

Pebbles

“The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result”—traditional proverb.

I am here to tell you, however,
that the definition of intelligence
is understanding that each time
we do the same thing the result
must inevitably be different.

You cannot prepare
the same pot of stew twice.

Thomas Edison failed
more times than I would care to count
before finally offering us the light bulb.

Take one pebble, drop it in a pond.
This effects no change—except
concentric ripples that soon disappear.
Continue one by one and,
after sufficient time,
our pond, too, will disappear, forever.

And then consider the giant maple:
What if she, like you and I,
were to cast seeds singly,
or in small batches, hoping thereby
to confirm some reason for this existence?
After ten, or twenty, failed to sprout,
remembering your definition, she
would surely declare: “I am through
with such crazy behavior.”

Continue, therefore, I implore you,
to cast your seeds—singly
or in small batches—
even if all that came before
have failed to sprout.
For each attempt renews hope
that this time we will, at last,
confirm whatever reasons there may be
for our humanity.

Steve Bloom
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