

My Life and His Ideas By Ben Huot

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A mini autobiography connected to my philosophy and inspired
by a monthly prayer meeting

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Hard Limits

Many people are depressed in the world today. I was for a few years as well. This was during the heart of the 2008 economic crisis. I was convinced the world would end soon.

But then I accepted that the world could end as we know it at anytime. I decided that I may not even decide to carry on because of the state it would be in. I decided to stop watching the news (outside of the technology world).

Things starting getting better emotionally for me from there. During the 2020 pandemic, I got a lot done. I was surprised by how mild the crisis was. I was expecting something like HIV or Ebola becoming airborne.

Most of us in America live in a bubble. We are basically the world's royalty. We see celebrities as living in ridiculous wealth that they squander. We appear the same way to the majority of the world. Our problems actually mirror those of the royalty at any other time in history.

We should not be surprised by suffering. We should be happy when nothing particularly bad is happening to us. Boredom is actually a great sign of wealth and happiness.

I have not traveled much since I was in the military. This is a deliberate choice. I have a good idea of how cruel the world is. Ironically we treat animals worse in the United States.

We have stopped growing economically. We foolishly allowed the richest individuals to save money by using technology and becoming more efficient without compensating us. We let others do our dirty manufacturing work and even literally sent our garbage there.

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But these nations in Asia, just like those in Europe, were not going to be happy making our toys, for much less than what we consider the poverty level in our country. This could have lasted longer, if we were not so obsessed with economic efficiency and at the cost of social resilience and stability in crisis.

Even when we do decide to care about the majority of the world we are too superficial, simplistic, and lazy to get a very detailed understanding of other cultures. When we start to treat people as individuals, then we will begin to turn things around in America. It should not discourage us to save only a few people, even in our entire lifetimes.

People are not an assembly line and do not respond well to another quick sales pitch. If you use the same techniques to win someone over for Christ that you do for selling technology, then you have lost most potential believers. This is even before they consider God's offer of salvation.

We are really bad representatives of Christ. He could do all of this better than us. Which leads me to believe that winning people over is less about proving we are right and more about us demonstrating kindness.

The unique thing about Christ is not about His responses to the Pharisees. It is more about what He didn't say. We rush into everything too quick.

We need to form relationships with unbelievers and be patient with them. God will give us enough time for them to be saved before they die. As followers of Christ, we do not get to set the rules.

We do not serve theology. Sometimes we spend so much time analyzing the Bible that we forget we are talking about real

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people. So soon we forget our own evil nature and when we were not saved either.

We lost a lot when we decided to throw away all the things about the traditional Church when Northern Europe and America became Protestant, independent, and wealthy. Individuality is worth pursuing, if we use it to inspire ourselves to be better people. Using it as an excuse, to put in less effort, or to give up is not helpful.

Maybe we can focus our efforts on what we consider the little things, in our own lives. We need not worry about politics or the state of the world. We need to find encouragement, when small things go right. Once we accept our limitations, we can find the joys God brings to our lives.

This century our world will learn humility one way or another. No matter how smart we think we are, we cannot out engineer the consequences of sin. Just because we lived in great comfort, early in our history, does not mean the same conditions are owed to us forever.

Just Give Up Already

One of the things that we fight to the bitter end for is our sanity and our independence. We want to be correct and in control. We measure our worth in terms of money, power, or other things that can be counted in numbers.

This is what dying to the world and taking up your cross means in the New Testament. Being born again requires dying and living the life of Christ. In America, like it has been in Europe for some time, the popular conception of being Christian is basically the same as being mentally ill.

But we do not need to fight this. We should embrace it. Failure is the beginning of success, at least in my life anyway. When I first started writing about God and faith 25 years ago, I had failed out in college and did not serve my full enlistment in the military.

The ideas that launched my writings were from philosophy courses I took in college. I embraced the freedom from trying to win the game of life. I found other motivations and other ways to succeed.

I changed my priorities. Being unimportant means being safe. Most of us are already living like royalty, as we are American citizens. When I left the military, I was really careful with not taking on unneeded risks. I was willing to live a boring life, in exchange for this.

I had originally planned on being an international businessman, leading distribution and logistics, but I hated business courses and was not good at them. I realized I had problems and at first thought I was a Goth. Later I tried doing journalism, but then I found out I was mentally ill.

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At that time, going to college and studying journalism sounded like a great idea. Now it is irrelevant to me. Furthermore, writing is being automated almost entirely, by what is popularly called artificial intelligence.

The one thing that mattered is that I managed to get a honorable discharge, upon leaving the military. This meant I was eligible for veterans benefits. I attribute this to how my parents raised me. I obeyed orders instantly without hesitation and always gave 150%. Drill Sergeants in both basic and advanced training told me this directly.

One of the Drill Sergeants in advanced training gave me her coin she got, when she trained in Drill Sergeant school, which is a prestigious award. This was because I missed getting a 95% coin award in advanced training, by less than one percent.

The Drill Sergeant in basic training told me, in front of the entire platoon, that she would have promoted me, as the one person she was able to promote. The reason why she didn't was that I was already at the rank she could promote me to, because I was an Eagle Scout.

Some of the things that helped me deal with realizing I was mentally ill were: being able to know I needed help, having a certain degree of doubt about myself, and understanding of how lucky I was to not have worse problems.

I was talking to a VA psychiatrist recently and she said people with Schizophrenia either stay at the same level of independence or get worse. They are questioning that I have Schizophrenia, because I keep improving in many ways. They don't debate as to whether I am mentally ill or not, but that I could be Schizoaffective instead (which has some attributes of Schizophrenia and some attributes of Bipolar Disorder).

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Part of the problem with this is she only sees me a very small part of the time, my mind still works very quickly, and she had not seen me before I had developed Schizophrenia. I am not the typical anything. Some also might doubt my patriotism or my faith because I approach them very differently.

I have recently gone from diabetic, to not diabetic, in 6 months. I am actually using fear to my advantage, in this case. I am excited that I have the discipline and awareness, to be able to reduce my blood sugar and lose weight. These are things I never thought I would be able to do.

So many things, although not perfect, are improving in my life. This I take great comfort in. One of the hardest things in life is knowing what things you can change and what things you cannot change.

This is simple. We can change ourselves, but not other people. Most people give up too easily today. If you can overcome this, many things can be possible, that most people would never try. The most important things for us to master are not our wealth or social status but our thoughts.

Quaker Roots

It might surprise some people, since I served in the military, but I am actually a special kind of Quaker (they call themselves Friends, as Jesus calls us in the Gospels, because we know more of His plans than in the Old Testament). I still have a copy of my dog tags, which are labelled "Protestant - Other" as there are few Quakers in the military.

Ironically, I won a national peace essay contest for my state, in high school, not long before I signed up for the military. There are actually a large minority of Quakers who are not pacifists. Personally, I think the well being of animals is more important than that of people. After all, God created them too and they behave much better than we do.

Some of the ideas of Quakers would be very refreshing to many non-believers today but frustrating to many believers. Quakers are very minimalistic and they avoid rituals to the point that they often do not put crosses on their churches. They have a silent time instead of communion and do not do physical baptism.

Anyone can be a registered minister. People are encouraged to stand up during the quiet time and say something they believe God communicated to them. They also believe strongly in getting involved in social causes.

Part of the tradition, that is not spelled out exactly, is that Quakers value humility. I don't remember anyone saying that directly, but I know I was obsessed with it for many years. This church was where I think I got the idea.

This particular brand of Quakers were what many people call evangelical. This meant to them that they believed in the fundamentals of the faith. These include the Bible being literally true, including the supernatural elements.

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So there were people there from many different backgrounds and many different ideas about what it means to be a Christian. Our family started there originally because they had a very good youth program.

This is also where I first understood the concept of paradox and this was reinforced by what I experienced in the military, as well. I was not happy with the attitude of what I saw much of the American church, especially politically. I sought a different way to be Christian.

There is a long tradition in Christianity to emulate the early Church. There has been a long held belief that we lost our understanding of the Bible along the way and we became morally corrupt. There is also a strong emphasis on studying the culture of the Middle East during ancient times. This helps us understand the context of what was said and what was assumed people understood.

One of the big differences is like most traditional cultures, the ancient Middle East valued community and continuity of values more than we now do. We, on the other hand, keep trying to adopt the latest gadgets and try to all start our own trends. There are advantages and disadvantages to both individuality and communally focused cultures. It is just that Americans tend to take things to extremes.

One extreme on the individuality spectrum in Protestant Christianity is the Quaker faith. Ultimately they give the believer a huge amount of freedom in how they want to interpret Scripture. This is the exact opposite approach of the traditional regional churches in Asia, Africa, and Europe, one of which is the Roman Catholic Church.

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There were a lot of cultural and political issues that brought about the success of what we commonly refer to as the Protestant Reformation in Continental Europe and Britain. Some of these ideas include more regional government, having elected officials both in the Church and government, radical changes in worship like using the local languages, and having every believer be their own theologian. As a side effect, some of these changes helped build the foundations of America, the British and Dutch Empires, and modern Germany.

This all pushed us into the modern world, the ideas of which go back to the European Reformation and Enlightenment. This happened long before most the technologies of the modern world were developed. A lot of this has to do with technologies of ocean navigation technologies, small changes in weather patterns and the climate, the speed at which all this happened, and the ease at which Europe and America could get people to work very hard and buy more things.

Basically, the Europeans managed to leverage their navies and the Americas to disrupt the trade routes dominated by the wealthy and powerful Muslim (Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal) dynasties across South Asia and Eastern Europe.

The turning point was the second siege of Vienna, at about 1700 AD, when guns became reliable enough to be useful in combat. What we call discipline in the military was invented and then perfected by the Prussia (later became modern Germany). This discipline was what made European armies more effective with gun based combat than the Muslim empires.

If you haven't noticed, I am not a fan of unrestricted capitalism. This is also known as the modern world system, which I consider to be Mystery Babylon (the evil end times empire run by the devil). I believe we should take a cue from the Amish and revert to an earlier level of technology.

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This decision will save us from descending into another stone age. We would also need to restrict the usage or development of technology. This is a concept called Agrarianism which was adopted by the variation of Confucianism that Chinese government officially adopted later in Imperial Chinese history.

Lifestyle Paradox

One of my earlier writings is a book I wrote about psychology. I realized then that not only are there people with opposite problems, but also that they have poor self knowledge specifically with regard to this. Specifically that some people's problem is that they work too much and for others they are too lazy.

The key to dealing with this is realizing that we do not have the perspective to diagnose ourselves. The busy think they should be busier and those who don't care think they care too much. You will get a more useful direction from people close to you.

So keep that in mind when talking about getting burned out and how to avoid it. Some of the things I advise may be the exact opposite of what some people need to do. I am writing for the workaholic type A personality.

I spent about 12 years independently studying Asian and European philosophy and religion. I was attempting to find a way to make Christianity more authentic. I attempted to do this by seeing religion from an Asian and African perspective.

One of the big surprises to me, late in my studies, was that Christianity has always been a world religion. Early Christianity was actually centered (population wise) in what is now Iraq. This church was sometimes referred to as the Church in Babylon. This church literally was headquartered there as it was the capitol of the Persian Empire. This lasted for the entire first millennium of church history.

One of the authors I read on this topic found this out by measuring how many church leaders there were and knowing how many people this would make in their congregations. Then he derived the total population of Christians based on this

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formulaic way they divided up the members of the Church of the East (East Syriac).

Another thing I found out in my studies early on is that Philosophical Taoism (the Zen in Zen Buddhism) and Christian Existentialism were at the heart of the Gospel. This was also in a way that was compatible with a literal understanding of the fundamentals of the Bible.

The main idea of Philosophical Taoism as it evolved over time in Chinese history was its yin and yang relationship with Confucianism. When the Jesuit Catholic Priests first brought the Gospel to China on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church, they quickly synchronized this with Confucianism, but did not do so with Taoism.

Part of this is a confusion made by cultural misunderstandings and the fact that there are two entirely different forms of Taoism. Originally, Philosophical Taoism came from the ideas of the I Ching, with the religious elements removed. Later, Religious Taoism evolved into a form of elaborate traditional Chinese folk religion or a form of animism (shamanism).

There was in China, like in many countries, state belief systems and there were also folk traditions of the general population of peasants. When you study Traditional Chinese Philosophy, you usually study pure philosophy without any religious elements. But most people, who were not in the leadership, practiced the Traditional Chinese Religion.

So the main reason for my interest in Chinese philosophy is that I am, in ancient Chinese terms, a Confucian by temperament, in that I am a type A workaholic personality. Philosophical Taoism evolved into a private and non political way of expressing feelings and creating artwork and literature for the ruling class.

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Confucianism never dealt with anything outside of public ceremonies and manners.

The traditional Chinese emperor controlled all land and assets in China and selected the officials who would administrate it on their behalf. They did this by a way of an imperial examination in which they wrote poetry to promote Confucian ideals.

So when some scholars scored low or failed their imperial exam, they often retreated into the rural areas to live like monks. They then adopted Taoism as a kind of counter culture movement, but they were never political about it.

Some of the main ideas of Philosophical Taoism are: being unimportant in social status, avoiding politics or hierarchy of any kind, skepticism, a belief of evil coming from culture rather than nature, and a very vague understanding of their being supernatural aspects to life. Basically Taoism was for those burned out Confucian scholar officials.

Tai Chi, Acupuncture, Kung Fu, tea ceremonies, meditation, calligraphy, and poetry are all applications of Philosophical Taoism. If you practice any of these, you are using the concept of Qi, which is the basis for any of these traditional Chinese practices and philosophies. Qi is the fundamental building block of both matter and spirit. It is what joins together the body and mind. Its relationship to religion is like science is in our modern culture.

Unpacking

A lot of events happened while I was in the military in a very short time frame. I have been reflecting on them for the last 25 plus years. First of all, the military has its own culture like any country or large organization.

When you come to Basic Training, you are exposed to stress to test your ability to survive in combat. The idea is that everyone comes from their own subculture. To build unity there needs to be an entirely different culture that everyone has to learn from scratch.

Your life basically starts over, as you experience cultural shock. They simulate the shock of being in combat, by shouting and intense physical training, at first. Later, they have the gas chamber, throwing a live grenade, and the final test in Field Training Exercises.

You learn that things happen for no reason and you must follow orders no matter what. There are no other options and there is no time to think. The military uses peer pressure, repetition, and fear to motivate you.

The military trains the enlisted soldiers very similarly to almost any other military. The difference for us is we have more money for longer and more thorough training. As much as our military screws things up (which you never get punished for), we are still the world leaders in logistics. America is the Apple Inc. of the world's militaries.

The point of basic training from a practical skills level is to teach you what are called combat survival skills. You have to learn how to shoot a rifle, which is designed to be used carefully, so that you only use one bullet per kill. You have to know how to respond to chemical weapons and protect and decontaminate yourself. You

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learn to stay low and crawl on your belly and how to march, so you know how to move in combat, as safely as possible.

The military made a decision a relatively long time ago that every soldier in the Army is first and foremost an infantry or foot soldier. This means everyone must be trained this way and so this is the purpose of Basic Training. One of the reasons why we win wars so easily is that we have the best technology because we have a virtually unlimited budget.

We also use this money to invest in supporting each foot or infantry soldier on the front lines. This decision means that the difference between a medic and a foot soldier is the medic carries an additional bag of supplies. This applies to every job. There are no desk jobs in the Army.

In the military, they say war is 80% boredom and 20% terror. There is nothing in between. It is like your entire life is Bipolar. You wait in line for hours for everything and they can and do random things unexpectedly, especially with tear gas and to scare you.

You learn to act like everyone else and you aren't able to express yourself in any way during training. You also are made to feel you only exist because they need a warm body to put into their fancy vehicles. This makes me think of how a kid puts toys soldiers into miniature replicas of combat vehicles.

You are disposable government property and they use a term for that that I will not repeat. Call a Drill Sergeant sir or ma'am and they will say they are not an officer and that they work for a living. This did little for my self esteem, which wasn't the highest before then anyway. I experienced a deep depression I had never felt before that.

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After going through my complete Army training successfully, I have no desire to lead anyone or serve in any leadership. I have no desire to be rich or famous. And I understand and respect the labor movement. I felt very different about these particular things beforehand.

The Army is really serious about these kinds of training. They teach you these skills over and over again, in your free time. You get to go to the gas chamber, prove you can shoot well enough, and get tested to see if you are in good enough physical shape every year. As enlisted, you actually get promoted most by getting college credit.

When I left the military, after a little over a year, I was stationed in Hawaii. Everyone else in my unit asked to leave as well. People who sign up for a second enlistment are very rare and often get paid large bonuses. You basically only get to be a Sergeant if you sign up for another tour.

The Army is the biggest organization that has to be equal opportunity and affirmative action compliant. But the military has a disproportionate representation of people of color as NCOs, and not enough as officers. These laws actually effectively help more white people get promoted to Sergeant.