

The Cult of Unschooling¹

Jon Gold²

*There is a field beyond all notions of right and wrong. Come, meet me there*³.

—Rumi, poet and mystic (1207-1273)

Give your children free reign to rule their lives as they see fit. No rules. No control. No formal lessons. No chores. No bedtimes. Support your children's interests, whatever they are. Treat your children as equals. There are no mistakes, there are only experiences. All limits are self-imposed. Listen to your children. Trust your children. Respect your children. These concepts are the very heart of unschooling and they violate everything ingrained in us by the world at large.

When some people are first introduced to unschooling they come away with the feeling that they have been visited by (choose one) Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Amway salesmen, Scientologists, fundamentalists of any stripe, or aliens⁴.

It's easy to see why outsiders and newbies⁵ are sometimes frightened by what they hear from enthusiastic unschoolers. We talk about the Journey. We wax about the joy. We are just as likely to quote Lao Tzu as John Holt. We extol the virtues of the Path. We invoke Buddha. We speak reverently of Zen simplicity. And we are sometimes (okay, often) rigidly dogmatic about our dogma-less dogma⁶. We tend to iterate over our touch words *listen trust respect* in a manner that to the uninitiated sounds like a mantra which is little different than the way *Oooooommmmm* sounds to most Western ears. To the observer, unschooling can seem overtly mystical as if it's been cooked up by new age hipsters from the left coast who didn't get the memo that the Sixties are over.

After getting over their initial cognitive dissonance, some people ask the question, "OK, maybe some of this unschooling stuff makes sense to me, but do I really have to drink the Kool-Aid?"

Yes, yes you do. But it's not Jim Jones' Kool-Aid, it's Ken Kesey's.

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¹ Wherein your questions may be answered, footnotes will be abused, and I will attempt to map a route from the sublime to the here and now. Ambitious? Oh yes. Possible? Maybe. Dangerous? Yah, sure, you betcha; but any worthwhile venture carries some risk. But you also have to consider, what's the risk of not trying?

² Jon Gold is an uneducated fool. He stayed in high school just long enough to meet his future spouse, Mary. After dropping out of high school he went on to drop out of college. He hopes to someday drop out of grad school just for the sake of continuity. He survived his traditional upbringing to become an autodidact typographer, programmer, café owner, and raconteur. He and Mary have two unschooled children, Conor and Qacei. They tend the garden of their hearts in Corvallis, Oregon, the unschooling center of the universe.

³ Don't you hate it when some article begins with an obscure quote that seemingly has nothing to do with the subject at hand? Then you get to the end of the article and the quote still doesn't make any sense? You suspect that the quote was used only to show how erudite the author thinks himself. I won't do that to you. When the time comes, I will point out exactly why I used this quote. Or double your money back. BTW, the word 'erudite' is also often used just to show how erudite the author thinks himself.

⁴ I am not discounting that all of those could actually be the same thing.

⁵ I mean no disrespect by either term, they are just convenient shorthand.

⁶ see *The Gateless Gate*, by Mu-mon

Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one. —Albert Einstein

There is no spoon. —The Matrix

...the whole world is an enigma, a harmless enigma that is made terrible by our own mad attempt to interpret it as though it had an underlying truth. —Umberto Eco

If you would be a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you doubt, as far as possible, all things. —René Descartes

To avoid the danger of putting Descartes before de horse⁷, a little exposition is required. About 2,400 years ago, a Greek gentleman named Plato wrote a book called, *The Republic of Plato*. The-matically, the Republic is an attempt to deconstruct society's institutions and show how they could be better structured to serve humankind⁸. Here was a guy saying, "Hey, I know that civilization is only a few thousand years old, but dude, I think we are getting off course⁹." In the middle of the Republic there is a short chapter entitled, *The Allegory of the Cave*. In these 8 or so pages, Plato gives us a gift: the first written instance of a man questioning the very construct of the world. The world, Plato shows us through his allegory, is an illusion, an artifice, a mere construct of shadow puppets on the wall of a cave so large that we cannot even perceive that we are in a cave. More importantly, he shows us that should we be seekers of truth, the illusion can be removed with a single realization. Plato bids us to come step into the light and be freed of all artificial constraints.

There is no religion in any of this. One need not be good of heart¹⁰, pure of spirit¹¹, noble of intent¹² or up-to-date on their tithes¹³ to enter into a state of grace in the here and now.

* * *

For monkeys to speak of truth is hubris of the highest degree. Where is it writ large that talking-monkeys should be able to model the cosmos? If a sea urchin or a raccoon were to propose to you that it had a viable truth about the universe, the absurdity of that assertion would be self-evident, but in our case we make an exception. —Terence McKenna

During my contentious adolescence my father, in trying to understand my battles with school, authority, and the world in general, would mock me by saying, "Everyone's out of step but Jonny." And he was right, that was exactly the way I felt, but I could not explain at the time *why* I felt that way¹⁴. I had been rendered emotionally mute¹⁵ by the assault of a world gone mad and at 16 had only books like *Catch-22* and *Slaughterhouse-Five* to justify my feelings. While I knew my father had read them both because he was an aficionado of war stories, I also knew their allegorical intent to be

⁷ I apologize.

⁸ Still a radical idea.

⁹ It is widely recorded that Plato made liberal use of the word 'dude.' In fact, the original title of his eponymous tome was, *The Republic of Dude*, but early scribes did not know how to translate the word from the original Greek until surfing was invented.

¹⁰ Still, a good thing to be.

¹¹ I don't even know what that means

¹² We know what they say about good intentions...

¹³ If you are tithing to any organization, other than charitable, then you may have drunk the wrong Kool-Aid.

¹⁴ "You've felt it your entire life, that there's something wrong with the world. You don't know what it is, but it's there, like a splinter in your mind." —Morpheus to Neo, *The Matrix*

¹⁵ "Bent out of shape by society's pliers." —Bob Dylan

beyond his ken. Though I could take comfort from Bob Dylan's *It's Alright Ma, (I'm Only Bleeding)*:

A question in your nerves is lit
Yet you know there is no answer fit
To satisfy, insure you not to quit
To keep it in your mind and not forget
That it is not he or she or them or it
That you belong to

it gave me no adequate vernacular to express myself to those who tried to control my life.

Even though my father meant it sarcastically, I saw truth in his mockery, everyone *was* out of step but me. I saw a world afire and I thought that no one else could see it; because if they could, they would be just as upset about it as I was. Perhaps they might even try to do something about it. But instead everyone else just went blithely about their business as if the abysmal state of human affairs¹⁶ was normal or even acceptable.

Had I known about the *Cave* at the time I would have thrust it into my father's hands as a way to show him the fount of my malcontent. The *Cave* has served me well as an adult because it has helped me articulate that, which as a teen, I knew only as feelings of anger and profound sadness.

The treasure we find in Plato's cave is that there is only one Truth about all of humanity: We live in a fantasy world of invented narrative. Everyone sees the world as they wish to and creates a story of events which they refer to as 'truth' which coincides with how they perceive the world. Anyone can invent a plausible narrative and label it as truth to justify any situation or behavior¹⁷, but the only truth is to recognize all narratives as man-made.

Which narratives am I speaking of? Political systems, economic systems, geo-political boundaries, religion¹⁸, commerce, social organizations, education¹⁹, legal²⁰. All of those systems are just stories that are man-made, they are but shadow puppets on the walls of our cave. They were not here on the planet when we humans found the place and they will not be here when we are gone from it.

This, my unschooling friends, is the Ken Kesey Kool-Aid elixir.

* * *

*We are all of us in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars*²¹. —Oscar Wilde

Why Jon, why? Why must I partake of this liquid? It looks bitter. And what the hell are you talking about, here, exactly? What does Plato's Cave have to do with unschooling?

If you are to undertake this unschooling journey it is imperative that you understand not only the destination²² but the stops along the way²³. One cannot climb the tallest snowcapped peaks without

¹⁶ It's as if we set out to build a perfect dystopia and succeeded with perpetual warfare, famine, injustice, racism, want in the midst of over consumption, et cetera, ad nauseum.

¹⁷ see The Crusades, the Inquisition, slavery, al-Qaida, fascism, Nazism, the current Iraq war, etc.

¹⁸ "We must respect the other fellow's religion, but only in the sense and to the extent that we respect his theory that his wife is beautiful and his children smart." —H.L. Mencken

¹⁹ "They know enough who know how to learn." —Henry Adams

²⁰ "Good people do not need laws to tell them to act responsibly, while bad people will find a way around the laws." —Plato, *aka* Dude

²¹ also: "Some people walk in the rain, others just get wet." —Roger Miller

also packing for the tropics²⁴. On your lifelong unschooling field trip one must be prepared for every possible climate. And Plato provides that preparation.

Most unschoolers speak of unschooling as a journey. I've already done so skeighty-eight times in the past dozen paragraphs. I don't remember who said it, it might have been Steinbeck, "we don't take a journey, a journey takes us." What he meant is that a journey is supposed to be transformative. Undertaken properly it should alter our long-standing perspectives, it should shake us out of our assumptions, it should change our *weltanschauung*²⁵.

The metaphor of the journey to describe unschooling works so well because unschooling is not something you do *for* your children like taking them for regular dental exams, it is something you do *with* your children. It is a path you travel together. And if you are not prepared take that journey with them, to challenge yourself, to confront the moldering assumptions and dusty beliefs you grew up with²⁶; if you are not willing to grow and change along with your children then you are not unschooling in the same manner that the rest of us are when we speak of unschooling²⁷.

The result will be that both you and your children will not experience the richness, the beauty, the fulfillment, the connections, the boundless joy that unschooling can bring into your lives; the risk is that you might miss seeing the stars.

* * *

I perceive the world as a set of narratives. I approve of all narratives. The narratives are unimportant. My experience of the narratives is what I value. —Astro Teller²⁸, *Exegesis*

I'm sorry, Jon. You're giving me sidereal light and I still don't know why you think I must adopt this seemingly crazy worldview, this weltanschauung you speak of (I don't like saying that word aloud, it hurts my mouth. And frankly, I'm a little suspicious of Germans).

Imagine you and your children as slaves in a Russian Gulag, shackled inside a barn for months after your arrival. Would it be acceptable if your owner said that he was going to remove your chains so you could work the internet credit card scam operation? Sure, you and the kids might be a little better off. Certainly you are free of the barn, but you still aren't free, not when torture and/or death await you just beyond the gulag's gate.

Freedom is binary, you either have it or you don't. There is no such thing as half-free. Getting out of the barn (the schools) is only part of the job at hand; getting off the gulag altogether must be your goal if you harbor any desire to live a self-directed life.

If our unschooling objective is to raise children who are truly free, who grow to adulthood with their spirits and sense of wonder and sense of selves intact then we must bring them to a place where that can happen, off the gulag, outside of Plato's cave. This is the place that is safe for your children to

²² Death.

²³ The stops are actually more important than the final destination, i.e. the journey is the destination.

²⁴ "To live for some future goal is shallow. It's the sides of the mountain that sustain life, not the top." — Robert Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

²⁵ *noun*, German, a comprehensive conception or image of the universe and of humanity's relation to it. Damn! Those Germans have some great words. *Glockenspiel* is another. So is *zwischenraum*.

²⁶ "I can't understand why people are frightened by new ideas. I'm frightened of old ones." —John Cage

²⁷ This is not to assert that someone is not an "unschooler" because they have a different approach.

²⁸ A great name but his real name is Eric Teller, grandson of Edward Teller, aka, "the father of the hydrogen bomb."

become who they are, unbound, unshackled from the world of invented narratives that conspire to limit us.

The artificial narratives we've created diminish our humanity by creating layers between us. If I am a Tory and you are a Whig, that creates a layer between us that hides our humanity from each other. I no longer see you as a fellow human, I now see you as dirty stinkin' Whig. If you are socialist and I am a free-marketer, that is another layer. If I am a Jainist and you are a Rastafarian, if you are Norwegian and I am Croatian, if I am a gun owner and you want gun control, if I smoke pot and you are opposed to drugs²⁹.

As a group we humans tend to define ourselves by our beliefs, in fact we often *become* our beliefs: I believe that my country is better than yours³⁰, I believe that my religion³¹ is the one true religion³², I believe that my theory of economics is better than yours, I believe that my political system is better than yours, I believe that my school is better than yours, I believe that my *weltanschauung* is better than yours.

By extension, if my beliefs are better than yours, then I am better than you. And if I am better than you then at some point it becomes okay for me to cheat you, oppress you, demean you, steal from you, attack you, hate you, enslave you, control you, generally do whatever I want to do to you, especially if I am bigger and more powerful than you. This, in summary, is the history of *manunkind* and *uncivilization*^{33, 34}; neighbor against neighbor, country against country, religion³⁵ against religion³⁶.

This world of invented narratives becomes a microcosm in our household when we apply it to our family. I am older than you, I am smarter than you, I am bigger than you, I am better than you, I'm right and you're wrong and that means I can (and will) control you. This paradigm³⁷ is exactly how the system of schooling is set up, teachers versus students; and it depicts the power structure in most traditional households, parents versus children.

If we can see how narratives hurt us, what happens when we strip them away? My country is better than yours? Countries are just lines drawn on a map; the lines often representing the place where some ancient armies finally stopped killing each other. There is no such thing as a country. My economic system is better than yours? All economic systems are just a way of formalizing barter. Religion? Religions are merely formalized superstitions and rituals meant to honor God³⁸. Most people don't even realize that they are atheists. You are. And so is the person sitting next to you and everyone you know. You are *selective* atheists. You don't believe in Zeus, Baal, Thor, Shakti, Isis, Ra,

²⁹ I think that makes me a pot-smoking, gun toting, capitalist, Croatian Tory; but that's better than being a Norwegian Rastafarian Whig against marijuana.

³⁰ "Patriotism is often the arbitrary veneration of real estate above principles." —George Jean Nathan

³¹ "The more I study religions the more I am convinced that man never worshipped anything but himself." —Richard Francis Burton, explorer

³² To date there have been approximately 8,342 'one true' religions.

³³ When asked what he thought of Western civilization, Gandhi cheekily replied, "I think it would be a good idea."

³⁴ "I know I am among civilized men because they are fighting so savagely." —Voltaire

³⁵ "We have just enough religion to make us hate but not enough to make us love one another." —Jonathan Swift

³⁶ "Almost everyone who has read history ... knows that when the great figure of God appears in a controversy, the shooting cannot be far off." —Stewart H. Holbrook

³⁷ Most paradigms are worth about 4 nickels.

³⁸ Send your religious hate mail to jonnyoro@yahoo.com. I will reprint the most malevolent ones online.

Ymir the frost giant, Assa Yaa, Glooscap, Vishnu, Mulungu, and about ten thousand other Gods and Goddesses that came before the current crop of popular Gods. The Gods that we have today are merely the Gods that survived human fickleness until writing was invented³⁹. Once they're immortalized in writing it's harder to force them into retirement at the Old Gods Home. But you earlier Gods? So sorry, you didn't make the cut, your 15 minutes are over⁴⁰. And finally, educational systems. We already know about them; they've only been around since the industrial revolution. Before then, most everyone unschooled.

So let's strip away all the layers, no country, no political system, no political party, no religion, no school, no social constructs. All of a sudden I see only you, a person, a fellow human being and we happen to be occupying this plane of existence at the same time. There is nothing between us that separates us; all the artificial labels are gone. Don't look now, but your humanity is showing. I don't see a Whig, I don't see a worshipper of Baal, I don't see a Norwegian⁴¹, I see only you and it's really nice to see you like this. I'm a person and you're a person and we are here, together, now; and by seeing each other like this we have achieved 100% commonality⁴². I'm glad to meet you⁴³. How are you? I am excellent, thanks for asking.

When you finally look at a person without the baggage of narratives, you will see that person as they were meant to be seen, as they were the moment before their birth, before any arbitrary labels were applied to them, before the lunatic baggage of *uncivilization* is permanently affixed to their psyches.

Now, recognizing the lunatic baggage for what it is, wouldn't it be wonderful if you could preserve that pristine state in your children? What if they never had to go through the torture of discovering that they've been born into an insane cave of shadow puppets that they must crawl out of in order to save their sanity? Wouldn't that be an incredible gift to give your children?

But isn't that part of life? Shouldn't they have to crawl out on their own? Isn't that the trial of transcendence, of overcoming adversity? That's one way of looking at it. But so many people become permanently damaged by the trip. Some are so mesmerized by the shadow puppets that they never bother looking up their whole lives. Some get the feeling that there might be a cave, but they are never sure of what they are experiencing, they are just always suspicious that something is terribly wrong and they have no control over it⁴⁴. Others only recognize that something is wrong and try to obliterate it with drugs and alcohol or else become afflicted by severe psychological problems.

What if those two boys at Columbine had been shown Plato's cave? We'll never know for sure, but I suspect that they would have merely laughed in the faces of their tormentors instead of slaughtering

³⁹ see the essay, *The Graveyard of the Dead Gods*, by H.L. Mencken

⁴⁰ Can't you picture Simon Cowell telling some pathetic glockenspiel-playing God to get off the stage on *America's Next Top Deity*?

⁴¹ I don't know why but the word *Norwegian* is inherently amusing to me. Like *trousers*. Or *glockenspiel*. The funniest phrase on the planet at this moment might very well be *Norwegian glockenspiel trousers*. Say it with me.

⁴² This is it! This is the bit that ties in to that first obscure quote. When you take away the narratives what's left are just people. There is nothing from which to make a judgment of right or wrong. This is Rumi's field, right and wrong don't even exist in this place. It took 42 footnotes to get here, but we did it. I feel better, don't you? Coincidentally, 42 is the answer to life, the universe, and everything. Hmmm, sometimes the universe aligns in mysterious ways.

⁴³ "If you don't find God in the next person you meet, it is a waste of time looking any further." —Mahatma Gandhi

⁴⁴ Which usually leads to a lifetime of therapy or an addiction to self-help books.

all those people; because once you've seen your way out of the cave, most things that the other humans say or do will be ridiculous to you.

Having knowledge of the cave gives you complete control over your life. Again, isn't that a wonderful gift to give your children? Letting them know that they are welcomed to humanity without having to be anything else, that they are valued just as they are, and that anything they want to do or become is within their control?

I know this seems hard but anything worthwhile requires effort and carries risks. One of the risks is that if you are heavily invested in the narratives this concept may cause your head to explode⁴⁵. If your sense of self is derived from external narratives then this can be a painful transition; what you must remember is that everything you think you have found in the narratives is really something that can be found within yourself⁴⁶. When we find something good in the world, it is something that was already inside of us just waiting to be uncovered. When you see the beauty of a flower or you fall in love, it is only because you have unchained your self-imposed limits. The flower was always there, the person was always there; what changed was your willingness to appreciate them.

Giving your children this ultimate freedom is absolutely insane. It defies conventional wisdom. It is contrary to the beliefs of 99.999999% of the rest of the planet. In some countries it can get your children taken from you. In yet other countries it can get you jailed as a heretic⁴⁷ or put to death⁴⁸ as a provocateur⁴⁹.

Here is the payoff for you: When you undertake this difficult unschooling journey with your children it is also a journey of self-discovery. You will uncover within yourself vast hidden stores of love and energy and compassion and creativity that you did not know you had. You will develop deep connections to your children and others around you that you did not know were possible. You will understand in your bones what it means to be a *parent*, a *spouse*, a *friend*. You will, eventually, come face-to-face with what it truly means to be a human being, to be connected all at once to all that was, all that is, and all that will ever be.

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⁴⁵ I'm not cleaning that up.

⁴⁶ Dorothy always had the power to go home, she only needed good witch Glinda to point the way out of the cave.

⁴⁷ "There is no heresy or philosophy which is so abhorrent to the church as a human being." —James Joyce

⁴⁸ "Every society honors its live conformists and its dead troublemakers." —Mignon McLaughlin

⁴⁹ I've always wanted to be a *provocateur*. Like most French words if you say it right, it sounds dirty.

There! Right there! That last section. What the crap?! That's that touchy-feely new-agey spirituality vibe that I detect when I'm talking to unschoolers. It's just that no one ever came out and said it like that before. What's up with that? I mean, you talk about God but you do it so flippantly that you seem like some kinda atheist⁵⁰ commie weirdo. What's your deal?

Each of us has our own notion of the Divine⁵¹. Frank Lloyd Wright said, "I believe in God, only I spell it Nature⁵²." I am deeply spiritual, as are most unschoolers I've met, but I do not believe in any traditional conception of God⁵³. I do not have any religious practices⁵⁴ yet there is not a day I have on this planet that I do not:

- give thanks for the people and material comforts in my life
- contemplate my relationship to the cosmos⁵⁵
- acknowledge that someday, maybe today, I will merge with the Infinite⁵⁶.

All I know for certain⁵⁷ is that today is one more day that I have the opportunity to try to be the best person I can be; to approach every task with joy, to respond to all situations with kindness and compassion, to always help others when it is in my power to do so⁵⁸.

* * *

Wait a minute now. You're talking about Enlightenment, aren't you? How is that possible? You just up-chucked it all onto the page here. I mean, don't people spend years studying, yoga-ing, meditating, visiting the Far East, consulting gurus, ingesting weird substances, attending seminars, hiring silly life coaches, and sitting uncomfortably on the floor for long periods of time before they achieve enlightenment?

Yes, yes they do. I've given it to you wrapped up in a 15 minute essay. Of course, this only describes *my* enlightenment; your enlightenment may be entirely different. You should also consider

⁵⁰ "If it turns out that there is a God...the worst that you can say about him is that basically he's an underachiever." —Woody Allen

⁵¹ "For those who believe in God, most of the big questions are answered. But for those of us who can't readily accept the God formula, the big answers don't remain stone-written. We adjust to new conditions and discoveries. We are pliable. Love need not be a command or faith a dictum. I am my own God. We are here to unlearn the teachings of the church, state, and our educational system. We are here to drink beer. We are here to kill war. We are here to laugh at the odds and live our lives so well that Death will tremble to take us." —Charles Bukowski

⁵² also, *I'm a Tree Hugging Dirt Worshipper* —bumper sticker

⁵³ "God is a comedian playing to an audience too afraid to laugh." —Voltaire

⁵⁴ "To practice a religion can be beautiful, to believe in one can be dangerous." —Tom Robbins, *Fierce Invalids Home From Hot Climates*

⁵⁵ roughly equivalent to an amoeba's relationship to the sun, not our sun mind you but maybe Alpha Centauri some 25.8 trillion miles away. There are 100 billion solar systems in this galaxy. There could be as many as 125 billion galaxies in the universe. Anyone who thinks we are alone in this universe or that earthlings are God's "special people" is living so deeply in the cave that they may never get out.

⁵⁶ "Life is pleasant. Death is peaceful. It's the transition that's troublesome." —Isaac Asimov

⁵⁷ "We are here and it is now. Further than that all human knowledge is moonshine." —H. L. Mencken

⁵⁸ That is not to claim that I have achieved these goals, I *aspire* to these goals. Maybe someday with enough practice I will get there. Of course, knowing that the Universe has an ironic sense of humor, the day that I actually do accomplish those goals will likely be the day I that go home.

that you may have just spent the past 15 minutes reading the psychotic babblings of an utter fool⁵⁹. There really is no way to know for sure⁶⁰.

* * *

So there you have it, the cult-less cult of unschooling. I've laid it bare as best I can. So when you hear unschoolers speak of their dogma-less dogma:

Give your children free reign to live their lives as they see fit. No rules. No control. No formal lessons. No chores. No bedtimes. Support your children's interests, whatever they are. Treat your children as equals. There are no mistakes, there are only experiences. All limits are self-imposed. Listen to your children. Trust your children. Respect your children⁶¹.

know too that they are also speaking of sacrifice and doubts and tears and personal transformation that now yield untold riches of the heart.

I know that many people will disagree with some of the things I've said here⁶² but I can't show you any better than I have. I cannot make you drink the elixir⁶³ anymore than I can prove the veracity of my words. I can only tell you about the cave, you will have to decide for yourself whether to stand up and walk out.

~ Fin⁶⁴ ~

⁵⁹ "Too much sanity may be madness. And maddest of all, to see life as it is and not as it should be!" —Miguel de Cervantes

⁶⁰ "It is much more comfortable to be mad and know it, than to be sane and have one's doubts." — G.B. Burgin

⁶¹ There are caveats, there is minutiae, there are details, there are nuts and bolts. There are endless discussions on the forums and boards online; go there for your questions, but always remember: *Listen, trust, respect*.

⁶² Many folks seek out writings and advice and self-help information not because they actually want advice or help or to read of someone else's experiences, but because they want validation for what they are already doing in their lives. Upon reading something that fails to provide such reassurance many people are inclined to defend their choices by tearing down that which does not support them.

Before you fire off your vitriol in my general direction, I would like for you to think about this for a moment: If you are reacting angrily to something which you have read that has absolutely no bearing on your life whatsoever, then what are you getting mad about? If something does not affect you or apply to you, why would you invite anger into your life over it? Certainly it's not fun or enjoyable to be angry (parenthetically, (I'm using a parenthetical aside because this software program won't allow me to add a footnote to a footnote. So this set of parenthesis right here is a footnote to a footnote to a footnote—oh boy we're having fun now!) my favorite t-shirt prior to figuring out all this stuff read, "Anger Is A Gift").

On the other hand, could it be possible that your anger is a result of you not feeling entirely comfortable with the choices you've made; and that instead of objectively examining your choices in the cool light of reason, it's easier to lash out in the heat of an emotional response? Give that some thought before you unload your enmity and self-doubt on a total stranger whose opinion, you've already decided, means nothing to you. jonnyoro@yahoo.com

⁶³ "You can lead a horse to water, but if you can get him to float on his back, you've really got something." — Woody Allen, *Without Feathers*

⁶⁴ Um, really sorry about all the footnotes. They're quite annoying, aren't they? This is what's in my head all day long, a running commentary of absolute—often juvenile— nonsense that I can't turn off; e.g. which is funnier: *Carpe carp* or *carpe queso*? If ever I meet the Divine, that will be the first thing I ask. Oh well, thanks for all the opportunities to use the word *glockenspiel*. Enjoy your day.