



“Zen without bells and whistles.”

Thornton Wilder comments on the Judgemental Comparisons and Notions of Entitlement

The most valuable thing I inherited was a temperament that does not revolt against necessity and that is constantly renewed in Hope.

From Malcolm Cowley's book, *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews, (First Series)*, Penguin Books, p.106

Interviewer: ...[Do] you feel that you were born in a place and at a time, and to a family all of which combined favorably to shape you for what you were to do?

Wilder: Comparisons of one's lot with others' teaches us nothing and enfeebles the will. Many born in an environment of poverty, disease, and stupidity, in an age of chaos, have put us in their debt.

By the standards of many people and by my own, these dispositions were favorable...but what are our judgments in such matters? Everyone is born with an array of handicaps, even Mozart, even Sophocles, and acquires new ones. In a famous passage, Shakespeare ruefully complains that he was not endowed with another writer's "scope!" We are all equally distant from the sun, but we all have a share in it. The

most valuable thing I inherited was a temperament that does not revolt against necessity and that is constantly renewed in Hope. (I am alluding to Goethe's great poem about the problem of each man's "lot", the Orphische Worte.)'