

## M.W. MILLER / A Far West Commentary on the Diamond Sutra

[1] The Excluded Middle walks without feet, on no discernable path, and never arrives. Even the Excluded Middle sometimes wonders: what's the point?

[2] The Excluded Middle is nonetheless very joyful and a fine raconteur on both winter and summer evenings. It never gets in the way of a story. Indeed, the Excluded Middle can never get in the way of anything, or offer any obstruction.

[3] The Excluded Middle just can't disagree, and so can never be bested in any debate. If you swing at the Excluded Middle, you'll be swinging at air. It floats like a butterfly and deploys three kinds of stings: is, is not, and therefore is.

[4] If the Excluded Middle could feel guilty about offering so little resistance and in not putting up a more entertaining fight, it would. But it can't.

[5] So it doesn't. It can only repeat: is, is not, and therefore is. The Excluded Middle is far too generous to offer advice of any kind and would be offended at the thought, if it could be offended. It trusts your wisdom, implicitly, as well as your generosity, ethics, patience, energy & calm, and is careful not to add any new heads to the one you already have. For it would be an act of hypocrisy of limitless proportions, easily enough to make Jesus weep, for the Excluded Middle, who has no head, who is not anyone, to add a head to anyone else.

[6] Being without a head, and joyfully so, the personhood of the Excluded Middle is in much dispute. The Excluded Middle always has an immeasurable laugh at this. That's another thing it's particularly good at. Though no one knows how, being without a head and all.

[7] The Excluded Middle patiently contains multitudes, chiliocosms of chiliocosms with all the particles of dust there entailed, and chiliocosms of chiliocosms within each particle of dust. [But there are no particles of dust. Therefore, there are particles of dust.] With great energy and every perfection, the Excluded Middle gathers together all particles of dust into one huge & infinitely spinning wheel, and calmly places that wheel on the glass of your coffee table, without a particle spilled, while

leaving plenty of room for your Gideon, for your sutras, and even for your teetering stack of Real Estate Weeklies.

[8] The Excluded Middle is that good.

[9] The Excluded Middle can pitch its tent anywhere, encompassing all tribal treasures, named & unnamed, and traverse any desert for whatever series of quadruple decades required, followed by pillars of smoke & flame.

[10] The Excluded Middle is always on the move and favors nomads, barbarians, pirates & rogues, and is bored by cities, trade & the clever. If it could be overtaken by anger, it would be particularly exasperated by people with fine handwriting. But it cannot be overtaken by anger.

[11] The Excluded Middle is the non-obstructed & generous provider of all grounds, all public spaces and is home to all the best country fairs. A greased pig is one of the many ceremonies that gives the Excluded Middle boundless joy.

[12] The Excluded Middle especially favors lemonade made with quartered lemons, crushed ice and heaps of sugar, as well as corn on a stick dipped in melted butter. If the Excluded Middle had a doctrine, this would be its doctrine. But the Excluded Middle has no doctrine. [Therefore, this indeed is its doctrine.]

[13] Send all inquiries regarding the events you plan to run or attend in these public spaces, as well as any questions you have on current scheduling, to the Excluded Middle, though it's notorious for slipping all determination and desperately hard to reach.

[14] Should you reach the Excluded Middle, it will ask: What sugar? What ice? What lemons? And: whose corn & butter? And it will say: no lemons, no ice, no sugar, and no one's corn & butter. And it will say: therefore, sugar, ice, lemons, corn & butter.

[15] But by that time, you will have taken out your car keys.

[16] A gentleman with his three children lays a picnic on the grass near the fairgrounds of the Excluded Middle. His lady is nearby on a tree swing and dressed in a bright saffron frock. She glides. She has lovely calves.

[17] The three children run naked around the picnic spread, shrieking, We're invisible! You can't see us! The gentleman looks up from his weighty scroll, a little annoyed: Yes I can.

[18] The ground trembles.

[19] The middle child, Aristotle, visibly grows up and moves to the city, where he becomes a dominant caudillo and raises a vast army.

[20] He's terribly organized. His ambitions are vast. He drives all immeasurable signs of the Excluded Middle from the west side, then crosses Main Street and marches on the east. His troops are well armed, well trained, and conversant in all branches of knowledge, each of which is laid out in phalanx. They form a whole much greater than the sum of its parts. But they were never parts, says the Excluded Middle, and they are not now whole. [Therefore, they are parts, and they are whole.]

[21] The Excluded Middle gathers a muddle of 108 million triple-headed elephants in armor, plus a myriad, give or take, of weapons-grade chakras, and a bottomless quiver of arrows that hang in the air like zeppelins.

[22] Before the battle, an eagle snatches a dove out of the sky, which is a sign. Neither body can ever be found, which is another sign. Neither of these signs is truly a sign. Therefore, they are [signs].

[23] The battle is joined, involving all the races of the earth, each one grander but more confused than the last. Monkeys, otters, llamas and bears take up the slack. [And so metal clangs on metal and performs its rough & tendentious surgeries.]

[24] Weeks pass with little or no action. Disgruntled warriors on both sides set up board games across the lines of scrimmage. Only so many can be killed before all imaginary afterworlds are double & triple booked, and the staff is forced to start sending them all back, to the battlefield, which becomes more crowded than ever.

[25] Supplies are running low. Even fishes & loaves are put on a wait list. But there are no fishes & loaves. Therefore, there are fishes & loaves, which is a good thing [for people will always be hungry].

[26] The stalemate becomes daily yet more stale. The DMZ shrinks down to the two lanes of Main Street, which is now a border dividing the city, west from east. Talks begin.

[27] The Excluded Middle and Aristotle meet in a bubble teashop on Main Street. Aristotle orders green tea & mango. As for the Excluded Middle, how could it choose?

[28] Talking to the Excluded Middle is of course impossible, and the meetings lead nowhere, but Aristotle keeps coming back. Drawing on his own golden mean, he

remains patient. The waitress, Kwan Yin, is charming to the point of heartbreak. The Excluded Middle passes along Aristotle's secret notes.

[29] Aristotle raises the position of women to the top link on the Great Chain of Being, but fearfully, telling no one.

[30] Randomly, warriors slip back and forth across the DMZ of Main Street as if there were no border. But there is a border. [Therefore, there is no border.]

[31] All of Aristotle's steps are lighter than they used to be. He rediscovers his lost dialogues. They paint a beard on Plato. They're bestsellers, and also do well with the critics. Aristotle's brand is bigger than ever. His career is re-energized. But none of this unsettles his mind.

[32] At the side of the Excluded Middle, Aristotle strolls unobstructed on summer evenings down Main Street. Pale stars rise overhead. Street lights flicker off & on. Around his feet, ocean foam, flashes of lightening & phantoms play about like clouds, like Greek fire, and like dreams.

[This is a rough draft of a reconstruction from an irretrievably corrupted text of an epitomized version of a commentary attributed to Licchavi Vimalakirti; the full commentary is estimated to run 6,000 pages.]