

## I Adhyaropa Darsana, Cosmic Projection

### Verse 5

9/27/5

This, of mind-stuff alone, in the beginning was accomplished, as if a painting, with all the picturesqueness seen here, by the Lord, like an artist.

This is one of the verse commentaries that is less than optimal in my estimation, since it's clear that the vast field of the subject was impossible for Nitya to epitomize in a few pages. To get the most out of it I recommend turning to verse 85 of *That Alone: The Core of Wisdom*, brought out from the depths about seventeen years later and unearthing some important implications of an analogy that Narayana Guru must have liked very well. That verse, actually composed about two decades prior to Darsanamala, reads:

No shadow exists independent of an actual form; as there is no original form anywhere for the existing world, it is neither shadow nor substance; everything that is seen is like a snake painted by a master.

I'm sure everyone has a copy, but just in case I'll reprint the parts we read out from Nitya's commentary:

Narayana Guru says that when an expert paints a snake and the painting is placed in dim light, it can frighten a person. The dread can be so great that the person might even collapse and die. So the

painting can function as a snake to some extent, but as soon as it is closely examined it will be found to be only a painting.

When it turns out to be a painting, it does not cease to be. The snake doesn't disappear. It continues to be what it always was—a painting done by a master. What changes is your reaction to it. You no longer react with fear but with great admiration. You say, “Look how lifelike it is! It's wonderful!” You might want to possess it: “Let me take it home. It's a terrific picture!” Once you accept it, it is no longer a snake. When you were dreading it, it was also not a snake. It all came from the mind's projection.

Now let's go back to the idea of 'wife'. The original clay is there: some flesh, a body. On it you project your dear wife, just like the potter projected the idea of pot onto the clay. The process is of course a little different. Here, a greater potter has done the first part of the work in fashioning the woman, but it only becomes meaningful when you project the idea of 'wife' on top of her, so to speak. Does this idea have validity or not? It has validity. Has it full validity? No. It is valid only until you telephone an attorney to effect a separation.

This doesn't only refer to the husband-wife business but is a handy way of understanding something general in life, where people get infatuated with so many things and then after some time effect a separation from them. Marriages and divorces are going on all the time between people and their relativistic values. They aspire to something, but when they get close to it they no longer want it. They think it is not what they were looking for. That's because the beingness of those things has the same status as a painted picture. The painting is done from within. Is it real or unreal? The Guru says you cannot say it is real, nor can you say it is unreal. It's simply a wonder.

To apply this in your life, you have to look for the being which cannot be explained away.

In you there is a witnessing self, a *saksi*. It is the big eye which watches the visions of the two small eyes, one seeing the external world and the other the internal world. Only when that witnessing eye is relied on will you be able to transcend the other two. Until you come to that experience you will be alternately fearing the snake and admiring its beauty, and also losing interest again and again and again.

Ninety percent of your suffering is imaginary. You sit there and imagine what must be happening to your father or mother, or your wife at home, or someone else somewhere else. While you're sitting there, from your last *chakra* or synergic center, something goes to the next imagination and then the next. Then the whole thing burns inside. After posing these problems, Shankara says, "Now find out the real basis of your experience. To make this experience real, you should tell me definitely what truly exists, what you truly know of this experience, that will not be altered at any time."

Even the idea "I am" is not there when you are in deep sleep. If you are in a yogic absorption, the central idea is not "I am." The distinction of 'I' and 'that' is gone. If what is behind these notions is real and unchanging, your greater insight should rest on that.

In the first four verses of Darsanamala, Narayana Guru presented a bare bones creation story. Now at the fifth verse the mind comes into being, and with it the cosmic projection of a world. Very quickly the Guru is going to show us how we become mesmerized by our projections and lose our grounding in the Unchanging. We lose touch with ourselves and focus instead on the play before our eyes. One of the unfortunate results is that we become very clever to point out the defects in all those people out there, forgetting that they are us. The observer and the observed cannot be separated.

In class we talked a little about the ways in which our projections manifested as frightening imaginations. It would be valuable to do some

more of this in the privacy of your own home, since the very act of observing the process, diligently performed, removes that ninety percent of needless suffering. The remainder is much trickier, so why not take on the easy stuff first?

Again, in the process there is a tendency to think of other people's problems instead of our own, which neither addresses our suffering nor offers any solace to the imaginary "others" who are the objects of our largesse. This is an ego feint to throw us off the scent. Watch how criticism of others leaps into the mind in place of self-criticism, and gently turn back to yourself. Once cured of this malaise—so ably taught by our society—you may actually be able to help others for real. But not before.

At the end of class Anne told a long story of her life, about how she taught herself to let go of judging both herself and others. She realized that feeling sorry for herself over some truly major misfortunes was only adding to her misery and she was able to let those go. For the last fourteen years she has worked in an AIDS hospice, where most people are severely judgmental towards the patients and reap a harvest of bad feelings on the flip side. Anne compassionately saw that any of us could be in the same boat very easily, and imagined herself or her kids as having the disease. The patients respond well to her enlightened attitude. A perfect example of Nataraja Guru's double assertion over double negation.

"Judge not, lest ye be judged," is just about my favorite Bible quote, and it's true that how you act and believe comes back to you in kind. Jack Flanders's motto is "What's coming at you is actually coming from you." This is the most important lesson to glean from the fact that we as the Lord of our personal universe project that universe. Anne not only showed us how to put that wisdom into action, but she unintentionally reminded us that enlightenment isn't only something far off possessed by great sages, but something all of us participate in to some degree. That's another of Narayana Guru's heartfelt teachings

(Atmo, v. 48) by the way. We're all better prepared to recognize greatness in our friends and neighbors after listening to Anne. Aum.

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10/27/15

Adhyaropa Darsana Verse 5

This, of mind-stuff alone, in the beginning  
was accomplished, as if a painting,  
with all the picturesqueness seen here,  
by the Lord, like an artist.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

*In the beginning this world  
Which was in the form of mind-stuff, like a picture  
Achieved with all this picturesque variety  
Like an artist, the Lord.*

A full moon night as we approach All Hallows Eve, also known as Halloween, the one night of the year when evil spirits are unleashed upon the land, formed a backdrop for this deceptively simple verse. And we were 13 resolute souls, supposedly an unlucky number, unless framed as a baker's dozen, when it's extra nice. Which it was. The commentary even bore a connection to the impending night of the dead:

In the darkness of night, when a man passes by a graveyard he may be fearful that some ghost or goblin will confront him. His mind will people the cemetery with spirits of the dead, and such is the negativity of the human mind that they will be seen as malevolent. He knows this to be a self-induced fear, and will

do his best to reassure himself that there are, in fact, no ghosts. But deep within his mind lies a stratum of paranoia, and because of this he does not easily yield to rationality. If he sees the stump of a tree or hears a strange sound, his latent fear will cloak it with the vestments of a ghost. Then he will either flee or faint. In this case the man is hypnotized by his own latent fear. We can find examples of this form of self-hypnosis in every area of human experience, in the painful and the pleasurable, in the benign and the dreadful. (67)

The conclusion to Verse 42 in *That Alone* recounts the basis for Nitya's understanding of this innate dread, and touches on the antidote:

If a person is contemplative, he should have a detached mind so that he knows that even when he is relating to many things, they are all born of one consciousness, called 'this'. Then we will not be caught in the magic that we ourselves create.

We are strange kinds of magicians that create a magic which we then get caught in the snare of. We need to be so clever that we create, but only amuse ourselves and do not get caught.

Once I painted a demon on one of the walls of a house where I was living. At night, I became so afraid of it I couldn't go down the hall where it was. I had done it with chalk, so I took a cup of water with me and when I passed by it I threw the water on it. Then I couldn't see the chalk while it was wet, so I could go past. The next day I was not afraid, but again the next night I did the same thing.

Like that, we are always creating demons out of our own minds and getting afraid of them. Narayana Guru says to not get caught in this delusion.

The conclusion of Nitya's commentary makes the cure specific:

In the Upanishads it is said, *yad dhyayate tad bhavati*, which means “whatever is meditated upon, that one becomes.” Yogis meditate upon the Lord or the Absolute. Identifying themselves completely with the Supreme, they can then participate in fashioning or altering aspects of the cosmic picture.

The trick is, we don’t realize the extent to which we are meditating on self-limiting ideas. When they pinch us it should tip us off, but it takes a philosophical reduction in order to begin to deal with them. We are more likely to believe the pincers are real and coming from a hostile outside world, than that they are reflections of our own misunderstandings. Verses 7 and 8 will elaborate on how our delusions can terrorize us. Narayana Guru is of course guiding us away from living in fear, if we are brave enough to hear his message.

Deb recently shared an article by author Marilynne Robinson titled Fear, from the New York Review of Books, where she offers a Christian equivalent to the Guru’s message. She is a voice crying in the wilderness for sure. After affirming that America is a self-professed Christian nation:

There is something I have felt the need to say, that I have spoken about in various settings, extemporaneously, because my thoughts on the subject have not been entirely formed, and because it is painful to me to have to express them. However, my thesis is always the same, and it is very simply stated, though it has two parts: first, contemporary America is full of fear. And second, fear is not a Christian habit of mind....

There are always real dangers in the world, sufficient to their day. Fearfulness obscures the distinction between real threat on one hand and on the other the terrors that beset those who see threat everywhere. It is clear enough, to an objective viewer at

least, with whom one would choose to share a crisis, whose judgment should be trusted when sound judgment is most needed.

Granting the perils of the world, it is potentially a very costly indulgence to fear indiscriminately, and to try to stimulate fear in others, just for the excitement of it, or because to do so channels anxiety or loneliness or prejudice or resentment into an emotion that can seem to those who indulge it like shrewdness or courage or patriotism. But no one seems to have an unkind word to say about fear these days, un-Christian as it surely is.

The whole essay is here:

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2015/sep/24/marilynne-robinson-fear/>

In this business, as in every business, balance is the key. When we separate and make every nuanced difference distinct, divorced from its unitive context, we lay the groundwork for fear. Yet paradoxically, making no distinctions also has its downside. Nitya knew this personally from his travels, and he was speaking about himself when he said, “If an Indian should go to China, Africa, or Europe, he would find it difficult to distinguish one person from another in the country he was visiting.” He well knew the value of recognizing the individual he was relating to.

I explained how this had once impacting me. I spent the fall of 1970 in Nitya’s Bhagavad Gita class, including various field trips and directed meditations together. In the fall of 1971 I was present for the inception of the Portland Gurukula, where I naïvely asked him to be my guru. He immediately began blasting me, without the reassurance of saying “Sure, I’d love to!” Anyway, we wrestled and tussled for a couple of months, with him first throwing me out of the Integrated Science of the Absolute class for



being too stupid, and then insisting I get out of the Gurukula, for a number of other failings. As I gathered my few belongings and took them out to my car, he invited me into his room for the last time. “Since you have decided to leave,” he began, “I should tell you the three things I have been attempting to teach you.” The first being how to live without a crutch. Suffice to say my psyche was shredded, but the point here is that we had had a long and intense relationship.

Over the next year I performed a ferocious self-examination, wondering how I could have failed so utterly with the finest teacher and human being I had ever encountered. The next fall Nitya returned to Portland again and taught some courses at Portland State University. I slipped into the back of his classes, and was again amazed and uplifted by their magnificence. Eventually I got up the courage to ask to talk to him again, and he invited me into the room where he was staying.

I professed how I had been working very hard to rectify my psyche, and I was willing to work with him again, and see if I could do better. There was a very odd sense that he wasn't paying much attention to what I was saying, a coldness and distance, and I felt weirder and weirder. Eventually I took leave. He had been polite, but also the epitome of a guru who doesn't even notice his disciple. For me it was a profound rejection, and it impelled me to two or three more years of suffering with self-doubt.

When the pain got almost too intense to bear, in desperation I wrote to my former girlfriend Deb, who was one of his main disciples. Eventually she got back to me. She had asked him about my visit. He remembered meeting a young man at the time, but hadn't recognized me! He told her, “I thought at the time that this fellow was somewhat Indianized,” because I'd called him Guruji. Otherwise I was just another anonymous student as far as he was concerned.

It's easy enough to see that pretty much everything in my experience was my own projection, and so in the long run it was an exceptional learning opportunity. But it was tough going! Even knowing that he really hadn't recognized me took a long time to sink in. Years later, when he owned up to his inability to recognize foreigners, I knew exactly how important that skill was. Not everyone is a disciple, so even gurus need both distinctions and unifying insights together for optimal functioning.

And yes, I'm sure there are a few exceptions. I can only talk about what I know. There are stories about great gurus who act totally spontaneously at the behest of the Divine, but I've never met one.

The essence of the verse is that the world is like a painting. It has just as much reality as a painting does. Nitya emphasizes the unitive nature of the Creator's art:

In this verse, the artist Narayana Guru has in mind is none other than the Supreme Lord. He is certainly unlike any other artist. This is because his art, or the manifestation of which he is the creator, is not to be considered as composed of distinct and separate entities. (65)

However, I pointed out that we do intuitively recognize the unity of a painting or a film or a musical piece. We certainly take note of the individual parts, but we always see them as included in the greater reality. We scrutinize, but then we step back: a grand dance of getting to know our environs. The world is a reflection of our own mental state. Andy talked about the relevance of the great dictum *prajnanam brahma* to this picture, and I will add some about that in Part II.

Deb talked about one of Andy's paintings we have, of a solar flare, and how it is like the verses themselves, eruptions arising from a central source, taking on a distinct shape, and then falling

back into a potent uniformity. There is a real sense of that in this darsana especially, starting from a point of origin and elaborating more and more. Deb reminded us we are still in the framework of understanding how this world and our consciousness arise.

We reprised a number of familiar ideas in relation to the verse, how challenges elicit responses and are so often invitations to growth and the paring away of impediments. (Some people get pedicures, some of us get impedicures.) Andy noted how these are recurring lessons, and every moment involves some letting go, to which Deb added that it's not just letting go but being open to whatever comes at the same time. Often this is painful. Deb appreciated that we have to take the good with the bad. Nitya shows that right knowledge easily and essentially includes them both together:

We usually choose to forget that the same God created the devil also. In Indian iconography these contradictions are meaningfully conceived by presenting a delicate picture of the beautiful Sarasvati seated in a white lotus, playing melodies on a stringed instrument called a *veena*. To complete the total picture, the serenity of Sarasvati has as its counterpart the terrible figure of Kali, standing on a corpse and holding in one hand a scimitar and in the other a decapitated human head. If we can see all this as the aesthetic expression of an artist, then this may enable us to view the world in the same way, giving us a comprehensive viewpoint which will resolve many seeming paradoxes. (66)

The issue of ignorance played a role in the class, based on the quote from Sankara that maya is “that which projects various and variegated impressions which are beginningless and of the form of ignorance.” Ignorance is a tough concept, because we tend to take it as wholly negative, yet it is meant in Vedanta philosophy as a

neutral condition. As Deb said, it's hard to think of the world as ignorance. In fact, when we think of it that way we most often demonize it, and then it afflicts us. That's why Narayana Guru emphasizes knowledge, which after all is the dialectical counterpart of ignorance. He wanted to counterbalance all those centuries of obsession with ignorance and imagining we were in the dark no matter what. In a way, knowledge is ignorance and ignorance is knowledge, but we can make more headway when we frame the world as knowledge-based. With knowledge you can change what you know, but ignorance defeats you at every turn, almost by definition. Aligning well with the Guru, Paul wanted to support the practical value of all the things we call ignorance, when properly considered.

Bill asserted that the yogi who identifies completely with the Supreme or the Absolute does not experience ignorance. Yet, since we all fall short of that ideal, what Narayana Guru wants us to know is how to manage our ignorance, how to accept it, and even occasionally trade it in for knowledge. At times, imagining perfection helps us to focus, but it can also undermine our determination, because we know we can never live up to a pure ideal. The way Nitya describes reexamining the painting of the snake is exactly what's optimal here. Throw light on it, and see that it can't really bite you. It's actually kind of lovely, in its own way. You could even learn to admire it.

Andy thought this was related to the epochal Verse 9 of Atmopadesa Satakam:

Growing on both sides, in a blossoming state,  
is the one vine which has come, spread out and risen to the top  
of a tree;  
remember that hell does not come  
to the man dwelling in contemplation beneath it.

For Andy, this emergent display of nature is absolutely normal and acceptable, and we become befuddled when we treat it as illusory. Indeed, our gurus repeatedly urge us to take it seriously. Andy said we have to accept an eternal division between the observing self and what is observed. Deb agreed that the illusion was in the way we treat everything as separate. Susan sewed it up by noting how in meditation we go back and forth between the whole and the divisions. Paul wondered how to unite these aspects. How can yogis not leave that state of total identification? Don't they have to eat and wash just like us? Again, the identification with the Supreme is wholesale, not piecemeal, so it persists in the midst of whatever we happen to be doing. This should give us a healing glimpse of how we divide these things in our conceptualization, but they are not actually divided in themselves.

The key is to find the beingness within yourself. You don't change the world, except as an aftereffect, or, say, by mistake. The painting that is the world is reflecting our inner being for us to observe, but as long as we imagine our happiness is dependent on the image before us, we will keep losing touch with it. We have to locate the ground of our being within ourselves. I gave several examples of hating something or someone and then finding out how nice they are later. I remembered our daughter Harmony, who was a very picky eater as a child, absolutely refusing and carrying on about some delicious dish we were trying to get her to taste. Once in a while I'd persist enough to poke a little into her mouth, and was treated with her face going from anger and rejection to startle to delight in a matter of seconds. Of course, not everything tastes good, but we seldom give anything the chance to taste as it really is: we decide in advance how it's going to taste and what we think of it. Deb agreed that it was a profound reorientation wanting our satisfaction to come from outside and instead seeing it coming from yourself and subsequently seeing it everywhere.

Paul concluded that the yogi is indeed a full participant in life, by making a reconnection with the wholeness. I affirmed that these gurus are not speaking of some magical attainment when they talk about yogis becoming co-creators with God or, as here, that “they can then participate in fashioning or altering aspects of the cosmic picture.” This isn’t about manifesting a watch with someone’s birthday on it, or a car in the driveway. This is about being a radiant lover of the world, who people come to for succor and to get a taste of peace. Nitya was practical, strictly avoided fantasizing, and his gifts did not fly in the face of science, but thousands came to him with their woes and found their questions poetically and intelligently answered, and realized they were being nudged toward the perennial joy of higher values. It was partly what he said and partly his presence, because you can definitely feel it in your heart when someone is as grounded as he was. His gifts suited each person in the way that they understood best. Andy waxed rhapsodic about the benefits of association with a guru, and paraphrased Ramana Maharshi: “hanging out with the wise is a great way of potentiating your search.” We all shared his feelings, and inwardly gave thanks for the rare blessing of hearing the sublime words of wisdom that we are privileged to have come in contact with. Aum.

## Part II

Swami Vidyananda’s commentary:

The terms *sankalpa* (willing), *vàsanà* (incipient memory factor), and *shakti* (potent power), have been employed so as to be considered equivalent (vertically), each in itself to the mind (*manas*), which occupies the central position in this verse. This world was merely of a mental status before creation. Just as an artist creates in respect of his painting, so the Lord also

accomplished all this artistic variety (seen in the world).

Before creation this world remained in the form of (virtual) mind-stuff. If it should be asked how, we say, it remained like a picture in the mind of an artist, before the picture was accomplished. In the same way it was in the mind (*manas*) or the willing (*sankalpa*), of the Lord that all this potentially resided. It is possible for an artist to produce works of art with many and varied elaborations. Similarly, the Lord has the ability or the power to produce a world with any amount of elaborations or varieties. In short, the entire manifested world is only an (artistic) expression of the mind of the Lord.

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Nitya's That Alone commentary for verse 85 throws a lot of additional light on the subject, being also about the world as a painting. I recommend reading the entire chapter, but here are a few of the most salient points.

First the verse, which Nitya describes right off the bat as very important:

No shadow exists independent of an actual form;  
as there is no original form anywhere for the existing world,  
it is neither shadow nor substance;  
everything that is seen is like a snake painted by a master.

Now some highlights. Nitya begins with a reprise of the infamous pot analogy:

Why should we bother so much about a pot and its beingness? Why is this important? This question only arises when we do not know the subject we are dealing with. Many of our experiences are of a lesser degree of reality than the pot's. If you

cannot establish the beingness of a pot, how can you establish the beingness of your husband or your wife? At least a pot can be seen; it has a certain form. But concepts like wife and husband, or friend and enemy don't have any form. You can't point out the wife in a woman, so how is it determined? Unless you establish the beingness of your wife, there is going to be great trouble. The solid foundation of the family, society, practically everything is built on top of this fictitious thing called husband and wife. Very many of your expectations in social life are based on notions which have their root in a wife image and a husband image. People are always looking for a social image.

Such images are the shadows the Guru is speaking of in this verse. He says *ezhum ulakengum*. This is not just dealing with one object but with whatever people consider to be empirically valid or transactionally existing, in other words where there is a so-called objectivity and subjectivity. The world where there are conventions, customs and moral principles is called *ulaku*. This word appeared in an earlier verse with the special connotation of the world we perceive when we are earth-bound and mundane in our interests.

So is this world we perceive an image or not? If pot is an image, wife is also an image. We have already seen the difficulty of establishing the beingness of a pot, and if the beingness of a pot cannot be established, the beingness of a house or a car will also be hard to determine. This brings the very idea of form itself into question. All forms are images—images of what, we do not know.

The difficulty begins as soon as we accept the world of perception. In the world of perception we see form. For us to see form it must have existence and we have to have knowledge of it. In other words it must have beingness. But the place of its beingness is already occupied by the existence of another entity:



the unmodified Absolute. Therefore it is suspended in midair, so to speak, without a footing. This is the crux of the problem.

How does Narayana Guru explain it? He says that when an expert paints a snake and the painting is placed in dim light, it can frighten a person. The dread can be so great that the person might even collapse and die. So the painting can function as a snake to some extent, but as soon as it is closely examined it will be found to be only a painting.

When it turns out to be a painting, it does not cease to be. The snake doesn't disappear. It continues to be what it always was—a painting done by a master. What changes is your reaction to it. You no longer react with fear but with great admiration. You say, "Look how lifelike it is! It's wonderful!" You might want to possess it: "Let me take it home. It's a terrific picture!" Once you accept it, it is no longer a snake. When you were dreading it, it was also not a snake. It all came from the mind's projection.

Now let's go back to the idea of 'wife'. The original clay is there: some flesh, a body. On it you project your dear wife, just like the potter projected the idea of pot onto the clay. The process is of course a little different. Here, a greater potter has done the first part of the work in fashioning the woman, but it only becomes meaningful when you project the idea of 'wife' on top of her, so to speak. Does this idea have validity or not? It has validity. Has it full validity? No. It is valid only until you telephone an attorney to effect a separation.

This doesn't only refer to the husband-wife business but is a handy way of understanding something general in life, where people get infatuated with so many things and then after some time effect a separation from them. Marriages and divorces are going on all the time between people and their relativistic values. They aspire to something, but when they get close to it they no longer want it. They think it is not what they were looking for. That's because the beingness of those things has the same status as a

painted picture. The painting is done from within. Is it real or unreal? The Guru says you cannot say it is real, nor can you say it is unreal. It's simply a wonder.

To apply this in your life, you have to look for the being which cannot be explained away.

The other kinds of pots I am speaking of, like husband and wife, friends, neighbors, enemies and so on, are fashioned out of an already transitory substance called the life process. The stream of life is moving, changing and transforming all the time. On top of this ever-flowing process you are making other suppositions. So there is every possibility that in the flow your suppositions will be dislocated. What you think of as permanent is really an impermanent fixation superimposed on an already impermanent substance. But that impermanent substance really does reside in a beingness which does not change.

Ninety percent of your suffering is imaginary. You sit there and imagine what must be happening to your father or mother, or your wife at home, or someone else somewhere else. While you're sitting there, from your last *chakra* or synergic center, something goes to the next imagination and then the next. Then the whole thing burns inside.

This verse is not of merely intellectual interest. It has a great spiritual import. To those who meditate on it and want to take benefit from it in their life, it gives so much. It is just like Jesus saying, "Come to me, those who suffer. Unload all your burdens on me." Why should you carry them around in your head? The whole thing is a supposition—leave it where it belongs. Feel right. Be happy.

You bind yourself so much with mere suppositions. It is those suppositions and images, called here *nizhal*, shadows, that you should be dealing with. Then alone can life become a harmonious flow. Otherwise it can spell tragedy.

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Andy has just completed the wonderful verse 51 of That Alone in his online study group with Nancy Y, and was struck by how the meditation on the *mahavakya* (great dictum) *prajnanam brahma* related to our class. Here's what I read out from That Alone about it:

The Upanishads give us another dictum to meditate upon: *prajnanam brahma*, "The external world is presented to you as your knowledge of it." To you, you have no other way of apprehending it; the external world and your knowledge of it are the same. Its existence is in the existence of your knowledge. Now, if there is not a one-to-one correspondence between what is out there and what is in your knowledge, you are bound to make mistakes. So, if the snow is cold you should know what that means. If the road becomes slippery when it is icy, you should know that. The truth that is in you is also the truth that has become manifest out there.

Don't just call it *maya* and dismiss it. Of course the whole thing can be an error, but it is not a piecemeal one. If it is an error it is wholesale. You are within that wholesale error now. Do not mistake something wholesale for something piecemeal. As long as you are within the frame of reference called the transactional, you have to give full validation to every item in it. It is here that the spiritual life of some people fails, because in the name of spirituality, in the name of philosophy, or in the name of realization, they belittle the validity of transactions. This

ontological error is a big problem. To correct it, *prajnanam brahma* is given, to remind you that what is out there as your experience is born of the same reality that has produced you and your mind. Not until you realize this can you be at ease with the external world.

All this is in preparation for a final search, a search for the meaning of your own life. (349-50)