

# EMPATHY ROAD

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Charles Goldman wrote the nine parts of Empathy Road in 2010, out of a deeply felt inspiration. The source of this poem, as with many of his poems, comes from what the poet describes as “an engulfing presence of love and insight from beyond myself.” In a world of poems composed from the need to juxtapose words in novel forms, it is gratifying to find poems still written in a romantic tongue, about the nature of the human struggle.

Empathy Road is partly a map to our own future as well as the heartfelt cry of a man to all his fellow travelers on their paths through life. It offers a ray of hope to those who struggle with the idea of cessation, and then applies that idea to the turning of the page of human history. What kind of future do we want for ourselves and for generations to come?

Here is the signal now come to so many of us, that the Selfish modality of human business must end and be replaced with one of Compassion and Empathy. This has to extend from our personal lives into the very way we govern our societies. The Poet believes that only this utter transformation of the way we conduct ourselves will save humanity from extinction.

# EMPATHY ROAD

Dedicated to Alex Buck

“In the future of these States must arise poets immenser far, and make great poems of death. The poems of life are great, but there must be the poems of the purports of life, not only in itself, but beyond itself.”

~ Walt Whitman, from *Specimen Days*

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On Empathy Road those who have loved us rise  
from the flames of our hearts like blossoms of fire,  
and we can truly call ourselves humanity for the first time.

On Empathy Road  
nature echoes its cries for equilibrium,  
when our own voices choke on universal truth.

We follow Empathy Road  
as it leads us out to the stars.

We follow Empathy Road  
leading us back into our own hearts.

No longer chastise the poor for not having,  
nor the hungry for dying but for the indolent masses of a rich culture,  
no, do not chastise the believers in universal intelligence, nor those who have been  
face to face with God and seen the vastness of that starry beating heart  
within their own heart.

Allow the light of love to fill each of us as it has never been allowed before  
and wake to a world made new, made fresh, made of love itself where love  
has burned in oil and risen in black smoke from a million chimneys.

Allow your love to give and share so that we are a united species happy  
in every single cell of our blind humanness.

Invoke peace as though it wasn't tainted by a thousand wars over ten thousand years,  
and which argues that we must be at war because war is our nature, then  
we will rise from that pretext and begin anew, no longer relying on the disparate  
ugliness within to shape our destiny out of vengeance, greed and killer rage.

No longer be the child who suckled at the Earth's breast and then ravaged  
the same beautiful mother, making all women secondary in her image as  
the great provider at the master's beck and call.

No more remain the slaves of need, and the urge to have more and more to feel alive,  
in our soul's fury and striving as we are nearing a precipice  
and over the edge love is falling and returning itself to the grand realms which  
sent it to us  
as a gift.

I believe in the great heart of my species, that it will lay down every gun, that  
it will stop generating tribunals out of confusion and hatred, and find  
the center of all things turning within its own individuated hearts,  
to find beauty in the simplest smile and surrender to life like children  
to their hours of play.

For the generation of complex rationalizations I pray simplicity  
For the generation of addiction and sloth I pray dignity  
For the generation of scientific absolutes I pray mystery  
For the generation of poverty and base drives I pray torment's end  
For the generation of killers and their protectors through Might I pray awakening  
For the generation of manufacturers and brokers I pray that love is the coin of the realm.

Forsaken dreamers who have nowhere to turn I want there to be a hand to put  
in yours, and that this shall be the method  
of our Government, rooted in empathy for us all; until there can be no suffering which is  
not looked after, and no agony which is not shared openly by us all  
until it is healed and that cure is to be found only in one place, which is love.

If I have grown tired of my witness to this infernal landscape out of balance  
where are my brothers and sisters by my side, no longer arguing the finer points  
of human salvation, but doing it, living it, expressing it as the one supreme virtue?

If I have grown tired of my witness to this nightmare which should have been a fulfilled  
dream, where are the other golden souls whose lives shine like fireflies  
dancing upon a meadow composed only of their dream of endless love?

Dare I go on without being ridiculed, without pointing the disparaging finger back at  
hatred

and the denouncements of weak minds, tortured by all they fear while  
accusing and opposing love as weakness, as addicts to the rush of rage  
produced beneath their skin?

Do I send them love and let them free if they are to become the new wall separating  
humanity from its freedom? To anyone erecting walls I say  
let the only walls be those of love behind which a child sleeps warm from the freezing wind.

That is how I am feeling in these days of war, and crime, while the rich steal the world  
from beneath our feet, and have made the very policies of chaos which assail us.

That those who make the laws make the poor to shoulder it  
when there is only the one love to govern us  
but it is a buried law, one buried in dullness and beneath the weight  
of poisoned generations born from the embrace of the one law,  
which is love.

||

What good to talk of death, I who always fear it, although I am in no wise  
naive, or one who has never opened a book,  
nor cast my own eyes upon the dying flesh to watch its light rise? I saw my own father's  
death, as he lay there limp on his tranquil bed, and watched white tufts rise sporadic,  
to a place above him. But that journey, no matter how bitter is the end, haunts us all  
as a question haunts an answer which we believe can never come,  
in a universe composed of ice cold space and foreboding. Chemicals on the dim spheres  
turning in the nocturnal distance, dance for us in a song as concrete and finite  
as life itself. Why mention this?

Out in the starlight gently gliding are a myriad of forms we cannot begin to know,  
not in the twilight mist of our thinking, with its roots sunk deep  
in the loam of matter and matter's hard-boiled keepers, who'd give rise to reasons  
why there is no afterlife. It is best that way, to preserve the status quo, to keep  
the coffers constant filling, secure beyond morality, while the decent pray,  
and the innocent wonder, and the religions dominate by making God into a man,  
so that flesh answers to flesh, and the blood of the son is wine at the altar.

Yes, let us be drunk at our altars, and strip down bare in the woods to dance,  
for the earth in full flower, and yet with all her riches spilling onward  
throughout time and endless epochs of living beasts, children starve

because we cannot feed them of this bounty. Ask the corporations why  
they put their patent stamps on crops you cannot regrow, unless through  
seeds purchased from them? If you do not find this odd,  
then as one of them,

their patent stamp has penetrated beneath your brow, and also bubbles deeply  
in your blood.

Here is the chaos of our assumptions and disagreements,  
woven in the fabric of centuries for us to walk comfortably upon,  
while lifetimes of suffering enshroud even the happiest day and the happiest hour.

Deep within the bones of those who urge us onward a change is coming.  
It implies itself, it intimates itself toward a new spiritual vision not of the norm.  
Included is life itself as well as the everlasting, included is the reaction to war  
and the wisdom to know why, included is the return to balance and addressing  
every inequality.

Race, sexual leaning, gender, duality,  
all risen in one spirit giving their voice; the workers who are denied their future  
and the callous bosses who own their day, no longer viable throughout  
all humanity.

We are at the moment in which democracy must finally be born,  
and all labor leads to security and comfort, education and healing,  
not for the prosperous alone. Not just man, as we are at the threshold of  
responsibility for planet Earth, and those small voices  
hardly heard will soon be felt in every person's soul. Why question death?  
When the leaf is gone does the caterpillar question why he ate it?  
The universe is calling to us within our own spirit: Ask.

It is the great reminder.

Death awaits no one's question, as the universe calls, echoing  
through death's door, hovering above the roof,  
bursting with illumination, as though evolution  
was the word of light made flesh  
and that word is Life.

### III

There is nothing more sad to me than the spiritually bankrupt man;  
the ones without hope are not among them,  
the child burdened with incurable suffering is not among them,  
the families scattered across millenia in famine and drought and flood  
are not among them,  
the shops full of sweating men and women, the stores full of clerks,  
without unions, within the parameters of great need, are not  
among them, the young black man hustling off to war, because  
there is no other work is not among them, no.

The learned who have given up their dream of unity with others,  
who work to assail those whose rich lands must now be plundered  
for the richer nation and the dominant state,  
The young man hustling off to war, not him but his generals in their knowledge  
of the strategies of hell on Earth, the pompous leaders whose two faced lives  
are the tribunal of nations, the scientists gaming the methodology of complete control,  
and the liars who deny them, the pundits of the clouds of chaos forever yelling  
and generating rage and tumult, these I want you to know and understand,  
are the spiritually bankrupt. The sadsack souls whose  
mouths curl around carefully constructed lies to pry open the dark places  
within every listener, entering through the opened eyes of the watcher  
even though they are as asleep, entranced by the macabre dance  
of the language of filth, debasement and triviality which fuses the world into its final knot.

For all of those whose hopes are dashed,  
for you beloved, sweet beings whose lives are frustrated and even agonized,  
generations from now, the light which is of the few will be among the many,  
the stars of the past will come to each person's heart like  
an infinite melody which vanquishes the poison of the spiritually bankrupt.  
Do not believe them. Work toward that future which because you can see it ahead  
is in a very real sense, already here.  
If you are afraid today, bitter before a coming end,  
there is no end in sight. If your fear is for your children and their children  
after them, know that the liars will be laid to rest because they are the future's  
fertile ground,  
mixed into the manure of their blind and wicked speech and out of which blooms  
beyond their day of reckoning, a garden endless as the night sky,  
teaming with those, who today, would be called masters, but who will in that future time,  
be the friend next door.

How often we dash the hope  
of the promised land, and make of it instead an illusory place where angels dwell,  
built upon the edicts of a clouded religion, which the rain nurtures within the ignorant soul,  
until that soul must raise its head beyond the clouds of unknowing, like a great blossom  
of light which is the central light,  
the turning point within each starry countenance of man.  
There is that day, and many more like it. Our journey has just begun, not ended, and  
we will see the still and wonderful landscapes of a thousand new worlds,  
we'll look with our own eyes beyond the speed of light,  
in ships made of light where once mere clay stood erect.  
We will dance in light-years and call the vast, empty reaches between stars  
our home, where in beds like those we sleep in now,  
we will find our rest at the end of day, in a journey universal and sublime.

I will meet you beyond the misery of the flesh, out where the shining  
soul has found its peaceful day, where the new body is a body luminous  
and unsuffering, where the insensate wretches and spoilers of beautiful thought  
cannot exist. I will greet you among the light beams falling from a rainbowed sun,  
and you will recognize my smile, even though we have never met, because  
you felt it in your soul. I will feel you in my soul, and the fairest love expressed  
will make between us a nova of sublime desire now consummated without fear.

In your arms will come the true melting and blending of everyone and thing  
with the fabric of our transmuted resonance.  
Often I hear how without conflict the world will be a boring place,  
but I say to you, you have hardly begun to know the structure of harmony's gate.  
Beyond it there are ways of life unimaginable, and heaven need not be understood  
as only an afterlife state, and that we must build it in the here and now.

## IV

When we gather who will we not welcome?  
Together: what does that mean?  
We are one: what does that mean? I see you coming from a far off place,  
not in miles but that distance created by thinking, and I am reluctant to hold out my arms.

I would not welcome you if you have consciously harmed others, but I must, I must  
give way to love and honor its meaning. I must bow before the faith in the infinite

that will arise inside you, and one day unify us both. I will invite you into my circle, but I am reluctant, and I will judge your actions if they celebrate greed and control, but I will ask you still to join us in the hour of ultimate solidarity and ask of you only that you love.

The world is a swirling tide of pain within its own soul, through the chain of flesh, where no thinking holds, and the reins of want is by brute force, and the captured prey devoured in agony quite real, as the churning of forms devouring, cycles through eternal pain, in the jaws of death, in a universe divine.

Yet even here is the law, in its state of animal majesty hunting on the grassy plain where mankind first opened up animal eyes and saw beyond the veil of life, into the depths of time, that a gift was given which even the beasts could sense, as one grew near and placed his raging head beneath a human hand, for the affection given of a beloved friend.

We are not lions, ants or bees, we are the ones who will move on born of this Earthly place: Will we seed the distant stars or die, we can ask and ask we must, but the answer always comes back the same, the chance you take is not of luck, but love.

## V

This is the time and place for war, it is the flesh of violence and uncertainty; it is the dream of death and death's finality, for longing of the dreamer as the dreamer perishes. It is the place of carnage and its rotten aftermath, it is the palace of hatred and hatred's warriors, the helmeted armies of madness, and their digital reflections in a million familiar mirrors.

This is the place of Armageddon and the bankers who will profit from it. From here blood flows in rivers, on the shores I find the dance of the drunken thieves, lost in their dream of taking. They dance as if hung from a rope, the rope of no conscience, the one suspended above a dark void where their souls dangle, no better nor less than those who rob society on the street. What is it that they so joyously take along the shores of the rivers of blood? It is our birthright.



To own what is ours, this humanity locked behind walls of oil and trade,  
they have murdered the true inventors of freedom, trivialized  
their freeing machines, mocked the thinkers who have done the impossible,  
and when met with protest, killed them. Our birthright is a time-bomb ticking  
in a hot and furious wind, as a sweaty infant covered in a fever rash is dying, who  
should have been comforted by salvation's inventiveness.

Who watches this beside me dressed in black and feigning death's best friend?  
Mimicking a fictitious thirst for blood, is this our age's archetype? Pale  
men in the dark who shun the light, who open wide horrendous mouths  
to dine on us? There is no image  
more appropriate to define the state of society, unless, perhaps, complacency.

When the light within each breath not  
only animates each being, but is the home of all future worlds blossoming  
in my imagination, now stagnant, defeated, awaiting a true trial by fire. I am  
impatient for you to wake up, dreamer shaking violently and bleeding out of your  
dream eyes.

For what other tears would startle you awake when tears shed by  
the myriad suffering seem to have no affect at all? I am impatient for you to  
grab love's lifeline and pull us to safety, in the shadow of a spiritual grace,  
tranquil in its forested light, dappled and majestic as a temple made  
of overarching trees and mountain streams, in  
empathy's strong but gentle hands, in the stream of love where the rivers of blood  
can never flow.

## VI

Do you think the earth's poles will shift  
without first shifting the polarity of your own heart?  
What is so hard to understand? That shifting the point of view of Selfishness  
to Empathy, is the only shift of polarity we need. What if that is the real  
Apocalypse, the true ending of one world and the beginning of another.  
It is hard to imagine a condition of harmony generated by such a shift,  
especially among those who say that without conflict how will I grow?

Not one of us has yet to envision a world which has thrown out that old pretext,  
nor can we imagine what comes after. Is that not an explorer's ultimate paradise?

To not find a world, but to make a world anew in which new possibilities  
are discovered?

What would it be like to have the whole world governed by compassion?  
Where all machines of war and defense of nation, were instead turned to taking us  
out to the stars?

Here in our own backyard is the answer: to become the stewards who have  
mastered life, not conquered it. How are we different from the animals?  
We are the ones who will take Earth consciousness into the galaxy, we  
will find and embrace civilizations older than the drift of continents,  
but would they embrace us in return, or hide from our violent ways?

A world of Empathy is not one of violence,  
A world that such a simple idea describes, throws out the old world model  
of dominance, mayhem and control, because it is stale, it has been tried  
for thousands of years and failed. To those who say  
we need the bad to learn what it is to be good, I say  
how many more thousands of years of depravity, murder, greed,  
war, and selfishness, do we need in order  
to learn that final, simple lesson?

O the passage of time  
has provided many wonderful things, but failed us completely in respect  
of what and who we are. Never has a civilization built itself from the ground  
up, upon the recognition that we are spirits and our bodies miraculous  
full of the power to heal ourselves and our relationships  
to act because the Earth is in our hearts  
to decide the future where life abounds  
to see beyond time  
to contact loved ones gone into the light,  
who can talk to us if we but listen,  
when we learn the magic art of action through our hearts.

The multitude of the arrogant in denial,  
their days are numbered, for a shift has come. Hear the signal in your throat,  
hear the signal in your mind, the poles within you  
are shifting, slipping, opening up, to show you that  
you are no longer merely mortal, and as all spiritual systems  
have ultimately prescribed, compassion is the state of evolution for us,  
and not otherwise.



## VIII

Opinions fall like drops of blood onto the snow,  
like warnings from the eyes of a million creatures,  
upon the sad dawn I will awaken to their silence,  
upon a landscape littered with the remains of the extinct.

If I do not want such a world I know you do not want such a world,  
yet such a world is happening daily,  
invisible to the distracted eye  
where miserable hope holds out its hand in poverty,  
and where a single cent outweighs the dream of all creation.

Am I to sing and chant of love within this day of mourning?  
This angry day in which I drop to my knees in shame,  
wondering what has become of my humanity's open heart?  
We began in the heat of our youth to end such suffering  
but the brokers of distraction offered us a technicolor dream  
and many chose instead to feel only while watching the macabre dance  
of actors in repetition, and the digital death  
portrayed excitedly in games of power and war.  
We began in the coolness of an evening in which the hum of mowers  
across the lawn brought smiles of satisfaction for our groomed achievement.  
Then we grilled a steak, and then another, and then another to fill to fullness  
of contentment, and look around  
at the perfect death we share across our vast and populous proud land.

Who will be the first to escape this nightmare?  
To fly from this depressing place, and leave body and soul anchored behind?  
Who will be the first to back away from the swindle of the everyday  
and feel his roots clinging to the dead earth in desperation and grief?

When the dark oppression of the newly extinct washes over us  
who will snuggle up beneath its quilt, stultified and hardened in our once soft lives?  
The tides of warning have washed these shores many, many times,  
while those who give it their heart's own voice  
are trivialized in the game plan of high finance.  
And I wonder why, why we have become such machines?  
The toys of stealthy, silent lurking demons, who whisper in the soul's

shadow, 'win, win, win,'  
they are the winners in their multitude,  
who do not ever want to hear these words.

My sorrow is for those who cannot mourn,  
for those who will not feel,  
though voices rise in despair, and the countless ears will not hear them.

My sorrow is for those who feel secure and politely talk of the good life,  
with lips made purple by French wine, and books on how to cook gourmet cuisine,  
and gardens of exotic plants whose weeping leaves may long  
for places on Earth so far away, that moonbeams cannot find them,  
and on the windswept soiled roads, from town to town and stopped  
by endless cross walks in the city, the trucks pull up to the loading dock  
and empty an agony in boxes for Detroit. For the richest cities  
the boxes come, and boxes shipped that travel far, by road, by rail, by sea and plane,  
fueling the sky with man-made jets and passengers all asleep,  
while on the ground a child looks up in awe, wondering at the abrading sound  
and churning smoke in the ocean of the night, and my desire is  
that he will grow into a world where birds still fly,  
and not a sky devoid of everything but a noisy, glinting jet.

Should I again speak of love, O Love Infinite!  
caring upon the fields of war, and in the suburban homes of happy families,  
and among the students in their schools,  
and among the hospice workers who know what caring means?  
Should I again speak of love everlasting, of the soul's true form,  
of the spirits who are waiting beyond the brink  
of this hardened clay? Nothing will move you  
to believe it is your destiny, to end the endless suffering,  
to cease the endless war,  
encrusted in your flesh, as each must take and take and take,  
as though a desert emptied us,  
and anger rose up from love to conquer us forever.

## IX

"O YOU MILLIONS, BE EMBRACED!"

Have I written yet for eternity?  
Even my heart says no, they will forget,  
they will not know. Those few may find  
a note which lived inside my heart  
and since turned to dust, and if I  
have written for anyone, it is myself.  
The reminder to take heart, to have a heart  
full of the joy which a visionary life can bring.  
And if its pages or whatever form turns  
to dust it will do so gladly, having given  
of itself gratis, at no cost to a single soul,  
and only that its spark can join with  
the spark of another and lay down  
side by side like two lovers finding  
the single moment in which self  
must collapse to find the soul.

Yet they would tell me there cannot be  
a soul in all things. They talk of angels  
and their outspread wings, but know not  
the wings of the stone, nor the flight  
of the dreaming minds of all mankind.

I have seen what I have seen  
and know that the rapture so sought  
is naught but the splintering of the chrysalis  
in which larval man now dwells, that he may  
open his eyes for the first time as a new being,  
one who does not ask for another to save him,  
and finds that the path made of a barricade of stones  
is tread by wingless angels who are the simple  
children, who will move beyond what they have  
long believed, into a state in which they will know.

No prophecy need unfold, no great countenance

from the realms of a sphere thought of as 'on high'  
to descend to us, as if we are not already members  
of that highest place, and the makers of servants  
for the trust of owners of mankind. No prophecy  
need be restated a thousand times to make me believe.  
I will not believe, I will know. There are a few  
who read not to read but to discover, a few who  
discover to shatter what has been taught, drummed  
home, for the slaves of ancient tales, those  
who are poor in spirit, because they do not know.

This is my love poem for you.

"O you millions, be embraced!" By the very heart  
of all that love can tell, by the longing of the sages  
of every time and place. The one stream is ending  
because it must, and it quickens, rushes onward  
ever faster, so do not hold on to the shore,  
because it will drag you under to drown.  
Let go and travel to the farthest places  
man has gone, rich in the wisdom carried  
through immortal time, not to a savior on a throne  
but into the depths of your own hearts.

There, a jewel turning in a greater market place  
than any you have fashioned by the pillars of finance,  
by any your skeptics reviewing the economic systems  
of a million greedy men, by dint of the greatness of music  
as yet unheard, by the hand and the eye and open mind  
seeking the freedom of all beings, not just those of a single belief,  
a jewel on a pedestal made of the teachings which open doors,  
made of the sense to cherish life in every creature, a jewel  
which every beloved teacher deified for glory,  
has carved a single notch, a jewel turning  
on a pedestal made for every man, woman, child,  
and is of their flesh and blood.

When I look beyond the storied layers of your one book,  
I find it striving to tell you to be at peace and find love.  
I hear its voice rising within my own, to tell you  
to sing of suffering and the way to give to all,  
that which the wealthiest possess, that whatever

nightmare of subservience created under the aegis of control  
be abandoned as this jewel now rises, rises like a blossom  
in the spring of man's unfoldment.

Who crawls from the rubble beneath the war torn street?  
Who moves mountains to build hotels?  
Whose dynasty of eternal wealth gloats in private?  
Whose shame passes for but a moment glimpsed in the mirror?  
Who holds the reins of the human soul?

Joy over a thousand thousand millennia unfolds  
if you would but see it! Joy to calm the tornado of  
the heart of man! Joy to lift from one's hands  
the end of all disease! Joy to quicken the only medicine  
to cure poverty! Joy to give back to each child  
the nurturing intelligence of love! Joy coming off  
the torture rack! Joy lifting off the severing blade!  
Joy encountering only joy!

Where you have failed joy rises.  
Where you have fallen upon your prey in the darkness of hatred, joy now rises!  
Where you have looked into the mirror and saw your own death, joy now rises!  
Where you have turned upon another and taken what they earned, joy must rise!  
Where you have lied to sully others, joy must now rise!  
Where you have caused an agony and destroyed, joy must now rise!  
Where you have been the brute, the smug undoer of another's work, joy must arise!  
Where the liar has lied, where the snake has bit, where your handiwork  
Was the turmoil for others, where you brought death and despair, and smiled  
Upon the blood dripping from your own hands, joy must now rise!  
Upon your words which denigrate and hate, hanging  
Like corpses from the throat of these proclamations, joy will now rise!

Is this the bliss made of the darkest inferno of your own hearts  
laid out as your final gift before the infinite? What salvo  
from our depths; ugliness, depravity, despair, doubt, booming  
in death from which sorrow becomes a radiance full of joy?  
That and only that is the roadmap I would share.

Know this. That if you do not know, find out.  
That you will find out. That you will have learned.  
That out of your material gain in which



thought and deed has brought profound despair,  
Joy will be the flower which lifts its ultimate head  
and all futures will bathe in its fragrance.

Know this. That if you do not love. Learn love.  
Unless love rolls from the wheels in your chest,  
driving you through life, and know  
that liberty comes only when all mankind is free.  
The law which is love is not found in the convoluted protections of the rich.  
The law which is love comes as a silent thread wending its way  
up through the majesty of the human soul and heart.  
The law which is love forgotten, drips from our labor.  
The law which is love rests in the fists done with their beating.  
The law which is love sits in protest and also swings down in the baton of rage.  
The law which is love surrounds each bullet ever fired no matter the size.  
The law which is love grows in the horrid tumors of every kind of cancer.  
The law which is love must be recognized so that it may heal what is sick.

I have not written for eternity but to myself alone,  
for I do not know who would listen or care.  
I have no strength or courage to wrest from you your  
sleep, your stupor, your momentary flash of all goodness.  
I have no way of prying open whatever rigid thinking boxes in friend or foe.  
I do not and cannot write the great writing  
for I am not great until I love.