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### Quack

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## Quack

For those who have listened to ducks, the word "quack" does not really come very close to the sound the aquatic birds make. Anyone who has heard my rendition of a "duck call" could claim the same: no similarity to what is normally heard on any duck pond. Words are often much better at conveying meaning to us than they are at giving us accurate "sound recordings" from nature.

Words can remind us of experiences we have had, and can initiate and guide or modify some of our thought processes, but mere words cannot fully convey our beliefs, hopes, or loves. We use the word "quacks" as a pejorative term for persons who use words in making false statements and building false expectations; the sounds they make do not match with reality. A slight bit of honest reflection is all we need in order to recognize both the power and the limitations of written or spoken words.

We can use the same words in different contexts and with different intentions and purposes, so that "I love you" can carry one of the most important messages of which we are capable when we are making a commitment to another person as a thoroughly authentic expression, or we could say the same words as a means for gaining undeserved trust, thereby engaging in "quackery."

Words do not always communicate reality on their own, but often require a spiritual component for the sake of genuine interchange. Though it takes only an instant to notice how we feel about a value-laden word or expression before we act on it by speaking, writing, or accepting it as true, the choice to reflect prior to action is an expression of our spirituality. We can be quite satisfied with obeying a stop sign at an intersection without giving it any consideration, but we cannot well use words that are in any way connected with trust, faith, or love without noting whether or not the words harmonize with our intentions.

We differ among ourselves in that some people are gifted with talents for organizing, others for physical prowess, and still others for one or other admirable quality. But all of us are gifted with the capacity, which we can develop or leave unused, of recognizing whether or not our words are reasonable approximations of what we mean, and at the same time evoke feelings that affirm our honest and authentic use of those words. Rather than permitting a dangerous disconnect between mind and heart, we can choose to direct our attention, for the fraction of a second it takes, to ensure that our thoughts and our feelings fit peacefully together. We might ask ourselves, "Does this make sense and does it feel right?"

When we listen to music, we do not have to be a musician, vocalist, or conductor to recognize when someone is off key, because the dissonance disturbs our sense of what is appropriate. Within ourselves, we have the capability of distinguishing between the sweet and sour "notes" of what we think in combination with accompanying feelings. We can choose not to speak, act, or accept our inner words when they do not please our spiritual sense for what is appropriate, and of course we can with confidence and a joyful spirit proceed when we are "in tune."

Let the ducks quack, but let us use only those words, both within us and in our expressions, that align properly with trust and love.