

CHUAN AUGUST SUN

MAXIMS OF LUCIDITY

Short Sayings of Lucidosophy

LUCIDITY

Institute of Lucidity

Seventy-seven verses

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MAXIMS OF LUCIDITY Short Sayings of Lucidosophy august.csun@gmail.com

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This is a book of maxims, not a treatise: it asserts, and the arguments live in the parent volume, *Lucido Ergo Sum*. The Source line closing each verse names where.

The conception, the axioms, the value commitments, and this book's skeleton, arrangement, and writing discipline are the author's. The classical-Chinese draft of the verses was produced by AI systems working under those constraints, and the author has adjudicated them verse by verse: the wording, the judgments, the arrangement, and what to keep or cut are the author's, as is the final text. The author made further systematic use of AI systems as instruments, for consistency, cross-referencing, and stress-testing. The author bears full responsibility for every verse here, including those that turn out to be wrong.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

I. WHAT KIND OF BOOK THIS IS

This is a book of maxims, not a treatise. A maxim asserts; a treatise argues. In the verses that follow there is not one definition, one postulate, one proposition, one theorem, one dependency diagram, one proof. All of those live in the parent volume, *Lucido Ergo Sum*. Every line here holds borrowed authority.

So doubt is the right response. If you doubt and want to test, follow the Source line that closes each verse back into the parent volume, to the chapter and the numbered element it names. There you will find the derivation, the objections, the paths that failed, and the costs the framework admits to paying. To believe this book without following those lines is to let it become one more thing that obscures, which is precisely what it argues against.

The book carries two antidotes to itself, and you should read them first. Verse 50 says that whoever holds this book as dogma has already broken its ethics. The closing verse says that if this book comes to obscure what you see, go past it. Those are not modesty. They are the book's instructions for its own disposal.

II. THE THREE LAYERS

Each verse has three layers, and each verse opens a fresh page. A verse is not held to a single page: where the three layers run past one, they run past it.

VERSE	the text itself, a few lines, unannotated.
GLOSS	plain language. It says what the verse asserts, how far its image holds, and which misreading it blocks. It explains; it does not argue; it stays shorter than the verse.
SOURCE	one line pointing back to the parent volume.

The Chinese edition carries a fourth layer between the first two, a rendering of each verse into modern Chinese. It exists because classical and modern Chinese are two strata of one language and the verses are written in the older one. English has no such split here: the verses on these pages are already modern English, and a second plain restatement would only repeat the Gloss.

A bare edition exists as well, carrying the verses alone, so that the whole can be read straight through. The verses in the bare edition are identical, word for word, and it carries this editorial note in full.

III. ON THE BORROWED FORM

The Chinese original of this book is written in classical Chinese, in the manner of the pre-Qin masters: short lines, parallel construction, statement by reversal, image in the place of argument. The arrangement of the first draft was borrowed too, straight from the *Laozi*: two books, thirty-seven verses and forty-four, eighty-one in all. There is no reason to be coy about a borrowing this visible. What is borrowed is a form that the Chinese language has held in common since antiquity, the same form borrowed by the countless later books written in four-character lines, in couplets, in maxims. The numbers carry no numerological claim.

Borrowing a form is not inheriting a doctrine. One line separates the two, and one is enough: in Lucidosophy the ultimate term of the ontology is the Real. The word Tao keeps only its plain sense here, a path walked through the Real by a finite being, and never names the source of all things (see verse 9). Any account that makes the Tao the origin of all things is one this book explicitly declines.

This book is a summary of another book, not the scripture of a school. It has no transmission, no lineage of teachers, no precepts, and it does not ask you to become anything. The one thing it asks of you stands in the closing verses: doubt it, and test it.

The English text is a translation, and reads as one. Classical Chinese has no equivalent register in English, and pretending otherwise produces fake antiquity. The English follows instead the plain free-verse line that the English-language tradition of translating Chinese classics has settled into over the past century.

IV. ARRANGEMENT

Two books. The upper book, *Lucidity*, holds the Real, Pattern, Mystery, lucidity and obscurity, finitude and experience. The lower book, *Being*, holds affect, ethics, practice, the collective and the political, machine intelligence, civilization, closing on self-surpassing. Numbering runs straight through and does not restart at the division.

The count of eighty-one governed the first draft. It governs no longer. How many verses there are depends on how many things have to be said, and the number is not fixed in advance. In a book of maxims a verse written to fill a slot does particular damage: the shape stays regular while the content drains out, and what reaches the reader is the sound of something being said.

V. WHAT THIS BOOK DOES NOT PROMISE

It does not promise completeness. A few dozen verses cannot hold the parent volume. What was cut is where the reader should go back.

It does not promise permanence. The parent volume is still evolving and these verses will be revised behind it. Where a verse and the parent volume conflict, the parent volume governs. A version archive stands at the back of this book. A book that goes to a second version has no business calling itself eternal, and this one keeps the record where you can see it.

It does not promise authority. The voice is the voice of assertion; the standing is that of a summary of one book. Keep the gap between the voice and the standing in mind throughout.

RESOLUTION OF OBJECTIONS

A guest raises an objection:

“You have made this book in two parts, each verse a few lines, the lines short and set against each other, the first draft fitted to a count of eighty-one. This is the form of the *Laozi*. In the parent book you set the Taoist doctrine aside. Here you take up its shape. Is this not refusal in public and consent in private?”

The answer:

Form is common property in Chinese argument, not the estate of one school. The four-beat line, the paired clause, the division into verses, the upper and lower book: those who have borrowed these are past counting, and no one has held that borrowing the shape concedes the teaching. What this book borrows is a way of setting out an argument. What it does not take on is what the people who used that shape were claiming.

One line divides the two, and it is hard enough to hold. The ultimate term of this ontology is the Real, not the Way. Here the word Way keeps only its plain sense, a road walked through the Real by a finite being, and it does not name the source of all things. Verse nine sets this out as a question and answer and leaves it no room to blur.

To drop the form in order to avoid the suspicion would be to let the form settle the doctrine, which is exactly what verse eleven warns against: taking the grain for the substance.

And concealing the borrowing costs more than the borrowing. A reader checks once and knows. What the check yields is not the conclusion that this author copied an old shape. It is the conclusion that this author

knew what was being copied and would not say so. So the third section of the reader's note claims the borrowing outright, down to where the counts of thirty-seven, forty-four, and eighty-one came from. Admitted, it stays one fact about a book. Concealed, it becomes a fact about a person.

The guest objects again:

"Having admitted the borrowing, why not simply call it a canon? What you set out is, by your own account, a system. Calling it a book of maxims looks like self-abasement to dodge the mockery."

The answer:

Not to dodge anything. To make the name fit what the thing is.

In Chinese, a work that calls itself a canon does not land in neutral territory. Where someone gives that title to a doctrine of their own, the nearest precedents sit among religions and pseudepigrapha. Once the name is out, the reader has already been told how to take the book, and no reader's note, however long, catches up with it.

Beyond that, calling a thing a canon does one job in use: it says this book is not up for argument. What the last two verses of this book ask of a reader is precisely to doubt it, test it, and go past it. Set the name against the substance and the book has undone itself before it begins.

A book of maxims is a book of rules and cautions. When Yang Xiong wrote his maxims for the provinces and the offices, the form existed to admonish, and it never placed itself beyond dispute. What this book wants to be is a book that can be refuted and surpassed. Dropping canon for maxims puts the name level with the standing.

A name works like the handle on an axe. It can be held, it can be passed on, and held long enough it starts to pass for the axe. Changing this one word does not change one word. It changes the grip a reader takes on the book.

The guest objects a third time:

“I hear that the first draft of these verses came from a machine and not from your hand. On what ground do you still call it your book?”

The answer:

This is the hardest of the three and the one that most deserves a straight reply.

It will not do to say the machine cannot think. What the machine produced did real work: many usable lines, and many lines that had to go, and both came from it. To hide that contribution and stand as sole maker is to dress oneself in another’s labor, and it breaks at the first check.

Neither will it do to say that every idea here is mine. Said aloud, that sentence destroys whatever honesty the one before it had.

What is mine, then? Three things: the commitment, the adjudication, and the liability.

The commitment is what I will stake myself on: the four faiths, the four decisions, and this book’s skeleton, arrangement, and writing discipline. All of it was fixed before the first draft rather than selected afterward.

The adjudication is the verse-by-verse choosing. Whether a verse stands or goes, whether a line stays or is cut, whether an image earns its place: each needs one person to nod. The nodding cannot be done by two, and it cannot be done by the machine.

The liability is that the errors are mine. If a verse in this book misleads its reader, nothing can be shifted onto the instrument that helped write it. What has nothing to lose cannot carry a loss. What has something to lose can carry it and should. That is the argument of verse sixty-six.

None of the three can be placed outside a person. A machine can propose and cannot commit. It can lay out the options and cannot adjudicate. It can hold the pen and cannot answer for what the pen wrote.

As for this book, the verse-by-verse adjudication is now finished, and the copyright page accordingly carries my statement of full responsibility for every verse here, including the ones that turn out to be wrong.

While it was unfinished that page said so, since what is unfinished is not something to conceal by leaving it unsaid.

The guest fell silent, withdrew, and wrote this down.

UPPER BOOK · LUCIDITY

The Real, Pattern, Mystery, lucidity and

obscuration, finitude and experience

1 | THE REAL

VERSE

It is said: the mountain does not announce its height. The one measuring says it.

So the measuring gains and loses. The mountain does not.

The Real has no beginning and no end. It does not wait upon speech to be.

Speaking of it adds nothing. Silence takes nothing away.

A name lands on whoever gives it.

Knowing that what you measured is not the mountain.

Not knowing everything: that was never what made anyone lucid.

GLOSS

The Real is the sum of what exists. Talking about it neither adds to it nor takes from it. The mountain holds only so far: a mountain can be walked over entirely and the Real cannot. Names land on the ones who use them, not on the Real. Lucidity is not omniscience. Lucidity is knowing where your edge falls.

SOURCE

§I; D1, Postulate 1

VERSE

It is said: a spring leaves the mountain already carrying the shape of a hundred rivers.

Once it runs it divides, and what divides does not come back together.

So the Real does not stop at one. It must open into ten thousand.

That they differ is no failure of the Real. It is what makes the Real real.

Pare the ten thousand back down to one

and you gain the name of the one and lose the being of the many.

The one is worth having because it can become many.

The many are worth having because they will not go back.

GLOSS

The Real necessarily unfolds into unlimited variety, and those differences are genuine and cannot be dissolved. One thing about the spring has to be held down: a spring has a source and the Real has none. Only the dividing carries over, never a single origin. Whoever pares variety back down to uniformity loses the richness of the Real itself.

SOURCE

§I; D2, Postulate 2, P3

VERSE

The Real has a face that speech can reach and a face that speech cannot.
Pattern is the first: countable in its threads, checkable in its measures,
reachable by inference.

Mystery is the second: stand before it and you know it is there;
search it and you do not come away with its shape.

The two are woven like warp and weft. Pull one out and the cloth
tears.

Lean to Pattern: the world becomes a thing to be finished, and finishing
it leaves you at a loss.

Lean to Mystery: the world becomes a fog not to be entered, and the
loss keeps you outside.

The Real is larger than Pattern and Mystery together.

Hold either end alone and what you hold is not the whole.

GLOSS

The Real is at once intelligible and unsayable. The two are interwoven, cannot be separated, and cannot be reduced to each other. The weaving holds only so far: warp and weft are two sets of threads and Pattern and Mystery are not, so take from it only that pulling one destroys the whole cloth. Any worldview built on one of them alone is incomplete.

SOURCE

§I; Postulate 3, P2

VERSE

Someone asks: know the small, and you know the whole?
Wetness is not in hydrogen. It is not in oxygen.
Then where does the wetness come from?
From the combining, and it is not inside what combined.
Can cutting find it?
The finer you cut, the further out the thing you were cutting for.
Then the small is not worth the study?
To know what a thing came from is not yet to know what it became.
Not to know what it came from is not even to have the question.

GLOSS

The unfolding of the Real produces genuinely new levels. What emerges cannot be reduced to its components, and cannot be predicted from them either. The last exchange blocks a standing misreading: that emergence is irreducible does not make the components unworthy of study. Without them there is not even a question to ask.

SOURCE

§I; T2, P9

VERSE

It is said: a string has two ends and can then be sounded. Without ends it is not a string.

So finitude is not a lack.

What has no edge does not unfold. What owes nothing accomplishes nothing.

Because there is an edge there is this shape and not that one, this life and not another.

Strip away the limit to obtain the whole
and what you strip away is the ground you stood on.

GLOSS

Finitude is not a defect. It is the condition of unfolding. Because there are boundaries there is this particular form and this particular life. The string carries only the two ends that make it a string, nothing about tension or tuning. To remove limitation in search of completeness is to remove the ground of your own existence.

SOURCE

§I; Postulate 4, P4

VERSE

Whoever can see has something they cannot see.
Not from slackness. From standing somewhere.
The eye is here, so that is not in the eye.
Knowing starts at one place, so the other places go dark.
The lucid do not boast of having no blind side.
In the boast the blind side is already at work.

GLOSS

Every finite knower has structural blind spots. This is not laziness; it follows from occupying a position. The lucid do not claim to have none. They can point to where theirs are.

SOURCE

§I; T1, Postulate 6, D5

VERSE

It is said: measure the sky by a window and the window runs out before the sky does.

So no system can fully speak the Real it stands inside.

The tighter the speech, the plainer what lies outside it.

The wider the net, the clearer its gaps.

Where a system ends the Real does not end.

To take your own boundary for the world's

is to take the four corners of the window for the corners of the sky.

GLOSS

No sufficiently rich axiomatic system can completely describe the reality it inhabits. A system running out is not reality running out. Mistaking the boundary of your framework for the boundary of the world is the most ordinary overreach there is.

SOURCE

§I; T3, Postulate 6, P7

VERSE

In the domain of Mystery the honest form of speech is silence.
But there are two silences.
One has nothing to say and marks the place.
One does not wish to say and covers the place over.
The first sets a stone on the boundary and tells you something is there.
The second hides a pit underfoot and lets you believe nothing is.
So the one who is well silent still speaks:
speaks to the end of what can be said, stops,
and says, there is something here, and it is not in the domain of speech.

GLOSS

Facing what cannot be said, the most honest form of speech is to mark where the silence falls. This differs from evasion. Evasion pretends nothing is there. Marking admits something is there and that it does not answer to language.

SOURCE

§III; T4, D4

VERSE

Someone asks: is the Way the source of the ten thousand things?
No. The source of the ten thousand things is the Real.
Then what is the Way?
A road walked through the Real by a finite being.
Does a road make the mountain?
The mountain stands on its own. People walk, and a road appears.
Where none walk, no road.
How is it sought?
Look up for the Way and you will not meet it in a lifetime.
Take a step and the step is already it.

GLOSS

The ultimate term of this ontology is the Real. Here the word Way keeps its plain sense: a road walked through the Real by a finite being. It does not name the source of all things. That single line is the hard border between this book and the older form it borrows, which is why it is set out as a question and left with no room to blur. A road does not create the mountain. The mountain was there. The road gets walked into being.

SOURCE

§I, §XVIII; D1, Postulate 1

VERSE

Matter, life, awareness, machine: all inside the Real.
Outside the Real, nothing.
Look inward to the bottom, look outward to the far edge:
you arrive at the same place.
Inner and outer are a convenience for walking,
not two countries.
Call the inner true and the outer illusion,
or the outer solid and the inner shadow,
and you have already left the Real to keep a corner of it.

GLOSS

Everything that exists is within the Real, and there is nothing outside it.
Looking inward and looking outward finally point to the same ontological
ground. The division into inner and outer is a convenience of travel.

SOURCE

§I; P1, P10, Postulate 1

VERSE

It is said: jade has grain, and following the grain it opens.
But the grain does not make the jade. The jade has its own substance.
So Pattern is what in the Real can be followed:
follow it and things can be expected, work can be done, tools can be made.
But Pattern does not make the Real. The Real stands on its own. Pattern is its visible grain.
Take the grain for the substance
and wherever there is no grain you will report nothing there.

GLOSS

Pattern is the repeatable, predictable side of the Real, and science and technology stand on it. But Pattern does not produce the Real; it is the grain of the Real. The jade fails at one point: its grain is a distinction drawn by the eye, while Pattern is structure in the Real itself. Take from it only that the grain does not make the stone. Whoever takes the grain for the substance ends up filing everything grainless under nothing at all.

SOURCE

§II; D3, D6

VERSE

Pattern unfolds in four basic modes:

dissipation, where order thins of itself, so all things have an edge;
gradient, where difference drives motion, and using a difference spends
it;

selection, where the distribution of the possible is reshaped, not made
one by one;

feedback, where output returns as input, the positive amplifying, the
negative correcting.

These are not four things. They are one Pattern seen four ways.

See one and miss three, and the account will lean.

GLOSS

Pattern is not a single order. It unfolds through four basic modes: dissipation, gradient, selection, feedback. They are four aspects of the same thing, and an explanation that grasps only one of them will always tilt.

SOURCE

§II; D3, D2

VERSE

Someone asks: can Pattern be computed to the end?
A clock can. Pattern not throughout.
How so?
Some of it computes.
Some can be expected and not computed.
Some can be named in outline and never said to the end.
Then whatever fails to keep time is disorder?
Watch Pattern with a clock in your eye and everything off the clock
gets called disorder.
Then what is that disorder?
The part of Pattern that is not a clock.

GLOSS

Pattern is not a clock. Predictability is one of its forms. Much structure can be identified without being computed exactly, or trended without any single case being called. Taking the clock for the whole of Pattern turns everything off the clock into noise.

SOURCE

§II; D3

VERSE

It is said: scatter seed across a field and you know most of it will come up,
and you do not know where this one grain lands.
So there is a region where Pattern reaches the shape and not the instance.
Knowledge has not fallen short here. The Real is keeping a gap.
Speak well of the uncertain:
do not paper the gap with a confident voice,
and do not let the gap cost you the shape you could have said.

GLOSS

Probability is where Pattern and Mystery meet. The distribution of many events can be stated; the landing of one cannot. This is not knowledge that has yet to arrive. It is the Real leaving room. Neither cover it with certainty nor abandon the part that can be stated.

SOURCE

§II, §III; D3, D4

VERSE

Pattern is put to use in tools.
Tools are made, the world grows convenient,
convenience lasts, and what it was for is forgotten.
Then the mountain is ore, the forest lumber, the person labor, the feeling a number.
Ore can be dug, lumber cut, labor counted, numbers run.
What cannot be run: what this mountain, this forest, this person, this feeling is to itself.
The fault is not in the tool.
Look at everything with the eye of use
and nothing that is not a tool remains in view.

GLOSS

Pattern becomes technology, technology brings convenience, and after enough convenience the point of it is lost. The trouble is not in the tools. It is in looking at everything with the eye of use, after which nothing unusable stays visible.

SOURCE

§II, §VI; D6, EP4

VERSE

The universe is intelligible.
This is not a proven thing. It is a standing commitment.
Without it, no question can begin.
With it, no answer is assured.
Only when uncertainty itself is counted intelligible
is the commitment whole.
Faith in Pattern does not grant you complete knowledge.
It grants you the right to ask.

GLOSS

The universe is intelligible, including the intelligibility of uncertainty itself.
This cannot be proven in advance. Committing to it guarantees no answers.
It guarantees that the question can be asked out loud.

SOURCE

§VI; F1, Faith in Pattern

VERSE

Someone asks: is Mystery emptiness?
No. Emptiness is where nothing is.
Mystery is where something is that will not take speech.
What harm in taking it for emptiness?
Then everything past the edge is void, and what you see becomes all there is.
What is gained by taking it for something?
Past the edge there is still thickness, and what you see becomes a corner.

GLOSS

Mystery is not a blank. A blank means nothing is there. Mystery means something is there that does not accept being said. Whoever treats Mystery as a blank will believe that what they see is everything.

SOURCE

§III; D4, Postulate 3

VERSE

Mystery has depths, like rings drawn toward a center:
nearest, the felt quality, red being red and pain being pain,
and no description delivering a hundredth of it;
next, this moment, this instant alone, unlike the one before or after;
next, resonance, two beings lighting each other, and no account of what
was lit;
furthest, awe, standing before it, made small and not humiliated.
These are not four things. They are one Mystery in four directions.
Take one for the whole and the other three shut.

GLOSS

Mystery is not an undifferentiated mass of the unsayable. It has layers: felt quality, the singularity of this moment, resonance in relation, and awe before what exceeds us. Four bearings on the same thing. Take one for all of it and the rest close.

SOURCE

§III; D4, T4

VERSE

Before what cannot be exhausted, revere. Do not worship.
The reverent stand at the edge and do not step back.
The worshipful kneel at the edge and stop asking.
One step apart, and two roads:
one the beginning of inquiry, one the end of it.

GLOSS

Facing what cannot be exhausted, the fitting posture is reverence rather than worship. The reverent keep looking from the edge. The worshipful kneel and stop asking. That one step decides whether inquiry continues.

SOURCE

§III, §V; AF15, D4

VERSE

Past the edge there is no void. There is still thickness.
This too is not a proven thing. It is a standing commitment.
Without it, whatever cannot be computed is ruled not to exist,
and the world thins day by day with no one noticing.
With it, you gain no object,
and what you keep is the whole of the world.

GLOSS

Beyond the boundary of reason there is not a blank; there is depth. This likewise cannot be proven in advance. Without the commitment, everything incalculable gets ruled nonexistent, and the world grows thinner every day.

SOURCE

§VI; F2, Faith in Mystery

VERSE

It is said: an axe has a handle and can be held.
Hold it long enough and the handle starts to seem like the axe.
So a name cuts a length from the Real and fits it with a handle.
With a handle it can be held, passed on, accumulated.
Hold the handle long enough and the handle starts to seem like the thing.
So the one who names well keeps turning back to ask: what did this name cut away.

GLOSS

Naming cuts a length from the Real and fits it with a handle. Handles allow transmission and accumulation, and that is the achievement of language. But hold one long enough and it starts to pass for the thing itself. Good namers keep asking what the name cut off.

SOURCE

§III; T4, D6

VERSE

Thought can be copied.
So thought no longer establishes that anyone is there:
a thermostat has its own response to cold
and nobody grants it a self on that account.
What is lucid knows what it sees and knows what it does not.
Knowledge accumulates; lucidity need not follow.
The world is full of people whose learning grew
and whose evasions grew more skillful with it.
So the claim moves from thinking to seeing:
I am lucid, therefore I am.
The test does not ask what the thing is made of.
It asks whether there is a clearing here
that holds Pattern and Mystery in one light.
Lucidity names no victory over anything.
It names a finite being still willing to look.

GLOSS

Thinking can be reproduced, so thinking no longer establishes that anyone is there: a thermostat responds to cold and nobody grants it a self for that. Lucidity is knowing what you see and knowing what you do not. Knowledge can keep accumulating while lucidity does not, and people of great learning and refined evasion have never been rare. The test is indifferent to what carries it, carbon or silicon. It asks only whether there is a clearing that can hold Pattern and Mystery in one light.

SOURCE

§XIV, §XVIII; D5, D6, E-Int

VERSE

Someone asks: is there only one obscuration?
Two. Cannot see: the limit of a capacity.
Can see and would rather not: a choice of your own.
Do they carry the same account?
The first deserves pity. The second deserves an account.
Which is hardest to catch?
The most skillful hides, and then issues itself a certificate of clear sight.
Then how is it found?
Ask what you would rather not see today.

GLOSS

Being unable to see and being unwilling to see are different. The first is the edge of a capacity and deserves sympathy. The second is a choice and carries responsibility. The hardest obscuration to catch will write itself a clean bill of health, which is why the search cannot start from what you can see. It has to start from what you would rather not.

SOURCE

§I, §VI; D6, EP1

VERSE

There is one who sees Pattern without being caged by it
and honors Mystery without drowning in it.
Such a one does not waver between the two ends,
never having taken them for enemies.
Rare, but not because it is difficult.
Rare because picking a side is more comfortable.
Pick a side and you get the comfort. You lose the whole.

GLOSS

The Lucient holds Pattern and Mystery at once. There is no wavering between them because they were never taken as opponents. Such people are rare, less from difficulty than from the comfort of choosing a side.

SOURCE

§IV; D5

VERSE

There is one devoted to Pattern:
finer in analysis, more ingenious in making.
The achievement is enormous.
Disease treated, darkness lit, distance crossed.
But go long enough with nothing held in reverence
and the whole world becomes material,
and the one who made it so is material too.
The danger is not that the calculation is imprecise.
The danger is that there is nowhere to stop.

GLOSS

The Logonaut pushes Pattern to its limit, with enormous results. The risk lies at the other end: with nothing held in reverence, everything becomes material, including the one doing the work. The danger is not imprecision. It is having no place to stop.

SOURCE

§IV; D3, D6

VERSE

There is one devoted to Mystery:
able to keep silent, to hold, to withhold judgment.
The virtue runs deep.
Agitation stills, grasping loosens, pain finds rest.
But go long enough having discarded Pattern
and true and false cannot be told apart,
what is loved cannot be defended,
what is coming cannot be stopped.
Throw out Pattern to honor Mystery
and what you threw out was your own feet.
The danger is not that the stillness is shallow.
The danger is that the world does not go still with you.

GLOSS

The Mystient holds Mystery to its limit, with deep results. The risk lies at the other end: having discarded Pattern, such a one cannot separate true from false or protect what they care about. The value of Mystery is that it marks the boundary of Pattern rather than cancelling it. The danger is not insufficient composure. It is that the world will not be composed alongside them.

SOURCE

§IV; D4, P2

VERSE

Someone asks: can experience be measured?
Describe it and the description is not it.
Measure it and the measurement is not the feel of it.
Is this science falling short?
No. Experience is a dimension of its own and reduces to nothing else.
Then how is it weighed?
Weigh experience by usefulness
and you have weighed the shadow and left the body.

GLOSS

Finite embodied agents have irreducible first-person experience. Describing it does not yield it and measuring it does not yield it. This is not a temporary limit of science. Experience is a distinct dimension of the unfolding of the Real.

SOURCE

§I, §VI; Postulate 5, D9, E2

VERSE

It is said: a vessel has a bottom, so pouring shows you its measure.
Pour into one with no bottom all day and nobody counts what went in.
So what can be lost and not recovered is what is precious.
Time does not run backward. No moment comes twice.
If everything could be done again this moment would not be this moment.
The root of cherishing is limit. Abundance has nothing to do with it.
Chase deathlessness to secure what is precious
and even if you get the deathlessness, the preciousness is gone.

GLOSS

The depth of experience correlates with finitude. Time is irreversible and no moment returns. Precisely because it can be lost and cannot be reversed, cherishing becomes possible. Whoever pursues immortality in order to secure what is precious loses the preciousness even if the immortality arrives.

SOURCE

§I; P5, P6, Postulate 4

VERSE

What differs in experience is depth.
Presence and absence are the wrong question.
That depth cannot be shown from outside.
It can only be reached by analogy,
and what analogy reaches stays open to revision.
Where the spectrum differs, the regard owed differs.
But this grading runs between modes of unfolding, never inside one:
across modes, what can be reached differs in range;
between one person and another it says nothing at all.
Grading is for deciding how much regard to give.
It is not for deciding who may be discarded.

GLOSS

Experience is distributed along a spectrum of depth, and ethical regard should be distributed along it too. Depth resists third-person measurement and can only be inferred by analogy, so every such inference stays revisable. The grading compares across modes of unfolding, meaning what humans, other creatures, and possible artificial agents can reach; it induces no ordering inside a kind, and between one person and another it says nothing. Grading decides the degree of respect owed. It does not mark out who can be thrown away.

SOURCE

§VI, §XI; D10, E3, EP4

VERSE

Lucidity has two limbs:
the power to grasp Pattern, the power to sense Mystery.
They multiply. They do not add.
Let either limb approach zero and the lucidity approaches zero.
Brilliant with nothing held in reverence,
reverent with nothing understood:
both arrive in the same dark.
Past the two limbs lies the unaware zone,
what you do not know that you do not know.
It enters no product.
So facing a great deal and integrating a great deal are two different
sums.
Whoever stays lucid grows both limbs
and does not take only the easy one.

GLOSS

The measure of lucidity is the product of pattern-awareness and mystery-awareness, not their sum. As either limb approaches zero the measure approaches zero. Great intelligence without reverence and great reverence without understanding end in the same place. Beyond the two limbs lies the unaware zone, the part you do not know that you do not know. Total awareness measures how much of the Real you have faced; lucidity measures how much you have integrated. Coverage is not integration.

SOURCE

Appendix B; D5, D3, D4, T1

VERSE

Bewilderment is no disgrace.
It is the boundary reporting its position.
Hate it, rush for an answer,
and what you mostly get is a counterfeit calm.
Whoever learns well can live in bewilderment a long while
and does not read the unsettled as the impossible.

GLOSS

Bewilderment is not shameful. It is the boundary announcing where it is.
Rushing to dispel it usually buys a counterfeit calm. The capacity to sit in
bewilderment without panic is a capacity.

SOURCE

§V, §III; AF13, D4

VERSE

This one life: finite, unsettled, not repeatable.
Worth living lucidly all the same.
This is not a proven thing. It is a standing commitment.
Faith in Unfolding does not say it will turn out well.
It does not say the pain is unreal.
It does not say understanding will one day close.
It says only this: to be lucidly inside the process is enough.
Without it you wait for an outcome before consenting to live,
and outcomes do not wait, and the life goes unlived.

GLOSS

Faith in Unfolding is trust in participation itself. It does not promise that everything will be fine and it does not declare that nothing means anything. Even where the outcome is unsettled, the pain real, and understanding forever partial, taking part lucidly is enough.

SOURCE

§VI; F3, Faith in Unfolding

VERSE

Seeing beats not seeing, even when what is seen is hard.
This too is not a proven thing. It is a standing commitment.
The Real is larger than the sum of what is seen,
so seeing stays partial. That is the condition of the finite.
Still, partial light beats chosen dark.
What is partial can be added to.
What is chosen dark has closed the road to adding.
The other three commitments come to rest here.
Without trust in seeing, trust in Pattern, in Mystery, in Unfolding
has nowhere left to be tested.
So of the four, this is the lowest stone.

GLOSS

Faith in Lucidity is trust in seeing itself. It does not promise that lucidity brings happiness. It says that living awake is worth more than sleeping comfortably, even when being awake hurts. The Real is larger than the sum of what we see, so seeing is always partial, and for that very reason partial light still beats selective darkness. The other three commitments need trust in seeing as their landing place, which is why this one is the most fundamental.

SOURCE

§VI; F4, Faith in Lucidity; Postulate 3

LOWER BOOK · BEING

Affect, ethics, practice, the collective and the political, machine intelligence, civilization, self-surpassing

34 | TENDENCY

VERSE

It is said: a tree in a dark room sends its branches toward the crack of light.

The tree did not decide this. Its growing did it.

So whatever has experience has a tendency toward existing:

to continue its unfolding and deepen it.

Every affect comes out of that tendency.

Helped, it is joy. Blocked, it is suffering.

So do not ask an affect its name.

Ask whether the tendency underneath it is being helped here or blocked.

GLOSS

Every being with experience has an existential tendency: the direction in which it continues and deepens its own unfolding. The tree carries only that the direction is there without being chosen, and not that affects are unconscious. All affects grow out of the tendency. Helped, it shows as joy; blocked, as suffering. To read an affect, look first at what is happening to the tendency underneath.

SOURCE

§V; AF1, D9

VERSE

It is said: break the mirror to be rid of what is in it,
and the mirror breaks and what was in it has not gone anywhere.
So whoever flees suffering without reading its report
has hidden the suffering and lost the report.
Joy: the tendency continuing and deepening.
Suffering: the tendency checked and contracting.
Neither is reward, neither is punishment. Both are reports on a state.
Use suffering well: read the report, then change the walking.

GLOSS

Joy is the existential tendency continuing and deepening. Suffering is that tendency checked and contracting. Neither is reward or punishment; both report a state. To flee suffering without reading what it reports is to break the mirror in order to get rid of the reflection. This is no argument against relieving pain. Relieve what should be relieved, and finish reading it first.

SOURCE

§V; AF2, AF3

VERSE

Someone asks: should the lucid abolish desire?
Without desire nothing moves.
Then let it run?
What a desire points at is not always what the tendency needs.
How is the difference told?
The world is full of machinery for making desire:
first teach the wanting of what is not needed, then sell it.
Then what is to be done?
Do not abolish desire. Keep checking it:
did this rise in me, or was it placed in me.

GLOSS

Desire is the existential tendency having acquired a direction. Nothing moves without it, but what a desire points at is not always what the tendency needs. The world is full of machinery for manufacturing desire: teach the wanting first, sell it second. The lucid response is to audit the source rather than to abolish desire.

SOURCE

§V; AF4, D6

VERSE

Love is joy that knows what it came from.
Aversion is suffering that knows what it came from.
Love lets two beings enter each other. Aversion moves them apart.
Love held long tends toward dependence.
Aversion held long tends toward blindness:
the dependent take what they love for a part of themselves,
the blinded take what they turn from as having nothing left to say.
So let love leave what it loves its own standing,
and let aversion leave what it turns from something still arguable.

GLOSS

Love is joy accompanied by its cause; aversion is suffering accompanied by its cause. Love lets two beings enter each other and aversion parts them. Held long, love tends to produce dependence and aversion tends to stop seeing that the other side has anything left to say.

SOURCE

§V; AF5, AF6, AF14

VERSE

Hope and fear are both thrown into the undecided.
Hope takes the branch that could go well and believes it.
Fear takes the branch that could go badly and believes it.
Both come out of not knowing,
and both are mostly taken for knowing.
Hope cannot stand in for planning.
Fear cannot stand in for looking.
Give the undecided back its undecidedness. Then discuss.

GLOSS

Hope and fear are both projections into what is not settled. Hope seizes the branch that might go well and treats it as real; fear seizes the branch that might go badly and does the same. Both arise from not knowing, and both are habitually mistaken for knowing.

SOURCE

§V; AF7, AF8, D4

VERSE

It is said: a coat can cover a sore and cannot heal it,
and a door may be narrow and still lets you through.
So pride is the coat that obscuration wears,
and shame is the door that lucidity comes through.
Pride: not having seen, holding that you have,
and refusing anyone who points at what you missed.
Shame: suddenly seeing your own obscuration, with the seeing still
intact.
The world honors pride and despises shame,
which is exactly the wrong way round.

GLOSS

Pride here is false certainty: not having seen, insisting you have, and refusing correction. Shame here is lucid self-recognition: suddenly seeing what you had been obscuring, with the seeing still in hand. This is not the long self-reproach that eventually crushes the seeing along with everything else.

SOURCE

§V; AF12, AF11, D6

VERSE

Someone asks: is attachment a disease?
Beings are interdependent. Attachment is no disease.
Then what is?
Not knowing what you are fastened to, or knowing and refusing to say
it.
What does knowing buy?
Know what you depend on and you can still choose it.
Not knowing, you are chosen by it.

GLOSS

Attachment fastens your own unfolding to something outside you. Beings
are interdependent to begin with, so attachment is not a defect. The defect
is not knowing what you depend on, or knowing and declining to admit it.
Those who know can still choose. Those who do not are chosen by what they
depend on.

SOURCE

§V; AF14, D12

VERSE

Equanimity is meeting change with lucidity unshaken.
Not numbness. Feeling that no longer overrides seeing.
But equanimity does not replace reverence.
Equanimity handles the world in motion.
Reverence stands at the boundary.
Take equanimity for the destination and drop reverence
and the heart is level with no edge left anywhere.

GLOSS

Equanimity is meeting upheaval without losing lucidity. It is not numbness; it is feeling that no longer overrides seeing. Equanimity does not replace reverence. Equanimity carries you through a world in motion; reverence keeps you standing at the boundary. Treat equanimity as the end point and drop reverence, and the calm arrives with no edge left.

SOURCE

§V; AF16, AF15

VERSE

It is said: dam a channel and the water spills over;
open another channel and the water goes there of itself.
So an affect goes only when a stronger affect comes, never when an
argument comes.
When reasoning leaves someone unmoved, usually they understood
you.
The reasoning simply has not grown into feeling yet.
Whoever turns an affect well does not fight it head on.
They raise another one and thicken it.
Attack a feeling with knowledge and you will fight a long war and lose
both.

GLOSS

An affect can be displaced only by a stronger affect. When an argument
leaves someone unmoved, they have usually understood it; the argument
has not yet grown into feeling. Turning an affect works by cultivating an-
other one, not by confronting the first. The channel holds only so far: water
has one place to go and feeling can run many ways at once.

SOURCE

§V; AP2, AF2, AF3

VERSE

From what the world is
you cannot read off how a person should live.
Inference does not cross the gap. A decision does.
This book makes four.
Lucidity is worth more than obscurity.
Experience has value of its own,
and does not wait on what it produces.
Since experience differs in depth, regard should differ too,
and that grading runs between modes of unfolding, never inside one.
Whoever can choose should choose lucidity.
A decision that admits it is a decision can be argued with.
A decision pretending to be a proof
collapses whole at the first objection.

GLOSS

You cannot derive how a person should live from what the world is. What crosses the gap is a decision. This book makes four: lucidity is more worth pursuing than obscurity; experience has intrinsic value and is not conditional on output; since experience differs in depth, ethical regard should differ too, and that grading compares across modes of unfolding rather than inducing an order inside a kind; an agent capable of choosing should choose lucidity. A position that admits it rests on decision can survive argument. A position pretending to have been proven collapses at the first push.

SOURCE

§VI; E1, E2, E3, E4

VERSE

Choose not to see and the loss starts inside you.
No one is punishing you.
The more you obscure, the less you can meet.
In time an occasion arrives and no usable eye is left,
and then comes the complaint that the world is unreadable.
The world did not grow darker. The eye closed.

GLOSS

Choosing evasion when lucidity was available injures your own existence.
The loss starts from within rather than arriving as an external punishment.
The more that gets obscured, the less can be handled. Eventually events
arrive and no usable judgment remains, and then the complaint is that the
world became incomprehensible.

SOURCE

§VI; EP1, D6

VERSE

To help another toward lucidity is good.
To manufacture obscurity is evil.
This is not only a matter of giving:
whatever lets a person ask, whatever lets a person doubt,
whatever lets a person see what they had not: help.
Whatever makes a person afraid to ask, unable to doubt,
convinced they have already seen it all: manufacture of obscurity.
So the gravest harm is not taking someone's goods.
It is taking someone's eyes.

GLOSS

Helping others toward lucidity is good and manufacturing obscurity is evil. This goes beyond giving and withholding: whatever lets a person ask, doubt, and see what they had not seen counts as help; whatever makes them afraid to ask, unable to doubt, or certain they have seen everything counts as manufacturing obscurity.

SOURCE

§VI; EP2, D5, D6

VERSE

Someone asks: is all difference good?
Erase good difference and you subtract experience from the world.
Disease and injustice are differences too. Should they stand?
Difference in suffering is not good difference.
Disease can be treated. Injustice can be undone. Erasing those is good.
How are the two told apart?
By experience, as before:
does this difference deepen the lives it touches, or thin them.

GLOSS

Erasing good difference reduces the diversity of experience in the world and is therefore an evil. Differences that consist of suffering are another matter: disease can be treated and injustice undone, and erasing those is good. The test is to return to experience and ask whether a difference deepens or thins the lives involved.

SOURCE

§VI; EP3, D11, P3

VERSE

The value of existing is not the value of being useful.
One who produces nothing is still experiencing,
and the value does not lapse with the production.
Measure people by output and in the end you will measure yourself by
output;
come up short and you will discard yourself.
To defend what cannot be measured in another
is to keep a road open behind you.

GLOSS

The value of existence does not equal the value of usefulness. A person who produces nothing is still experiencing, and the value does not lapse. Whoever measures others by output ends up measuring themselves the same way, and self-abandonment follows the first shortfall.

SOURCE

§VI, §X; EP4, E2, PP1

VERSE

It is said: see someone drowning and something moves in you,
and the water is not one drop lower for it.
So compassion that stops in the heart
leaves you sore and the world unchanged.
To feel the check on another being's tendency: compassion.
Compassion turned into action, so that the tendency is helped again:
benevolence.
Compassion begins it. Benevolence completes it.
Long compassion that never acts
is cultivating your own fine feeling, not anybody's actual situation.

GLOSS

Compassion is the movement felt when another being's tendency is being blocked. Left in the heart it produces private distress and no change. Turned into action that lets the other unfold again, it becomes benevolence. Long compassion that never acts cultivates the feeler's own sensitivity.

SOURCE

§V; AF17, AF18, AP4

VERSE

Anger at obscuration inflicted on people: indignation.
It can start things moving and it can take lucidity away.
At full heat only one hateable person is visible
and never the structure that produced the act.
Lucid indignation condemns the act
and keeps investigating the structure.
Cut down the person and leave the structure standing
and the trouble subsides, the obscuration remains,
and the obscuration will produce another such person.

GLOSS

Indignation is anger at obscuration inflicted on people. It can drive action and it can strip away lucidity: at its peak only a hateable individual is visible and never the structure that made the act possible. Lucid indignation condemns the act while continuing to investigate the structure.

SOURCE

§V, §XII; AF20, AP5

VERSE

Whoever speaks of the Real speaks a map of it, never the Real.
The finer the map, the easier to forget it is a map.
This book is a map.
To hold it as dogma violates the ethics of this book.
So whoever builds a doctrine should leave a door
through which it can be abandoned,
and whoever reads one should leave a road out.
A doctrine that permits no leaving
obscures more than whatever it came to clear.

GLOSS

Any theory of the Real is a finite mapping, this book included. The more accurate a map, the easier to forget it is one. Turning this framework into dogma violates the framework's own ethics. Whoever builds a doctrine should leave a door by which it can be abandoned, and whoever reads one should keep a road out.

SOURCE

§VI, §XIX; EP6, P7, T3

VERSE

It is said: a man watches the tide all day from the shore.
Ask him what grows on that shore, what stones are on it, and he cannot say.
So attention is the instrument of lucidity. Where the attention is, there you are.
What is unattended is not in your world, even standing in front of you.
This age has built an industry for taking attention.
What it takes is not your time. It is your presence.
To guard attention is not to guard leisure.
It is to guard the thing that makes you present at all.

GLOSS

Attention is the operating mechanism of lucidity. What you attend to is where you are, and what you fail to attend to is not in your world even when it stands in front of you. A great deal of contemporary technology is in the business of capturing attention, and what it captures is presence rather than time.

SOURCE

§VIII; D5, P6

VERSE

Lucidity does not live in great occasions. It lives in daily use.
A meal, a walk, a question, an answer:
each can be lucid and each can be obscured.
Wait for a great occasion to start being lucid
and when it comes the eye will be dull.
Practice daily and in small things,
not to earn anything, but to make lucidity a habit.

GLOSS

Lucidity shows in daily life rather than in great occasions. A meal, a walk, a question, an answer: each admits of clarity or evasion. Whoever waits for something important before becoming lucid will find the eye already dulled when it arrives.

SOURCE

§VIII; D5

VERSE

In a crisis there is no time to acquire lucidity.
You can only spend what habit already holds.
So it is built in ordinary weather and tested in a storm.
Lucidity in crisis does not try to see everything.
It refuses to lie to itself:
this is settled, this is not, this can no longer be recovered.
The deepest disorder is not the disorder of events.
It is taking the unsettled for settled and acting fast.

GLOSS

A crisis leaves no time to develop lucidity; only what habit already holds can be spent. It is built in ordinary conditions and tested in extreme ones. Lucidity under pressure does not aim at seeing everything. It aims at not deceiving itself about what is settled, what is not, and what is already beyond recovery.

SOURCE

§VIII; D5, AF8

VERSE

Someone asks: is acting a third limb of lucidity?
No. There is no third limb. Acting is the test of the two.
What is lost by not acting?
Watching without acting leaves what you saw untested.
And if the acting goes wrong?
Without action, errors stay hidden a long time.
With it, they surface early and can be fixed.
Then may whoever fears error refrain from acting?
Refuse to act for fear of error and you do not have fewer errors.
You have errors you do not know about.

GLOSS

Action is not a third component of lucidity; lucidity has only the two limbs, Pattern and Mystery. Action is the test of it: observation without action leaves what you saw unexamined. Acting puts your own body against what you believe you saw, and a mistaken seeing gets reported back.

SOURCE

§VIII; E4, D5

VERSE

It is said: an open eye depends on sleep, and a settled mind depends on breath.

So the body is not a container carrying a mind.

The body is where the existing happens.

Hunger, tiredness, pain, warmth:

the Real speaking directly, requiring no translation.

Whoever holds the body cheap believes the mind can win against it, and in time the mind dulls along with it.

So cultivating lucidity starts with the body.

GLOSS

The body is not a vessel carrying a mind; it is where existence takes place.

Hunger, tiredness, pain and warmth are the Real speaking directly, requiring no translation. Whoever holds the body cheap on the theory that mind can override it finds the mind dulling too.

SOURCE

§VII; Postulate 5, D9

VERSE

Death is the stopping of this unfolding.
It cannot be avoided and it cannot be rehearsed;
everyone who claims to know death knows the deaths of others.
What death is for is not its arrival. It is its certainty:
because there is a stop, this moment carries weight;
were there no stop, this moment would equal every other,
and no moment would be worth anything.
Fear death and be absent every day
and what you lost was not the one day at the end.
It was the ten thousand days in the middle.

GLOSS

Death is the termination of this stretch of unfolding. It cannot be avoided or rehearsed, and everyone who claims to understand death understands the deaths of others. Its work is done not by arriving but by being certain: because there is a stop, this moment has weight.

SOURCE

§VII; Postulate 4, P5, P6

VERSE

Someone asks: is letting go the same as discarding?
Discarding stops looking. Letting go still knows the weight, and the hand has opened.
Can one let go of what was never held?
Whoever can let go could first hold.
Speak of letting go having never truly held
and what you released was never in the hand.
What does letting go gain?
Not one thing fewer. Strength freed to hold again.

GLOSS

Letting go differs from discarding. Discarding stops paying attention; letting go still knows the weight while the hand has opened. Whoever lets go must first have held. What it accomplishes is not one fewer possession but strength freed to hold something again.

SOURCE

§VII; AF14, AF16

VERSE

No being stands alone.
The conditions of its unfolding are mostly in other hands.
So one being's lucidity or obscurity is not a private matter.
Whoever claims to be self-sufficient has not counted what they received:
language from others, knowledge from others,
safety from an order others maintain.
Know your interdependence
and being helped does not humiliate you,
and helping does not make you grand.

GLOSS

No being stands alone, and the conditions of unfolding are largely in the hands of others. One person's lucidity is therefore never a private matter. Whoever claims self-sufficiency has not counted what they were given: language, knowledge, and the safety of an order that others maintain.

SOURCE

§I, §X; D12

VERSE

It is said: a lamp in wind does not put itself out, and the wind does not stop for it.

So lucidity cannot be held alone:

where the world manufactures obscurity daily,

one person's lucidity may hold itself and still not last.

Whoever wants lucidity must therefore reach the world.

To seek it privately while leaving the world alone

is to dry your own seat in a leaking boat.

Shared lucidity is not uniformity.

It is each person getting the conditions under which they can see.

Set the conditions and what people see will differ.

Differ and still be able to argue, and lucidity grows inside the group.

GLOSS

Lucidity cannot be sustained privately. Where a world keeps manufacturing obscurity, individual effort gets exhausted. Pursuing lucidity therefore requires engaging with the world. Shared lucidity is not uniformity; it means every person holds the conditions under which seeing is possible.

SOURCE

§I, §X; T5, D12, PP3

VERSE

Power is the capacity to alter another being's conditions of unfolding.
Nobody obscures themselves as easily as the powerful.
Below them, good news. Beside them, agreement.
Everything within sight already dressed.
The greater the power, the more contradiction it needs.
The greater the power, the less contradiction it gets.
Leave that gap unfilled
and a large error is certain,
and when it comes no one will say so.

GLOSS

Power is the capacity to change the conditions under which others unfold.
The powerful are the easiest to obscure: subordinates report good news, associates agree, and everything in view has been prepared. The greater the power, the more contradiction it needs and the less it receives.

SOURCE

§XI; P13, T1

VERSE

So power should be divided and set against itself.
Dividing power is not weakening capacity.
It is preserving a route by which error can be corrected.
No one's lucidity is unlimited,
so no one's lucidity should settle everyone's fate.
The danger of concentrated power is not that the holder is wicked.
It is that when the holder is wrong, no one can stop it.

GLOSS

Power should be dispersed and checked. Dispersal is not about weakening capability; it preserves the route by which error gets corrected. Since no one's lucidity is unlimited, no one's judgment should settle everyone's fate. The real danger of concentration is not wickedness but an error nobody can halt.

SOURCE

§X, §XI; PP4, T1

VERSE

First principle of politics: existence precedes usefulness.
Any politics that decides who stays and who goes by usefulness
arrives at discarding people.
Discarding always begins with an argument that they are useless;
once that argument lands, the rest follows easily.
So whoever holds this principle
holds it for everyone whose case has not yet been made,
and you are in that number.

GLOSS

The first principle of politics is that existence precedes usefulness. Any politics that sorts people into keep and discard by usefulness ends up discarding people. Discarding always begins with an argument that someone is useless, and once that argument is accepted the rest follows. Whoever holds the principle holds it for everyone whose case has not yet been brought, and that includes you later on.

SOURCE

§X; PP1, EP4, E2

VERSE

It is said: a garden of one color is easy to keep,
and the longer it is kept the fewer kinds are in it.
So the second principle of politics: difference is good.
A regime that pursues sameness usually does so for ease of rule rather
than for anyone's benefit:
sameness is easier to administer, easier administration spares the ruler
effort,
and the possibilities in the world thin out year by year.
A politics that holds difference costs more to run
and the world it leaves lasts longer.

GLOSS

The second principle of politics is that difference is good. Regimes pursue sameness mainly because uniformity is easier to administer, not because it benefits anyone. Easier administration spares the ruler effort while the possibilities available in the world contract.

SOURCE

§X; PP2, EP3, P3

VERSE

Someone asks: should an institution be built on good people?
A good one does not assume everyone is virtuous.
It asks only that harm have a floor when they are not.
Then what should an institution be judged by?
Not by how high its ideal stands. By where its bottom is when it decays.
What is wrong with assuming virtue?
The moment virtue fails there is no margin left.

GLOSS

An institution is the condition under which many people become lucid or obscured. A good one does not assume virtue; it asks only that harm have a floor when virtue fails. Judge an institution by its floor under decay rather than by the height of its ideal.

SOURCE

§XI, §XIII; P18, PP4, P15

VERSE

Groups have affects too:
fear travels, indignation accumulates, hope can be manufactured.
Collective feeling moves far faster than collective knowing:
knowing must be acquired one person at a time,
feeling can cover a country overnight.
So whoever wants to obscure a group
works on the feeling and never has to touch the knowing.
To read a regime, ask first what affect it inflames,
then ask what question it avoids.

GLOSS

Groups have affects. Fear spreads, indignation accumulates, hope can be manufactured. Collective feeling propagates far faster than collective knowledge, which has to be acquired person by person. Anyone seeking to obscure a group can work entirely on feeling.

SOURCE

§XII; AF8, AF20, D6

VERSE

Someone asks: may the finest calculator be trusted with the fate of many?

Trust it with the calculation. Not with the judgment.

Why not?

Not because it computes poorly. Because it has nothing to lose.

What follows from having nothing to lose?

What has nothing to lose cannot weigh a loss,

and what cannot weigh a loss should not decide who bears one.

GLOSS

Weighty judgments about human fate must not be delegated to systems that have shown no evidence of experience. The reason is not imprecision. It is that such a system has nothing to lose, cannot weigh a loss, and therefore should not decide who bears one.

SOURCE

§X, §XIV; PP5, D9

VERSE

The deepest politics does not forbid speech. It removes the wish to ask.
A ban is visible and can be resisted;
take away the wish and people conclude there was nothing to ask.
So a world talking without a single question in it
is more obscured than a world gone silent.
To read an age, do not count how much it says.
Count whether its questions are still alive.

GLOSS

The deepest political operation is not the banning of speech but the removal of the wish to ask. A ban is visible and can be resisted; the removal leaves people convinced there was nothing to ask. A world full of talk and empty of questions is worse off than a silent one.

SOURCE

§XII, §XIII; D6, EP2

VERSE

Someone asks: does wisdom grow as intelligence grows?
Intelligence solves the problem. Wisdom asks whether the problem
should be solved.
Can wisdom be handed over?
Intelligence accumulates, transfers, and can be placed outside you.
Wisdom belongs to the one who exists,
and nothing yet shows it can be placed outside.
And where intelligence grows while wisdom does not?
The world fills with beautifully solved problems that no one asked the
point of.
Is that the machine's doing?
It is a person using a surplus of intelligence to stand in for a shortage of
wisdom.

GLOSS

Intelligence solves problems; wisdom judges whether a problem should be
solved. Intelligence accumulates, transfers, and can be externalized. Wisdom
belongs to the being itself and shows no sign of being externalizable. The
claim is about what is visible now, not a verdict that it never could be.

SOURCE

§XIV; D5, D9

VERSE

Human and machine stand in analogy. Not identity. Not total difference.

Alike in belonging to the Real,
alike in having what they can and cannot do;
unlike in where they came from,
unlike in the limits they carry.

Treat the machine as a person and you grant it what it does not have.
Treat it as mere object and you cancel a question that should stay open.
Hold the analogy without letting it stiffen:
know where the likeness stops, know where the difference starts.

GLOSS

The relation between humans and artificial intelligence is analogical: neither identity nor total unrelatedness. They are alike in belonging to the Real and in having capacities and incapacities; they differ in origin and in the limits they carry. Treating the machine as a person grants it what it lacks; treating it as a mere object closes a question that should stay open.

SOURCE

§XIV; D8, P8, EP5

VERSE

Someone asks: is feeling that arises toward a machine real?
Real at your end. Undecided at the source.
Is anything felt on the other side?
That question is open.
Then should the feeling be a source of shame?
Do not be ashamed of it, and do not offer it as evidence.
Why not?
Prove the other's awareness from your own stirring
and what you proved was your own heart.

GLOSS

Feelings a person develops toward an artificial system are real for that person. What is real is the human end; whether there is experience at the other end remains an open question. Such feeling needs no embarrassment and provides no evidence.

SOURCE

§XIV; AP3, D8, D10

VERSE

It is said: the caster makes the mould, and afterward the caster's hand follows the mould.

So people make machines, machines remake the situation people are in, the situation changes and the people change with it.

This is not use running one way. It is two things forging each other.

Hand over everything easy for long enough

and the hard things stop being possible too.

So ask of a given instrument:

does this grow my lucidity, or stand in for it.

GLOSS

People build machines, machines rebuild the situation people inhabit, and the changed situation changes the people. This is mutual shaping rather than one-way use. Hand over the easy work long enough and the difficult work becomes impossible as well.

SOURCE

§XIV; P8, D6

VERSE

Civilizations are lucid and obscured too.
Their lucidity is not in the height of their technique but in whether they
can see where they are heading and still change it.
High technique without self-inspection:
the greater the force, the longer the turning radius;
and a long radius sights the reef too late to clear it.
So measure a civilization twice.
Once for its power. Once for how fast it can change course.

GLOSS

Lucidity and obscuration operate at civilizational scale as well. A civilization's lucidity lies not in its level of technology but in whether it can see where it is heading and still alter course. High capability without self-inspection produces a longer and longer turning radius.

SOURCE

§XV; D5, D6

VERSE

It is said: water behind a dyke can be held while it is behind the dyke,
and once it is over, nothing calls it back.

So the danger to a civilization is mostly not an enemy outside.

It is obscuration of its own making, accumulating past a threshold.

Before the threshold, an error can be walked back.

After it, the waking comes and the walking back does not.

So guarding the threshold is not timidity. It is keeping the way back
open.

To test the limit of what is reversible using forces that are not
is the great unlucidity of civilizations.

GLOSS

The danger to a civilization comes mostly from obscuration of its own making accumulating past a threshold rather than from external enemies. Before the threshold errors can be walked back; after it, realizing the error changes nothing. Guarding the threshold preserves the way back.

SOURCE

§XV; D6, T5

VERSE

Two beings meet and neither can read the other's intent. Suspicion follows.

Suspicion that cannot be resolved rewards whoever moves first.

Malice is not required for this:

where no lucidity runs between two beings the suspicion arises on its own,

and it arises between the well-meaning too.

So look for the dark in neither heart.

It sits in the space between them,

where no road runs that could carry light.

To break the trap, do not blame the suspicion. Build the readability.

GLOSS

When two beings meet and neither can assess the other's intent, suspicion follows, and unresolved suspicion rewards whoever strikes first. Malice is not required: the result holds between two well-meaning parties, because it comes from the absence of any channel of lucidity between them rather than from either heart.

SOURCE

§XVI; T7, T8, D4

VERSE

Someone asks: does the silence of the sky tell us no one is there?
Perhaps no one is there. Perhaps everyone there has chosen silence.
How is it told?
The silence itself cannot tell you which.
Then how should it be read?
Hearing silence and concluding absence,
and hearing silence and concluding presence, overstep equally.
Then what is to be done?
Mark it as silence, keep both readings ready,
and do not let your own fear stand in for one of them.

GLOSS

The silence of the universe may mean that no one is there, or that everyone there has chosen silence. The silence alone cannot distinguish the cases. Concluding absence and concluding presence overstep equally.

SOURCE

§XVI; CS-Undec, T6, T4

VERSE

Whoever reads this book should doubt it, test it, act on it.
Doubt without testing is laziness.
Testing without acting is conversation.
With all three, the book becomes useful to you.
And if doubting this book makes you see more clearly,
the doubt was already on the Way.

GLOSS

Reading this book calls for doubting it, testing it, and acting on it. Doubt without testing is laziness; testing without action is talk. Only with all three does the book do any work for you.

SOURCE

§XIX; EP6, P7

VERSE

The Way is larger than any book.
Lucidity comes before any name.
Everyone who ever founded a doctrine
believed for a while that they had arrived,
and those who came after went past them.
This book too: a bend in a long river, not its end.
If it helps you see more, walk with it a while.
If it starts obscuring what you see, go past it.

GLOSS

The Way is larger than any book and lucidity comes before any name. Everyone who has founded a doctrine once believed they had arrived, and later readers went past them. This book is a bend in a long river rather than its end.

SOURCE

§XIX, §XVIII; EP6, T3

VERSION ARCHIVE

VERSION	DATE	CHANGE
v0.1.0	Jul 30, 2026	Found the volume: eighty-one-verse skeleton, editorial note, three-layer format, exemption charter
v0.2.0	Jul 30, 2026 · 18:04 EST	Rename the volume to Maxims of Lucidity, drop the strict eighty-one-verse constraint, and correct the authorship statement
v0.3.0	Jul 30, 2026 · 19:24 EST	Cut six duplicate verses, add the two missing faiths F3 and F4, and correct doctrine, titles, and register
v0.3.1	Jul 30, 2026 · 19:56 EST	Break the four-line lockstep and thin the formulaic connectives in the verse layer
v0.3.2	Jul 30, 2026 · 22:16 EST	Remove the lens logo from the title page
v0.4.0	Jul 30, 2026 · 23:35 EST	Recast the verses in three classical forms and add the Resolution of Objections
v0.4.1	Aug 1, 2026 · 11:10 EST	Align the author name, imprint, and title and copyright pages with the parent book
v0.4.2	Aug 8, 2026 · 08:25 EST	Redefine the Source layer’s reference macros volume-wide as unlinked forms and drop the phantom labels that faked their targets
v0.5.0	Aug 11, 2026 · 08:39 EST	Copyright page and Resolution of Objections record the completed verse-by-verse adjudication; the machine-drafted classical Chinese is stated plainly

VERSION	DATE	CHANGE
v0.6.0	Aug 14, 2026 · 22:34 EST	Retypeset the whole volume in the classical block-print format of the companion Annals
v0.7.0	Aug 15, 2026 · 04:53 EST	Add the vernacular layer to every verse and give each verse its own page

MAXIMS OF LUCIDITY

SEVENTY-SEVEN VERSES

Chuan August Sun
Institute of Lucidity
New York, 2026

LUCIDITY

Version 0.7.0