

Don't Think Twice

by [Bart Edelman](#) (January 2024)



Girl in a Rape Field– John Knapp-Fisher, 1990

Don't Think Twice

Don't think twice,
But if you must,
Do it ever so gently,
Without any malice,
And as little forethought,
As is humanly possible.
Still what ramblings remain,
In the brain you twist
To meet each simple need,

Knot after knot after knot.

Hope, one day, you'll tire
Of mind-boggling ideas—
Both large and small—
Those that crush the spirit,
Keep peace three steps away.
Learn what can be forgotten,
By the time it takes
A bird to fly,
A fish to swim,
A song to begin.

Whirling Dervish

The dervish told me to whirl,
And it seemed like a swell idea;
At least at the moment.
My mind had been spinning—
Somewhat out of control—
For the past few weeks.
I figured my idle body
Might as well join the party.
But, admittedly, I hadn't counted
On the task demanded of me:
Repetitive circle after circle,
The customary, meditative music,
Connecting me to Allah—
May his name be so praised.
When I finally concluded
Each revolving, twisting orbit,
Still howling in a fitful state,
I was weary beyond reason.

It's been a month now since then.
I've calmed down a bit.
However, I must confess,
When the devoted hour arrives,
I'm terrified to start whirling again.

By and Large

The way we live life—
Primarily speaking, of course.
The horse before the cart,
But don't dare tell the horse,
Or Lyle Lovett, for that matter.
Basically, it's business, per usual,
Commerce on an even keel,
Chiefly, the only route to travel,
If you prefer satisfaction
And know the final destination.
Mostly, though, it's often so,
With a tiny bit of thought
Wed to tomorrow's inclination,
Entirely possible should you
Choose to turn the next corner,
Provided the wheel remains steady.
Yes, you're home free now,
Fully willing and able to function
In today's topsy-turvy world,
As long as you stay calm,
Weigh each option...
By and large.

Scavengers

Every single one of us,
Doing what needs done—
And then some, of course—
Each bone picked clean,
Smooth to the touch,
As if it had never been
What it was in life.

We sort and catalogue,
Add to the collection,

When new specimens appear,
Ready for analytical betrayal—
This steady dig towards extinction.
Yes, how else to pass the days,
Before we, too, are no more.

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Bart Edelman's poetry collections include *Crossing the Hackensack*, *Under Damaris' Dress*, *The Alphabet of Love*, *The Gentle Man*, *The Last Mojito*, *The Geographer's Wife*, *Whistling to Trick the Wind*, and *This Body Is Never at Rest: New and Selected Poems 1993 – 2023*, forthcoming from Meadowlark Press. He has taught at Glendale College, where he edited *Eclipse*, a literary journal, and, most recently, in the MFA program at Antioch University, Los Angeles. His work has been widely anthologized in textbooks published by City Lights Books, Etruscan Press, Fountainhead Press, Harcourt Brace, Longman, McGraw-Hill, Prentice Hall, Simon & Schuster, Thomson/Heinle, the University of Iowa Press, Wadsworth, and others. He lives in Pasadena, California.

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