

6/4/13
Verse 21

Endearment is one kind; this is dear to me;
your preference is for something else;
thus, many objects of endearment are differentiated and confusion
comes;
what is dear to you is dear to another also; this should be known.

Free translation:

This thing is dear to me. To another, something else is dear. Thus there comes confusion in the appraisal of the correct value of the objects of endearment. One should know that his experience of happiness is essentially the same as another's.

Nataraja Guru's:

A certain kind is dear, that is dear to me; what is one's own desire
And what is to another, so variously thus puzzlement prevails
Round each object of desire: what to oneself is dear
That verily know to be another's desire also.

A gorgeous evening and Oregon's prized strawberries just beginning to peak combined to usher us into the second stage of our journey through Atmopadesa Satakam. There was so much excited conversation around the table beforehand that I almost had to bodily drag everyone into our living room/spaceship, but finally we were underway again, under a lingering sunset that was still glowing at the closing chant.

The twenty-first verse commences a short, profound section on ethics, which Narayana Guru penetrates to the essence of. As with personal development, the gist is the integration of unity and multiplicity. Nitya's examples make the distinction abundantly clear. He concludes, "When we shift our focus from particular

objects back to the Self, we will stop getting so confused on this issue.” On specific details we may disagree, often strenuously, but if we know the essence we can live in harmony.

It’s very rewarding to put this into practice in our everyday life, and that was the basis of our discussion. Since all the participants have been working at this for a long time, there was plenty of insight, along with plenty of rueful admissions of the times when we forget and get caught up in the details. It gives a whole new spin to the adage, “The Devil is in the details.”

Deb mentioned that this was a valuable lesson every time she heard it—it is never inappropriate. She can easily accept it, yet when she is in a conflict situation, she highlights the details and the unity slips into the shadows. The challenge is to continue to be aware of what Nitya calls the “golden thread” linking us all together. It is elusively subtle because it is invisible. Only the details are visible.

The dilemma is made more acute because the people we are in conflict with oftentimes do not have a sustaining concept of unity themselves. Their faces are jammed up against actuality, so they are not going to help in the way the Guru recommends. Their intensity automatically puts us on the defensive, resonating with our own inner history of isolation. Our challenge is to remain neutral under the pressure. Most of the time we don’t have to fight back, we can step out of the blast zone or even laugh (inwardly, please). Our study has taught us that we all carry heavy baggage, and most conflicts have their roots in our habitual likes and dislikes. As philosophers we can peer into the depths of the people we are wrestling with to discern their real motivations and the sources of their discontent, and if we work with those tendrils we can sometimes produce a breakthrough. Just as we have been doing all along with our self.

Not surprisingly, Nitya was a master at that. In conflict situations he would often bring up something that seemed shockingly irrelevant, because he was addressing the real cause, not the one the person (and we) imagined. His accuser would be

stunned, and stop arguing to try to make sense of the new framework. Somehow Nitya was able to turn them back on themselves, to elicit the unconscious motivation that was driving them, which would stop them in their tracks and occasionally even bring on tears of remorse and relief. Those present could almost see the air going out of their balloon, the anger dissipating. That's my idea of a guru miracle—not manifesting watches. Because he looked beyond the surface issues, Nitya could see the deeper motivations that were driving us. He usually left it to us to do our own work, but was not averse to stepping in when he was really needed. If you confronted him you were inviting a real absolutist blast.

When you undertake a serious course of study like *That Alone*, it isn't all sweetness and light, though there's plenty of that too. The early stages include the dismantling of a number of ugly aspects of the social mask. Those of us in the class were a pretty ordinary bunch, not more selfish or crazy than any other group of people, but you can read hints in the text that our veneers of respectability were slipping. Nitya's example here of the childish bickering "He's *my* guru!" "No, he's *mine*!" were directed at the egotistic taint that was being exposed as we progressed. It sounds absurd, and it is, but it is also a growth stage, or can be. It takes a measure of fearlessness to let our slips show. Those who successfully suppress their selfish impulses may also be suppressing their chance to bring them out in the open and throw them away.

Michael talked about some of the politics at his work, which are not dissimilar to the kinds of ego trips we had around the *That Alone* class. It sounds like he is standing up for sanity in an atmosphere that also resembles a middle school ego fest. His attitude to the petty complaints he heard was "So what? What are you going to gain by what you're trying to do?" It may be that his coworkers never ask themselves such rudimentary questions. Eric amplified Michael's idea of how to weigh in by advising that if you don't respond to gossip, the person gossiping loses their

energy and it fizzles out. It's hard to not respond, but it's worth it. There is no one solution to being caught in chaos, we have to blaze a new trail in each situation, but in all of them if we minimize our reactions and don't stoke other peoples' fires, it will help.

We were joined by Jake, a welcome addition who will be in the vicinity for some time. He is now a regular contributor to the class notes, a real lover of That Alone. He has young grandchildren in the Portland area, and noticed how they constantly play roles and try out different scenarios, but then quickly drop them and move on to the next. They aren't burdened with the clinging, with what Salvador Dali painted as *The Persistence of Memory*. The sad fate of adults is to get attached to our role-playing and become convinced it defines who we are. The gurus want us to remember that who we really are is the Absolute, the infinite Self, and that our temporary identities, while amusing and sometimes even necessary, should be kept in that perspective. We should play our games, only without attachment, like children. When we identify with our perishable parts, we go from death to death, as Narayana Guru puts it in *Darsanamala*, describing *saccidananda*:

All is indeed existence, consciousness, and pure happiness;
in this there is not even a trace of the many;
he who sees this as many
goes from death to death. (II, 10)

Jake's observations prompted several revealing stories about how enslaved people can be to their little likes and dislikes. All these should be referred back to ourself, so that we learn from them. People who cherish their preferences are not along on this trip with us.

Paul did this with aplomb. He recognized how he becomes defensive in situations, and as Deb said, we get defensive exactly where we are attached. Without realizing it, we protect our sore spots not only from others, but from ourselves. Paul recalled Nitya's early advice to Deb she related in the last class: "I hope

that some day you won't have such a strong need to defend yourself." That goes for all of us. Paul thought that meekness was an ideal antidote to our urge to defend. He has decided to meekly accept criticism without defending himself, an admirable tactic. For him, this includes not offering advice or at least quelling the urge to advise, which (he is right) is often a veiled form of defensiveness. One of our most subtle defenses is to deflect attention by redirecting it to the problems of others. Yet if we can maintain neutrality, our advice will be of value, and not out of place. It should be offered if requested, whether tacitly or overtly.

Our defensiveness was put in place as children, when we were either beaten or otherwise humiliated. "Likes and dislikes," sounds kind of trivial, but we have always liked being loved and disliked being hurt, and a lot of things in our past really hurt a lot. They went deep into our psyche at the foundational level, and are by no means easy to root out. People are often willing to go to extremes in their own defense, because the unconscious memory of the pain they once suffered is so intense. It explains why the intensity of people's reactions routinely exceeds what is called for: they aren't just dealing with the present, but an icy shadow of the past is throwing its chill onto the scene. It can drive us mad.

Again and again in this study we are being helped to find our neutral ground, the place where we can act without the conditioning of the past coloring our vision. Sitting quietly in a neutral state deactivates our habits, de-energizes our defenses. It's really the only authentic position we can interact from; otherwise our preferences significantly diminish our clarity.

Jan talked about how families are sometimes dysfunctional (she is too polite to say *always* dysfunctional), and they are expert at keeping us in places where we are not at our best. Not surprisingly, this brought a din of recognition.

Jan's insight highlighted the value of a guru: because they are abiding in a neutral state, if we can establish a bipolarity with them we can begin to intuit what the neutral state is like. After the initial painfully shedding of our snakeskin, neutrality turns into a

profoundly delicious state, or non-state. There are few if any truly balanced people in our everyday life, so we are all knocking each other around and supplying each other with misunderstandings. In the class we are using a book as a kind of ersatz guru, struggling to create a virtual pole of neutrality to relate ourselves to. It may be second best, but it is not bad. Not bad at all. If we take it seriously enough.

Susan's best revelation of the night was that "first you need to have less of an adversarial relational with yourself." We are busy beating up on ourselves, trying to make ourselves invulnerable, i.e. acceptable to everyone. That's a fools errand if ever there was one! If we became acceptable in our own eyes, we might find that we are already acceptable to our friends and family, they just weren't able to get through to us because we were so busy trying to squelch our vitality. Somehow Susan's insight got through our defenses, and several of us sheepishly felt that we were maintaining an internal adversarial relationship with ourself, despite everything we had learned.

Paul is a good example. He has come a long way in emancipating himself and transforming into a wise human being, but he retains a strong streak of self-deprecation. Men in our society learn to do this early in life, because it does deflect criticism. "Before anyone else can criticize me, I'll do it myself and steal their thunder." It works. But what if we are no longer in such a hostile environment? Shouldn't we give up the ruse, and possible even lighten up a bit? Why not?

This was my first conscious recognition of the homonym guise and guys. Guys are always maintaining their guise, their protective covering. Guys are only known as their guise—who they really are is hidden from everyone, including themselves. Maybe it's time to get over it. We can still know we're flawed and all that, but we're also okay, perhaps even admirable once in awhile. This goes for gals too, or course.

Jake pointed out that we are always looking to those around us for validation, and instead encountering opposition. This should

tip us off that our validation has to come from within. Michael agreed that often enough we are our own worst enemies. Deb thought it was a measure of how bifurcated we are, how separated from the unity that is our core reality. So true!

Susan spoke for all of us when she told us about finding her nearly adult kids hurling curses at each other. She so badly wants to be a peacemaker and set them straight! She gets caught up in trying to fix the problem and sort out who's right and who's wrong, and it doesn't help at all. Sometimes siblings just like to fight—it clears the air like a thunderstorm, so long as they let go afterwards. We pray they will, but once they hit double digits in age, our influence is severely limited. It is their life to learn to live, not ours. Susan has resolved to let them be, but something in her keeps rising to the bait. That's okay, because our hearts will always be tempted. But now she can see the hidden fishhook inside the bait, and no longer wants to take a bite.

We have said it often enough, but it is easy to forget, that the conflicts we find ourselves in are valuable teaching moments if we can extricate ourselves from the immediacy of the confusion. Our reactions show us where our areas of tension are, our hidden wounds that continue to darken the present. We should treat them as blessings, and not react with aversion, or at least not give in to the first reaction of aversion (or compulsion) we feel. That first reaction is the samskara bubbling up. Instead of letting it drive us, we can hold it up and examine it, at which time it begins to lose its attraction. By doing this we gradually regain our lost neutrality, which is a terrific boon not only to us but to everyone we come in contact with. Nitya sums this up beautifully in his commentary:

If we can approach life from the point of view of the all-seeing witness, which is not tainted with incipient memories or proliferating interests, then we will see the good of all, the general good, in which what pleases me is also included. This is not attained, as some mistakenly think, by summarily dismissing what pleases me as an individual.

Nitya makes an eloquent case that self-suppression is an unfortunate but common technique in spiritual life. Neutrality and suppression are not the same thing, but often enough they are not properly distinguished. Suppression is the flip side of selfish aggression; both are forms of ego dominance.

Deb believes that *tolerance* is a cloaked word of misunderstanding. Nitya's commentary made her realize that we are inextricably interwoven with others, and this is very different from tolerance. The subtext of tolerance is "I'm right and you're wrong, but I'll let you stick to your wrong opinion." Of course, this is much better than "I'll kill you for your wrong opinion," but it still leaves a lot to be desired. The gurus want us to rise way beyond tolerance to mutual respect and admiration, based on the recognition of our underlying unity. That is fair to everyone, and a blissful place for the center of our own operations.

Part II

From *Neither This Nor That But . . . Aum:*

Being is one thing and seeing is another. Seeing is a partial experience, it neither highlights a concept nor synchronizes a concept with a percept. Even to the wisest of men a rat is a rat and a cat is a cat. However, through an absolute empathy, a person can transcend the conditional limitations of name and form. In fact, this transcendence vouchsafes the transmutation of names and forms, and everything will remain the same to him even after achieving perfect transcendence. The difference in experience is not in belonging to his act of perception or conception, but in his being one with the existential unity of everything and in the holistic appreciation of the unity of everything substantiated by unbroken consciousness. The worth of each in itself becomes, as it were, the reflection of the one sun in several mirrors.

The kind of programming and conditioning to which we are exposed in our everyday life is such that sooner or later we become alienated from our beingness and we become identified with very many

personal likes and dislikes, individual things, and conceptual ideas. Recognition of dear values in a thing, a person, or an ideology alienated from total beingness is like a bee in the bonnet which cannot be shared universally with all.

When two people have their separate likes and dislikes, a clash or a conflict of interest arises between them. When the same people find their union at a deeper level, such as in their beingness, their conceptual identities undergo a radical transformation so that their knowledge can be in tune with their beingness. For instance, when a person loves another person intensely, even though the other person's habits and preferences are contrary to his likes and dislikes, the sheer love for the other acts as an alchemy; it blends their lives in such a way that both of them come to appreciate the same values. This is not happening from above by making rational programmes of unifying their interest, but it happens almost unconsciously from beneath, as it were.

The discovery of the full worth of one's life is accomplished by returning to the one beingness to which everything and everyone alike belongs. In this rediscovery, one learns to appreciate that his happiness is implied in the happiness of all, and the happiness of others is as much his concern as his own happiness.

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Nataraja Guru's:

THIS verse has to be read with the next one, which together complete the plus and minus aspects of the same unitive thought. In this verse it is the negative aspect of complication which is touched upon, while in the next the positively dialectical resolution is brought into evidence.

Life expresses itself through attractions and repulsions, likes or dislikes, preferences or rejections, strong or weak.

When we come to examine the different kinds of interests or value-appreciations that human beings generally are capable of having, we can think of them in four different kinds of combinations.

There is:

- 1) the self that relates itself to outside objects or
- 2) to a certain specific quality outside itself, as when we say, 'I like a rose', or 'I like beauty'.
- 3) When we say 'this is my preference' we have a personal and subjectively directed movement of interest. As against this self-directed kind of interest there are
- 4) interests which have their accent on the opposite pole of the non-self.

In all four cases we have the field or seeds of confusion, puzzlement, or discontent. In fact all mental troubles may be said to have their origin in such possible confusions.

The verse ends with a generalized axiomatic statement which could be said to enunciate the basis for all ethics of right or morally correct conduct. How morality stems out of philosophical considerations is a question that has often puzzled thinkers and writers. In such a context one often hears of a voice within called conscience or the will of God. The categorical imperative of the philosopher Kant corresponds to the same moral or ethical principle innately present in man. In the context of the Bhagavad Gita we have the notion of the sameness (samya) that the yogi should see with all beings because of their being analogous with the self that is within each of us. Modern phenomenology, axiology (the science of values), and eudaimonology (eu- = happiness or well-being, daimon = spirit; the science of well-being) adopt the same method of putting together subjective and objective value factors to harmonise inner and outer life. Equating somehow the Self with the non-Self so as to arrive at unitive or

non-conflicting interests, is the method that underlies this way of solving the question of morals.

After having systematically laid the foundations required epistemologically (i.e., in the science of the ways of knowing) and methodologically (i.e., in the science of means and disciplines) for a discussion of ethical values, the Guru here devotes the next few verses to the basic considerations of a morality that he intends to be broad-based on a proper philosophy.

This work is not meant to be a code of ethics and is to be kept free from degenerating into a mere 'dharma sastra' (textbook on right conduct) or 'smriti' (remembered application of heard wisdom) which would belong more to the side of action rather than to understanding. The present work is devoted mainly to Self-realization and should be free from the social and obligatory aspects of morality. Therefore the author contents himself with broad generalisations which have more of a wisdom-interest than one of obligatory social action. (A regular Narayana Smriti has been compiled by some of his disciples at the instance of the Guru.)

'WHAT TO ONESELF IS DEAR, ETC.': The axiomatic conclusion of the verse merely draws attention to the philosophical verity that there is no fundamental difference between the desires, appetites or aspirations of one man and another. All persons need food, sleep, waking activities or companionship, involving many individual items of interest. Whether it be man, woman or child, a civilised or a primitive human's needs have a basic uniformity of character. Although, considered in detail, tastes might differ, basic satisfactions depend on items that are alike. A wheat-eater and a rice-eater are both consumers of cereals. Looked at in this way, the basic axiom of good conduct reduces itself to one law: namely, one is right when one's own taste accords with what is truly human, or conversely, to choose what one should rightfully prefer in life, one

should be guided by what would be conducive to the happiness of humanity in general.

Part III

Peggy and Michael did find a reference to connotation, at dictionary.com, from the adjective connate. It's an interesting word, meaning "related to birth or origin, inborn." However, it doesn't fit with the intent of "I know it," the egocentric version of *chit*. I stand by my assessment that the intent is connotation, and we either misheard it or Nitya misspoke it.

Happily, looking into this led me to a quote by Eleanor Roosevelt, very much in the spirit of our study: "Somewhere along the line of development we discover who we really are, and then we make our real decision for which we are responsible. Make that decision primarily for yourself because you can never really live anyone else's life, not even your child's. The influence you exert is through your own life and what you become yourself."

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Deb delivered a complaint in person about the notes, that she doesn't remember any of the conflicts I mentioned during the original class. She is right that the prevailing atmosphere was sweet and wonderful; also very intense. The conflicts mostly happened in the shadows. People would come into Nitya's room and air their grievances in private, and if he spoke about it he never mentioned names. This could also be taken symbolically. We maintain a happy face in public, and only vent when we think we're in cloistered space. In any case, Nitya was addressing our personal conflicts, but the point was first and foremost universal. We don't care what A gossiped about B in Portland, Oregon in 1977, but the principle is one we can and should take to heart at all times.

This was brought home to me today reading an article in the latest Scientific American (June 2013), about the subtle effects of

prejudice on academic performance. In *Armor Against Prejudice*, Ed Yong reports on stereotype threat, “the fear of failing in a way that reinforces derogatory stereotypes of one’s social group.” Briefly, psychologists have identified a universal fear in young people that they are inferior and others have an advantage over them. Prejudice aggravates the effect, and has a measurable impact, and of course it hits persecuted minorities hardest. The most fascinating feature of the article is that some very simple strategies have been devised to mitigate the harm, despite the chronic entrenchment of prejudice in society.

It isn’t just that one group or another is inferior, we are all inferior one way or another, and we tend to obsess about it:

To date, hundreds of studies have found evidence of stereotype threat in all manner of groups. It afflicts students from poorer backgrounds in academic tests and men in tasks of social sensitivity. White students suffer from it when pitted against Asian peers in math tests or against black peers in sports. In many of these studies, the strongest students suffer the greatest setbacks. The ones who are most invested in succeeding are most likely to be bothered by a negative stereotype and most likely to underperform as a result. Stereotype threat is nothing if not painfully ironic.

The process has been well analyzed: prejudice causes anxiety, which undercuts motivation and lowers expectations. “People tend to overthink actions that would otherwise be automatic and become more sensitive to cues that might indicate discrimination. An ambiguous expression can be misread as a sneer, and even one’s own anxiety can become a sign of immanent failure. Minds also wander, and self-control weakens.”

Stanford University’s Geoffrey Cohen has achieved impressive results with a stunningly simple and inexpensive program: he has people consider what is important to them and write about why it matters for 15 minutes. Doing so boosted

students' self-confidence and immunized them against stereotype threat to a surprising degree.

If kids are taught in middle school that these feelings are common to everyone and go away over time, it has a tremendous impact. Cohen collaborated with another Stanford professor, Greg Walton, providing kids with survey statistics and quotes from older students that show that feelings of inferiority are common to everyone no matter what their race, and that they eventually go away. It helps them stop framing their abilities in terms of race and develop heightened respect for their own abilities. In one experiment:

Walton and Cohen tested their hour-long exercise with college students in their first spring term. Three years later, when students graduated, the achievement gap between blacks and whites had been halved. The black students were also happier and healthier than their peers who did not take part in Walton's exercise. In the past three years they had made fewer visits to the doctor. Walton acknowledges that such a simple exercise may look trivial to an outsider. But, he says for students who are "actively worried about whether they fit in, the knowledge that those concerns are shared and temporary is actually very powerful."

Many of us in the original That Alone class also had doubts about our worth. That jostling for the Guru's favor was the result of inferiority complexes, amplified by the competitive basis of our culture. He was applying a broad version of the simple programs of these psychologists, helping all of us to gain self-esteem, and realize that we were the captains of our fate, knowing that we would certainly grow. He treated everyone unitively, as being equally worthy and capable. And we blossomed under his benign care.

Not only do we all have our likes and dislikes, we have our strengths and weaknesses. Verse 21 encourages us to be glad that

others have different strengths and weaknesses than we do, and to be supportive and compassionate about people's sensitivities. It's much easier if we are assured we will grow stronger as we go along, in whatever way best suits our abilities.

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Jake's commentary:

In Nitya's commentary on this verse, he concludes by way of an anecdote about Mao Zedong and his famous plea to "let a million flowers bloom" in China rather than the single Red one of Soviet communism. The larger point of his example is that truth takes many forms and needs to be allowed its space: "There is plenty of room."

This political reference contains within it the contradictions and difficulties inherent in one's holding open the space necessary for allowing others to express/live in those pieces of the truth they are capable of perceiving. Many Americans, for example, might find the citing of Mao as representing any kind of virtue at all both reprehensible and hypocritical. The number of dead created in his name speaks for itself. On the other hand, the same can be said of the many historical figures claiming a more traditionally religious righteousness as they eliminated the heathen.

We live in a world of partial truths, where pieces of the Absolute are perceived by individuals isolated by their own devices, and that general context constitutes the subject of the larger discussion Nitya offers in his commentary on the first four lines of the guru's verse. In that discussion, he drills down into how we, for the most part, get to the point that we would, to note the earlier Mao example, dismiss out of hand a glimmer of truth because of its partiality.

Nitya begins by explaining *experience* and then moves on to *reality*. The two domains persevere as long as we inhabit bodies and live in them where we do. Experience, he writes, breaks into

two categories: internal (ideas, memories, sensations) and external (things, people, and so on). In both cases, the subject is an *I* we construct (ego) that breaks into three parts—I, my idea, and what is not I (outside). The fourth element in this model is the unlit shining lamp of the eternal within us all, the Karu, the eternal witness, the oceanic oneness common to all manifestation. When the first three elements are perceived through and founded on the eternal oneness of the fourth, we are liberated from the fragmentation implicit in our focus on the transient nature of the first three. By concentrating on our bi-polar relationship with the Absolute, we can see the rest of experience as the passing show it is, a drama broken into the triad of past, present, and future; here, there, beyond; the knower, the known, the knowledge; enjoyer, enjoyed, enjoyment. Once we've forgotten our eternal identity and the pieces of experience appear scattered across the landscape, so to speak, it is very easy to attach to a detail, blow it out of proportion, and preach its virtue. In this world of *I* ego, conflicts are never ending. True believers are expert at denial and repression because they have to be in order to cling to a conviction anchored in dissolving sand.

As the guru and Nitya have repeated in previous verses/commentaries, our triadic experiences are further colored by *vasanas/samskaras* that come between what *is* (real) and what *ought to be* (illusion). In Indian philosophy, reality contains the “three unifying aspects”: *sat, cit, ananda* or *saccidananda*. The first term denotes that which is perceptually common such as I, you, the sky, the mountains, etc. The second term refers to our being aware of that which exists, and the *ananda* constitutes the value we place on those things we are aware of. In its pure form, reality is the oneness of the three aspects that is both blissful and whole. But our ego tends to break apart the elements, as do our external senses and mind, making them recognizable for a limited differentiated consciousness. The three aspects become distortions: *asti* (this is), *bhati* (I know it), and *priyam* (I love it, or vice versa). Having lost sight of our bi-polarity with the Absolute

and its wholeness in saccidananda, the ego attaches to all kinds of partial truths in this disconnected pile, a project that locates the highest value in that which is external. In other words, the internal ego processes—that depend on a forgetting of our eternal light in order to operate—aggravate that very condition as they proceed, thereby making it ever-more difficult to wake up the more enmeshed we become.

A true believer can never be argued out of a position he/she was never argued into in the first place. That truism suggests the partial and transient foundation on which egoic arguments rest, battles for which there are no resolutions beyond an endless shifting of premises. And it is this all too common form of blind and unstable conviction that Nitya addresses in his closing paragraphs where he references Christ's teachings on the mansions of his Father's house, the unlimited possibilities for those who pay attention to the un-changing oneness at the core—for those who allow everyone, including themselves, the space to find that Truth.

Part IV

Jean wanted us to remember that Mao was no angel, and there may have been a dark undercurrent to the statement Nitya cited. She also sent some great thoughts on Part III, emphasizing the importance of the personal factor:

Thank you for the positive, wonderful information from Scientific American. I've finally figured out that I can access magazine articles directly on Internet, even when the magazine is unavailable to me. I'll read the whole article later, but just found the following, too:

These promising results, however, raise a critical question: How do we scale up social-psychological interventions to reach more than students in a single school, but also those in an entire school district, state or even the entire nation? As Lisbeth Schorr suggested in her books *Within Our Reach* and *Common Purpose*,

the attention to detail, knowledge of theory and human touch that make interventions work at a small scale can be lost when they are scaled up. In the process key details can also be missed or key elements changed. For instance, values affirmations might have little effect if given in a haphazard way or belonging interventions might do more harm than good if they are seen as offering only platitudes rather than credibly conveying the important message. Finally, it would be foolhardy to assert that social-psychological interventions are magic bullets that work in all places at all times. They are rather context dependent. They work under certain conditions and function as catalysts interacting with existing situational factors. The interventions are not panaceas. Stated differently, the interventions unleash the positive forces already in the student and the environment. They obviously will not compensate for inadequate infrastructure or a violent neighborhood. But they can catalyze large gains under the right conditions, and they may even be necessary for the full benefits of larger reforms to emerge.

I liked this added comment, too:

This article is very pertinent to my own development in life. For most of my life to the age of fifty I always felt as if adults were far above me in almost all ways. It was not until I reached fifty plus a year or two that I suddenly found out that although many people were better than I was I could equal many others and so very suddenly felt I was an equal to most people (read adults) and I could compete on an equal footing. My abilities might be different to others, but my abilities were equal to other people in other ways. For the first time in my life I felt as if I was an adult. Thinking about it I was astounded this inferior feeling had gone for so long, but it was very real. Now I know I can equal others no matter their education or skills or knowledge. I am different, but I am equal.... a wonderful feeling. No longer am I that small boy

looking up, but an adult looking across to others on an equal footing.

I wonder how many other adults have had this experience at this late age (fifty)? Now at age ninety-two it is still a good feeling. My body is a shell of its old self, but my mind is still sharp and active.

D. Meek

Jean again:

It makes me think of my brother, who struggled with school (unknown dyslexia) and earned his GED later in life. But when he realized that his mechanical abilities and understanding were far better than most everyone else's—he could dismantle and put together a whole motorcycle at a very young age—when he realized his own mechanical genius, it did wonders for his self-esteem, though it's too bad it took so long.