

3/26/13
Verse 14

Going beyond the boundaries of the three worlds, with all-filling
effulgence,
when the three-petaled knowledge has faded out, ever brighter shines
that light;
a pretentious seer will never grasp this;
thus, the Upanisads' secret word should be remembered.

Free translation:

Remember the secret of the Upanishads. The Self in its pure state
is limitless and indivisible. It is bereft of divisions in time, and it
fills the entire consciousness without the divisions of the knower,
the known, and knowledge. One does not gain this state merely by
making false claims to it.

Nataraja Guru's:

That light, rid of three-fold view, that ever brighter burns
Upsurging and brimful beyond the bounds of the triple worlds,
Remember, that it will never come within the reach
Of a hermit untrue, as Upanishadic secret lore declares.

Deb started us off with a reprise of Saundarya Lahari, where
the devi creates the three worlds, the cosmological, the
psychological and the microscopic, out of the dust of her feet. This
is counterbalanced by the Shiva aspect that burns the three worlds
to ashes and smears them on his skin. These are vivid images to
help us relinquish our clinging to concepts. Our mundane side
simply seeks "surcease of sorrow," while the divine in us seeks
dynamism and freedom. If we don't make this choice consciously,
we will very likely cater to our mundane tendencies and miss out
on all the fun.

The overarching theme of the Hundred Verses is to intelligently use concepts to free ourselves from all limitations, up to and including concepts themselves, especially toxic ones, thus allowing the inner radiance to shine forth and become our guiding light. Because of the thoroughgoing intensity of the method, it is not well suited to casual dabbling. There are many far superior systems to produce a transient state of peace and quiet.

Many of the verses feature the kind of dichotomy that is so prominent here, the clash of the ideal and the actual. This is not just a syrupy fairytale, it's a practical way of facing our problems and overcoming them. For many people that's too tedious for words. Even the Guru's Gurukula rarely lives up to the challenge. It's so much easier to pretend we already know what we're talking about!

Nitya reduces pretension to its essence: a conversion of living reality into a fixed scheme: "What we are asked here is not to make an intellectual game by renaming all our concepts, but to feel from within the unity of the external world and the unity of the internal world." His free translation also hits the nail on the head: "One does not gain this state merely by making false claims to it." Because we live in a world where concepts dominate and we are repeatedly called to hold to a fixed identity, there is nothing easy about this. It goes against a flood tide of social pressure.

Hoping to encourage wholehearted dedication, Nitya then paraphrases the instruction from Chapter XIII of the Bhagavad Gita, a crucial section on what a seeker is called to do in Vedanta. I have written extensively about the terms involved at <http://scotteitsworth.tripod.com/id49.html> beginning with verse 7. I included a wonderful section from Nitya's *Therapy and Realization in the Bhagavad Gita*, starting with this:

The Bhagavad Gita gives a list of things or changes that are expected in the disciple. These can also be used with advantage by the psychologist. The first in the list is called *amanitvam*. *Manitvam* is wrong identification. When you

give up wrong identification, what takes place is *amanitvam*. *Mana* means measurement. You measure yourself: “I am this.” It is a measurement which you make constantly. If the value that you have given yourself is something which you want to stick to, then in some new situation or context where you could function differently, the lucidity is lost. You have become morbid with your fixed notion. You have become rigid. If this ossification and fossilization that can come to a person’s ego is removed we say that *amanitvam* has come to him. It means breaking away the morbidity of yourself, of that feeling “I am this. I am this.”

When you have *dambha*, that kind of feeling has become worse and difficult to change. You have taken pride in being so and so. You are being proud of yourself and you don’t want to give it up. This attitude keeps the *mana* rigid. If you want to break the one, you must break the other. The dynamics of identity is the exaggeration of the value that is given to it in the form of pride. This pride you must give up.

The pretentiousness Narayana Guru warns us against stems from this perfectly normal act of self-measurement. Once we establish that we are such-and-such and so-and-so, we begin to elaborate and defend that fixed position. As Nitya implies, our position may be quite realistic, but it’s the *exaggeration of its value* that trips us up. Both a positive and a negative exaggeration will do the trick.

The lila-sport of the yogi is to cast off all identifications as soon as they become apparent, certainly as soon as they become onerous. It’s a razor’s edge walk to simultaneously be authentic to ourselves and free of self-identification. Only then are we living up to our potential as vibrant entities rather than being caught in the snares of well-defined personas.

Nitya, being not only intense but surpassingly kindhearted, is even able to put a positive spin on pretension, treating it as our pre-tending to wisdom. We are all pre-tending from that angle of

vision, limited beings with an inevitably partial viewpoint, hopefully intent on enlarging it.

Michael shared a delightful analogy of how children pretend to be various kinds of grownups: doctors, mothers, sports heroes, and so on. There is nothing sordid about it. It's how they learn and grow. But for the most part the kids don't insist that they are the roles they play. They know perfectly well it's a game, and they take off the roles again after the game is over, just like changing clothes. Most of us lose that wisdom as we age, unfortunately.

When we decide to become wise, we first pre-tend to be, long before we ever are. We model admirable people, and often adopt a program of study. For the most part, that's as far as it goes. We learn our program and then identify with it. Occasionally it actually blooms into a living reality; most often it remains an academic version, a dusty relic of someone else's enlightenment. The rare wisdom of *That Alone* is designed for those who want to go beyond academia and burst all bonds.

Narayana Guru is suggesting that our identifications, while they may well satisfy our ego, don't really help us to attain the transcendental state he is advocating. A superficially pacified ego resists threats to its stasis, and can become aggressive in a heartbeat. Only if we stop coddling it and placating it will it assume its rightful place as a humble part of a much larger being. For most people the learning curve includes some psychological pokes and prods to demonstrate to the ego that despite its pretensions it does not accurately represent who we are: our true nature is something else entirely.

It's such a subtle process! We have to have intentions, and they have to be sensible and intelligently crafted. Without intentions we get nowhere. And yet, they almost always become fixed notions that block the very light we seek. We have to exercise our will and at the same time keep it maximally flexible. A universal orientation is essential. If our intentions only serve us as individuals, they become egoistic. So a very practical spiritual

attitude is to aim at the good of all, and not as an idea, but as a matter of conviction. Nitya beautifully clarifies how this is done:

You should make yourself invulnerable to internal as well as external distractions. Let the interest you are cultivating become all-filling, so that your whole joy of life is in it and it becomes meaningful every moment. Day and night are then filled with the joy of living the one truth to which you have dedicated yourself. In this, even if slips come, failures come, put up with them. Don't lose your center. Stand firm. In order to be able to do this, you must have a clear notion of what your intention is, and how to go about your business every step of the way. In this process, see that you are not grabbing things away from others, but are only using the resources that are apportioned to you by nature in its benevolence. There is perfect sharing of life with all. Thus you transform and get into a mode of life, a behavioral pattern, where there is total sharing with the rest of the world. Full cooperation is given. You include in your happiness the happiness of all, but you do not tread upon your own happiness. You make yourself as much your own friend as a friend of others. You don't alienate yourself and become hostile to yourself. No hostility to others and no hostility to yourself. Do not be disturbed by the world and don't disturb the world. Get into greater and greater harmony.

Is this an impossible task? No, "we have only to clear our desks and put things in the right places and start. Then we progress day after day."

Moni related how Narayana Guru never used the term 'I'. He was well known for always using 'we'. His awareness always included everything around him. It made him stand out. He could never be taken for granted. In keeping with this verse's advice, he didn't do it as a technique to tame his ego, he did it because his ego

was already tamed. He wasn't pretending. When done pretentiously, it is a mere conceit.

Nitya used 'I' sparingly, almost as if he was speaking about another person. He often referred to it as a legitimate place holder. Since it can be pretentious to avoid using 'I', he was totally relaxed about it. I never saw him become defensive, which is the key. He felt he had nothing to defend, that his ego wasn't important enough, didn't need it. People would drop by and harangue him now and then, and he might rebuff them, but it was never for self-protection. He remained unruffled. He stood his ground not as a combative maneuver but because it was the right thing to do. That made his rejoinders far more effective. They were an absolute pronouncement rather than a strategic ploy. His accusers would leave without having gained the satisfaction of making him upset.

We speculated about the mysterious reference to the Upanishad's secret word or lore, which remains unspecified. But the implication is there—it is the neutral attitude that allows the light to penetrate into the shadows where we have taken up residence. Pretension is not normally neutral, but we can pre-tend to neutrality. That way we always aim for it, at least. Aum is the word of consent, that affirms without taking sides, without assuming a fixed position. We are in the process of mitigating all our learned wants so we can search for fresh terrain unimpeded by them. Aum is the universal vibration, the sun that shines on everyone without exception.

This verse is a stern warning against hubris and conceit, for us to take to heart. It isn't about someone else. We have dammed up our inner light without realizing it, and now we're taking down the dams so that the river will again run wild and free. A part of us is afraid of all that potential exuberance, but at the same time we know "something there is that doesn't love a wall, that wants it down." It's our true nature that rebels at walls, that wants very badly to sweep them away. That's the impetus we are going to align ourselves with.

Part II

Nitya's short version, from *Neither This Nor That... But Aum*, a most excellent addition to our discussion:

A person can look outward and see a world that alternately fascinates and bewilders. He can also look inward and be delighted at the prospect of the possibilities that can be creatively imagined, or be fearful of the negative and depressing phantoms that might haunt his psyche. For many people, living in this world is like being caught between the deep blue sea and the devil. This is not the only possibility however. One can also look from the centre of his beingness to a world that has for its substance the same reality of beingness, or he can look into this beingness and see in it the intrinsic worth of the world which he adores.

Both the fool and the wise man live in the same world and are equipped with the same faculties; however, their experience is at great variance with regard to its quality and meaning. The man whose awareness alternates between the changing patterns of external phenomena and his internal imagery is bewildered by the great flux which gives him no foothold on which to stand firm, nor any side rail to hold on to. The wise man sees a consistent and constant frame of reference in which even uncertainty comes under the category of the certainty of the law that makes it inevitably uncertain. If the former is assailed by doubts and surprises, the latter foresees eventualities and amuses himself with the wonder that the flux can evoke by corroding expectations and sometimes nullifying the certitude of a prediction. It is hard for those who are easily deluded to evolve into the fully informed. There are many aspirants for such an elevation, but only a few enter the haven of wisdom.

Conceit is a disease of which man is rarely relieved. We have many accepted classifications and categorizations with which it is easy to separate the sheep from the goats. In the case of sheep and goats the difference is obvious, but when it comes to subtle qualities that characterize personality traits, we are misled by

advertised titles. A freshman in a medical school is likely to make himself a physician of renown after several years of intensive training, good discipline and experience. If, however, the possibility is mistaken for an actuality and he offers his services to handle a difficult case which involves risk, he will only be a menace to his patient. Entitlement to wisdom is nowhere different from this. Wishful thinking makes many people identify with unachieved abilities or understandings, and this wrong identification becomes their main hurdle to surmount in order to achieve the goal for which they set out on their journey.

The ideal presented in this verse is of a person who is adept in restraining himself from being misled by the lures of a seemingly fascinating world or from being crippled by its illusory threats. In the same way he is also capable of retaining the valid memory of the rules of transaction so that even when he is fully conversant with the all absorbing beingness of the Transcendent, he can legitimately respond to the natural requirements of the phenomena to which his body and senses correspond. He sees the past, the present and the future, what is far off, close by and inside, and the shifting agency of the ego moving back and forth between the roles of the knower, the doer and the enjoyer. True wisdom can transcend all these kinds of triads. Until one gains this rare insight and becomes efficient in living with it, he cannot be called truly wise.

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Nataraja Guru's commentary:

VERSE 14

That light, rid of three-fold view, that ever brighter burns
Upsurging and brimful beyond the bounds of the triple worlds,
Remember, that it will never come within the reach
Of a hermit untrue, as Upanishadic secret lore declares.

THE context of Shiva worship is here abandoned in favour of Upanishadic teaching. The dialectical revaluation of the Guru-wisdom, as represented here in the teaching for Self-realization, participates on one side in the pure teaching of the Vedanta as contained in the Upanishads, and on the other side it includes the long tradition of Shiva-worship which has been preserved down to the time of Sankara in South India.

A certain upright and straightforward attitude of mind is the basis of all Upanishadic teaching. The whole philosophy of the Vedanta may be said to be based on the notion of sat (ontological verity) which has the same root in Sanskrit as the word satya (truth). Sattva, which is recommended as an attitude to be cultivated by the aspirant to wisdom by texts in the Upanishads as well as in the Bhagavad Gita, also implies a basis in truth. The truth within and the truth that one seeks have to fall into one and the same line.

This attitude of mind is referred to as arjavam (straightforwardness) in the Bhagavad Gita (XIII. 7; XVI. 1; XVII. 14; XVIII. 42), and as satyam (truth) in the same work (X. 4; XVI. 2, 7; XVII. 15; XVIII. 65), reiterating Upanishadic teaching in many ways. In the Chandogya Upanishad truth is referred to as the foundation or principle of the Universe (VI. XVI. 1) and the same Upanishad stresses the need to understand the truth (VII. XVI). The soul is supposed to be obtainable by truth in the Mundaka Upanishad (III. 1,5,6). The Absolute itself is characterized by truth as stated in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (V. v. 1, 2). Seekers of truth are applauded in the Mundaka Upanishad (I. ii, 1) and referred to as Satyakamas (lovers of truth). Thus, both as end as well as means, truth represents a high value in the Upanishads.

There is no short-cut or crooked path to wisdom. One has to go by the royal, public or straight road. All kinds of esotericisms and secret practices, not at one with the principle of truth as a philosophical as well as an ethical concept, are discredited here by

the Guru, where he wishes to enter into the subject of Self-realization one degree deeper than hitherto in the text. In the next verse we can see that the Guru touches upon two aspects of nature which are reciprocal and contradictory at once by way of relating outer and inner truth under one scheme.

The earlier half of the present verse disposes of two additional epistemological and methodological concepts familiar in Vedanta. They have to be first understood properly before one can enter the wisdom-path of Self-realization. We shall examine them below. When these two kinds of conditionings hindering our progress in Self-realization are effectively discarded, the vision of the Absolute will come, as it were before the eyes of the aspirant in a manner that is not merely an academic appraisal of the Absolute. The wonder of the Absolute will then fill the personality with that form of subtle exaltation after which all yogis aspire.

The two impediments are of a cosmological and psychological order. The latter may be said to be lodged within, as the beam in the eye, while the other conditioning applies to the outer world in a cosmological sense. It is a grosser conditioning which is comparable to the mote in another's eye. The subjective and objective causes of erroneous appraisal of truth have first to be removed. Triputi is here translated as 'the three-fold view.' Tribhuvana, 'triple-world', refers to the cosmological worlds of value within which the spirit of man with its aspirations may be said to live. A one-one correspondence is implied between these three-fold conditionings.

'RID OF THREE-FOLD VIEW, ETC.': One of the most important conditionings to which knowledge is subjected, as we have just pointed out, is referred to in Vedanta as the tri-basic conditioning or triputi. Puta means base, as that of a leaf, and this tri-basic quality, affecting our appraisal of truth, consists of dividing our knowledge into the subjective, the objective and the meaning

aspects, which tend to be thought of separately instead of unitively. Thus first, second and third persons, as used in grammatical syntax, can refer to the same central verity in a phrase which may be said to be affected by the syntactical prejudice of triputi. The pure vertical semiotic content of thought gets horizontalized in a sentence form when syntactically conditioned tri-basically.

If we should take the case of the purest notion of the Absolute we can refer to this central notion in three ways. The Absolute could be the antecedent respectively of 'I', 'you', or 'it' in three sentences written as predications about the Absolute, but in the first, second and third person. The mahavakyas (great dicta) of the Vedanta do just this when they declare: 'I am the Absolute', 'Thou art That', or 'This Self is the Absolute.' The meaning remains one and the same.

But as 'soon as this primary 'basic' fundamental conditioning natural to the intellect in relation with objective interests in life is admitted into our way of thinking, it has the disastrous effect of shutting out the unconditioned aspect of the Absolute. One already views it, as it were, through the coloured glasses of three kinds of conditionings to begin with. These three give birth to other secondary ones whose ramifications of upadhis (conditionings and sub-conditionings) fill the whole area of the field and stream of consciousness with a multiplicity of interests, rather than with that unitive one which is the highest and supreme value in life.

The passion and love of truth planted in the human heart, which, as Mathew Arnold said, consists of the 'intellectual enthusiasm to see the truth and the emotional enthusiasm to see the truth prevail', have to be cultivated and affirmed further by contemplative disciplines. The false recluse here referred to is the spiritual aspirant who believes in indirect or sinuous paths for reaching the vision of the Absolute. The false personal attitude might be what

conditions from within, or conditioning as it were from without - both hiding the end envisaged as a goal of life. In other words, ends and means in spirituality have to fall in the same straight line of truthfulness or straightforwardness.

‘THE TRIPLE WORLDS, ETC.’: In every language, heaven, inferno and the human world refer to three levels of value-strata in which the human self finds its subjective-objective environment. The ‘Divine Comedy’ of Dante and the ‘Paradise Lost’ of Milton are built around this time-honoured way of referring to value-systems in which the personality of man may be said to live and move up or down.

Rid of all its superfluous accretions and superstitious implications we can still think axiologically of three worlds or value-systems. For example, we know that the blue of the sky is not even a scientific truth. The blue is there because of the limitation of our powers of vision. A high flight or a telescope penetrating space, through clearer vision abolishes the blue effectively. A certain dispersal of light is implied there which applies to the eye as an organ as well as to the rays of light that can affect it. Pure light is thus conditioned by a certain veil. This veil is both subjective and objective at once. Even as between the cosmological and psychological there is a duality to be abolished in our appraisal of pure truth in itself, when rid of its phenomenal aspects.

While the notion of triputi, which we have explained in the previous section, is a psychological one, the notion of the three worlds, resorted to by the Guru here, is to be taken as the more objectified counterpart of the same series of conditionings of an epistemological order. The three worlds and the tri-basic conditioning of consciousness vis-a-vis the knowledge of the Absolute may be said to refer to the vertical and the horizontal aspects of the Absolute. Cosmology being more objective than psychology, the horizontal aspect would accord more with the

conditioning under the three worlds, which would then refer to the horizontal axis.

The three-fold view on the other hand, would refer to the vertical aspect. This difference which we have once referred to under two aspects relating to the inner and the outer nature, is further clarified and brought into relief in the next verse. Modern phenomenological operationism takes its stand on a similar epistemological ground.

Part III

Deb offered one of her poems, in keeping with Verse 14:

The Arithmetic of Knowledge

We learn to divide early in our lives, night and shadow different
from day and light, above and below, this from that,
now, not later—opposites and antonyms that spell our
circumference,
define our loves, aversions, our very selves.

The appraising eye that casually, irrevocably
evaluates and breeds exclusion, the cruelty of a harsh laugh
spun on cold air, that judges and thus freezes.

These divisions must be turned, spiraled around,
brought inward to be held close—to burn, to ache,
and erase the boundaries we call my world.

To know is to not divide. The arm's extension
is measured by what is held inside, its inclusion,
and the eyes' widening circle defines by identification.

The inundated grasses are bent over by ice, melting,

bleached and loosened, particles of leafstalk sodden,
giving themselves up to the flooding spring.

* * *

Jake's thoughts make us chafe that he so prefers the salubrious climate of Hawaii to the cold, gray, wet of Oregon, so we have to content ourselves with written communications:

This verse sets up the following one in which Narayana Guru offers a description of the mystical state we all seek. Transrational, inclusive, and unitive, this state cannot be attained solely through reason or study, but paradoxically, this condition does not render study, meditation, or introspection irrelevant but rather moves them up in the hierarchy of those activities we ought to pursue. In the aggregate, these types of disciplines make up our "practice" that forms the core of our everyday work in our effort to wake up.¹

The barriers to arriving at a mystical perspective are, as Nitya points out in his commentary, a result of the normal experience we all share on this planet. He divides them into two large groups, cosmological and psychological. Concerning the former, it is the nature of nature that we first must become familiar with [it] in order to exist here. Gravity, entropy, the universal mathematical constants, all present us with a world that requires our attention in order for us to survive. And, within those laws is a further classification of the microscopic, sense defined, and macroscopic. In other words, the conventions governing the cosmos don't operate the same way when applied to the general through the specific. The sub-atomic world of the physicist and the universe of Einstein's time/space continuum don't follow the same rules necessary for the carpenter or engineer in completing their tasks.

¹ According to one realized contemporary American, Adyashanti, all this practice and work one dedicates one's life to performing is designed for the purpose of demonstrating that, in the final analysis, all the effort was unnecessary in a practical sense but required in a procedural one.

Our psychological interior further partitions our perceptions into subjective and objective domains that are, for the most part, out of conscious awareness and often confused with one another. What *ought* to be the case is often very casually interchanged with what *is* the case with little concern for the distinction between the two.

All these barriers to realization, concludes Nitya, cannot be worked through but must be transcended, a position one finally achieves by way of grace and not reason. Such a perspective represents a unitive rather than a unified view, one that puts the seer in a position from which he/she places the entire cosmos within the transcendent thereby eliminating the contradictions and barriers our minds have so painstakingly constructed so that we can successfully navigate our specific transactional condition.

In his closing paragraphs, Nitya reminds us that the process is a long one that cannot be forced but one that we can prepare for if we are willing to *pretend* to the role. By pretending, he says, we practice without pretense, hypocrisy, or arrogance. He then offers a series of tasks meant to assist us on our way: don't be judgmental and compare yourself to others, have forbearance for others who are in various states of darkness (as you yourself are), be vigilant, upright, and uncompromising concerning the truth, settle down to your work which shares your talents with the world, and use only those resources "apportioned to you by nature"—a total sharing with a world in which all people pursue happiness, including yourself.

These final admonitions, in conjunction with the instructions to study and meditate, offer a practical approach for those of us who have yet to become realized. The project may not pan out totally, but, then again, there is a confidence in knowing that the effort by its very nature adds to the general happiness, however small that circle of people might be for any one of us. Anchored as I am in a mind entrenched in reason, I can't rationalize a sensible alternative.

¹ According to one realized contemporary American, Adyashanti, all this practice and work one dedicates one's life to performing is designed for the purpose of demonstrating that, in the final analysis, all the effort was unnecessary in a practical sense but required in a procedural one.

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From John H:

Verse 14 and Nitya's commentary went past me at the speed of light. I'm back here in between galaxies.

I am trying to put this into something I can get my mind around, and the best is, since I'm appraiser, is the following thing I see happening in appraisers because I used to do it. There are appraisers who have in their own hearts become assured they are experts. I show them things and they quickly tell me what it is and what it's worth. They carry themselves in such a way as to reassure me that they are not just bullshitting me. But.....when I take a close look at how they have identified the subject property - I see something quite different. The assured appraiser skims through a book and says it's a first edition of Huckleberry Finn. What I see is a book, a bound number of pages, and it looks like it could be a first edition of Huckleberry Finn and I carefully look over the points of issue, and it is. Then, I look around and see what people are trying to sell theirs for and what they have sold them for at auction. Usually, my expert is right - but somehow, I get this gut feeling that he isn't really looking, he's remembering or projecting an image or reality. Is this what Verse 14 is about - trying to be aware that there is subjective judgment, and there is actuality, and that there is also meaning for both together, as well as independent of one another?

My reply:

That's a fine analogy. The deal is, such “expertise” works just fine (for the most part) in terms of horizontal actualities, but not for spiritual matters. The sense you have that the expert might be missing something is your intuition that more care and a deeper look is very valuable, indeed essential. In day-to-day life, we have all become the kind of experts that rely on habit much more than direct experience, and in fact our habits overlay the *possibility* of direct experience by passing themselves off as new and insightful. There is a measure of comfort in knowing rather than doubting, even when the knowledge is spurious. We have to battle this natural tendency in order to keep our eyes open, which is of supreme value in any field, including the so-called mundane. When we look at mundane matters with open eyes, they tend toward the miraculous.

I included a quote from Nataraja Guru on frames of reference in the last episode, but I'll reproduce it at more length now. This is from the middle of Chapter II of my Gita commentary:

Relating what we have studied so far to saccidananda per Nataraja Guru, Chapter I was observational, pertaining to *sat* on the lowest level of the vertical axis. The Samkhya section we have just concluded deals with *chit*, the induction and deduction of linear thought. The next section on Yoga brings in dialectic thinking useful in matters of ananda or value, at the top of the vertical axis. All these can and should be treated integrally and not sequentially, but it is very important to distinguish the different types of ideation and their proper fields. Nataraja Guru cautions us that “Dialectics is conducive to unitive understanding only, and spoils the case when applied to ordinary situations in life where usual ratiocinative methods or logic would be the proper instrument to employ.” (Gita, p. 112.) He elaborates on this structural scheme in his *Unitive Philosophy* (377-78):

Between a posteriori inferences from experimental data, we pass thus into the domain of such propositions as the famous

Cartesian dictum, *cogito ergo sum*, and build rational or theoretical speculations upwards till we touch a region in pure higher reasoning which employs dialectics, called by Plato the highest instrument of reasoning, independent of all visible or sensible facts.

This kind of reasoning, the dialectical, which takes us to the threshold of higher idealistic values in life is the third and the last step in philosophical methodology taken as a whole. The laws of nature refer to the world of existence. Rules of thought, whether axiomatic or based on postulates, refer to the world of subsistence. The third step of reasoning lives and has its being in the pure domain of human values, those referring to the True, the Good or the Beautiful, which are values in life and thus belong to the domain of axiology.

The visible, the intelligible and the value worlds which we can mark out on a vertical line represent levels of higher and higher reasonings culminating in the dialectical. It is like soaring, or resorting to ascending dialectics as spoken of in certain circles. This level has, just inferior to it, the world of formal or syllogistic reasonings admitting of the limits of contradictions at its lower limit and of tautology at its higher limit, where logistic and propositional calculi are employed.

At the lowest level in this vertical axis, where empirical or at least ontological factors prevail, referring to existent aspects of the physical world actually, perceptually or even conceptually understood, we have a region where certitudes naturally take the form of laws such as that of gravitation, or the conservation of matter and energy. Electromagnetic and thermodynamic laws belong to the Einsteinian physical world, whether treated epistemologically as real or ideal.

Thus existential, subsistential and value aspects of the Absolute have three different methodological approaches, one proper to and compatible with each.

A normal methodology applicable to integrated knowledge whether philosophical or scientific has to accommodate within

its scope these three kinds of approaches to certitude, each in its proper domain. The experimental method suits existential aspects of the Absolute, the logical suits the subsistential and the dialectical suits the value aspects of the Absolute. Interest in the physical world gives place in the second stage of ascent to logical psychology or phenomenology, where ratiocination plays its part. Finally we ascend higher into the third aspect of the Absolute where value relations hold good and the instrument or methodology used is that of dialectics.

Part IV

Sometimes it helps to skip ahead. One of the most touching moments in all of *That Alone* comes in Verse 19. It forms one of the bedrock pillars of my life, in keeping with my desire to always be of service to those around me. Since we may not get to this until June, I clip in my favorite part of all, something I hope is the baseline understanding we all share about the class:

This verse has a very practical bearing on our life. It encapsulates the art of living together, the art of reconciliation, the art of harmony....

Mutual attraction is what has been keeping the world going through the millennia. Although countless people have been born, lived and died on this earth, the heritage of mankind is maintained by this simple sharing. We have not seen the Buddha, we have never met Jesus Christ, nor Socrates. We have never seen Kant or Spinoza, Shakespeare or Shelley, Kalidasa, Valmiki, or the philosophers of far-off China. Bach, Mozart and Beethoven were isolated within a tiny section of our planet. Still, our human heritage is molded by the brilliant thoughts of all these wonderful people from all around the world: the poets, storytellers, those who made the myths and legends, the inventors, composers, scientists and discoverers. Whatever they have contributed is still present in our lives, guiding us, teaching us, and helping us every moment. But they are not here. Only the friend next to you is here, the friend

who exemplifies and incorporates all those wonderful qualities and insights. And we can all share this tremendous inheritance and even more, with each other, to make life an ecstatic and joyful experience.

Part V

Susan achieves the “better late than never” category:

When reading the class notes from Verse 14, I felt at first overwhelmed. I had not gone to class or read the commentary and I had been through a stressful week. I was again at a loss as to how to ever really feel the unity therein described without being so thrown by the inevitable tangles of daily life. I thought about the other verses and the idea of trying to get beyond the facades that we create and that are created for us by our early conditioning. This is a very difficult thing and I am realizing that it doesn't feel all that good to let go of those comfortable façades. Maybe it's a bit like my daughter's fear when she started college last Fall that she might have to go to meals by herself sometimes. She wanted to be sure to have people to sit with and I suppose it was because she would have felt exposed and anxiously uncomfortable. I remember that feeling as a teenager — it seemed I was almost always self-conscious and trying not to stand out. The funny (and sad) thing is that the person I became, in order to fit in and not stand out, is the façade in which I felt most comfortable for many years. I feel as though I began letting go of that about 10 years ago (with help from Nitya, Scott, and the Gurukula) but there is still more to go and this is much harder. I have to be willing to be very uncomfortable in a psychological way and I really hate that. Again and again, I must eat in the cafeteria by myself. That being said, this journey isn't so awful — there are indeed friends and supports and wonderful epiphanies along the way. It's just keeping with the effort and not settling into the comfort of the façade.

I was really struck by the discussion in the class notes and in Nitya's commentary about measuring oneself. Here is a great quote that Scott included from Nitya's *Therapy and Realization in the Bhagavad Gita*:

The Bhagavad Gita gives a list of things or changes that are expected in the disciple. These can also be used with advantage by the psychologist. The first in the list is called *amanitvam*. *Manitvam* is wrong identification. When you give up wrong identification, what takes place is *amanitvam*. *Mana* means measurement. You measure yourself: "I am this." It is a measurement which you make constantly. If the value that you have given yourself is something which you want to stick to, then in some new situation or context where you could function differently, the lucidity is lost. You have become morbid with your fixed notion. You have become rigid. If this ossification and fossilization that can come to a person's ego is removed we say that *amanitvam* has come to him. It means breaking away the morbidity of yourself, of that feeling "I am this. I am this."

When you have *dambha*, that kind of feeling has become worse and difficult to change. You have taken pride in being so and so. You are being proud of yourself and you don't want to give it up. This attitude keeps the *mana* rigid. If you want to break the one, you must break the other. The dynamics of identity is the exaggeration of the value that is given to it in the form of pride. This pride you must give up.

I often am measuring myself in this way — being self-conscious again. So it's quite revolutionary to think of not measuring oneself at all. This relates wonderfully to a conversation I had with my Alexander Technique teacher a few weeks ago. In the lessons, I am supposed to think about letting my neck be free and thinking certain directions for my back and my front and my arms and legs. By thinking in this way, my body and brain let go of the conditioned bad postures and tensions that keep my natural and

efficient "use of myself" from happening. By thinking certain directions, I allow this to happen. I was telling my teacher that I tend to check in with my body very often to make sure that my neck is free and that my body is relaxing in the right way. I was at first very surprised when she said, "No. Don't check in with your body." I thought that was the whole point but actually it wasn't. By checking in with my body, I was assessing how I was doing, or, in the words of the commentary, I was measuring myself. My Alexander teacher said that instead I should stop myself every time I have the inclination to "check in" with my body and then I should think my instructions, not paying attention to the result so much as being present in the thoughts. I have been trying to do this in the last two weeks and have discovered that it's very freeing to not think about my posture or position. In the same way, it must be very freeing to not think, "I am that" or "I am this." If I am not thinking self-consciously, I am in the being of myself and not the reflection, the façade, the stagnation. For me, the practice of not thinking about my posture also helps me to let go of mental self-analysis. As in the passage above, that self analysis can lead to thinking that we are better or thinking we are worse, as well as just thinking that we are this or that (not to be confused with *This* or *That*). In the last week, when I have started to reflect on myself or when I have started to reflect on others ("bad drivers," "improper English," the state of the world, almost any article in the newspaper), I say Aum and let the intensity of my focus disperse. It feels good. This is not a practice of distracting myself from the transaction world or ignoring important issues but rather neutralizing the exaggerations of my mind, which are many.

Scott— I'll clip in the first part of the transcript of my new audio, "Coming Back to Ourselves," (from wetwaremedia.com) which speaks to why staying stuck feels better than breaking free:

One of the subtle aspects of a spiritual development practice is how to distinguish between legitimate inspiration which comes

from our inner genius and the corrupted but nicely packaged desires of our selfish side. Can you tell us how Indian philosophy pictures this situation?

That's an extremely important question because there's no safe and easy way to pin it down. It's something we have to always be aware of and always be careful of. The main reason being that because of our development, when we accord with social pressure and what we have learned to see as our role in life, that feels very good. And part of us is very satisfied that we have linked up with the dictates of our society and family and environment. But the inner genius, as you've called it, the evolving power within us is something else entirely and it's often not social. It can be anti-social, but it's really not based on social or external dictates at all so it feels very uncomfortable. It produces anxiety when set against the society.

So what feels good is often what's leading us away from our authentic self and what feels like an uncomfortable challenge is what's leading us toward it. So we are having a conflict with that and we need some kind of assistance or boost to focus more on our inner unfoldment.

Part VI

Well, Susan's thoughts have struck a chord. Nice. I'll include a couple of more comments, but let me just say that from a yogic viewpoint, both "checking in" and "not checking in" are the two sides of the coin here, the thesis and antithesis. Susan inner guru rightly brought her to a person who opposed her initial idea, and helped her increase her freedom through synthesis. Which is the point. Putting the two together should bring us to the numinous middle ground that is often described as "letting go." Neither tack by itself is adequate, but both together reveal the Absolute, or the liberated state. In other words, thinking "I should always measure myself," (a very normal condition) is constraining, but "I shouldn't

measure myself," is also inadequate, because as John hints below we can't go on autopilot without a lot of solid preparation. Not all our inner forces are benign. Susan's teacher got it right: we should simply act freely, neither checking or not checking up. Both stand outside the pure unitive act, but squeezed together they explode into it. Simple, eh?

Scotty wrote:

Excellent dialogue you two, I'm thinking of Ramana Maharshi's description of that edge between what seems "right" in the transactional world and, what "feels" right (sometimes, no matter how bitter the taste) in our "inner authority" world, both an illusion ultimately due to the law of Constant Change!

John H added these very important nuances, and we are reminded that fiction is also true:

This is very thoughtful material from Susan. I guess my question to the question raised - if I don't check in on myself and try to identify what I am thinking, what I am feeling - and so on - how can I then identify and give a name to forces that might otherwise be driving me? Is it best to be angry, or better to be angry and know I am angry? I guess, is it better to know why I am doing something? It's not control for control sake I'm after, but to not let some of my passions drive me to do very wrong things, I guess.

As for defining myself as an appraiser or whatever - it's pretty much a social norm. The first thing people ask me after what my name is "what do you do?" I've been tempted to give pithy answers and i sometimes do. In fact, I've been known to tell people that my name is Holden Caulfield - nobody gets it, or very few I should say. I quit doing that, though, when the children of the real Holden Caulfield contacted me. Boy was I embarrassed. And here, I thought he was purely fiction.