

I Adhyaropa Darsana, Cosmic Projection

Verse 2

9/6/5

As incipient memory form alone, in the beginning, this remained; thereafter the Lord projected with his maya, like a magician, the entire world. (I,2)

Now we see why the “as if” in the first verse: the cosmic seedbed of vasanas exists even when there is nonexistence. An infinite sea of potentials biding their time to spring into actuality, an entire universe must be created to offer them opportunities for manifestation. The modern notion of an informational pattern underlying and directing evolution is the same thing. Truly random complexification would take forever, but the quantum vacuum contains structural blueprints that guide and “inform” the process. Science continues to try to imagine this happening without intelligence as a factor (why is that, I wonder?), so the postulate is these are records of previous successful patterns that probably DID take forever to evolve in a former universe, but now that they exist replication proceeds much faster.

It’s important to know that samskaras are memories and habits from the current life, while vasanas (pronounced WAsanas) are a deeper level of memories stemming from previous lives. We’re free to view these as our own personal previous lives—Narayana Guru isn’t going to argue the matter one way or the other—or as the collective genetic inheritance. Our physical structure allows us to walk but not fly or swim, and our mental structure directs us to interpret events within certain frameworks. If

such peculiarities were due to samskaras, we could change them pretty rapidly if we tried, but vasanas are “below the radar” so to speak. Much effort over long periods of time produces little change. We’re better off to work with them and flow with them than curse our fate and try to be something we’re not.

For the Christians out there, vasanas correspond to original sin and samskaras to personal sin. When we take a body form, we are no longer infinite. The inevitable limitations of this state, which in a sense “separate” us from the prabhu (I think Christians call it God), are called original sin. Our attitudes limit us even further. While these come mostly from our environment and social milieu, they are ironically called personal sin. Since sin has gotten a bad name, when you encounter those terms you can mentally translate them, just as you translate Satan or the devil to ego. Takes a lot of the fear and guilt out of it.

In the course of an honorable life we promote “good” vasanas and suppress “bad” ones. Psychologists know that mere suppression of unwelcome memories forces them back underground, where they poison the system in various ways. Yogis have developed a technique of witnessing, where the upsurging vasanas are observed and even embraced but not acted out. Failing reinforcement, they die away. In a severe tradition this treatment is recommended for both good and bad vasanas, while the Gita and other less stringent forms suggest reinforcing the good by expressing them.

And yes, good or bad is an opinion, and people have slightly different values in respect to them, though when sorted out they are all pretty similar. This is an area to bring your best thoughts and to make your own selections. You must throw off lame opinions handed down by unimaginative folk. Seemingly good ideas can have dire consequences as well, so you should thoroughly think things through. The Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction deals with ethical matters in depth, while Darsanamala does not. Learning

your own dharma means knowing what to promote as your absorbing interest. Following your own sense of wonder and ecstasy for growth implies a gentle faith in the universe's beneficence, but it is perhaps justified by the encouragement of so many wise seers and scriptures. To me, the alternative is too horrible to rest on: that we exist in a dog-eat-dog world where survival of the fittest means killing before being killed. Sadly, that's a popular belief of our day, and its fruits are visible in the many disasters humanity is busy making.

Science has recently added the notion that survival of the fittest historically included nurturing and care, even as far back as the dinosaurs, but it hasn't percolated too far into society, where every man for himself is the bedrock. But to the extent we can help our neighbors and spread good will, we are doing our small part to improve the seedbed from which we all spring. Hopefully, that's at least part of what we're doing with the wisdom sacrifice of Darsanamala study.

It's been observed that the brain of a newborn experiences explosive growth for about two years, producing an incredibly vast number of cells. Then, as the child is directed to certain neural pathways, the used paths are strengthened while most of the unused ones wither away. Vasanas are the seeds which sprout to produce this nearly infinite potential, and as they're winnowed down to the tried and true they become buttressed with samskaras.

As we age, our ability to change is greatly reduced, though the dire pronouncements that we can't continue to grow and change are now known to be false. Brain cell renewal at all ages has recently been observed by neuroscientists. What was once Niagara Falls becomes a drizzle, but all doors remain open unless we ourselves give up in despair. A healthy philosophy reminds us of our potential, now and forever. Samskaras can be worked with, but vasanas are like riding wild horses: all you can do is hold on for dear life.

A couple of people have confessed to being confused in the class. Confusion is an underrated condition. I would venture to say that in the present circumstance it means the person has set aside expectations and habitual modes of thought to open up to a new vision. Such a less-conditioned state of mind is confusing because we don't have handy labels for what we encounter, but it's optimal for listening and learning. The labels actually prevent learning. The key to enjoying the process is to not focus on the confusion itself, but recognize it as a vestigial hanging on of old notions. Use it as a goad to listen harder.

A guru often creates confusion precisely to dismantle the superficial beliefs of the student, which serve as a block to learning. Although Narayana Guru is being very straightforward here, that could well be part of the plot.

The democratic nature of the class also contributes to confusion when tangential or even shaky ideas are brought up. Again, these are a challenge for us to sort out the true from the false, to work hard on our understanding, rather than merely accepting everything as gospel. Usually they bear some connection with the subject, albeit veiled. Critical discrimination is an integral part of yoga practice. We're all students here, learning as we go along. I was amazed as always how the contributions from each person opened up new paths to explore, new facets of the truth diamond to admire.

The bottom line is we're in deep water here, and there is no fault in being confused. And please share your questions with the group when you can. It's such a vast subject, we want to address where you are. Confidence of knowing the subject matter better will take a long time, but is the point of the game, after all.

We closed the class with a verse from William Wordsworth's Ode, *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*.

It's worth looking up the whole poem. Romantic and profound. Because of the reference to vasanās, it belonged with us last night. I imagine Wordsworth was thinking of Locke's tabula rasa, and realizing how far from a blank slate we are when we are born:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

Wordsworth and Narayana Guru call us to reclaim our divine inner nature, which seems less far off the more it is contemplated. As we tune into it we can both work with and overcome our natural limitations, becoming happier and more free for the benefit of all.
Aum.

(Response to Susan) - Vasanas, being consolidated memories of the past historical record, cannot be changed, but they can be allowed

to fade away by not being reinforced. As they fade away they are the same, only wisper. When they die they are the same, only dead. :) We substitute new ones by focusing on present areas of interest. Sometimes we're tricked by old vasanas disguised as new ones; in fact, we're pretty much tricked by everything all the time. But that's why we're looking into it in the class.

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10/6/15

Adhyaropa Darsana, Verse 2

As incipient memory form alone, in the beginning,
This remained; thereafter, the Lord
Projected with his *maya*,
Like a magician, the entire world.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

*In the beginning in the form of incipient memory factors
(All) this remained. Then the Lord
By His own power of false presentiment, like a magician
Created all this world (of change).*

Another universe of insights emerged from this simple verse. It seems that we are accessing the Garland from a deeper level than ever before. This is going to get very interesting!

Deb set the stage by noting how we tend to think of *maya* as illusion, a gigantic trick or impediment. Yet properly understood, *maya* includes all of manifestation. Everything without exception is a projection that arises from the ground, here called *prabhu*. I pointed out that this engenders a very different attitude toward the world. If we think of the whole of creation as an illusion, it

becomes a kind of enemy, an obstacle to accessing something preferable. This can only exacerbate the duality we feel as a sense of isolation, of being separated from our environment. Instead, when maya is treated as a natural and inevitable occurrence, we can learn to harmonize with the essence of everything, which is transformed into something to love and be loved by.

Bill added that maya was a process, not a stand-alone entity, which is an operational hazard of personifying it and reducing it to a cliché. Deb elaborated that it is the whole that arises from the seed, and the seed is in the mind of God (which is also a principle of proliferation and not a stand-alone entity. See Part II). The seed billows out and becomes the entire universe.

Narayana Guru is affirming that the apparent nothingness of the beginning is filled with infinite potentials. It is not an empty nothingness. It is tautologically obvious that if something comes to be, it must have been latent in the previous state where it did not appear to exist. Knowing this is a most uplifting insight! By contrast, scientific materialism has proposed a deadening alternative: a universe of pure randomness, in other words, without anything being latent in it. Its favorite image is the blind watchmaker, swirling dust around and occasionally making a recognizable form purely by accident. If such absolute randomness were in fact the case, we should expect to see a preponderance of heterogeneous piles of junk, dotted here and there with temporarily functioning conglomerations. Yet wherever we look, every bit of it is marvelously well put together. We don't see randomness painfully accreting anywhere. It's all a magnificently functioning interrelated whole. And from what we can tell, it has been that way since the beginning.

Andy has been trying to recollect his earliest memories, which is also far from random, considering that it fits so well with the present study. At Narayana Guru's behest we are contemplating the totality that supports the temporal world we inhabit,

presumably because we have lost touch with it and want to reacquaint ourselves with it. There are many ways to access the pristine state we lived in before we began to become seriously conditioned, and diving into the depths of memory is a fascinating option. Andy noticed that before his earliest coherent memories, somewhere around age two, looms a dark void, intriguing and impenetrable. We wondered with him, what connection does that bear to the prabhu? And, must we surrender all our psychological structuring in order to enter the mystery?

Jan related how when she was young she visited the Greek Acropolis and other ruins of the Mediterranean region where she lived, and she can still recall the spiritual feeling they evoked. She could easily sense that there was something valuable just below the surface, or even being elicited by the surface. Until recently, civilized humans believed that architecture inspired creativity and what they might have called godliness. Sadly, the new god of Finance is better worshipped by squelching those sentiments, including replacing sinuous architectural lines with massive, unimaginative boxes. But Jan's point was that like Andy she felt close to something profound when she regressed into early memories. It is an enjoyable and accessible route into our personal lake of prabhu.

Susan also had a tale about the evocation of memory, in her case through exhaustion, which is central to many spiritual techniques. At the end of a long and grueling day of travels, she fell into a semi-dreamlike state where she had a clear, realistic memory of her father telling her to keep her mouth shut. She hadn't remembered that for some four decades, but it came back with a rush, and she suspects her father's well-meant directive has subtly inhibited her for much of that time. Having seen it so plainly, she can begin to let go of its impact and feel a little less inhibited.

To me, just knowing about a state of unlimited potential that exists within us is a liberating concept. We don't have to explain or otherwise determine what the mystery is, exactly, or link up with it, we can just invite it to work with us, and make ourselves as open as possible to its influence. When we do, we find that those potentials are "hot to trot." Eager to be actualized. Like carbon dioxide bubbles in a soda, they are continually bubbling to the surface. Normally we suppress them, I guess in the fear that they might make us burp in public. This is too bad, since they are our inner genius reaching out to us.

Andy offered himself as an example. He has been composing a spectacular (my word) graphic image for each of the Atmopadesa Satakam verses as he addresses them in his online study group. For a long time he found it an effortless process, where the insights would just pour out of him as he worked. Now he has gotten to a place where he is not so sure of himself, and is somewhat anxious about the process. Yet as he stewes and muses about his dilemma, images begin to come, and before long he has done another graphic interpretation of the subject.

The great geniuses of human history often seemed to be hard pressed to keep up with the visions pouring into them, and that is a popular ideal of creativity. On closer examination, most if not all of them had bouts of struggle when the flow was more sluggish or even stopped entirely. Very often they invoked their preferred version of the Unknown, and by so doing opened themselves even more to its influence. Sooner or later the flow was reestablished, often improved or at least redefined.

When things go perfectly all the time, it is far too easy to become egotistical about it. Even thinking something as simple as "I'm doing it right," may be enough to stifle the inspiration. On the other hand, doubt can help reduce the egotism and restore the openness. Certainly the humility of not feeling in total control of the process is invaluable. We should keep this in mind as Narayana

Guru leads us in a serious process of deconstruction as we pass through Darsanamala. Whether or not we are exceptionally gifted, we live our lives like glowing stars, almost without noticing the myriad complexities we perform daily like master magicians. Then too, if we are fortunate, we find time to stop and examine what's going on. We dip back into the depths of our being and emerge refreshed, ready to reassess the world with new eyes and ears.

Andy has been doing something like that in relation to the structural image of aum that is so central to the Gurukula version of Vedanta. He experiences awe in the image's "super-intelligent presence," and feels that the symbolic concept is "smarter than I am." You ponder it and don't realize how much meaning is in it, but it continually brings up new insights. This is the type of aesthetic contemplation that Nitya was especially fond of and considered an optimal meditation, by the way.

Jan wanted a clarification on the incipient memories of this verse, the *vasanas*, wondering how they were related to the *prabhu*. This is an important distinction to make. Are they the same or not? Almost, but not quite. *Vasanas* are a lot like the personal extension of the total all-pervading *prabhu*, in that from our conscious perspective, both are impelling us to act, and we often have a hard time determining which are the more or less valuable. To make matters worse, there are two contradictory threads in Vedanta, where *vasanas* are either to be selectively promoted or done away with entirely. We surely don't want to encourage the harmful impulses that sometimes surge through us, but, along with Jan, we do desire to foster our creativity for any number of good reasons. Obviously this process is not something that can be clearly delineated, nor should it be. Nitya does emphasize its importance in streamlining our interactions, however:

This potential or latent aspect, which enables one to have harmonious or discordant relations with others, and which often

appears capricious to the onlooker, is described by the Sanskrit term *vasana*.

Briefly, the Absolute is a state of pure potential, and therefore it does not impel anything. The *prabhu* is that aspect of the Absolute that does unleash the creative unfoldment that proliferates into our universe in all its details. Part of that unfoldment is what we now call the genetic makeup of all the living species that have been created. It's a kind of successful patterning that keeps getting reused to replicate the success. In Sanskrit it's called *vasana*. Most of this replication goes on species-wide whether or not we are aware of it, though yogis are presumed to be becoming better acquainted with that part of their makeup. Nitya adds:

Narayana Guru attributes such potentiality to one generic, latent principle in the primeval substratum, recognized in the previous verse as *paramesvara*, and in the present one as *prabhu*. All possibilities in the universe, from the spinning of a nebula to the pollination of a flower, and including the composition of a symphony, are all latent in the *prabhu* as *vasanas*. *Prabhu* literally means, "that which becomes, methodically and abundantly."

Bill added that as individuals we transmute the pure energy of the *prabhu* and shape it according to who we are. This personal shaping on the deepest level is done by our *vasanas*, and at a more conscious level by our *samskaras*. On a surface level it is dictated mainly by social constraints and commonly accepted knowledge. Regardless, it is only natural that we shape our interactions with the world according to who we are. It's when we substitute who we think we *should* be for who we are that we begin to get into trouble.

That's why the unknown is best left unknown, though it need not be unappreciated. Deb has recently noticed that, like us, physicists have been deconstructing their fixed view of the world more and more. Dark matter and dark energy are now thought to make up 96% of the cosmos. "Dark" is a term coined by persnickety scientists striving to avoid religious implications at all costs. The truth is that it's not dark, it's invisible. Most of the universe consists of invisible, undetectable, weightless nothingness that somehow impacts everything we know about—the lowly 4%. Such invisibility is uncomfortably close to divinity, so it gets demonized as darkness instead, which suits the Semitic religious mindset just fine, particularly certain like-minded rationalists.

So Darsanamala is encouraging us to ease back into the unknown, not to define it but to simply experience it, and our group mind in the class is looking like an excellent way to inspire each other in the joys of the journey.

Deb gave us an assignment: to answer Nitya's question, "What is it that causes qualitative variations at the atomic level?" In other words, how does the quality-less Absolute become imbued with qualities? Is it all an illusion? Does it matter? The original question is about simple chemistry, about how atoms become various qualitatively different formations when combined. It brings up the question, what is a quality? How do we detect it and what does it mean? Nitya, of course, reminds us to always apply his analogies to our personal spiritual self-examination:

When we turn our attention from the mysteries of the physical and chemical worlds and focus it on a more intimate subject, that of our own personal life, we are confronted with a much deeper mystery.

So, what does it mean when we apply this analogy to our own life? You please tell us.

Bushra talked about another key idea implied in the verse: we are making up stories all the time to conceive of the inconceivable. She agreed it was okay, as long as you realized that none of the stories you came up with were actually true. I added that we were nonetheless free to upgrade our stories to make them kinder and more joyous, etc. The sum total of these “fictions” is what makes up our conception of the universe, and they are as good as it gets, until the next more improved version comes along. That’s why we share. When you create something out of nothing, it is bound to be an imposition. And on a grand scale, a superimposition. It can’t be helped. Deb reminded us of Wendell Berry’s terrific and essential book *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*, where he examines the cultural myths we unconsciously employ in the US, along with their effects on the environment and our lives. Those beliefs that go deepest and we are most sure are true are at the same time the ones that can lead us most astray, like lambs to the slaughter.

It is interesting that Nitya uses the example of the manned moon landings to demonstrate a plausible fact that is doubted by closed-minded naysayers. At the time of writing *Darsanamala*, those events were universally believed without question, and yet since then convincing evidence has surfaced that points to the whole drama being staged for propaganda purposes. I have been pondering this all week in preparation for the class. It reminds me of the propaganda coup of blaming the demolition of the New York trade towers on Muslim fundamentalists. In both cases, a politically motivated belief, ceaselessly repeated, easily continues to trump clear scientific evidence of its falsity. Because I am somewhat a voice in the wilderness in calling such patriotic beliefs into question, I have personally observed the hurricane of denial that erupts whenever the tried and true is doubted. It rapidly escalates beyond mere disagreement to rancor and calumny, with a potential for even worse. This can teach us a lot about the degree to

which we are bound without realizing it. It's rather shocking, as a matter of fact.

While Galileo and Bruno are its poster children victims, the need for society to viciously defend false beliefs has apparently not abated in the more than four hundred years of “progress” since they were brutally persecuted by the standard-bearers of their day for holding beliefs that are currently beyond question. If anything, many beliefs have become even more rigidly conformist in our time, since socially acceptable attitudes are routinely amplified and reduplicated through the mass media and now reach every corner of the globe.

An unequivocal warning tone is definitely where Narayana Guru is going with his observations of cosmic projection, as he spells out unmistakably later in the darsana:

7. When Self-knowledge shrinks,
then ignorance is fearful;
substantiation by name and form,
in the most terrible fashion, looms here, ghostlike.
8. This is terrible and empty of content,
like a phantom city;
even as such, the whole universe
is made as a wonder by the Primeval One.

Although it is “terrible and empty of content,” falsehood has the power to move us, mainly but not exclusively because we buy into it. Nitya's example is of those who deny the obvious because of prior-held ideas that would have to be surrendered in order to accept it. This is a ubiquitous quality of human beings, the prime reason we remain “boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past,” in F. Scott Fitzgerald's immortal words.

Anyone daring to take Darsanamala seriously should be prepared to give up at least a few of the very ideas they cling to most tenaciously, as their very tenacity is an indicator that we may be holding on to them not out of intelligence but out of fear.

The ideas we cherish and profess make a huge difference, not just to us but to everyone around us. Whether you believe that the Americans beat the Soviets to the moon may be relatively inconsequential at this point, a relatively trivial propaganda victory, but blaming Muslims for the 9/11 mayhem was more successful: yet another excuse to wage an eternal war that is eating our planet alive, now fourteen or really twenty-four years on. The devastation is truly titanic in scale.

Our class is not about debating what did or did not happen; it is aimed at each of us recognizing the tendency in ourselves to pad our nests with the attitudes we have been saddled with in the course of our mental development. We don't have to hold to them, but since that is our default setting as brain-operated beings, we do have to intentionally let them go or they will persist. The very ideas that make us uncomfortable if they are questioned are where we most need to do the weeding, and if we accede to our preference for the easy route, we will effortlessly ignore the most entrenched falsehoods in our psyche. We don't have much problem in observing other people's idol worship, but it is much harder to look into our own. Narayana Guru, in his fierce compassion, is going to keep turning our heads back into our own being, because right behind all our garbage is where the beauty of our being resides. Recall the Isa Upanishad's golden disc that hides the sun: a simulacrum—a false but plausible simulation—is the best place to hide truth, because we are content to be satisfied with it. Nitya often characterized himself as a gardener of the soul, helping us to see behind the façade:

My lot is of a clumsy old gardener who cuts and prunes the bushes and hunts out the vermin and the fungus that come to destroy the delicate buds of his blossoming bushes. (L&B 371)

Why is it so hard to disabuse ourselves of false beliefs? Lurking behind them in our subconscious, in our *samskaras*, is the threat of punishment. Free thinking has almost always been met with severe correction, even as it was professed as a virtue, and in the back of our minds we still fear the lash. In our reflection on our earliest memories, we can likely recall moments in the first years of schooling where our unpopular ideas were met with derision, and we hastily abandoned them in favor of groupthink. (Searching groupthink will bring up a wealth of relevant ideas. This one is very good: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Groupthink>).

Our closing meditation was on returning to our still center, our *karu* or absolute emptiness, to be regenerated with a fresh approach, exactly like a caterpillar melting into a formless soup in its chrysalis before it breaks out reconstituted as a butterfly.

Part II

Swami Vidyananda's commentary:

At inception this visible world was in the form of *vàsanàs* (incipient memory factors). Thereafter the Great Lord by His power, which was of a non-existent (or merely conceptual order), after the manner of a magician, created all this phenomenal universe. Before creation this world had merely the status of pure *samskàras* (deep apperceptive masses in consciousness). The *sankalpa* (willing) mentioned in the previous verse is only an active version of the same *vàsanà*. At the time of creation the Lord created all this by his illusory power. This is like the magician, who while remaining all alone, is able to make us believe there are

multitudes of other things around him. There is in reality nothing apart from the magician, who is capable of manifesting visible things. Actual entities are not there, but only entities having the status of memory factors are to be considered real. In the same way, there is nothing in the universe which is other than the Lord. What is in the Lord is only a certain power of specification or qualification called *màya* (the principle of false presentiment), having no (real) existence of its own. By the example of the magician, it has, thus, been shown that the phenomenal world is false.

Part III

Susan passed along some pertinent quotes for our delectation. The link embedded in the Nietzsche section will take you to the excellent Brain Pickings site [now *the marginalian*] with some pithy ideas about creative inspiration from Picasso and others. Susan wrote: I'm finding this study wonderful so far. By the way, I think this quote I sent you before is quite germane this week. From *Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life*, by James Hollis:

Thus people worship forms of belief without struggling with the issues the forms tentatively embody or emulate behaviors without questioning whether they really serve fuller life. Accordingly, either the image of divinity is to be defended for its presumed historic claim, or it is to be summarily rejected as unworthy of a modern sensibility. In either case the world is desouled, when what it needs is reanimation; either way, the individual is prey to belief systems that narrow into rigid positions rather than expand to opening dialogue; the mystery is banished and therefore rendered irrelevant to all. Similarly, one may attend a college in order to avoid the radical opening to real education,* go to church to avoid religious experience,

and even undertake therapy to avoid the reality of the psyche. All of these practices are in fact common, albeit mostly unconscious, and result only in deeper and deeper alienation from the mystery. And all reduce the measure of life through the disregard of personal experience and deflection of personal authority.

*Education derives from the verb *educere*, which means “to draw forth from within.” The original teaching methods of Socrates has been largely displaced by professorial deference to received scholarly authority. By and large, our students are taught how to take exams but not to think, write, or find their own path. pp 195-6

There’s also a great series of quotes from [the marginalian](#). Do you know that site? Read this:

Any human being who does not wish to be part of the masses need only stop making things easy for himself. Let him follow his conscience, which calls out to him: "Be yourself! All that you are now doing, thinking, desiring, all that is not you." Every young soul hears this call by day and by night and shudders with excitement at the premonition of that degree of happiness which eternities have prepared for those who will give thought to their true liberation. There is no way to help any soul attain this happiness, however, so long as it remains shackled with the chains of opinion and fear. And how hopeless and meaningless life can become without such a liberation! There is no drearier, sorrier creature in nature than the man who has evaded his own genius and who squints now towards the right, now towards the left, now backwards, now in any direction whatever.

Echoing Picasso's proclamation that "to know what you're going to draw, you have to begin drawing," Nietzsche considers the only true antidote to this existential dreariness:

No one can build you the bridge on which you, and only you, must cross the river of life. There may be countless trails and bridges and demigods who would gladly carry you across; but only at the price of pawning and forgoing yourself. There is one path in the world that none can walk but you. Where does it lead? Don't ask, walk!

But this path to finding ourselves, Nietzsche is careful to point out, is no light stroll:

How can man know himself? It is a dark, mysterious business: if a hare has seven skins, a man may skin himself seventy times seven times without being able to say, "Now that is truly you; that is no longer your outside." It is also an agonizing, hazardous undertaking thus to dig into oneself, to climb down toughly and directly into the tunnels of one's being. How easy it is thereby to give oneself such injuries as no doctor can heal. Moreover, why should it even be necessary given that everything bears witness to our being – our friendships and animosities, our glances and handshakes, our memories and all that we forget, our books as well as our pens. For the most important inquiry, however, there is a method. Let the young soul survey its own life with a view of the following question: "What have you truly loved thus far? What has ever uplifted your soul, what has dominated and delighted it at the same time?" Assemble these revered objects in a row before you and perhaps they will reveal a law by their nature and their order: the fundamental law of your very self. Compare these objects, see how they complement, enlarge, outdo, transfigure one

another; how they form a ladder on whose steps you have been climbing up to yourself so far; for your true self does not lie buried deep within you, but rather rises immeasurably high above you, or at least above what you commonly take to be your I.