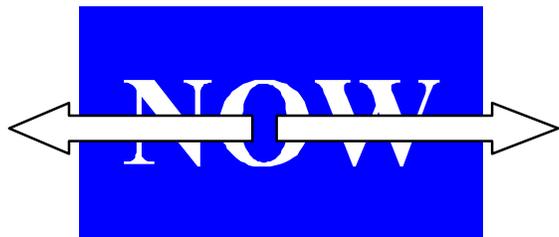


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Next Greville Street Meetings –October 25 & November 29

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In the interests of continuity I open this month with feedback on the Advaita matters raised in the last issue and follow with the contributions held over due to the length of our last edition. Thank you all.

I have been updating the mailing list. If this results in your name reappearing after unsubscribing, my apologies, and please let me have another unsubscribe email.

From Sam Blight

I've had a chance to read the review of DW's book you left me with as well as his comments and I'd have to say I'm definitely with you and Radhakrishnan. Making the initial truth claims ("Your waking experiences are no more real than..." etc) the stepping off point for your review was an excellent approach I thought. One thing that struck me about DW's comments, and I'm tempted to take this to be a feature of his approach in general without having read anything of his, is the reliance on logic and reason to arrive at a conviction regarding the truth claims he's making.

To my mind this has two serious and perhaps fatal disadvantages. The first is that any conclusion reached in this way, however watertight the argument leading to it, will be some kind of mental formulation and therefore inherently dualistic. This would help explain the unbalanced kind of expression often produced by this approach, of which DW's four claims are typical.

The second disadvantage is that holding a mental conviction of any kind is to my mind inimical to noticing and then valuing the bleeding obvious if and when it happens to be encountered, as we've found with many of those with whom we've attempted unsuccessfully to share Seeing.

The best this kind of book can hope for, I'd say, is to create curiosity and an openness to accepting and celebrating the facts as they are given, in terms of the absence of separation discovered when we notice (by whatever means) where we're looking from. Here again though, the eliding of the issue of levels of experience (or we might say, directions of View) which pervades this kind of discourse, complicates even this worthy aim. Congratulations on finding that quote from DW in Non Duality Magazine in which he mentions "levels". My question would be, why isn't this highly important caveat placed prominently at the front of his book? It seems that, as is all too often the Advaita world, if it appears at all, it's in response to an obvious and reasonable objection to unhelpful absolutist claims.

I'm left reminded of one of my favourite DH quotes:

"What I find difficult and unacceptable really, is the wishy-washy reliance on words, on concepts, of so much alleged spirituality. True spirituality is real, down to earth, concrete - it's coming home from your appearance to your reality. As the Buddha said, you won't by going reach that place where there is the end of suffering. You'll get it by coming. We are so good at looking that way, and lousy at looking this way"
~ Interview with Douglas Harding. DVD

How lucky we are to have stumbled onto his "way" and to have a real Ground from which to consider these issues.

Sam Blight

Reply from me to Sam. I appreciate your response to my notes on Dennis Waite's book. I think your point about reliance on logic and reason is exactly right as he admires Gaudapada's method which is exactly that. I am in an ongoing exchange with Dennis about my negative reactions and I've threatened him that when he's put me right I'm going to publish a one page dissertation entitled Advaita Without Tears. He admits that one of Advaita's weaknesses is a failure to define its terms and your comment on why not stick the caveat at the beginning is an example. He uses both reality and creation in unconventional ways. Reality as unchanging and instead of creation they use formation. The 'ocean' of Brahman does not create waves it forms them. So, no creation! He also points out that the word creation implies a creator but I would say Bohm's 'self ordering principles of the universe' offers a creator-free option. We are lucky indeed to have stumbled on the shortcut. Even Krishnamurti, in a moment of exasperation, said do we really have to go through all this explanation and analysis, or can we just step around it? On another occasion he pointed out that the first step is the last step, failing to add it is a step backwards, as confirmed in your DEH quote.

Alan

(The next two responses are from long-time participants in the LookForYourself conference Jim Clatfelter and Chris Cheney).

From Jim Clatfelter on 'Definition resistance'.

Alan Mann's latest Nowletter arrived in my inbox this morning. It is mostly a dialogue between Alan and Dennis Waite about Dennis's new book on Advaita (non-duality) called *A-U-M, Awakening to Reality*. I don't want to say anything about Advaita and the book. I just want to talk about some of the parallels Alan points out between Advaita and headlessness. I'll start by quoting from Alan in the Nowletter.

"I subscribe to another form of enquiry which is also often greeted with strong resistance on the grounds of its apparent nonsensical claims, in my case it is that I have no head. If my critics hang around long enough to let me demonstrate that there is a perspective from which this claim can be made and demonstrated, ridicule is sometimes replaced by understanding."

Why put the matter as the apparently nonsensical claim: I have no head. In an interview with Richard Lang, Douglas said it was to be provocative. Dennis Waite says that the Advaita definition of reality as permanence is meant to be provocative. "The statement in that form was deliberately provocative to incite people to want to read it!"

I don't say this was a mistake. Having heard of "the man who didn't have a head" certainly primed me to read the book. When I saw *On Having No Head* on the shelf of a small bookstore, I immediately bought it. I bought the book in the morning, and by the afternoon I bought the premise. I saw that I "have" no head. What I really saw was that I could not see the head on my shoulders that you see. I saw empty space. I learned the difference between first and third person perception. As Alan puts it:

"The Harding experiments seem to be relevant to the Advaita approach in that they offer an immediately available reversal of attention which can break the deep identification with third personhood, revealing the aware space which includes, yet remains free of, the so-called objective world, knowledge, concepts, etc."

My identity changed that day. I saw that I had no head. What I really saw was that I couldn't see my head. My image of myself could no longer resemble my image of other people, and image is a huge part of identity. My image now include a "hole" at its center, the hole that makes one whole.

What if we drop the provocative way of talking about headlessness? I think Richard (Richard Lang) is taking this approach by emphasizing the fact that I can't see my own head. Everybody will agree with this. It could be that *On Not Being Able To See My Head* would not make a catchy or provocative book title, but it works in conversation and no doubt in workshops. I see the "great void" instead of a head. Doesn't that get rid of the problem of "definition resistance" right off the bat? And isn't that exciting and plenty provocative too?

Other instances of definition resistance regarding heedlessness? I'm sure there are many. I'm just thinking that we don't have to "shoot ourselves in the foot" (as Alan puts it) with the first words out of our mouths. Please don't ask me "What mouths?"

Jim

In a further post Jim added;

You can include what I wrote if you wish. I didn't say anything about Advaita though. It has no appeal for me. Nor does any other religion or spirituality. The older I get, the more skeptical I become. Dennis Waite says he is averse to science. I look upon headless seeing as the science of the first person. For me, it's about perception rather than spirituality. On ultimate matters, I have no certain information. The inside information seeing provides does not lead me to certainty about such matters. On present evidence I am able to draw no conclusions about religious matters. I remain open to whatever discoveries might emerge. Seeing is about openness, not about closing doors with doctrine and dogma. I don't see it as an adjunct to religion, though I

think there is room for those who do. I do think that definition resistance may turn some people away from headless seeing -- as you indicate you have experienced.

Jim

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From Chris Cheney

Hi Alan, I know your post is to Jim, but here is 2 cents from me (for free no less). Well, some of the same empty(ness) rhetoric exists in Zen, but from a slightly different angle which i have seen described as those Daruma dolls which return to center and stand back up when knocked over (Zen) vs. a pendulum, which carries the still point at the top rather than at the bottom (Advaita).

In Zen, all it is generally taken to mean, is like "regarding all temporal things as like the dew and lightning." The appearance of the thing itself is to be regarded as an empty appearance, its own emptiness, in the sense that it is not a permanent object, and all periods of time are empty. The other side of that is that of course it is full, and if it weren't empty, it couldn't be full, 'cause it wouldn't have any room for anything.

Anyone who meditates for awhile will likely perceive that there are no permanent states, things change continuously, so there is no particular emphasis on clinging to some kind of "emptiness" , which can lead to a number of problems, chiefly of the "my emptiness is emptier than your emptiness" variety, or walking around muttering "nothing, nothing" all day. Love, Chris

Note from Alan: Chris's comment reminded me that Traherne says much the same in the language of his tradition and times:

They that quarrel at the manner of God's revealing Himself are troubled because He is invisible. Yet is it expedient that He should be so: for whatsoever is visible is a body; whatsoever is a body excludeth other things out of the place where itself is. If God therefore being infinite were visible He would make it impossible for anything to have a being. Besides, bulk as such in itself is dead. Whatsoever is visible is so in like manner. That which inspireth bulk with motion, life, and sense is invisible; and in itself distinct from the bulk which it inspireth. Were God therefore pure bulk, He could neither move, nor will, nor desire anything; but being invisible; He leaveth room for and effecteth all things. He filleth nothing with a bodily presence, but includeth all. He is pure Life, Knowledge, and Desire, from which all things flow: pure

Wisdom, Goodness, and Love to which all things return.

I thought that was a neat 17th century Anglo Advaita commentary on what we were talking about and that in turn reminded me of one of my favourite quotations:

In the Taittirlya Upanishad Bhrigu Varuni asks his father to explain to him the mystery of Brahman, the mystery of the universe. His father speaks to him of the earth and the food of the earth, of life and the breath of life, of the mind and of reason, and of consciousness behind reason and mind.

In the end Bhrigu Varuni saw the Truth expressed in these words sublime:

And then he saw that Brahman was joy, for from joy all beings have come, by joy they all live, and unto joy they all return.

God is love, and love is joy. All the universe has come from love and unto love all things return.

I can't remember where that was clipped from.

From Gary Jackson

Garry sent me an extract from the book *Creation theories and the Reality of the World*.

Extract begins:

Sri Ramana had little or no interest in the theoretical side of spirituality. His principal concern was to bring people to an awareness of the Self and, to achieve this end he always insisted that practice was more important than speculation. He discouraged questions of a theoretical nature either by remaining silent when they were asked or by asking the questioner to find the source of the 'I' that was asking the question. Occasionally he would relent and give detailed expositions on various aspects of philosophy, but if his questioners persisted too long with their queries, or if the conversation veered towards sterile intellectualism, he would change the subject and direct the attention of his questioners towards more practical matters.

Many of these philosophical conversations centred around the nature and origin of the physical world since Sri Ramana was known to have views which were totally at variance with the common-sense view of the world. As with most other topics he tailored his statements to conform to the different levels of understanding he encountered in his questioners, but even so, almost all his ideas were radical refutations of the concepts of physical reality that most people cherish.

Sri Ramana adopted three different standpoints when he spoke about the nature of the physical world. He advocated all of them at different times but it is clear from his general comments on the subject that he only considered the first two theories given below to be either true or useful.

1 Ajata vada (the theory of non-causality). This is an ancient Hindu doctrine which states that the creation of the world never happened at all. It is a complete denial of all causality in the physical world. Sri Ramana endorsed this view by saying that it is the jnani's experience that nothing ever comes into existence or ceases to be because the Self alone exists as the sole unchanging reality. It is a corollary of this theory that time, space, cause and effect, essential components of all creation theories, exist only in the minds of ajnanis and that the experience of the Self reveals their non-existence.

This theory is not a denial of the reality of the world, only of the creative process which brought it into existence. Speaking from his own experience Sri Ramana said that the jnani is aware that the world is real, not as an assemblage of interacting matter and energy, but as an uncaused appearance in the Self. He enlarged on this by saying that because the real nature or substratum of this appearance is identical with the beingness of the Self, it necessarily partakes of its reality. That is to say, the world is not real to the jnani simply because it appears, but only because the real nature of the appearance is inseparable from the Self.

The ajnani, on the other hand, is totally unaware of the unitary nature and source of the world and, as a consequence, his mind constructs an illusory world of separate interacting objects by persistently misinterpreting the sense-impressions it receives. Sri Ramana pointed out that this view of the world has no more reality than a dream since it superimposes a creation of the mind on the reality of the Self. He summarised the difference between the jnani's and the ajnani's standpoint by saying that the world is unreal if it is perceived by the mind as a collection of discrete objects and real when it is directly experienced as an appearance in the Self.

2 Drishti-srishti vada If his questioners found the idea of ajata or non-causality impossible to assimilate, he would teach them that the world comes into existence simultaneously with the appearance of the 'I'-thought and that it ceases to exist when the 'I'-thought is absent. This theory is known as drishti-srishti, or simultaneous creation, and it says, in effect, that the world which appears to an ajnani is a product of the mind that perceives it, and that in the absence of that mind it ceases to exist. The theory is true in so far as the mind does create an imaginary world for itself, but from the standpoint of the Self, an imaginary 'I' creating an imaginary world is no creation at all, and so the doctrine of ajata is not subverted. Although Sri Ramana sometimes said that drishti-srishti was not the ultimate truth about creation he encouraged his followers to accept it as a working hypothesis. He justified this approach by saying that if one can consistently regard the world as an unreal creation of the mind then it loses its attraction and it becomes easier to maintain an undistracted awareness of the 'I'-thought.

3 Srishti-drishti vada (gradual creation). This is the commonsense view which holds that the world is an objective reality governed by laws of cause and effect which can be traced back to a single act of creation. It includes virtually all western ideas on the

subject from the 'big bang' theory to the biblical account in Genesis. Sri Ramana only invoked theories of this nature when he was talking to questioners who were unwilling to accept the implications of the ajata and drishti-srishti theories. Even then, he would usually point out that such theories should not be taken too seriously as they were only promulgated to satisfy intellectual curiosity.

Literally, drishti-srishti means that the world only exists when it is perceived whereas srishti-drishti means that the world existed prior to anyone's perception of it. Although the former theory sounds perverse, Sri Ramana insisted that serious seekers should be satisfied with it, partly because it is a close approximation to the truth and partly because it is the most beneficial attitude to adopt if one is seriously interested in realising the Self.

Q: How has srishti [creation] come about? Some say it is predestined. Others say it is the Lord's leela or sport. What is the truth?

A: Various accounts are given in books. But is there creation? Only if there is creation do we have to explain how it came about. We may not know about all these theories but we certainly know that we exist. Why not know the 'I' and then see if there is a creation?'

Q: In the vedanta of Sri Sankaracharya the principle of the creation of the world has been accepted for the sake of beginners, but for the advanced the principle of non-creation is put forward. What is your view on this matter?

A: There is no dissolution or creation, no one in bondage, nor anyone pursuing spiritual practices. There is no one desiring, etc.

Extract ends.

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From Garry Booth

As a preamble - just to remind you - my journey has been a fascinating investigation process of “perennial wisdom” and science (mind of g-d) to find the “truth” (if there is such a thing.) So I haven't really followed the wisdom of any single path or any single person, until I found non-duality . Is non-duality just another concept ? I don't think so.

For me, of all the concepts, the ancient Indian wisdom of 3,500 years ago, Vedanta , is the only “truth”, especially when it's considered in its generic form – non duality - and all superfluous stuff is peeled away .

I have often struggled with the text and meanings of the Vedas and Hinduism. I believe some meanings (pointers) are lost in translation (as Jesus's original text too was lost) Once non-duality is understood then words aren't required and the “path” to

get there can be seen more clearly. So I tend to agree with your final assessment & Dennis' postscript and his comment regarding the various "levels" of awareness & awakening.

Not sure if I can add more to the discussion as I have generally avoided the complexity of the Vedic scriptures – as well as any other scriptures & dogma - and sought the "core truth" more directly through mysticism, mythology and metaphor. As Joseph Campbell once said, mythology and metaphor speak directly to the psyche (thus bypassing the intellectual).

As a (long) postscript I thought I'd add my quick point of view on non-duality – since my "re-discovery" in 2013 - of what I have found so far - which you may well already know.

Consciousness: Naturally I believe consciousness is primary, eternal and unchanged. Also our evolution has been an evolution of intellect and ego/self, (becoming) nurtured and suspended in (the screen of) consciousness (being.) As you know, all we have to do is get out of the picture. For me there is no such thing as "higher" consciousness, just higher "clarity" as ego (thinking) gets out of the way. There is only consciousness (albeit a word) Consciousness is synonymous with *another word* "light." Once intellect takes the "silent witness" towards the "light" and the light of consciousness is shone on "ego" it evaporates & ultimate "truth" is known. This tends to explain the various "levels" of awakening from recurring "awareness" (seeing and knowing) to a more permanent transition (enlightenment/being).

Complexity: Spirituality is a complex intellectual discussion and I find that sometimes words (pointers) and their meanings get in the way. After thousands of words at the end of the journey a single word is too much - and of course, as you know, no-one arrives. I believe the meaning of the word Maya as "illusionary" is a misinterpretation so I prefer - that which exists but is constantly changing (material / time) – in a background of non-change (immaterial / present / eternal)

Simplicity: From my investigations and "experience" I have been attracted to a more direct approach like Nisargadatta's "I Am That". In the end, as an intellectual concept, the "truth," as I define it, is quite simple and human nature has made "truth" complex – for mostly egotistical reasons culminating in the general notion, that if a doctrine is not complex then the doctrine cannot be the "true path." Of course the most difficult part is the sincere dedication required to undertake the "inner journey" and to re-discovery our "true nature" - hidden by thoughts, beliefs, conditioning and tightly guarded by an illusionary image of ego/self. Everything becomes a belief (concept) for ego's identity and for ego to defend - and fight wars over. Once we "lose" our sense of self we gain "more than we can ever imagine" and therein is the greatest paradox of all. For the ego is fearful and tenaciously guards its mistaken identity, so the journey can be easily thwarted by ego.

Concepts: I believe that physically, everything is energy and mentally everything is “concepts or mindstuff”, including who I think I am. For me, non-duality points to “no-thingness” to “one-ness” (no self & no concept) and therefore beyond words and concepts. Put simply, there is only consciousness (Brahman) and manifestations or appearances in consciousness, both local (Atman) and non-local (Cosmos) – which are one and the same (as in quantum physics). Tends to reminds me of the “ Big Mind “ concept. Also the material world as described by quantum physics founding fathers is more like “mind stuff.”

A-U-M: If I identify - as who I truly am - with the screen of consciousness then my sense of self dissolves. When A-U-M was explained to me by Joseph Campbell I was overjoyed with its meaning – as the “answer” is found in the silent gap between A-U-Ms. I’ve been to quite a few Hindu Swami meetings and Satsangs where chanting has been involved & I found it “illuminating” and blissful – but that’s another story.

Mysticism: As previously mentioned, I believe Vedanta (end of knowing) is a concept that points to the ultimate “truth ” and “ground of being”. This ancient wisdom can be found at the core of Hinduism , Buddhism, Kabbala, Sufism, Gnosticism/ Christianity & Daoism. My understanding is that the Buddha discarded the dogma of Hinduism and sought the core teachings of Vedanta. Also the mystical Jesus was influenced by the desert fathers (Kabbala) - and no doubt Buddhism from India.

Mythology: Campbell’s investigations into ancient & tribal mythology has also showed that even the earliest disassociated tribes had mythical stories that pointed to non-duality. Campbell’s so called “Hero’s journey” is the inner journey to re-discover true nature and transcend ego (non-duality) Metaphysical literature and well known and respected authors, philosophers , mystics throughout the ages from Socrates to Shakespeare to Jung have championed the mystical path of non-duality. Most of the spiritual writers of the 19th & 20th century including Tolle & Wilber point to non-duality.

Garry Booth

From Graeme Wilkins

Some understandings that have helped ..

After seeking answers from words (and pointers) from those who purport to know, the "neo advaita" proponents (Tony Parsons et al), are extensions of thought/concepts from those "originators" who understood the sub stratum of what Bob Adamson calls, "intelligence energy" .

AUM is traditionally known as the "primordial" sound vibration but whether chanting will allow access to the substratum (also it seems known as turiya) is questionable, but isn't it all? The mind will accommodate any number of ways to try and assuage the fear

of "unknowing".

Negation of this/that and the enquiry into who/what "I" is, is a logical (to the mind) way to "arrive" at "truth".. the fact of your existence is unquestionable from a direct experience standpoint as DEH found. "Neo advaitins" from a substratum (potential/capacitie) viewpoint can also be seen to be "right".. so the four points made by DW can be seen to be valid. Compare with the close eye experiment, on direct experience what is "real" apart from the "experiencer"?

It is has been some time since (or needing to) delving into some of the word-books .. "I am That" - Nisagardatta, "Confusion No More" - Ramesh Balsekar , "Presence Awareness" and "One Essence appearing as Everything" and "What's wrong with right now unless you think about it?" - Bob Adamson

They all say/point to the same thing—

The mind is contained in it....mind is a constant movement of energy ...so 'the peace that passeth all understanding" can only be present when the mind is not...It is mindless, timeless, spaceless, beyond birth and death, beyond where when how and why.. "The sword can't cut it, the wind can't dry it, the fire can't burn it and the water can't drown it"

And so on it goes .. *Graeme Wilkins*

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From Alan Mann

We all seem to be well disposed towards Advaita. The unitary dimension or aspect of being which Advaita calls Brahman, is acknowledged.

Advaita tells us that only Brahman is real on the grounds that it is the only aspect of being that can be understood to be unchanging.

What I call reality, Advaita describes as the unreal. The ever-changing aspect of being is labelled mithyA (see definition below). What I refer to as real, the everyday world of experience, is distinguished from Brahman by its ever-changing nature. Consequently, it must be understood as unreal.

Anything we say about Brahman or about the real and unreal is a product of the realm of mithyA , and therefore, by definition, is itself mithyA and, consequently, unreal. The four statements then, cannot be taken as statements of what I call truth, they are simply the pointing finger of mithyA.

Your waking experiences are no more real than your dreaming ones!

There has never been any creation.

You cannot die because you were never born!

The fact that you experience separate objects proves that they are not really there!

These are the statements I took exception to. It seems to me that they are put into the 'mouth' of Brahman which neither affirms nor denies any of this. It is mithyA not Brahman which generates these speculations.

If the above statements were prefaced by a note on the lines of " From the perspective of the unchanging Brahman, There has never been any creation, etc." Most of our objections would disappear only to be replaced by the question how can mithyA possibly know this? Gaudapada doesn't seem to deal with this problem either. Surely, Brahman is silent on such matters neither affirming nor denying?

In another attempt at understanding I checked Dennis's website at www.advaita.org again and found an article on mithyA by Ramesh Krishnamurthy which was very helpful. He uses the same analogy Dennis himself drew on in his reply to my comments in the last issue, an analogy with the different forms taken by water, all of which are Brahman but which also have a relative reality depending on *the frame of reference* in which the particular form manifests, e.g., steam in a situation of pan on stove above a certain temperature.

I think the 'frame of reference' a very good way of explaining what I think is missing from many Advaita statements. Nevertheless, I am still left wondering about what possible frame of reference there could be for those four bald statements which set me off on this journey.

Alan Mann

See, <http://www.advaita.org.uk/discourses/definitions/mithyA.htm> (well worth a look).

From the glossary in Dennis's book. *mithya - dependent reality; literally "incorrectly" or "improperly," used in the sense of "false, untrue." It is, however, more frequently used in the sense of "depending upon something else for its existence." It is ascribed to objects etc., meaning that these are not altogether unreal but not strictly real either i.e. they are our imposition of name and form upon the undifferentiated Self.*

Notes on the side

1. Whilst seeking further inspiration I came upon I came upon The Advaita Trap – A five minute play by Jeff Foster which is an amusing exchange between the two principal aspects of non-duality as covered in this dialogue.

<http://www.lifewithoutacentre.com/writings/the-advaita-trap-a-one-act-play/>

2. I remember hearing talk of Douglas having friendly dealings with the London or UK Ramana Association. There is a snippet on the question of the 'sudden versus gradual' debate at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1I6TShashA>

A Muslim Prayer – from Yvonne Truen

I came across this beautiful prayer the other day while tidying up and thought it might be ok for the NOWletter in view of the happenings in the Middle East and Europe today. Haven't got a scanner so will practise my typing....Yvonne

O God, do not let me be as a butcher of sheep
 and do not let me, as a sheep, be killed by the butchers.
 God, help me to speak the truth in the face of the strong
 and help me not to lie to gain the applause of the weak.
 O God, if you give me money, protect my happiness,
 and if you give me power, strengthen my wits
 and if you give me success, increase my humility,
 and if you give me humility, preserve my dignity.
 O God, help me to see both sides of the picture,
 and do not let me accuse my opponents of treachery
 just because they have a different point of view.
 O God, help me to love people as I love myself
 and to keep a check on myself as I keep a check on others.
 O God, do not let me become boastful if I am successful,
 and do not let me despair if I fail, but remind me always
 that failure is the experiment that precedes success.
 O God, let me be gentle with others, teach me that forgiveness
 is the highest standard of power
 and that revenge is the greatest indication of weakness.
 O God, if I lose my money, leave me hope:
 and if my success diminishes
 leave me the power to overcome failure;
 and if my health fails, leave me faith.
 Oh God, if I have wronged others, give me the opportunity
 to apologize; and if people have wronged me
 give me the power to forgive.

O God, if I forget you, do not forget me.
 Amen.

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Worth v Unworthy from Doug Lloyd

Unworthy

Steve prays, I thank you God that I am not like other people, I don't swear, lie, get drunk, take drugs, go to bed with other people's wives, or have mental problems.

Rather, I am faithful to my wife, I give lots to worthy causes and to the church. I am in the choir, preach, teach and chair the church council.

Richenda prays, God I confess that I cheat on my tax returns. I don't give much to worthy causes and none to the church.

I am going to make the assumption that Steve and Richenda are suffering acutely from feeling unworthy, a feeling of which they are unaware.

We all want to have a sense of worth. Feeling unworthy or inferior, or only of worth when we are of use to others is unbearable.

Steve seeks to get rid of the exceedingly painful state of unworthiness by asserting that he is better than others. He feels worthy or good when he puts people down, and thereby affirms his goodness. He keeps on doing this year after year. It appears then that his sense of rottenness, or of being worthless, a sense of which he is unconscious, is still troubling him.

Richenda seeks to get rid of the depressing feeling of unworthiness, a feeling of which she is unaware, by confessing to wrong- doing. Yet she keeps on going to confession every day.

Worthy

Steve was on his way to church when he noticed a sign in front of a shop window:

Headless Way Organization

Workshops on discovering your true identity

Time 10.00 a.m. -12.00 noon every Saturday.

Free; All welcome.

'What next. More fools,' muttered Steve.

He started to move on when he noticed a picture underneath the sign. A paper bag open at both ends with a person's head partly in the bag at one end and another person's head partly in it at the other end.

He hastened his steps towards the church. But his curiosity was aroused.

He went to the next workshop.

He watched incredulously as a man and a woman looked at each other through opposite ends of a paper bag.

He heard one of them exclaim! There's nothing looking at you Bill . You're seeing my head aren't you?'

'Of course,' replied Bill.

'Phooey. That's a relief. Yet there is an emptiness ever so bright looking at you. My head is not on view.'

Bill said, 'There's no emptiness here, I'm looking at you.'

At the invitation of the leader Steve decided to have a go. 'I'll straighten out this nonsense,' he muttered to himself.

He placed his face in one end of the bag and Myrtle did likewise at the other end.

The leader said, 'What do you see at the other end of the bag Steve?'

'Why, I see Myrtle's face of course. Silly question, snorted Steve.

'Okay. Then what do you see at your end of the bag? Do you see your face there or is there an emptiness and the absence of your face?'

Steve said, 'I'm flabbergasted. I can't see my face, it's rather like Joe said, 'A face-less reality is shining on Myrtle's face.'

Myrtle replied, 'I don't see my face, I'm not anatomically structured so that I can see my face.'

Six days on Steve remembered what he had prayed: 'I thank you God I am not like.....he paused.and looked inwards as he had done in the paper bag experiment. A faceless reality, the same crystal clear reality he had experienced in the bag experiment at the workshop, was observing what he was remembering.

Thoughts floated up from this seemingly infinite hole.

"I am not like you Steve.

I am in total contrast to all human beings and all creation.

I am wide open to you Steve and all that exists.

I am nearer to you than your jugular vein.

I love you and all that exists, not myself.

I love you for yourself, not for myself.

Hence I am selfless love."

'Wow!' exclaimed Steve. 'What value! What worth! All creation is so valuable that the billions of dollars in the world could not buy it. The *infinite whole* closer than our jugular veins is present, loving all creation for ourselves.'

'I won't be making out that I am better than others any more. We are all of infinite worth'.

A week later Steve read, 'Till we see our nothing, we cannot understand the value of our being,' says Traherne'.

Doug Lloyd.

The Culturium

A recent circular from Paula Marvally introduces her new website: The Culturium

<https://www.theculturium.com/>

Her 'About' page reads as follows:

The Culturium explores the interface between spirituality and the cultural arts.

It is devoted, therefore, to showcasing the compositions of writers, filmmakers, artists, performers, musicians, philosophers, sages and poets who have delved deep into the silence within and created work that is timeless, wise and beautiful.

With so many cultural, arts and mind body spirit sites vying for attention, we sincerely hope that The Culturium will offer you a more reflective and meaningful visit, by concentrating upon enduring, classic and contemporary offerings from our artistic and spiritual heritage.

Categories

The Culturium is divided into five main categories:

- Literature—poetry, prose, fiction, nonfiction, autobiography, travel
- Film—movie, documentary, moving image, video talk/interview
- Wisdom—philosophy, psychology, spirituality
- Visual Arts—drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, architecture
- Performing Arts—theatre, dance, music, opera, performance art

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