

THE CODE OF MHANHARA

THE WAY TO WISDOM

RULE ONE

Mhanhara wrote:

One day, one of my students came to me and asked: "What is happiness?"

I touched my long beard, then I gave him a wad of banknotes and I asked: "How do you feel?"

"Very happy".

"Ok" I said. "Now throw that money into the river".

He looked at me reluctant, but at the end he grabbed the banknotes and threw them into the water.

"How do you feel?"

"Not very happy now"

"You were feeling better before coming here?"

"Yes".

"You see..." I said. "Nothing has really changed: you didn't have money before and you don't have money now. Why are you feeling so unhappy now? I will tell you: outside nothing has changed, but something has changed inside. ALL YOUR HAPPINESS COMES FROM WITHIN, not from outside".

Mhanhara wrote on his diary the first rule to be wise and become philosopher:

Formulate general and universal laws.

RULE TWO

Mhanhara wrote:

The students of the School in Philosophy followed me to the courtyard, where I lit a big fire.

"The first thing I want you to do" I said "is to throw your science books into the fire".

"What?" mumbled a trail of perplexed faces. Until one of them walked with decision to the fire and threw his book into the flames. Others looked at him surprised, but then someone took the same decision, then someone else. At the end, everyone threw his book.

After we walked to the wood. I looked for the tallest tree and I climbed it to the top, where I checked some of the nests. I noted down my observation on a block notes, then I came down.

One student asked: "Why did you go to the top?"

I explained it, as if it was the most obvious answer: "You can only trust yourself".

Mhanhara wrote on his diary the second rule to be wise and become philosopher:

Be the source of your thoughts.

RULE THREE

Mhanhara wrote:

I wanted to help a beggar at one side of the street, so I asked to one of my students: "Go there and take all his money".

At first he was reluctant, but he knew I was right, so he went there and took all his money. "Now" I said "go to that shop and buy some paint".

He went to the shop and bought some paint.

"Now" I said "Go back to the beggar and tell him how to use it".

The student went back and explained to the beggar how to paint his face.

The beggar painted his face and all the bystanders started giving him money.

"Have you seen?" I said, satisfied. "It doesn't matter what you do, as long as you can help others".

Mhanhara wrote on his diary the third rule to be wise and become philosopher:

Be original and unexpected.

RULE FOUR

Mhanhara wrote:

I was walking down the street, when I saw a gun pointed to the head of an old man. I slowly walked toward the criminal, and when he noticed me, he rapidly pointed the gun to my chest. I continued walking, calmly, until the gun deeply stuck into my flesh. I placed my hand on the front of the criminal and I said: "Fasil! basuf!".

The criminal left the grip and the gun fell on the ground, then he run away crying.

The victim looked at me, surprised: "How did you do that? And what does 'Fasil basuf' mean?"

I slowly moved my head toward him. "It doesn't mean anything. It doesn't matter what you say, it matters how you feel".

Mhanhara wrote on his diary the fourth rule to be wise and become philosopher:

Be assertive.

RULE FIVE

Mhanhara wrote:

I accurately placed a pen on one scale pan of the balance and my hand on the other one, so to keep the bar perfectly balanced. The class was noisy, so I asked: "What's the heaviest of the two?"

The room plunged into silence for a few minutes. The longer the pause, the more important the question.

I looked calmly to each student, one by one, until one said: "The hand is heavier".

"No" replied another "they must be the same, because they are balanced".

The room plunged into silence for another few minutes. Finally, I said: "All your answers are incorrect". I pulled out my hand and the bar was still perfectly balanced, even if one scale pan was empty.

"This lesson is about asking questions, before giving answers".

Mhanhara wrote on his diary the fifth rule to be wise and become philosopher:

Talk slowly and never show to be emotional.

RULE SIX

Mhanhara wrote:

“Does God exist?”

This question had been asked me many times, but never with such an insistent tone and such a firm eyes.

I took some paper and I asked the student to paint a bi-dimensional world.

He drew a series of roads and some creatures.

I asked: “Can they see you?”

“No, they can't see the third dimension”.

“And who created them?”

“Me” he answered, shrugging his shoulders.

Now, I apparently diverted the discussion: “Tell me... do you know anything of this universe that has not been caused by something else?”

The student thought for a while, then admitted: “No, everything has been caused”.

“That means that also the universe has been caused” I said “but we cannot see the creator, because we are limited by three dimensions”.

“Yes” admitted the student. “But how can we be certain he exists, if we cannot see him?”

“Through our consciousness” I promptly responded.

He didn't understand, so I added: “Have you ever wondered how can we see and be conscious of three dimensions, without a fourth to contemplate the world?”

Mhanhara wrote on his diary the sixth rule to be wise and become philosopher:

Have an answer for everything.

RULE SEVEN

Mhanhara wrote:

The wounded man was crying and shaking for the cold, lying on one side of the street. I recognized him, the same man stole my money the day before.

Nonetheless, I went to him and I asked: “Do you need help?”

I held him up walking home, then I said: “This night you can stay here. I will give you some food and some medications”.

The next day the wound was almost completely healed and his stomach satiated. Hereupon he asked: “Why are you helping me? I stole your money”.

I explained: “That's the only way you can understand that what you did is wrong”.

Mhanhara wrote on his diary the seventh rule to be wise and become philosopher:

Be moral.

RULE EIGHT

Mhanhara wrote:

“What's the answer to everything?” I was asked.

I remained touching my beard for two long minutes. Then the student continued: "Do you have an answer?"

I cleared my throat, and I said: "I will find one!"

The next day he asked me the same question, then again the day after.

The third day I said: "I have the answer. The answer to everything is love".

"Why?" he asked, opening his eyes with surprise.

"Because... if there is an enemy, the only answer is love; if someone is ill, the answer is love; if there is a war, the solution that works is love; and if the life is unhappy, the answer is still love".

Mhanhara wrote on his diary the eighth rule to be wise and become philosopher:

Be meditative.

RULE NINE

Mhanhara wrote:

One of the students had just thrown at me his book.

"You are psychopathic!" he shouted.

I remained completely silent for a long minute, without moving a finger. I looked at him calmly and with respect.

He was waiting for a tough reply to continue the discussion, but he received back silence instead. So he had to calm down.

"What do you like to learn?" I asked.

"Philosophy is just theory..." he replied, disappointed. "Nothing we will ever use!"

I looked at the student next to him and I talked calmly but firmly. "Slap him!"

Everyone watched with big eyes the student raising his arm and slapping with force the face of the other student. A series of red lines appeared on the cheek.

"Is this more concrete?" I asked the initial student.

He looked at me like a rabid dog, then he nodded.

"Now tell me" I continued "Why didn't you do anything to avoid the pain?"

He thought about this, then he shook his head.

"Do you think you can avoid this in your life, if you cannot avoid this in the class?" I asked.

"That's what happens to you every day, in different forms. Without philosophy, tell me: how can you avoid all of this and be happy?"

Mhanhara wrote on his diary the ninth rule to be wise and become philosopher:

Don't get angry, because you have deep understanding.

RULE TEN

Mhanhara wrote:

"What's the sense of life?" muttered the men in agony, close to his death. "What's the point of living? Why taking care of others? Why doing our job, if one day everything ends?"

I leaned down toward the bedside, grabbed his hand, and said: "The only problem is your egoism" then I left the room.

For many days, the man thought and re-thought on what I said. He asked about it to the nurses, he asked to the doctors, he asked to the relatives.

Finally I returned and he told me: "Thanks, now I understand. It's only one part of my life that is ending, but what I did for my wife and my children will be still there. The only reason I was scared of the death was my egoism".

Mhanhara wrote on his diary the tenth rule to be wise and become philosopher:

Don't be obvious and leave others decipher what you mean.

RULE ELEVEN

Mhanhara wrote:

"How can I take right decisions in life?" my student asked. "Should I change job or not, should I marry that woman or not, should I start that activity... so many times I realize I should have taken different decisions, but only when it's too late to change".

I put my hand on his shoulder: "What's your plan in life?"

He shook his head and looked at me with empty eyes.

"Go" I said. "Think about your plan".

The day after he came back full of determination: "I want to become a philosopher".

"Well" I said "you have now to use the cumulative effect of your actions, and ask yourself: what decision taken now will help me to become a good philosopher?"

The face of the student seemed illuminated: "Then... I should marry the woman that support my goal, or choose the kind of job that give me enough time to become a philosopher.

Eureka! I know what to do!".

Mhanhara wrote on his diary the eleventh rule to be wise and become philosopher:

Answer with general laws or apparently unrelated explanations, then drive others to find specific answers themselves.

RULE TWELVE

Mhanhara wrote:

"Why don't the people listen to me?" asked my student. "How to become like you?"

I told him: "Talk every day to 10 different people and tell them anything you are really enthusiast about, or anything you really enjoy doing".

He didn't understand why, but every day he talked to 10 different people.

After a week he came back. "I talked to many people... now they listen to me, but I don't understand why".

I laughed, then I said: "You just need to be more yourself!"

Mhanhara wrote on his diary the twelfth rule to be wise and become philosopher:

Teach by helping others to understand from their own actions or errors.

RULE THIRTEEN

Mhanhara wrote:

"How can you be so calm and never in a hurry?" asked one of my students.

“Because I'm not only enjoying the results” I said, “but also the single actions I do to get those results, second after second”.

He looked at me with disbelief. “What if you have to get the train and you are late? You have to be in a hurry, right?”

“Is it more helpful being in a hurry or thinking clearly and taking the best decision? If you are intelligent you can find a way to run faster in the only direction allowed by the blinders, but if you are wise you can rotate your head 360 degrees and find an alternative road”.

I put an hand on his shoulder and I added: “You see... we are in a hurry when we are not confident of being able to obtain something. You need to enjoy every moment of your life and in order to do that, you need to be confident. But to become more confident, you need knowledge... so you need to become a philosopher”.

Mhanhara wrote on his diary the thirteenth rule to be wise and become philosopher:

Connect thoughts in an ingenious way.

RULE FOURTEEN

Mhanhara wrote:

Sometimes the people ask me: “Where are you from?”

I answer: “Where can a philosopher be from? I'm from God”.

Mhanhara wrote on his diary the fourteenth rule to be wise and become philosopher:

Use a little bit of intelligent humour.

RULE FIFTEEN

Mhanhara wrote:

The nurse pushed my bed to the room for the surgery. I had found to have a terrible cancer and I probably had only one other month to live.

The nurse noticed surprised my serene and relaxed expression, so asked: “How do you find the force and the courage not to be worried?”

I said with a smile: “We are scared by what we don't know. When you know everything about people, everything about life and everything about death, how can you be still worried?”

Mhanhara wrote on his diary the fifteenth rule to be wise and become philosopher:

Don't be scared by material things.

ENDING

Manhara died few days later. Now it's the students' duty to bring forward his teaching and become philosophers themselves.

From the Mhanhara's grave:

One day everyone will die, but not his ideas.

THE CODE OF MHANHARA

- 1) Formulate general and universal laws.
- 2) Be the source of your thoughts.
- 3) Be original and unexpected.
- 4) Be assertive.
- 5) Talk slowly and never show to be emotional.
- 6) Have an answer for everything.
- 7) Be moral.
- 8) Be meditative.
- 9) Don't get angry, because you have deep understanding.
- 10) Don't be obvious and leave others decipher what you mean.
- 11) Answer with general laws or apparently unrelated explanations, then drive others to find specific answers themselves.
- 12) Teach by helping others to understand from their own actions or errors.
- 13) Connect thoughts in an ingenious way.
- 14) Use a little bit of intelligent humour.
- 15) Don't be scared by material things.

MHANHARA'S TEACHINGS

When Mhanhara was asked why all the students were passing the exams, he was used to answer: "There is no such a thing as a bad student, there are only bad teachers". And a good student was also required to be a good teacher, to be successful in life. The "Mhanhara's teachings" are a precious collection of some of the most famous Mhanhara's aphorisms, compiled by Sam, one of the oldest students of the School in Philosophy. [The editor]

FIRST TEACHING

*<<Is there any questions>> asked Mhanhara, standing still in front of the classroom. An indefinite multitude of voices plunged into silence. Then one hand was raised and a feeble voice asked: <<How do we know if we are fully living our life?>>
<<Ask yourself about today>> answered Mhanhara. <<Have you fully lived your day? You should live every single moment of your life, every minute, every breath...>>
<<Yes>> nodded the same student. <<But how do I know if I lived today?>>
Mhanhara asked: <<Are you happy about your day? Never go to sleep without having filled your soul. Each single day>>.
One of the students stood up with anger: <<This is edonistic!>>
Mhanhara smiled, shaking his head. <<Edonism says "Only today", but I say "every day". You need to take into account every single day of your life, you need to take into account your future, your children, your job... you need to plan. I could smoke or eat kilos of candies now, but I wouldn't be thinking to my future, right? In other words, you need to change your point of view on life in order to change your point of view on what can give you satisfaction>>.
Everyone was listening to grasp the full meaning, with the eyes wandering in empty space. <<Ok>> continued Mhanhara. <<I will tell you a story. Once upon a time there was a priest that was very generous. Every day he was collecting all the money from the parishioners, then he was looking for the poorest people in the village and was giving them*

all the money. "Why don't you keep something for yourself?" asked one day someone. "Because I want to be happy". The man then asked: "aren't you unhappy, when you have no money to buy food for yourself?" "No" explained the priest "I'm not, when I think about the day in this village nobody will be poor anymore">>.

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

Enjoy every single moment of your life, but think like if you had to live forever.

SECOND TEACHING

*<<Quick!>> shouted a student, rushing into the class. <<The river is flooding!>>
<<What?>> echoed a choir.*

The storm roared over our heads and the walls trembled. He was talking about the river behind the school's building.

<<We need to build a barrier>> suggested someone from one of the desks. <<If we work together, we can move the sacks of lime in the warehouse>>.

Mhanhara stood up, walked toward the window and looked at the heavy rain. Nobody talked.

<<Follow me!>> he said, at a certain point.

We followed him under the rain, until the river.

Manhara stopped on the bank and looked around a pair of times. The water was one meter from his feet. <<We need to dig a canal from here to the school>>.

<<What?>> I said. <<Do you want to flood the school?>>

Mhanhara didn't answer, he limited himself to look at each one of us with serious eyes.

Perplexed, some students started digging. Others arrived with spades on their shoulders.

The canal was almost completed, when the water erupted and some of the students had to jump out, not to be swept away. We looked at the water running at full speed toward the school, then following the walls around it and dispersing its power down a slope, after the building.

<<The school is safe!>> exulted one of the students.

We anticipated the flooding to make it less powerful, I realized.

<<By building a wall>> I said <<we would have just made our enemy stronger>>.

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

Work with your enemy, if you want to get results.

THIRD TEACHING

I will never forget the day Mhanhara came over to the library, asking for my umbrella.

There was a terrible storm outside, but after he left I remembered the umbrella was broken.

When he came back, I looked at him, surprised.

He walked to my desk and gently said: <<Thanks for your favour>>.

His clothes were completely dry. <<How did you do that? My umbrella is broken>> I said.

<<Simple>> he explained <<you didn't tell me it was broken, so I couldn't know>>.

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

Beliefs are the biggest obstacle to the progress.

FOURTH TEACHING

<<Mhanhara>> I said, with my legs shaking, the day before my talk. <<I never talked to so many people... How can I be confident?>>.
He raised his eyes from the book and observed me with attention. <<Believe in yourself!>> he suggested, as if it was obvious. Then he started reading again.
<<But... How can I believe in myself?>>
He closed the book and pushed it to one side of the desk. <<Simple, you need to know who you are>>.
<<How do I know who I'm?>>
His eyes smiled. <<Well, what do you really know well?>>
I thought about that, then I said: <<I can play golf! that's what I do well>>.
He put one hand on my shoulder. <<Would you still be nervous, if you had to talk about golf?>>
<<Probably not>> I said.
<<Well>> reflected Mhanhara. <<Tomorrow you will give a talk about golf. First you have to learn about confidence, and when you will be a philosopher... you will have no fear to talk about that>>.

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

Any fear disappear, when you really know who you are.

FIFTH TEACHING

The horse bent the head, ready for a violent reaction. The back sprung up and I was unseated to the ground again.
Mhanhara, that had been watching since the beginning, silently walked toward me.
<<I will never learn to ride a horse>> I said, shrugging my shoulders.
<<You already know how to ride a horse>> laughed him. <<You just need some rafting>>.
The next morning we walked to the top of the tallest mountain, and from there we came down the rapids at full speed. We fell into the water countless times, we hit stones, jumping on the raft from side to side, all the way down.
The following day we came back to the school and he asked me: <<Can you ride a horse now?>>
I looked at the horse with confidence. <<Let's try!>>
I jumped on it with one move and it started riding around the school. It wasn't irascible like before, so I rode around the school an other time, and an other time.
At the end, Mhanhara said: <<Have you seen? You have always been able to ride a horse... simply, you didn't know that>>.

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

Often your inability of doing something is simply fear.

SIXTH TEACHING

The large eyes smiled, and gently invited me to sit down. I grabbed a chair and said: <<I went down to the town. How you asked me to do, Mhanhara>>.
<<And what happened?>> he wanted to know.
<<I couldn't find any happy people>>.

Mhanhara thought about my words, than said: <<What would make you very happy right now?>>
<<Well>> I considered <<completing my Apprentice Internship!>>
Mhanhara looked at me with attention, then added: <<You will have certainly completed it for the end of tomorrow!>>
I jumped up from the chair: <<Are you serious?>>
Mhanhara nodded, calmly. <<Now go back to the town and tell me how many happy people you can speak with>>.
I went to the town, then I met Mhanhara again.
<<How many people have you found this time?>> he wanted to know.
<<Many, I found many...>>
<<You have certainly completed your Internship!>> declaimed Mhanhara, pleased.

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

Before changing the world, change yourself.

SEVENTH TEACHING

<<It won't work!>> I repeated for the uptenth time, red in the face.
<<You don't understand!>> shouted at me the other student.
We had been discussing for hours, we only stopped when we heard someone walking toward us. Mhanhara calmly passed by and stopped on the bank, facing the stream. Then he turned back, with bright eyes: <<So, you are trying to build a bridge, aren't you?>>
<<Yes>> I confirmed. <<But my friend here doesn't understand that the most efficient way is a vault...>>
<<Bullshit!>> erupted he. <<We will never be able to lift such a heavy stones! The best solution is a series of columns>>.
<<It is unstable>> I replied. <<We will never be able to walk on it>>.
Mhanhara jumped in between: <<Ok, let's do in that way: why don't you build a wall in the middle to divide the stream in two parts. On one side, one of you will build half a bridge with a vault; on the other side, the other one will build the second half of the bridge with columns. Then, you will show me what you have done>>.
We liked the idea and we ended any discussions. In a few hours we built the wall and by evening we built the entire bridge.
The next day Mhanhara came back to see the extraordinary work: a bridge that opened up with a series of columns, crossed the wall, and ended with a vault.
<<Well done!>> commented Mhanhara <<That shows me that both of you were right!>>

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

It's funny that two people can debate although being both wrong. Even funnier is that they can debate being both right.

EIGHTH TEACHING

Mhanhara waited the class to be completely silent, before asking: <<What do you think about solar energy?>>
The faces were perplexed. Someone stood up. <<It's expensive... not convenient>>.
<<Crap!>> replied someone else, from the other side of the classroom. <<It is clean and efficient>>.

*<<We will never get enough energy for everyone>> pointed out another student.
<<The fact is that it's not clean>> added someone. <<We have to produce panels in some ways>>.*

Mhanhara raised the palm of the hand to stop everyone. <<Now tell me this: what do you know about solar energy? Who can give a talk on that?>>

Mhanhara looked at the perplexed faces, one by one. Nobody answered.

<<Well>> he said <<Tomorrow I want you to go to the library and read all the books you can find about solar energy>>.

The next day the students brought tens of books into the classroom. Mhanhara then asked to go to the town's central library and get other books.

After one month there was a basket full of books on the subject. But Mhanhara asked to get other books, wherever possible.

Another months passed, and now at the center of the class there was a tower of books, nearly touching the ceiling.

Mhanhara asked the same question: <What do you think about solar energy?>>

One of the students from the first row immediately answered: <<It's convenient in some contexts, it cannot cover all the needs, but it's clean>>.

<<I agree>> yelled someone.

All the other students nodded.

<<Well>> commented Mhanhara, with a smile. <<It seems all of you have reached an agreement>>.

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

It's funny that people almost always have opinions on everything, even when they don't have enough information to have one.

NINETH TEACHING

One day I asked: <<What's your opinion on God?>>

Mhanhara answered: <<What really matter is not our opinion on God, but God opinion on us>>.

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

A teacher can learn more from a question, than a student can learn from an answer.

TENTH TEACHING

<<Mhanhara,>> I asked <<how to accept the idea of working at the end of the school? I don't like to work... >>

He stopped writing, raised his head and laughed: <<Why are you asking to the only man that spent his entire life studying, instead of working?>>

Then he became serious and the eyes contemplative. <<Well, at the beginning it was probably different... there was no money and it was normal to help those who had no knowledge on how to do something. Over time, the people started to exchange their help: I hunt some bears for you, and you build that hut for me. Then it became simpler to exchange material goods, and that's called barter. Finally, someone invented the money, and everyone forgot that the word "work" simply means "help">>.

Mhanhara looked down on his desk and restarted writing, like if the conversation was over. So I asked: <<How can this help me? In the future I don't want to work...>>

He raised his head: <<You have just to ask yourself: how would I like to help others? Then find your job accordingly>>.

I thought about that for hours. When I came back to Mhanhara, I said: <<I think I will enjoy to work!>>

<<Have you found what you can do to help?>>

<<Yes>> I said, enthusiast. <<I think I will become a teacher>>.

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

Don't look for a job, you may not find it. Look on how you can help others, and you will always have a job.

ELEVENTH TEACHING

The voice echoed inside the classroom: <<Is there any questions?>>

I looked around a pair of times, then I stood up: <<Mhanhara, how can we avoid problems?>>

He laughed. <<Simple: by not avoiding them! I'll give you an example>>.

He took a wood stick and placed it over two piles of books. Then he took a weight and hung it to the stick.

The stick broke.

After he took a sheet of paper, he folded it several times, making a thin stick out of it, and placed it over the two piles of books. Again, he hung the weight.

This time, the stick made of paper bent. But it didn't broke.

<<Which one has been more succesfull?>> asked Mhanhara.

<<The paper>> yelled some students.

<<Why?>> asked Mhanhara. Nobody answered, so he explained: <<Because it didn't tried to avoid the problem>>.

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

Don't spend your energy in avoiding problems, but spend it in solving them.

TWELFTH TEACHING

Down in the town I had a friend running a car garage. One day he was shouting to one of his employees for the upteenth time, then he turned to me, completely red in his face: <<Can you see this guy? He cannot do anything right! I ask him to pull something and he breaks it, I tell him to put some oil and he spills it, I ask him to tighten a bolt and he loses it>>.

<<Don't worry>> I said, talking with firm eyes <<Mhanhara will help you>>.

<<Mhanhara what?>> he startled. <<Who is this guy?>>

<<He is my teacher... a philosopher>>.

He grunted, disappointed: <<What does he know about cars? He is not an engeener and he is not a manager either!>>

I calmly answered: <<You are perfectly right... but let's give him a try>>.

After a few hours, I returned back with Mhanhara. He gave a quick look at the bonnets open, at the poor guy running back and forward, without understanding what he was doing, and at the tools scattered on the floor. Then he asked: <<What are you asking this guy to do?>>

<<Well>> answered the mechanics, without much hope <<I tell him to pull levers, to tighten

bolts, to put oil...>>

<<Why don't you ask him to repair an engine?>> asked Mhanhara.

<<Because he doesn't know how to do it>> said the mechanics, shrugging his shoulders.

<<But you know how to do it, right?>> said Mhanhara <<and that guy will ask you questions, when he doesn't know something. Now, tell him to repair the engine>>.

The mechanics was not convinced yet, but he did what Mhanhara asked him to do. Shortly after, the guy started asking a lot of questions.

Before evening the engine was perfectly working.

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

A bad manager assigns actions, a good manager assigns objectives.

THIRTEENTH TEACHING

<<That money is mine!>>shouted a voice in the lobby.

<<No>> replied the other student.

<<Bullshit!>> insisted the first one. <<It's mine!>>

The discussion had been going on for hours, so Mhanhara said: <<There is a beggar outside the school... why don't you take that money and give it to him?>>

The students followed his suggestion and the discussion was over.

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

You don't need to discuss, you just need to find a solution that is fine for both.

FOURTEENTH TEACHING

Mhanhara was always able to find the reason of your troubles, simply by talking with you. I remember the day I met him in the classroom, after the other students had gone home. He was reading a book with the greatest concentration, and you were almost able to hear him thinking.

He raised his head and talked, like if he already knew the reason I was there. <<What's the problem, Sam?>>

I pulled out of my pocket one packet of cigarettes. <<That's my problem! I tried to quit, but without success. What else can I do?>>

<<Oh>> smiled Mhanhara <<You are avoiding instead of doing. That's your problem!>>

I closed and reopened my eyes, but I still didn't understand.

He continued: <<if you smoke, probably your diet isn't very good; and you are not doing much sport...>>

<<How do you know?>>

<<Well>> continued Mhanhara, closing his book. <<That's part of your problem... why don't you start eating better and practicing sport every day? At a certain point you will feel bad at smoking and you will quit without any effort>>.

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

Sometimes the problems are wider than you think, so your solutions should be wider too.

FIFTEENTH TEACHING

Asking Mhanhara solutions for all sorts of problems often became an annoying routine. I remember the day Manhara asked me back a question: <<What is the common denominator of your problems?>>

I shook my head: <<There isn't one, they are all different...>>

<<There must be one, or you wouldn't have many>> insisted Mhanhara <<Why do you get stuck when your bike has been punctured? Why do you realize that smoking is bad, only when you feel ill? Why do you get late the day of your exam? Why...>>

My eyes widened completely open. <<Do you mean I'm not planning enough?>>

<<Well>> sighed Manhara <<Why don't you think more and ask less?>>

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

The only way to predict the future is by planning it.

SIXTEENTH TEACHING

I was literally crying when I stepped out of the bank. Mhanhara crossed my way, and he already knew I lost all my money at gambling.

He asked: <<Why are you so worried about your money?>>

<<Oh>> I raised my eyebrow, surprised. <<How will I pay my wedding now?>>

<<This is not a problem, you can have wedding presents>>.

<<Yes, but... how will I buy a new bicycle?>>

<<You can work more and buy a new one anyway. What else do you need that money for?>>

<<Well>> I stammered. There wasn't really much else I could think of. I said: <<Having some money is a good safeguard anyway>>.

Manhara slowly nodded, then talked again: <<You can save one coin a week and start an insurance. Anything else?>>

Mhanhara kept staring at me, but I couldn't really think to any other reasons why I would need that money. So he said: <<If you can still do everything you want without the money that you lost, you shouldn't be so worried anymore>>.

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

Find a new solution and you will stop worrying about your errors.

SEVENTEENTH TEACHING

After everyone left the classroom, I walked to the Mhanhara's desk and asked: <<How can I know who is really my friend?>>

He raised his head: <<How many people do you know?>>

<<Not sure>> I reflected. <<Probably one hundred people>>.

<<Well>> continued Mhanhara. <<Tomorrow call each one and tell them that you have got a cancer>>.

<<What?>> I started. <<I cannot do that... they will be worried!>>

Mhanhara didn't move a finger and kept looking at me. So, the day after I called each one of them, one by one. After I came back to him.

<<How many people have you remained with?>> asked Mhanhara.

<<Only three>> I said, bending my head.

Mhanhara smiled: <<They are your friends!>>

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

You can recognize a friend, because in times you are in trouble he's closer; the others go away.

EIGHTEENTH TEACHING

<<What's is good luck?>> I uttered, in the empty classroom.

Mhanhara laughed, then looked at me with certainty: <<My son, there isn't such a thing like luck>>.

I shook my head. <<Tell me then, why does some days everything goes wrong?>>

<<For the same reason that if you throw two dices, one day you get more threes and another day more fives. The fact is that we always say we are lucky or unlucky after something happens, or we say someone is lucky after something happens to him. We cannot tell the same before. However, there is something you can do: go to play poker tonight, and do any good effort to loose. After go home and eat the more you can, until you feel unwell>>.

I looked at him with big eyes: <<Why should I do that?>>

I didn't get an answer, so I went to play and I lost all my money. Then I went home and I ate until having indigestion.

The next day I met Mhanhara again and I asked: <<Why did you ask me to do those crazy things?>>

<<Was it an unlucky day?>>

<<Yes>> I nodded.

<<Well>> he said. <<All you have to do, from today onward, is the opposite I asked you to do yesterday>>.

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

Good luck is an invented term: it doesn't really exist something called good luck.

NINETEENTH TEACHING

<<Mhanhara>> I asked <<how can you always have an answer for every question?>>

<<Oh>> he smiled, as if I wasn't the first to ask this. Then he walked to the other side of the kitchen, he poured some tea and came back with a steaming cup. He sat in front of me and said:<<I didn't learn the answer for each of the possible questions... there would be millions and I wouldn't have the time. But I learnt what lies above those questions, I learnt the general laws. I'm not interested in the details of life. That's what philosophy is about>>.

I looked inside me, puzzled. <<What if someone ask you how to repair a watch and you don't know the practical details?>>

<<I know how to learn about it, and that's all I need! You see, general rules have a wide scope. A doctor doesn't need to know every research published; a physicist doesn't need to remember each formula, as long as he knows how to find one>>.

<<Do you mean we can learn faster?>> I asked. <<Someone that has a frame of understanding about a subject, can easily fill in the holes?>>

<<That's one advantage>> confirmed Mhanhara. <<You learn more quickly, have more understanding, and feel more confident about it. Second, you can answer any questions. Those who spend their life in learning details and memorizing everything, will only answer to the questions they have been trained for, like a computer that match things together and respond to those same questions. But they will be unable to think>>.

Mhanhara spilt some tea on the table, then asked: <<What do you see?>>

*<<Mmmh...>> I stammered. <<Some tea, I think... What do you mean?>>
<<What do you see?>> repeated Mhanhara. <<Think about the lesson on inductive and deductive reasoning, that we had yesterday>>.
<<Oh, you mean... not just some tea falling, but the effect of gravity?>>
<<Correct!>> said Mhanhara, pleased. <<Newton didn't see an apple falling. He saw the law of universal gravitation. You should always aim to understand the general laws>>.
<<Now I understand, Mhanhara! I think today I'm a step further to become a philosopher>>.*

The same day Mhanhara wrote:

General rules explain everything.

MHANHARA'S QUOTES

Smart is the one who can see far away, but in the only direction allowed by the blinders. Wise is the one who can turn his head 360 degrees.

Any evaluation is based on a comparison. Being with a genius makes us look stupid, being with a beautiful person makes us look horrible.

When something can be done in two ways, it's very likely to become matter of debate.

I don't believe anything, but I'm open to everything.

It's funny that two people can debate although being both wrong. Even funnier is that they can debate being both right.

The universe is actually terribly simple, unfortunately explaining things in a complex way is just as easy.

If doctors were paid only for healing, the entire medical field would already be bankrupt.

It's funny that people almost always have opinions on everything, even when they don't have enough information to get one.

The truth that lies in between is often only an half-truth.

If you are not able to change your mind, you are not even able to understand.

What often looks like intelligence is just knowledge.

Some people know that something is red only after someone has told them it is red.

Good luck is an invented term: doesn't really exist something called good luck.

One of the greatest discoveries about meeting an alien race would be the music: what marvellous songs a race of millions of billions of beings could have ever created.

Affirm the opposite and the truth will appear a paradox.

The one who think by absolute principles has little capacity of reasoning.

No one is really rich, if he doesn't use his own wealth.

The happiness is always a few feet in front of us.

Confusing truth and reality is limited.

I wonder if the beautiness is a quality of what is being observed or a quality of the observer.

Not believing is for many a creed.

You can recognize a friend because in times you are in trouble he's closer; the others go away.

One of the biggest obstacles to the progress is the belief in our own theories.

It's more difficult to kill one person than one thousand.

What really matter is not our opinion on God, but God opinion on us.

The power of persuasion of the television lie in the authority that we ascribe to it for the fact of

being heard by so many people.

Philosophers are prone to change reality, while scientists prefer to change their mind.

It's funny how experts are always able to find an answer, even when they do not know something.

First you should learn to distinguish observations from assumptions. Then you should doubt of the latter and change them until you get an answers. Here's how to be a genius in solving problems.

If money hadn't been invented, we would have much more time and much less haste.

It's funny that the main concern of a rich is the money that he has, while that of a poor is the money that he doesn't have.

I asked a question to a dilettante. He told me it was a banal question and gave me immediately an answer.

I asked the same question to an expert. He told me it was a very good question, but he didn't know the answer.

The secret for being a succesful inventor lie in learning how to invent problems, instead of concentrating on solving them.

There are two kinds of people: the honests and those who say to be honest.

Not knowing is ignorance; not knowing what we don't know is ignorance; thinking to know what we don't know is ignorance. But knowing what we don't know is the way out of ignorance.

The intelligent will always find a way to accelerate its progress toward a result.

The wise will always find a way to continue with slow and relaxed pace, moving the result toward him.

The actions of others are observed, their intentions observe us.

The power of beliefs emerges from those people who base their irrational actions on their

misunderstandings.

You can learn the best technique and apply it step by step, but it will never work well if you don't understand it.

Our understanding is limited by the understanding of our teachers.

Thinking in absolute terms is simplistic and superficial.

Truth and logic need to work together.

Sometimes we transform hope in truth because of fear.

Experts feel empowered to formulate opinions that sell as facts.

A friend cares about your problems, an acquaintance has to be entertained with interesting talks

Love makes the life easier.

Philosophers are people with more thoughtful opinions.

Sex is short, love is all the time and forever.

Love is being united through the storm.

The liars can almost always deceive themselves, in order to be able to convince others.

You may be a good painter, but not a good artist. You can paint the most perfect face and it will look a zombie, devoided of life; you can paint the most perfect smile and it will look frightening; you can paint the most perfect body and it will look rigid. That's because you are concentrating on particulars. You should be able to perceive your entire work as a unit, and that day you will become an artist. Then the face will be alive and full of emotions, while the body will have real motion.

Trust is something that once broken is almost impossible to regain.

The shorter is the time you know a person, the more your judgements are based on exterior aspects. The longer is the time you know that person, the more your opinions are based on interior qualities.

Love is something of so whole and absolute, that it is impossible to fall in love with two people at the same time.

Insecurity make you act as a stupid, even if often the stupids are the most secure people I have ever seen.

It's an interesting paradox that those who do not experience love sometimes understand it better than those who experience it every day. It's like an healthy person that does not understand what health really means and how important it is, in the same way that can instead do an ill person.

A teacher can learn more from a question, than a student can learn from an answer.

Monopolies earn on scarcity, competitive markets earn on waste.

We don't ask ourselves questions we are afraid of the answers.

A bad manager assigns actions, a good manager assigns objectives.

The slowest way in the short term can be the fastest way in the long term.

Espionage is the art of giving the less information you can and getting the more information you can.

You are weak, if you need to get angry.

If you observe first, your conclusions are based on observations. If you formulate a conclusion first, your observations are based on conclusions.

You have a friend when you can do a big mistake, without him changing opinion about you.

Often the only reason you cannot find a solution, or you cannot express your ideas clearly, is because of your assumptions.

If you cannot solve a problem, try to eliminate it.

Sometimes it's hard to understand the treasures of life, when we experience them every day. It's like an healthy person that does not understand what health really is and how important it is.

Talk slowly and your words will be more important.

Ideas are worthless if they don't create social divisions: measure the value by the enthusiasm of the supporters and the innovation by the number of detractors.

You have a work of art when changing a single detail, ruin the whole beauty.

Trust takes an entire life to be gained, but only one second to be lost.

Some people constantly use the reason as a way to defend what is unreasonable.

A chess player that always performs perfect and optimal moves has a short life, what he needs is a strategy. Life works in the same identical way: you will not get anywhere without a strategy!

You can even take an advice that doesn't work, but if you are absolutely convinced that it works... it will work!

There are three types of memories: the ones that you cannot forget, the ones that you can easily forget and... I don't remember the third one.

New discoveries do not come from daily routine. New discoveries come from relentlessly exploring the unexplored.

Someone intelligent with the wrong information will provide the wrong answer. Someone wise with the wrong information will tell you that the information is wrong.

Teaching ream of details is the way to keep people ignorant.

Don't matter how intelligent you are, your ability to think won't go beyond your convictions.

Beliefs are the biggest obstacle to the progress.

Don't look for a job, you may not find it. Look on how you can help others, and you will always have a job.

Don't spend your energy to avoid problems, but spend it to solve them.

Instead of solving complex problems, make the problems simpler.

Enjoy every single moment of your life, but think like if you had to live forever.

There are no bad students, there are only bad teachers.

The only case I really learnt, is when I changed my point of view about something.

You have to believe, only when you are not certain.

Philosophy changes our thoughts according to reality, ideology changes our reality according to our thoughts.

There are always exceptions to the rules. Even this rule has exceptions.

Reality is very simple, so be careful not to mistake rationality for simplicity.

In any good choice, there is always a compromise.

Make distinction between a government that set rules to guarantee freedom and one that set rules to restrict freedom.

Most of the problems could be prevented by asking the right questions.

Your assumptions set a limit to your potential knowledge.

Intelligence allows you to change things around you. Wisdom allows you to change things inside you.

You need some kind of complexity to make things simple.

Most of the times things look complicated, is because who explain them didn't understand them very well.

Time always tells the truth.

When stuck, think wider.

Finding a mediocre solution, can stop you from finding a better solution.

Honesty is like an investment: it has a cost in the short term, but it has a return in the long term.