

7/21/21

In the Stream of Consciousness

Chapter 15A – The Stream of Consciousness

We had lots of absences for an impressive spectrum of reasons, including Deb, still coughing from her cold, and my amanuensis Susan, having an opportunity to visit with her son. The latter's absence may be detectable in today's notes, as my recording the class is woefully inferior to hers.

We read out the first 4 ½ pages of the chapter, which we'll finish next week. Emerging from the opening meditation I wondered if we all felt the river of our being, titled here the stream of consciousness. By sitting still, we spread out in all directions, including time, and it feels very riverlike. During the reading we were more focused on the present instant, with each word and group of words conveying meaningful concepts in the present instant, and the way they were passing by in sequence, to accumulate an edifice of comprehension. Both types of awareness are essential to a holistic engagement.

Our connection to the past, present and future is grounded in memory. Memory gives us our shape and our uniqueness, provides opportunities and sets up barricades. It is easily the most important factor—really a constellation of factors—in our life.

Steven has tended to look on memory as an impediment, and we discussed this at length. Some types of memory encode the ossification of conditioning, and are true impediments, but there is a wide range of essential ones that make us who we are. No matter the degree of our internal freedom, we have certain limitations because of our mental and physical form, and our memories in this extended sense provide us with the opportunities to express ourselves and, when you come right down to it, to *exist*.

Paul agreed that we are a continuum, biologically, meaning we are an accumulation of biological memory. Much mental therapy takes the body into account as a reservoir of trauma. He added that our existence comes from an *intention* to exist, so we

shouldn't get bogged down in questions of right or wrong to the point of inhibiting our expression, the way religions often do.

I recounted the tale of Clive Waring, a musician who lost all ability to consciously produce long-term memories, although his body retained them and he could still play his piano pieces, even though he wasn't aware he was doing it. I've added my take on this in Part II. Life without those types of coherence-supplying memories is not anything to be desired, and does not resemble the paragons that incline us to it—like, for instance, Ramana Maharshi—who appear utterly *present* at all times. It's a much more complex business than turning off a memory switch.

Steven was intrigued at Nitya's hints in this direction, based on Patanjali's famous maxim about the restraint of mental modifications, *citta vritti nirodha*. First off, restraint and cessation are by no means the same. Our impediments require us to work on them and with them. They are based on our neural wiring, which can't be rudely yanked out of the brain and tossed away.

To rewire our neurons, we don't want to focus on our negatives, but create new areas of interest that draw energy away from the old ruts. This doesn't happen by ignoring the negatives, either, because they are very good at manipulating us below our radar. We only need to notice every time they grab us, and then remind ourselves that's the old me, and now I'm letting that go.

With serious trauma conditioning, as in PTSD, this is very hard to do, but it can be done with enough perseverance. Steven mentioned a friend, a Green Beret Army veteran, who has had PTSD since his service, 25 years ago. We talked about the new techniques for curing the affliction, culminating in the most promising: psychedelic therapy. There is an impressive list of those sufferers given psilocybin therapy, whose lifelong PTSD was wiped away with a single treatment of two mild trips and talk therapy. Since we've mentioned this extensively in past classes, I'll just clip in a link to Michael Pollan's Trip Treatment article from the New Yorker in 2015, in case you've somehow missed it: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/02/09/trip-treatment>.

You can find a lot of moving testimonials online. The cured immediately want to share the good news with their fellow sufferers. Interestingly, the cure rate is actually higher in some studies after six months than after the first month, meaning the healing continues once the subject catches on to how to process their painful memories. The idea now is that psychedelics allow the brain to process short-term memories, stuck with trauma, into long-term, tolerable memories, almost effortlessly in many cases. It's how you let go of the past. And, paradoxically, how you recover the constructive past you need to function well.

The discussion we had was loosely based on Nitya's musings about memory, and his disciple's chagrin of recurring "dead habits" that he thought he had discarded, but clearly hadn't. That's what PTSD is, the persistence of toxic memories, and to some degree, everyone grows up traumatized. Just wanting conditioning to be gone is not enough. Nitya's chapter describing the stream of consciousness is aimed at revealing how and why we suffer these indignities:

The indication of the failure of a discipline, as my friend pointed out, is the unanticipated recurrence of a structure of memory which was not successfully deconstructed on a previous occasion. To throw light on this and other similar questions, we should have a good look at the stuff we are handling either as a guru and disciple or as a self-disciplining aspirant.

Obviously, we are all self-disciplining aspirants here, and it's nice to know we can "do-it-ourselves." Most important is to know we can do it at all.

Nitya was bold in declaring himself a fan of psychology, when so many spiritual leaders prefer a sexier mystique. He never made any pretenses.

Getting back to the restraint of vrittis, or mental modifications, the chapter contains some fresh angles on this perennially perplexing topic. Nitya's definition here is:

A vritti is a modification of consciousness in which the recall of a memory, the appraisal of its relevance, the release of a quantum of mental energy that produces a pleasant or unpleasant feeling, the awareness of one's orientation, the subsequent sparking of a volition, and a number of other such elements of consciousness, come together to make a total impression. Like a point in time, the pattern of modification also has its own uniqueness.

Might we describe a vritti as a thought along with its complete context? A gestalt, even?

Nitya adds, referring to the pot and clay analogy:

What Patanjali calls vritti is to be similarly understood as a meaningful adherence of impressions in which the envisioning of the self-luminous chit and the material gathered from the creative flux of nature come together as a living fact of the moment.

What an atom is to a physicist and a cell is to a biologist is what “the modulation of an incipient memory monitored by an interest” is to the Indian psychologist. This is what is called a vritti.

Incipient memories are called vasanas, and he is claiming they are the fundamental building blocks of consciousness, akin to atoms and cells in other sciences. These aren't the smallest parts, but they are the smallest *functional* parts. It takes lots of monads to mount an expedition.

All this talk about Patanjali got me to irreverently wonder, could Patanjali be a Sanskritization of Pot AND Jelly? It's on the table, at least. For a toast.

The importance of the duration of the vritti is included in the chapter. Buddhism and some other Indian schools of philosophy take it as the instant, and Steven has heard that scientists have now

measured one such instant as some fraction of a second. The separate vrittis are strung together like pixels in a painting, or frames of a movie film. Vedanta, by contrast, allows related groupings to be taken together, which, let's face it, provides the meaningful context and the relevance to life as we live it. It doesn't simply presume they arise from the dots. There is structuring and restructuring possible, along with the deconstruction. And our constructs are not considered faults or sins, but, being integral to our ability to act, are honored as worthy accomplishments.

Andy remembered Nitya describing vritti as a wrapper or a vortex at different times, and I think of it as what we called vibrations in the psychedelic era. Each wave of a frequency could be called a vritti, or the light beam itself could, since it is essentially coherent. Andy and I elaborated this into the subject-object sphere, as in the Bhana Darsana of Darsanamala. Subject and object arise together, with awareness vibrating rapidly between them, and their interplay provides the lift for the fluttering wings of the celestial butterfly of each individual's existence.

Nitya fills this out poetically:

The vritti can be compared many things, like the ticking of a clock, the flow of a river, the germination of a seed and its growth into a tree, the formation and breakup of cloud patterns, the pulsation of the heart, the alternation of yin and yang, or even the ambivalence of love and hatred. All these analogies partially shed light on the complex nature of vritti, yet they do not exhaust several of its mysterious and hidden aspects.

How far these examples are from a simple blink of the eye! Vedantic vritti can deal with inclusive units of comprehensible relationships. The instant and the whole are only connected in the remotest sense: we can hardly derive the one from the other. The unbelievably complex computers of 2021 that operate solely on long series of those dots, still cannot grasp the big picture at all. They have not made the leap to consciousness—thank God!

Scientists keep hoping to bridge the Sistine Chapel gap with more dots, yet it remains elusive.

Anita made a point in this regard, that many physicists are coming to accept that they can't explain everything. (What modesty!) The gap between matter and consciousness may have to be recognized as a real element of the structure of the universe. Perhaps it's where "God" dwells.

The second half of the class was taken up with this God business, sort of. No one can deny the coherence of our lives. If life were truly random (this is already widely acknowledged as impossible) life would have no coherence. Patterns and awareness of existence are not random: they're related to each other. Generating random numbers is ipso facto impossible—since they would have to generate themselves—though it would be very helpful in perfecting scientific experiments, finally eliminating confirmation and disconfirmation biases. Anyway, how can you prove randomness? So, why is there something rather than nothing? Why does our life have a harmonious trajectory beyond our struggles on the surface to control it? We'll take this on in the next installment, but Nitya adumbrates it here, at the end of what we read:

Like time rolling on from the first tick to the second, modifications also change. Consciousness is not static, it is flowing like a river. Although it is ever flowing and changing, the change has within it a purposive plan of progress. From the germination of a seed to the maturation of a tree, there is a continuous process of the growth and division of cells and the substitution of living cells for dead ones. In the same manner, a *vritti* once manifested can and will have a purposive relation with other future *vrittis*. In between, whatever comes along and looks unrelated or irrelevant does become related and relevant at some other stage in the flow of consciousness. A rhythmic movement is kept up between the functional dynamics (*pravrotti*) and the stable state (*sthiti*).

Steven was bothered by the “purposive” part, and initiated a discussion of intelligent design versus “random” evolution. Even evolutionists theorize causes for what happens, so they don’t truly believe in randomness. The harshest atheists proclaim without apology that evolution itself is highly intelligent. Andy got to the nub: resistance to intelligent design comes from positing an *external* designer, like the old-fashioned Zeus who became Deus. We are the intelligent drivers of our own designs. Nitya called us co-creators with God, to reduce the ego shading. That means it is a unitive process, guided from within.

I’ve seen recent estimates that our universe is 80% likely to have been created in a laboratory, meaning God really is a group of geeks wearing white lab coats and trying out their theories of what makes a successful world. The question is really a distraction from sensible activity, and we are in dire need of sensible activity these days.

Vedanta proclaims itself a science, not a religion, and it is primarily a psychological science. Here are a couple of quotes about God from Nitya, from his Selected Quotes, soon to be updated on the Read page at <http://aranya.me/index.html> , after I get done mining new ones from the present book:

It is not through argument that one arrives at God. (BU, Vol. I. 611)

When I say “God,” it only means the experience of Beauty, Goodness or Truth in a given situation. (L&B, 600)

Situations presenting themselves to us without any initiative on our part, and as a result of our most natural and correct behavior, should be taken as the will of God. (G, 241)

You don’t have to think of a Supreme God sitting somewhere in a far-off place and of one day reaching him so that bhakti can begin.

No, bhakti is operating all the time. The very person next to you now is a symbol of the Unknown whom you are seeking. If you can see in this person the manifestations of truth, the manifestations of beauty, the manifestations of goodness—to that extent you are moving towards fulfillment. Your realization is at hand, not as a distant promise but as what is presented here and now. (Bhakti, 14)

I've added a couple of quotes from Frans de Waal, from *The Bonobo and the Atheist*, in Part II. Here are a couple up front: "It is good to realize that resistance to evolution is almost entirely restricted to evangelical Protestants in the American South and Midwest." (91) And even those Wowsers believe in their refrigerators, which are not in the Bible, so they shouldn't believe in them. De Waal theorizes, with eloquent references and personal history, why some atheists are so pugnacious: "The stricter one's religious background, the greater the need to go against it and to replace old securities with new ones." (87) True scientists do not need to have unanswerable questions answered before they proceed with their search.

To De Waal, religion is a carryover from the loving interactions we expressed and needed as prehuman primates, a subject of little interest to most scientists, who apparently take it for granted as the bedrock of our human existence. As caring civilization degrades from an excess of rational tunnel vision, neither science nor religion seems to have realized what is being lost.

In conclusion, science is not a monolithic entity, nor is religion. In every field, people range from incredibly brilliant to stupefyingly inane, if not insane. What we attempt in the Portland Gurukula is to help people actualize their best qualities and assist their inane ones to wither away. Obviously, it isn't for everyone! But for a few folks, it's pretty sweet. None of us feels like we have the answers to the hard problems, or that our understanding is better than everybody else's. That game is not on the table. Such a

claim does bring in the multitudes, when adequately advertised, but that isn't our interest. We are people who cherish quiet seclusion and intimate contacts with dear friends. We have a "beeloud glade" to come home to, for now. Aum.

Part II

Scientists have beliefs just like religious people. The trick is to not get overly attached to limited framings, which creep up on all of us. My computer algorithm must attend our class, because it suggested an amusing article this morning that relates to it, and I'm putting it in the notes: https://getpocket.com/explore/item/mental-models-how-to-train-your-brain-to-think-in-new-ways?utm_source=pocket-newtab .

It's simple, but we forget. From the article:

A mental model is an explanation of how something works. It is a concept, framework, or worldview that you carry around in your mind to help you interpret the world and understand the relationship between things. Mental models are deeply held beliefs about how the world works....

The more you master a single mental model, the more likely it becomes that this mental model will be your downfall because you'll start applying it indiscriminately to every problem.

Expanding our mental models is the key to "Great Thinking and Decision Making." It even quotes Paul's favorite proverb, about the hammer.

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From Frans de Waal's *The Bonobo and the Atheist*, published 2013. The chapter on fundamentalist atheists is top notch: Is God

Dead or Just in a Coma? I've typed up a few snippets, but the whole chapter is a tour de force.

In my interactions with religious and non-religious people alike, I now draw a sharp line, based not on what exactly they believe but on their level of dogmatism. I consider dogmatism a far greater threat than religion per se. I am particularly curious why anyone would drop religion while retaining the blinkers sometimes associated with it. Why are the "neo-atheists" of today so obsessed with God's non-existence that they go on media rampages, wear T-shirts proclaiming their absence of belief, or call for a militant atheism? What does atheism have to offer worth fighting for?

As one philosopher put it, being a militant atheist is like "sleeping furiously." (84)

Atheists' zeal keeps surprising me. Why "sleep furiously" unless there are inner demons to be kept at bay? In the same way that firefighters are sometimes stealth arsonists and homophobes closet homosexuals, do some atheists secretly long for the certitude of religion? (88)

If faith makes people buy an entire package of myths and values without asking too many questions, scientists are only slightly better. We also buy into a certain outlook without critically weighing each and every underlying assumption and often turn a deaf ear to evidence that doesn't fit. We may even, like the psychologists on my student's committee, deliberately turn down a chance to get enlightened. But even if scientists are hardly more rational than believers, and even if the entire notion of unsentimental rationality is based on a giant misunderstanding (we cannot even *think* without emotions), there is one major difference between science and religion.... Science is a collective enterprise with rules of engagement that allow the whole to make progress even if its parts drag their feet. (99-100)

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My commentary on Gita II.57 addresses the value of memory, and mentions Waring:

57) He who remains in all cases unattached on gaining such or such desirable-undesirable end, who neither welcomes anything nor rejects in anger—his reason is well founded.

There are many subtleties surrounding detachment, but for now I'd like to mention the main difference between Vedanta philosophy as taught by the Gita and how it is typically interpreted in the popular imagination. In order to break the karmic cycle, where actions lead to attachments and attachments lead to circumscribed actions, endlessly, many Buddhists and Hindus recommend detachment. This is often interpreted to mean erecting a barrier against emotionally-charged experience, since the world is seen as a false projection, hostile to some unearthly "enlightenment." If you get drawn into involvement with the world, you remain caught. Perhaps this is useful in some ways, especially as a beginning step if we are caught up in a lot of junk, but it can easily produce a state of obliviousness that is far from spiritual. The Gita's method is to turn to the light rather than trying to cover up the darkness. It teaches being fully open to experience, but not to seek to abandon ourselves to it.

Being ecstatically alive means at the very least being cognizant of what's going on around you. Training yourself to not react to events engenders psychic numbness and mimics death. Vedanta recognizes that such an attitude can easily be the negative side of positive attraction, and as such equally delusional. The correction for this is to embrace experience as an expression of the Absolute with wholehearted participation, but then to not hold on to the "afterglow" except perhaps as a useful lesson. You don't dwell on the past, but move on. Storing up experiences as memories that feed the ego is deleterious, but expansive memories

related to the Big Picture are valuable not only in avoiding future mistakes but in intelligently guiding our steps.

The popular catchword is “live in the now.” That’s fine, so long as the now contains the past and the future. The now taken in isolation, detached from memories, is a kind of living death.

Musicologist Clive Waring has possibly the worst case of amnesia ever recorded, and is completely unable to create long term memories. His condition is utterly disabling and a living hell, consisting of days that are an endless series of “waking up for the first time” moments. If you are tempted to fantasize living solely in the present, watch the documentary of Mr. Waring.

What being here now really means is that we should discard regrets about the past and anxiety about the future, which can bog down our consciousness with distracting and unpleasant sidetracks that we can do nothing about. Many people are disabled by a variety of distracting thoughts, and learning to detach from them is therapeutic in many ways. It allows us to be more present and have more intensely positive experiences.

The bottom line is, please enjoy life. Drink life to the dregs, but also understand its projections and delusions, which are legion. Then, after thoroughly experiencing something, let it go. Don’t hold on to echoes of experience in your mind. They are preventing you from being present for the next occurrence. In contemplation it’s very helpful to review your experience, but not while you’re in the thick of things. Be alive to what’s happening, and ponder it later. Learn to move on from the feelings that catch hold of you in a static way, that induce repetition compulsions.

It’s tragic that the idea has caught on from verses like this one that you should avoid experience, avoid life. Why bother to put on a body at all, if you aren’t going to have fun in it? How will you feel if you get to the end of your life (which could be at any moment) and you look back and say to yourself that you were able to not do anything? How very “spiritual”! You managed to not love, to not admire the wonders of nature, never heard the great music or visited the museums, never created anything beautiful or

useful. That's what Arjuna proposed as a solution to his dilemma back in the first chapter, and Krishna told him, "No way! Get back in the game and play it for everything you're worth."

A young American with Buddhist leanings, whose mother was very ill, once asked me "If my mother dies, what should I do? How do I keep from being sad?" I told him "Go ahead and cry. Feel how sad it is. Miss her." It can't be helpful to be stifling your natural legitimate emotions. It's just crazy. This notion needs to be discarded with all the other false ones. Just open your heart to what's going on. Live the moment. You can philosophize about it later if you wish.

Now get out there and have some fun, and in the process make somebody else happy too.

Part III

I've been making a list of the classes we've covered in the Class Notes era, from 2004, and in the process finding some neglected gems from the ancient world. They're sort of related, but I include them to hint that the old notes have much to commend them. I'm going to have to make time to get more of them on the website.

In 2004 we had a Gita class in several people's houses. One bit leapt out for several reasons, including the citation of the Big Bang in our latest class.

Chapter XII

6/8/4

In the Gita class we first read an essay by Paul's 20-year-old son. A meditation on some of the paradoxes involved in traditional religious beliefs, it paralleled uncannily the epochal report of last month by a large group of scientists debunking the Big Bang theory as a kind of scientific creationism that had outlived its usefulness. The essay was well written and thoughtful; not what one would expect from someone of that age. It was full of the

kinds of thoughts that lead a person to a lifetime of uncovering the secrets of the universe. I continue to be amazed and humbled by the depth of wisdom evidenced by many youngsters these days, in contrast to what we see depicted in the media and particularly in contrast to my own abilities in my teens and twenties, in which incoherence and confusion were the most prominent features.

After settling in with cups of tea in Jan's comfortable living room, we covered Chapter XII, Bhakti Yoga....

The Isa Upanishad notes are up on the old website. This section caught my eye as relating to our discussion:

8/7/12

Mantra 16 (old)

O *Pusan* (Nourisher), seer who traverses alone, controller, *Surya* (Sun), offspring of *Prajapati*, disperse your rays, gather this light, let me see that, most auspicious, that form of yours; that *Purusa*, who is there, he is myself.

Nitya starts us off with possibly the most crucial idea in all of Vedanta: "Self-realization does not come as a cumulative effect of action. It comes only with the clear comprehension of Truth."

From birth we encounter programs that build on previously established platforms, so much so that it becomes a core assumption that that's all there is to life. But it isn't so hard to realize by contemplation that an unknown mystery cannot be led up to in steps. All our searching takes place within the known, no matter how passionately we wish it were otherwise. We can easily build towers to reach imaginary heavens, but if we do not know the destination they are certain to be built in the wrong direction. When they crumble, the construction crew is scattered to the

winds. What we need is an entirely different, non-cumulative methodology.

The Olympic games, currently taking place in London, are a perfect example of accumulated effects. To become expert in performance requires a long and arduous dedication to a goal. Each hour's hard work allows for a slightly better performance the next day, and a vacation is often a setback in the improvement chart. At the end of the continuum, only the world's best in each event is honored, and all the rest are losers and also rans. Obviously some fields are more generous. There are armloads of master musicians plying the world's stages. Nonetheless, one significant slip and you're out of the game.

This type of system fosters competition, and not always with gentlemanly behavior. Vying for an edge can easily lead to unfair tactics, even including criminality.

The class noted how as children we first recognize squiggles on paper, which gradually take shape as letters. Later we combine the letters to make words, and still later, words to make sentences and stories. Eventually we may even become philosophers who play with ideas. Each stage is dependent on substantial completion of the previous challenge. All our academic learning, especially math and science, unfolds in this way as well. Even history is taught as a sequence of dates, with rarely a meaningful vision of what they represent.

It's not that this mentality is bad, just limited. It is essential to life as we know it. And we don't have to give it up to add in the holistic appreciation of life—only just adjust to make room for it.

Nonetheless, realization is a far cry from what we have come to expect in our world of cumulative effects. “You either get it or you don't.” “You are either awake or you aren't.” Yet it isn't all or nothing: we always get only a part, but the part is terrific enough. There is no gold medal (or disc) to be won. It's all in the joy of playing the game.

Religions often imply that realization is some large, fixed item to be achieved, rather than a process. Very often it is to be

accomplished by our being swept aside and replaced by something else. As a consequence, nearly everyone learns to be dissatisfied with who they are. We are not okay, and are only tolerable if we are moving toward an accepted version of what okay means. Basically, we have learned to hate ourselves. A great many of our actions are meant as compensation for our perceived inadequacies. Because we're not okay, we construct a persona that looks like it might be acceptable to the rest of us. Since everyone is doing it, we have come to live in a vast constructed stage set that squelches us rather than allows us the freedom to express ourselves.

Jan noted the Semitic God is a remote entity looking down on humans as a source of shame. Honored visitor Aaron generalized it to a worldwide dilemma. When we think of God as wholly other, we are bound to seem like born sinners who are an embarrassment to Him. By contrast, the beauty of the Upanishads is that we are all the Absolute's attempt to express itself. Despite our imperfections, which are legion, we are the way the Absolute brings itself into existence. This is 180 degrees different from the lost sinners of the popular imagination. We are the very expression of the Absolute, so it is our innate calling to be as excellent as we can be. We are carrying the torch for an Absolute that uses us for its implementation. Anyone who sincerely comes to understand this has found the essence of their dharma. It's such a tremendous realization we become ecstatic with joy at the mere blessing of being alive. It was so moving that the entire class came to this realization together, sparked by Jan and Aaron. You could feel a surge in the group consciousness as it dawned on us.

Aaron talked about how he doesn't have a study group to work through these issues with. He often reads about oneness and all that, but it remains a cold abstraction. I think he really noticed how the class feedback and interaction helps bring the ideas to life, helps take them beyond isolated intellection into a much deeper emotional and intuitive appreciation. We all face the challenge of making the abstract ideas real, of real-izing them. Sometimes we succeed. In one sense we can't lead up to this type of success, and

in another sense everything we do leads up to it. The one certainty is that it remains independent of any formula.

Nitya's commentary is an example of how a teacher imparts a unitive realization. As you sit at the feet of a great teacher and listen closely, they lead your mind into a state of openness and wonder, into which insights pour. Reading about it in a book isn't quite so effortlessly uplifting, but it can have a similar impact given a bit more concentration. When the teacher is not around, it's an excellent substitute.

As the preceptor progresses from one idea to the next, we are along for the ride. His darsana—vision—becomes ours too. Nitya's comparison of the size of the sun and the eyes that witness it is not a mere chronicle of physical facts, it is a mindblowing vision we are invited to imbibe along with him.

When Nitya says, "In the creation of the world, man and sun are collaborators. The sun reveals the form, and man gives the names. Even the sun received his name from man." This can be little more than meaningless words, even as we nod our heads in agreement. But when animated by a group mind or an intense individual contemplation, we can feel an inkling of the power of our role in the scheme of things. We aren't here to teach others, we're here to learn how to live with expertise. The arrow has to turn back toward us. When it does, teaching may happen, almost by accident. But setting out to be a teacher diverts the arrow away from its target, which is the heart of our own soul. We have to set our course on being a lifetime learner, continuously opening up to new possibilities.

Deb relayed a quote from Carl Jung, "Until we make the unconscious conscious, it will continue to direct our lives and we will call it Fate." He was speaking of the part of the unconscious that contains our memories of traumas and other experiences, what Vedantins call samskaras. Jung was a leading advocate of probing into this territory in order to mitigate its influence on behavior. Our memories regularly undermine our effectiveness. We can certainly read this part of the Isa Upanishad as a prayer to lead us into this

veiled territory. We have to press past our concepts and percepts to see the true structure of our being. It is more than a point source in the Absolute, it has developed into a skeletal system on which all our thinking is strung, like organs, muscles and tracts. We are to become physicians to heal ourselves, based on our actual viscera rather than an imaginary idealized model. Our mental health flourishes in concert with our physical well-being, and vice versa.

I feel utterly inadequate to communicate the blazing realization the rishis wrote into their Upanishads and which the class touched on: we are the Absolute in our core. We are not some unwelcome scourge in the Garden of Eden, but the very essence of it, the part that can see, and know, and enjoy. Living in fear of the presiding God has withered our hearts and embittered our minds, but that is not the intent of Creation. If God is ashamed of us it is only because we have failed to thrive, failed to love, failed to care, because that's what we were put here to do. God is not ashamed because we dare to be ourselves, but because we don't.

The best part of who we are is the Absolute itself. That's the unconscious we are to make conscious. We can muck around with the rest too, in order to free ourselves from the evil Fate which is nothing more than our injured soul flailing about, but best of all we need to reach for that auspicious Light, that true form, which we are the very expression of. When we come to it, we know instinctively we are That.