**Living the Northern Way Episode 1**

Welcome to Living the Northern Way on Northern Way Radio. My name is Ken Corder. This is the first episode of what I hope will be many more episodes that will explore the Northern Way, which is the namesake of the website Northernway.Online and internet radio station Northern Way Radio? The Northern Way is an ancient worldview, a way of seeing the world and living in it. It developed over many thousands of years in the northern lands of Europe, in the British Isles, Germany, Scandinavia, Iceland, France and other European countries, even before those lands held such names.

The Northern Way worldview shows up in the literature, architecture, artifacts, folklore and folk songs of old Europe and persisted in European literature and folk songs even as modernity began to crush and destroy the old ways. These old ways of thinking and living show up in the writings of Goethe, D.H. Lawrence, William Blake, Nietzche, Ralph Waldo Emerson and many, many more authors. That is really just a tiny sampling to give us an idea of how the Northern Way persisted in European literature. It is found even earlier in the wisdom of the Stoics, Heraclitus, Aristotle, the Icelandic sagas, the Norse Eddas, German lore, fairy tales, the Grimm brothers, the songs and lore of the British Isles and in many, many other sources. This worldview expanded from Europe to the New World, to Australia, and all many of the places where the explorations and colonization of the world by northern European countries occurred.

But ever since the coming of the modern age, which many people date to the French Revolution, the Northern Way worldview has been under attack. In its place has been offered a darker, sicker, weaker, uglier, angrier, less noble worldview. And sadly the majority of people in the West today, it seems, have been swept up in the decadent, modern way of seeing the world.

My objective with this new program is to explore the Northern Way worldview, engage with the rich literature, history and cultural artifacts that show how beautiful, empowering and life-altering the Northern Way worldview can be for you and me, and to discuss the Northern Way in light of the current world situation and how we might overcome and flourish in this decadent world today by rediscovering and living out the Northern Way.

Okay, so what is the Northern Way? Others have expressed the fundamentals of this worldview in various terms, but here is how I define the Northern Way. I like to summarize it by describing four habits. Those who hold the Northern Way worldview and live it out each day consistently practice these four habits: 1) Affirm life and the World, 2) Pursue beauty and excellence, 3) Cultivate the health of self, kin and home, 4) Forge an ethic of honor and overcoming. Repeat those. At Northernway.online I occasionally upload brief articles that highlight one or more of these habits. So I encourage you to check in with Northernway.online regularly to catch those. Or you can follow The Northern Way Radio Facebook page, where I link to these articles as well as give updates on Northern Way Radio.

Let’s take a music break and then we will return and briefly talk about these four habits of the Northern Way, which will serve as a guide for us in future episodes. The first song we’ll hear is from Ian F. Benzie. It’s a 2001 version of Candidee-i-o. Sometimes known as “The Wearing of the Blue,” the song tells the story of a lady who desires to go to sea where her lover has gone. She pays gold to a sailor so that he will help her get aboard a ship. He gives her sailor’s clothes, dressing her in the blue. But when the crew finds out, they are enraged and want to drown her. The Captiain learns of this and saves the lady. And, the lady and the captain marry once the ship reaches land. So, a happy ending there.

The second song is a fun song sung by Sam Kelly called “The Jolly Waggoners” which is a celebration of the joy’s of rewarding work. On the other side of the break we will discuss more in depth the four habits of the Northern Way. Here we go…

PLAYS SONGS

Sam Kelly singing “The Jolly Waggoners” and before that Ian Benzie’s rendition of “Candidee-i-o.” They stories within each selection from the traditional European and early American folk song catalogue gives us a taste of the tragic, heroic, life-affirming Northern Way.

Let’s return to our discussion of the four habits of the Northern Way, which we said are 1) Affirm life and the world, 2) Pursue beauty and excellence, 3) Cultivate the health of self, kin and home, and 4) Forge and ethic of honor and overcoming.

**First, off…Affirm life and the world**. This involves saying “Yes!” to life and to this world. This life and world we experience are what are known and certain. None of us really knows what awaits beyond this life, so let’s get on with living nobly and cheerfully and purposefully in this life. Enjoy it to the fullest. That does not mean hedonistically, but with purpose, with an eye on leaving a legacy, achievements. Sure, you will experience obstacles and even tragedy along the way. But, in spite of this, you affirm life, you say yes each morning to life. You soak in the experience of life. Build friendships. Learn new things. You get back up. What other option is there? You develop new skills. You receive and give freely.

The counter-narrative to this is to wait, to sit idly, to drop out, to lay low, to do the minimum to get by each day, or to escape into vapid entertainment, drugs and what-not. It is so liberating when you stop resenting life or expecting it to be perfect, but, instead, you go about saying Yes! to life, in spite of the disappointment and pain. Just as trampled wind straightens again to wave in the wind.

Here’s how the Stoic and Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius put it: What should we prize? He asked. Life is not just living in our heads listening to our passing thoughts, or being jerked like a puppet by our impulses, or following the masses or eating and relieving ourselves afterwards. And is certainly is not seeking a clapping audience. There is so much more to life! And it is this: Do what you were designed for. When you affirm life, you don’t wait for life to pass you by and you don’t engage in escapism. You say yes to life, engage it, you go to battle, you improve yourself, those around you, your world. That is what we were designed for – to affirm life and the world.

**The second habit of the Northern Way is to pursue beauty and excellence.** As this life and world before us are what known and certain to us, we commit to spend the days and years we have creating beauty and aspiring to excellence. Pursue them in your physical, emotional and spiritual life. Create beauty in your surroundings, through excellent work and through cultivating an art and style. Example: Planting marigolds at my first apartment.

The person committed to excellence does not settle for mediocrity and utilitarian ends. This is what the material, consumer wants you to settle for. Stuff. Consumer goods. Material wealth as the final end. When money and stuff become the ends, this leads to the decay and ugliness that has overtaken our modern world today. You get people who desire Disney World more than this world, who define themselves by their car and home than by the style and character that they have fashioned for themselves. What is left is we don’t aspire to excellence and to create beauty? Only a bland, beige mediocrity where ugliness, slovenliness, sickness, resentment, jealousy.

The Northern Way teaches us to be so much more. Emerson said, “Flowers…are a proud assertion that a ray of beauty outvalues all the utilities of the world.” The aim is to be a flower – something beautiful – rather than an amorphous blob. Bloom, flower, and give of yourself as the flower gives of its nectar. You then become beautiful AND useful.

**The third habit of the Northern Way is to cultivate health, for you and your family.** Health is the first wealth. Take care of your physical, emotional and spiritual self through physical fitness, proper diet, adequate sleep. Adhere to the heathy psychology of your ancestors, who affirmed this life and this world and did not condemn or issue fundamental complaints against life.

Having abandoned the Northern Way, people are physically, emotionally, and spiritually sick. In the West, we live in a society in which 40% of people are clinically obese and in which prescriptions for depression and anxiety are on the rise, not to much the rise in suicides. By abandoning the Northern Way and accepting the modern worldview we have arrived at a catastrophic health crisis. This modern world that has abandoned beauty, excellence and health as highly valued has offers us unhealthy foods, poisoned water and soil, plastics in our bloodstream, and promoted a decadent lifestyle that lead to chronic sickness, neurosis and premature death. The Northern Way teaches us that health is the first wealth. We learn to value as one of the highest values our physical, mental and emotional health. You will not achieve that by living according to the pro-death and pro-sick way of the modern worldview.

But we not only seek to cultivate our individual personal health; in living the Northern Way we commit to the wellbeing and flourishing of our family and extended kin. Your family shares with you a genetic and cultural history and a rich, empowering heritage that will give you strength to overcome difficulties. The modern world has downplayed marriage and family and even said that they are stifling and evil. But marriage and the family are two of the most beautiful and life-affirming institutions to which we can devote ourselves. When you are personally healthy – in mind, body and soul – and your family is living in harmony and in frith - you realize you must take care of your family, honor it, and protect it. That is not happening today, because we have abandoned the Northern Way.

So, we affirm life, we create beauty and pursue excellence, we cultivate a healthy self and family….and finally,

**We forge an ethic of honor and overcoming.** Your honor is your greatest virtue. Sacrifice it for nothing. Sin is not your greatest fear but rather the shame and disgrace that might land upon you and your family if you act dishonorably. That should not be a novel idea, but it seems so. Because we elevated sin or shame. We abandoned honor as one of our highest values. To be honorable is to be honest, courageous, loyal, industrious, and to strive for beauty and excellence in the big and small things. The greatest sign of your honor is your stoic and indominable will to overcome all obstacles and disappointments that you face in life and in this world without complaint. The heroic life is the honorable life. The Northern Way is a heroic worldview.

Seneca defined this heroic life, when he wrote this: And yet life…is really a battle. For this reason those who are tossed about at sea, who proceed uphill and downhill over toiling crags and heights, who go on campaigns that bring the greatest danger, are heroes and front-rank fighters; but persons who live in rotten luxury and ease while others toil are mere turtle-doves safe only because men despise them.

The Northern Way teaches us to be heroes and front-rank fighters, not turtle-doves. Your future and that of your family belongs to the hero and to the front-rank fighter. Modernity creates decadent little turtle-doves. The Northern Way breeds heroes.

These four habits are a counter-narrative, an alternative way of living, opposed to the sick, weak, decadent, soul-crushing narrative and way of our modern world. The modern worldview is pro-death, prod-mediocrity, pro-sickness and pro-shame/disgrace. Hang around in the upcoming weeks and I will unpack what I mean when I say our society is pro-death, pro-mediocrity, pro-sickness and pro-shame/disgrace.

We’ll stop there for this inaugural episode of Living the Northern Way. I hope it’s been helpful. I hope to add a new episode every week or so, and I’ll announce the dates and times for each upcoming episode at Northern Way Online and at Northern Way Radio Facebook page . Until then, I hope you will keep listening to Northern Way Radio – “Real Folk for Real People” – and keep living the Northern Way. This time we close out with “The Cliffs of Dooneen” by The Dooleys. See you soon.