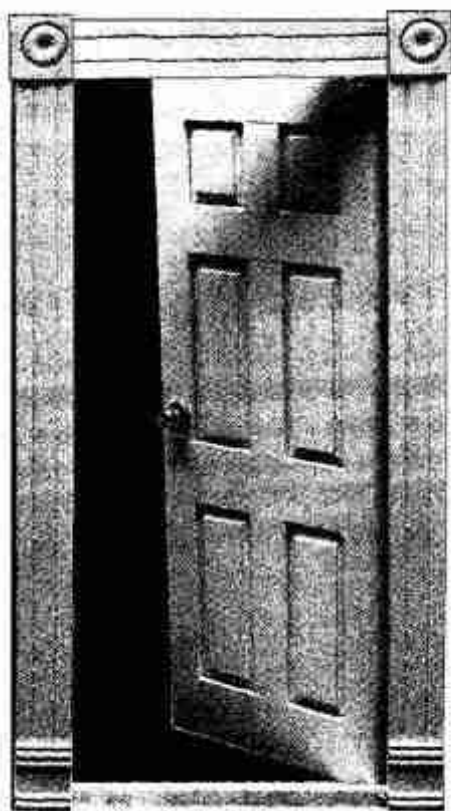


Afterwords...



AFTERWORDS...







MINIMIZE YOUR PROPHETS

COMOLOM foresees that the world will come to an end at some time in the near or distant future. That's as accurate as we can be since we haven't got a clue.

From the beginning of recorded history “prophets” — who typically wore hand-me-down pajamas and open-toed sandals — have been predicting that God would make his Grand Entrance at some appointed time, like maybe next Tuesday. Or they have been saying that the world would end on November 3rd at high noon, for instance.

Usual prophet-speak sounds something like this:

“There shall be signs in the sky such as clouds in the shape of clouds and birds in the shape of birds. And the weather shall be bad for several days in a row. And there shall be rugby games and rumors of rugby games. And the whole world shall be in the process of going digital. And by this ye shall know of His coming.

“He shall come wearing day-glow sunglasses and riding a Vespa. And the good and decent folk shall be called to His side, while the wicked non-believers shall wish they had had the foresight to be good. And the penny-pinching non-contributors shall wish they had parted with a few more farthings.

“And there shall be a period of approximately 333 years, 3 months, 3 days, 3 hours and 3 minutes of unmitigated glee.



And then the Evil One shall come upon the earth spreading hell fire and causing a lack of fun for all.

“And after that it all gets a little fuzzy.”

Would-be prophets come out of the woodwork as each century draws to a close. Prophecy reaches a fever pitch at the end of a millennia. COMOLOM prophesized that we would have our fill of prophecy in the years just before and after the Big Year of 2000 A.D.

One problem with prophecy is that it encourages its “true believers” to cheer about bad news. Yes, there are wars and hurricanes and bad jokes just as there have always been, but instead of working to decrease the world’s evils these solid citizens are contented — even overjoyed — to watch for signs that they can brand as evidence that The End is near. Real positive. Thanks for rolling up your sleeves and pitching in, guys.

In order to minimize your prophets. . .

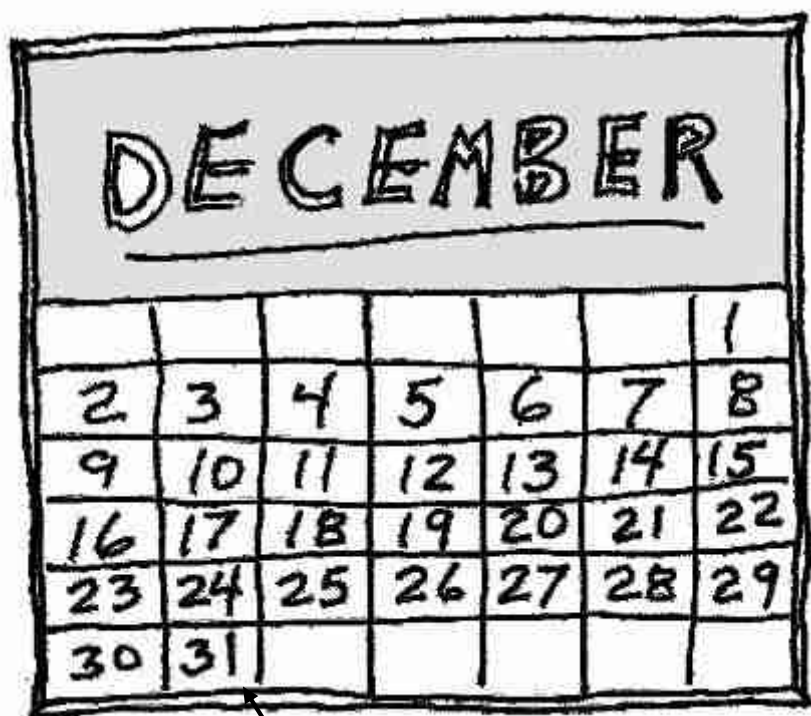
Remember Grand Precept #1: We Know Nothing.

Remember Grand Precept #3: If You're Absolutely Sure, You're Absolutely Nuts.

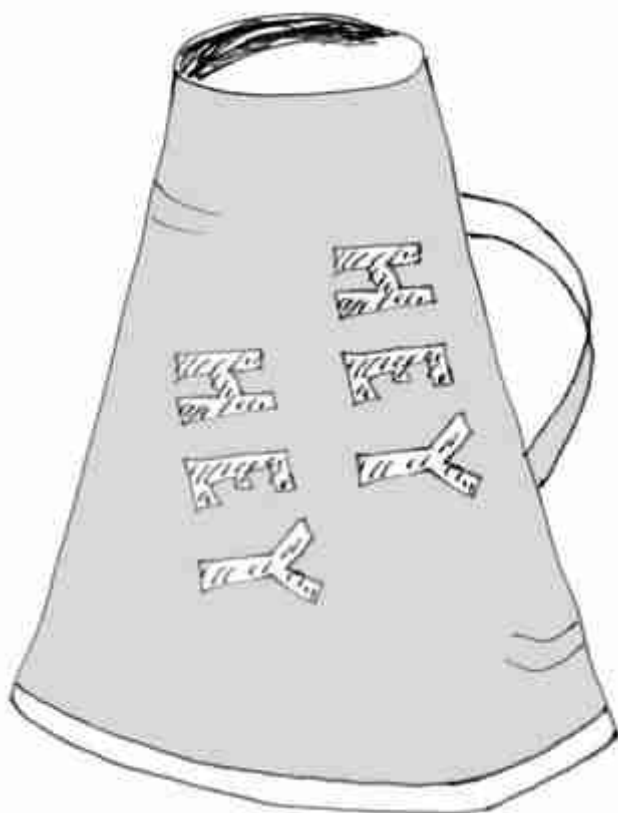
And remember Grand Precept #4: Doubt the Written Word, Any Written Word. You're even obliged to doubt *these* words.

Don't buy into end-of-the-world nonsense. And don't listen to those who are certain about the future. The world is full of bad guessers. Minimize your prophets. Don't fuel the fools.

Oleum addere camino.



End of the world happens here.





THE COMOLOM PRAYER

[Speak loudly in a cheerleading mode.
Thrash arms around freely. Do not use pom
poms.]

Hey, hey, thank you, God
Thanks for giving me this here bod
Thanks for letting me blow my wad
And for my day in the sun

Hey, hey, thanks, Big Guy
Thanks for letting me laugh and cry
Thanks for letting me live and die,
And crawl and walk and run

Man Upstairs, Yes siree
Thanks for gals like Susan B.
Thanks for guys like ol' Voltaire
Thanks for giving me lots of hair

Hey, hey, life's a lark
What was the deal with Joan of Arc?
What would you like me to absorb
While I'm hanging out
on this earthly orb?

Thanks for all the metaphors
All the shut and open doors
All the whys and the wherefores
All the apple sauce and apple cores

Hey, hey, thanks Big Guy
Life sure beats a poke in the eye
After all is done and said
All of us will end up dead



In the meantime

Thanks for all the trials and errors
All the pies at County Fairs
All the awesome sights I've seen
All the grapes and jelly beans
All the smiles from folks I like
All the rides on motor bikes
All the big and little things
All the good and bad life brings

Thanks for all the Lyles and Larrys
All the Mollys and the Marys
Thanks for all the dogs and cats
And thanks for all the dirty rats

I even say thanks for all that hurt
For all the times that I got burnt
All the stupid things I've done
All the games I never won
All the fun I missed last year
All the things that disappeared

I say thanks because I think
That bad times let you see the brink
I must have learned a point or three
The lessons sometimes flustered me

COMOLOM is simple stuff
Two plus two is much more rough
Build the foundation, then the house
Just be good. Don't be a louse
Open mind and open eyes
Forget the childish alibis

We've always known just what to do
The seasons change and so will you
The questions never go away
Make friends with doubt,
 'cause doubt's OK
Thanks for spinning us around
The journey has been real profound

AMEN

Vigilate et orate. Novissima verba



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Assumption An educated guess. A proposition put forth with a low level of certainty. A presumptuous assumption is really sticking your neck out there.

Awe State of wow considered normal for a COMOLOMA. (Wide-open mouth optional.) The look of awe is easily brought on by contemplating the number of cubic inches in the universe.

Certainty An absolute knowledge of the truth. Issues of the spirit do not lend

themselves kindly to this realm. Certainty, not religion, is to blame for "religious" wars. Anyone with certainty about religious matters cannot be a COMOLOMA. (We won't let them.) Believe me, Osama is not a COMOLOMA.

COMOLOM Acronym for Church Of the More Or Less Obvious Metaphor. Loose-knit, cheerful, awe-filled group recognized by a high level of tolerance and a low level of certainty. Half a religion. COMOLOM is also the book that lays out the teachings and the guesses.

COMOLOMA Acronym for Church Of the More Or Less Obvious Metaphor Adherent. Any individual who has read COMOLOM and recited the COMOLOM Prayer aloud is a COMOLOMA. No belief or special understanding of COMOLOM is required or presumed. COMOLOMAs look for the overlap and watch for the metaphors.



Faith A willingness to believe. COMOLOM teaches that faith is a virtue if it comforts you, a vice if it leads you to certainty. Blind Faith is both a dangerous form of religion and a highly acceptable collection of music.

Half a religion COMOLOM likes to say it's half a religion because that's all any religion can hope to be; YOU must decipher the other half and fill in the blanks for yourself. COMOLOM assumes you have brain enough to guess as well as the next guy.

Metaphor COMOLOM teaches that metaphors are God's method of speaking to us and teaching us. Of course, this is only a guess. We offer The Ten Most Obvious Metaphors as examples. The Seasons, The Circle, Infinity, Light and Dark and the rest appear again and again in primitive religions and "civilized" religions. Why is that? COMOLOM teaches that metaphors are a

constant throughout history. They are obvious. For instance, the procession of The Seasons offers you the same lessons and council that it offered the Vikings. Metaphors are an equal-opportunity universal language.

Overlap Common ground. Middle ground. Room for agreement. Similarities. Mutual concerns. Gray areas.

Possibilities A short range of answers to the question, "What's The Point?" Can you think of any other possible points?

Prayer A comforting, yet probably-fruitless appeal to God. God is most likely not concerned about whether Fred invites you to the prom.

Precept An axiom, a basis, a rule, a principle. A building block.



Religion A sense of awe, a feeling of wonder, a yearning for answers, a search for the meaning of life, for The Point. Religion is the common name for those feelings — sometimes called The Willies — had by every human being who ever lived.

The Point A sharp object. A dart. A zinger. A revelation. A bright idea. No one could possibly know for sure what The Point is. We're all looking for it. That's The Point.



TRANSLATION OF LATIN PHRASES

Introduction

Incipit, "Here begins" the first word in medieval manuscripts.

Incipit COMOLOM, "Here begins COMOLOM"

absit invidia, "Let ill will be absent".

Precepts

sit tibi terra levis, “May the earth be light upon you.”

Pre1 tabula rasa, “A clean slate.”

Pre2 respice finem, “Look before you leap” or “Examine the end.”

Pre3 timeo hominem unius libri, “I fear the man of one book.”

Pre4 doctus cum libro, “Book learning, not practical knowledge.”

Pre5 veritas simplex oratio est, “The language of truth is simple.”

Pre6 non semper ea sunt quae videntur, “Things are not always as they seem.”

Pre6 in medio tutissimus ibis, “You shall go safest in the middle course.”



Pre7 *respice, adspice, prospice*, “Look to the past, the present, the future.”

Pre8 *castigat ridendo mores*, “It corrects customs by laughing at them” or “Laughter succeeds where lecturing won't.”

Possibilities

omne trinum est perfectum, “Everything in 3s is perfect.”

Pos1 *vanitas vanitatum, omnis vanitas*, “Everything man does is in vain.”

non est tanti, “It's no big deal.”

Pos2 *ope et consilio*, “With help and council.”

Pos3 *ignis aurum probat, miseria fortes viros*, “Life is not a bowl of cherries,” “Fire tests gold, adversity (tests) strong men.”

Metaphors

est modus in rebus, "Choose the middle ground," "There is measure in things."

Met1 *horas non numero nisi serenas*, "I do not count the hours unless they are bright." (Sundial inscription.)

Met2 *terra es, terram ibis*, "Dust thou art, to dust thou shalt return."

Met3 *et nunc et semper*, "Now and forever."

Met4 *in lumine tuo videbimus lumen*, "In Thy light shall we see light."

Met5 *docendo discimus*, "Teach in order to learn."

Met6 *tempus ludendi*, "A time for



playing.”

Met7 *terra firma*, “Firm ground.”

Met8 *justitia omnibus*, “Justice for all.”

Met9 *sol lucet omnibus*, “The sun
shines for everyone.”

Met10 *via trita, via tuta*, “Beaten path,
safe path.”

Assumptions

ipse dixit, “He himself said so.” (An
unsupported assertion.)

Assump1 *caeli enarrant gloriam Dei*,
“The heavens bespeak the glory of God.”

Assump2 *homo doctus in se semper
divitias habet*, “A learned man always has
wealth within himself.”

parva leves capiunt animas, "Small things occupy little minds."

Assump3 *non nova sed nove*, "Not new things, but in a new way."

vel caeco appareat, "It would be apparent to a blind man."

Assump4 *stillicidi casus lapidem cavat*, "Slow and steady does it." "Dripping moisture hollows out a stone."

omnem movere lapidem, "Keep trying." "To move every stone."

BIG Q

de pilo pendet, "We've reached a critical stage." "It hangs by a hair."

ultima forsan, "It's later than you think."

res in cardine est, "The next 24 hrs will tell the story." "The matter is on a door hinge."



intelligenti pauca, “A word to the wise.”

mox nox in rem, “Let's get on with it.”
“Soon night, to the business.”

panem et circenses, “Bread & circus games.” (Roman rulers' formula for the masses.)

Afterwords...

oleum addere camino, “To pour fuel on the stove.”

vigilate et orate, “Watch and pray.”

Novissima verba, “Last word.”





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[illegible]

Give us half an hour, and we'll give you half a religion.



Hear what readers are saying about **COMOLOM**.

"This may be the Secular Humanist Bible."

"A philosophy, a religion, a whole advanced system of thought. And all for the price of 3 used road flares."

"Makes an excellent All Saint's Day gift. I got a copy for all my friends."

"This little book is destined to change the whole world. Superbly written. Simple, yet poignant art work. Certain to be a classic." (Ben's mom)

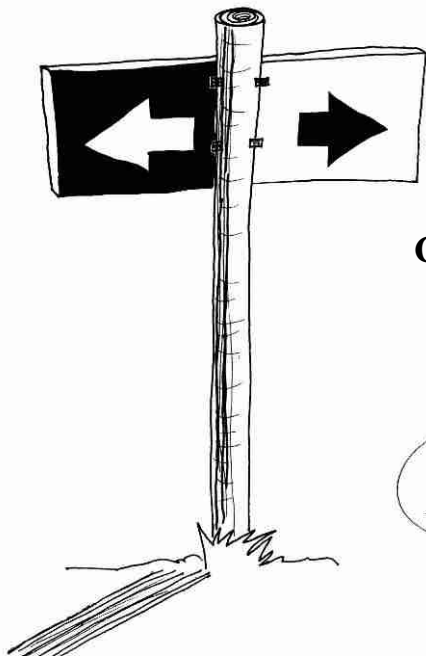
"A pearl. A gem. A jewel. A tasty morsel. A savory bite. Real food for thought."

"A modern day call to alms. No, not arms. Alms."

"I don't get it. I thought a metaphor had something to do with butterflies and cocoons."

"Now I feel at peace with the universe. Doubt is in style, and it's fully sanctioned."

"Finally, the perfect gift for the spiritually disenfranchised. Prepare to kiss your angst goodbye."



COMOLOM

***. . . Religion without
all the trappings.***



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P.O. BOX 376
FRENCHTOWN, MT. 59834

ISBN-X-XXX-XXXXX-
