

10/29/13
Verse 37

The other is replete with difficulty;
and it is hard to win over without the power to discriminate the
unbroken;
having won over the difficult,
attain to that discrimination which is opposed to sense interests.

Free Translation:

It is hard to win over the obduracy of 'the other' without having achieved a vivid vision which leaves nothing outside of it. By conquering the power of the indistinctiveness of 'this', which forces consciousness to split into specificity, one should gain the wisdom of integral unity. That alone will gain one access to pure wisdom, which leaves no room either to objectivize or to have the agency of a subject.

Nataraja Guru's:

To subdue even somewhat the obduracy of the 'other'
Is hard indeed without wisdom's limitless power;
By such do gain mastery over it and unto Her who is Wisdom
The anti-sensuous One, close access attain.

Verse 37 is another of those perfect essays that needs no elucidation, only a careful scrutiny. It made for a free and easy exchange in which we honored the ego surge that rises up in all of us as a defense of our honor, and laughingly conceded that it was of dubious veracity and value. We could only wonder what the species would look like if everyone felt safe enough to overcome that negative impulse.

We live in societies grounded in archaic fears, where every new thing has always been treated as a potential threat to survival, and our brains have come to be wired accordingly. Karma being

what it is, one man's defense is the next man's offense. This tells us that the way to peace is not through stronger defenses but via the opposite, an undefended openness.

We first acknowledged the extent of the mania of fear and self-protection rampant on all sides. It is a truly rare person who opts for fearlessness. We are deeply convinced that we are nothing, unimportant, and our happiness is wholly dependent on us becoming something other than what we are. I want to quote Nitya at length here, because he succinctly epitomizes our dilemma. I remember this blowing my mind on the first hearing:

Anya, this differentiating factor, is always running amuck and creating problems for us. In fact, the whole world is in an eternal state of strife because of otherness. The Guru says that somehow we have to triumph over this great fear of the other and bring all to a sameness. He gives us a key idea here, *visaya virodhini*, that which is opposed to a sensual orientation. *Visayam* means projecting the source of your happiness onto a thing and thinking it is the thing that makes you happy. Therein lies the crux of the problem. Once you think, "Without this thing I can never be happy," you have already alienated your happiness. You have created a chasm between your present state and a prospective future where happiness can be encountered. By default you have decided that at this moment you are not at all happy; you can be so only in the future. You feel that somehow you have to move away from the present to the future, and you won't be happy until then. You worry that you might miss this thing in the future in which your happiness is invested, and that your search will be a total failure and an absolute disappointment for you. Thus we alienate our happiness and postpone it via the *visaya* of the object of happiness.

If, on the other hand, you know that you are the source of all happiness and there is nothing to seek on the outside, the outer thing becomes associated with happiness only because you allow it to participate in your happiness. Discrimination is the key to making this happen. What kind of discrimination? The Guru says *akhandha*

viveka sakti, it is not a discrimination which makes a thing different from you, but a discrimination which makes something also you or you also that. It is a unifying discrimination, not a separating one. If ‘this’ and ‘this’ and ‘this’ can all be brought under ‘This’, and then ‘This’ and ‘I’ are brought together as one, then you get it.

This is the reason Narayana Guru asked us in the very first verse to see the common link between the outer world and the inner world, which he described as *karu*, a universal consciousness which is the divine manifestor of everything.

I well recall Nitya coming out with “If ‘this’ and ‘this’ and ‘this’ can all be brought under ‘This’, and then ‘This’ and ‘I’ are brought together as one, then you get it.” It sounded like utter gobbledygook, and I think he was as surprised as we were—it just came bursting out. But he laughed out loud in delight, because it really was exactly on target. Dialectics in action.

Michael pointed out that the part quoted above on discrimination fits into the discussion we had earlier about wisdom’s function, in Verse 35. Where we have learned to think of discrimination as dividing, the spiritual discrimination unites: we are intelligently discriminating against divisiveness. That’s the route to healing our primary ailment, of reclaiming our alienated happiness. Then the brilliant suns of realization can blaze forth once again.

First off we need to examine how we have basic assumptions about our unworthiness and so construct an alternative persona to our true nature. It’s as if there’s a ubiquitous fear that the whole house of cards of society will crumble if we accept who we are: the entire educational system, not to mention the economic structures, are energized by dissatisfaction, where happiness is projected to the ever-receding future. Almost no one would dare to posit that happiness was dependent on their state of mind in the present. It’s beyond radical, it can’t even be admitted. Thinking that way is harshly ridiculed, if it is ever even acknowledged. Narayana Guru’s vision is almost unheard of in the modern milieu.

We have come to believe that following certain steps will lead to restoration of our peace and happiness, but the very concept of taking steps toward a goal takes them away from us. Using an entirely different mindset we have to restore our relationship with our self, which is where peace and happiness reside—the only place they *could* reside. As Deb put it, “what we’re looking for is the inner beingness that runs through everything.” She admitted that our habitual response to everything is a surge of defensiveness, because the ego is always concerned with its public image.

So we live in a world where everything militates against our being comfortable with our self, and overcoming the torrential cascade of distraction, both inner and outer, is a severe challenge. As Nataraja Guru puts it in his commentary, “The ‘same’ or the vertical aspect has to gain an absolute status before it can prevail against the distracting forces of sense-interests. Half-hearted efforts at affirming Self-realization can therefore only fail.” You’ve got to really mean it, because our default setting is to be displaced from our self. We are very fortunate to have a small group where such radical ideas are taken as legitimate and given full support, but nevertheless we all experience the upsurge of our ego when confronted with anything that we imagine might knock it off its pedestal. Everyone chuckled ruefully in recognition of that familiar feeling of the ego defending itself, and noted how their family and friends encouraged notions of separateness and superiority, essentially training the ego to put on a false front. No wonder Narayana Guru is always asking who there is to know these core truths. It’s almost vanishingly rare.

The Judeo-Christian ethic begins with God as a remote entity: truth is absolutely elsewhere. By now, much of Eastern thought has bought into the same displacement. In fact, Nitya explicitly warns about that side of it here:

Swamis from India may come and say, “Look at this candle. Put it on a stand at eye level and stare at it.” Or they will ask

you to breathe in a certain way. When you get exhausted from breathing hard, what else can you do but lie back? You might imagine you have gained something. The world is full of trickery. Someone finds out a way to trick your nervous system, and then they sell it and patent the technique. But there is nothing spiritual about any of these things.

Programs are relatively easy: just plod along following the steps. Confronting our misapprehensions is not. Our ego deflects us away from it all the time. We have learned to deny our self and instead offer the world a plausible image, something we anticipate that others will buy into because they are lying in just the same way we are. Psychologists are becoming more aware of this universal tendency to dissimulation, and devising clever experiments to reveal it. The current issue (Nov/Dec 2013) of *Scientific American Mind* has several articles emphasizing various aspects of our often unwitting self-delusion. One study author concludes, “People often have knee-jerk moral intuitions and only come up with explanations for these intuitions after the fact. Many times apparent causal reasoning is simply post hoc justification.” There are a number of experiments that demonstrate the way we frame an issue has a significant impact on our interpretation of it. Another author concludes, “Metaphors subtly structure the way [people] understand the issue being described.” This insight should encourage us to improve our narrative, which is also precisely what Narayana Guru and Nitya are working so hard to help us accomplish.

Speaking of metaphors, Paul related this verse to one of his favorites. What do we gain by cursing the darkness? The only thing that dispels darkness is light. We have to turn on the light, and instantly the darkness is no longer a problem.

Sounds easy, but many of us recalled how we had been meticulously trained in the joys of cursing the darkness. Making fun of other people—or worse—has been raised to a high art form in many quarters. Doing it provides some minimal compensation

for our own sense of inadequacy, but in the long run it is a failed technique. It makes you feel okay for a short while, but pretty soon you need another dose, because it doesn't actually address the real issue.

So we're trained to fight and disdain others, to keep them at a distance. Such a strategy is a formula for eternal strife. For a better solution, I can't do better than reprint Nitya's concluding remarks, reprising the essence of the study. As noted before, there was a streak of competition and conflict in the air around Nitya and the ongoing work we were doing with him. Many people feel that if they just make a convincing argument, or are stronger or better or nicer, then they win, and everybody will fall at their feet. Nitya wanted to disabuse us of that type of fantasy, and showed exactly how to bring in an opposite tactic to cure ourselves:

The ultimate thing is to become *saumya*, which means finding the quietness within you. It is by attaining sama, sameness, that you become quiet inside. This is to be cultivated throughout. Each day begins a new series of encounters. Each encounter is to be taken as a challenge to reestablish your inner serenity, inner quietness, inner sense of sameness through an act of adoration, an attitude of worship and a sense of the sublime.

There is no need for you to win all the time. Your greater victory lies in your acceptance of defeat, allowing the other to win. You may be in an argument. What does it matter if you win or not? Give the other person the chance to win. Even if he uses some falsehood, when you allow him to win he rethinks the situation. In his heart of hearts he knows he did not deserve the victory. He knows the truth of your silence. You do not become egoistic and you don't make the other person egoistic either. It will chastise him as well as purify him.

Thus, through the cultivation of silence, sameness and serenity, you come to a unitive understanding from within. This brings peace and harmony. Where there is peace and harmony, love spontaneously comes. When you give yourself into the hands of grace, the hands of

the Divine, things which are difficult to attain become abundantly possible. Then you can say you have attained the discrimination of the unbroken, by which every 'this' is brought under the spell of the universal sameness.

This was a strategy Nitya himself used to tame himself in his headstrong youth, and it spoke to many of us. We secretly want to beat everyone else, and our entire education has been devoted to instilling and strengthening that desire. But winning and losing are two sides of a seriously tarnished coin. What if we could step outside that entire context of suffering? Could there be a better option? Well, yes.

I talked about how occasionally people would come to Nitya and really lambast him for some unorthodoxy or another. His response was "You don't know the half of it—I'm much worse than you think." That sometimes stopped them in their tracks. I used the perhaps misleading phrase, turning the other cheek. Mick took exception, because to him that would be a kind of submissiveness. He advocated finding a way for everyone to be a winner. The fighting mind doesn't want to lose, and it doesn't want to be told what to do. He felt neutrality could be practiced without being submissive, and that would make you a winner, which is fine if you can maintain your neutrality. Unfortunately, most of us can't. We react. That's where yoga comes in: you note your state of mind, the ego reaction, and then consciously countervail upon it with an opposing state. When the plus and minus balance out, a dynamic neutrality is attained. It is far from submissive. It is curative.

The trick is to remove ourselves entirely from the constraints of winning and losing. If we are the Absolute, what could we possibly win or lose? The whole thing is a hallucination. Instead, let's be present and unfearful. That's where our native happiness resides.

Our closing meditation focused on visualizing ten thousand suns in our core, radiating out and pushing our defenses out

beyond the horizon. To do that effectively we must reclaim our integrity as the source of all awareness. Only the ghostly mirages of mistaken beliefs hold us back. In our mind's eye we watch as the heat of the inner suns vaporizes them all. Aum.

Part II

Neither This Nor That But . . . Aum. Rather a weak one this time. Without the long version, there isn't much to it. Nitya must have been extra busy that morning.... Evidence that more words are often better than few or none:

We cannot go to sleep by deliberation. Sleep has to come from within us as a spontaneous fading out of our consciousness. Of course, we can put our bodies into an inert state by taking sleeping pills, but that is like committing temporary suicide. We cannot force ourselves to love anyone. Love is a tender emotion that comes naturally from our innermost self. All we can do is create a situation in which love can be nurtured. We cannot make our mind concentrate by applying brute compulsion. When a deep interest is stimulated in us, concentration comes as a natural consequence. Mind becomes peaceful only when its modulations slowly cease.

It is not easy to extricate the mind from its entanglements and free it so it can feel its oneness with the universal ground of consciousness. Each stimulus brings with it a specific form of pain and pleasure. It is not natural for the mind to transcend its affectivity so as to always remain established in the blissful state of the universal Self. Worries come with retrospective remorse or prospective anxiety. Discursive ratiocination drags the mind along idle forms of reasoning. Imagination haunts the mind and creates fantasies of all sorts. Actions sow their seeds and create chain reactions; many other diseases can bring physical and mental ailments. Even a pinprick can upset the mind. To reclaim the serenity of the soul from all these disturbances is a very difficult

feat. No one is left alone by the society of which he is an integral part. In fact, society may drive a person mad or compel him to commit suicide. We can go on and on cataloguing the potentials of *anya*. There is no end to it.

The antidote for all the above-mentioned evils is our power of discrimination. In our meditation on verse 35, we have seen how the grace of wisdom and discrimination came to the Buddha, Jesus Christ, the prophet Muhammad, Sri Ramakrishna, and Narayana Guru like ten thousand suns rising all at once in the sky of their consciousness.

We experience this world as several unrelated fragmentary bits of effects even though they have all emanated from one single cause. At the very beginning of these hundred verses of self-instruction we are advised to withhold our senses and prostrate before the supreme cause of both the inner and the outer world. In verse 13, we are advised to turn to the God who has transcended the three modalities of nature and to worship him by offering the blossoms of our mind. Only by cultivating an all-absorbing love for the Absolute will we be able to work out our final release from the compulsive obsession of *anya*.

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Nataraja Guru's commentary. Recall that methodology, epistemology and axiology are his English equivalents of *sat*, *chit* and *ananda*:

THE structure of consciousness and how it operates are dependent upon certain reciprocities, ambivalent polarities and peculiar modes which are important for the aspirant for spiritual Self-realization to understand fully. Independence and interdependence of tendencies, some of which compensate and some that come into conflict; some compromising the effect while others add up the cumulative effect according to inner laws of neurology or deeper psychology - have all to be taken into account before one could

gain final Self-realization. Here the Guru is not concerned with all the details of neurological or psychological phenomena, but only with those basic ones which give us the key to the inner workings of the modes of gaining knowledge or wisdom.

The two aspects of wisdom-functioning known as the 'same' and the 'other' have between them a subtle organic relationship, with a law of inverse proportion implicit between them. If the horizontal tendencies are accentuated the vertical ones suffer, and vice-versa. Just as pruning one branch would stimulate the growth of another, and electricity and magnetism are interdependent, we have to gain, by intuitive imagination, an idea of the structure and working modes of the process of cultivating wisdom. The 'same' which we have renamed here as the 'vertical', is pure and unrelated to sense-objects. The attractions and repulsions of things do not affect this series of tendencies. The class of tendencies which refer to the sensuous side of life, which we have tried to distinguish as the horizontal - called the 'other' in the text - tends to be strengthened at the expense of the former. Within the two categories of tendencies themselves there are polarities reflecting ambivalence so that a certain degree of relativity on the one side is countered by a corresponding degree of its opposite. The 'same' or the vertical aspect has to gain an absolute status before it can prevail against the distracting forces of sense-interests. Half-hearted efforts at affirming Self-realization can therefore only fail. The 'other' itself tends to gain an absolute status with the help of the natural penchant ordinarily existing in life. These subtle mathematical laws also hold good in the domain of the science of the Absolute, to which Self-realization, as understood here, also pertains. Self-realization has to respect the innate methodology, epistemology and axiology of the science of the Absolute if it is to yield any degree of success at all.

The remainder of what is implied in this verse has to be understood by imaginative intuition and not by any metalinguistic analysis.

The Guru himself elaborates and defines to the extent that such is possible or necessary in such a matter as this, which touches the core of consciousness itself, and which eludes by its subtlety all analysis. It has to reveal its truth rather than be described in analytical terms.

Part III

There is a subtle distinction I'm sure I didn't make clear in the notes that's central to the yoga of "bringing in the opposite." When Nitya was criticized and responded, "I'm much worse than you think," it sounds like he's not supplying an opposing idea, but instead adding weight to the one-sided argument against him. He's agreeing with the accuser and adding an implication of facts to their largely false position. That's true on the surface, but not in the inner reality. His (or our) personal response to an insult is for the ego to rise up in anger or defense. That means the initial impulse is an ego thrust. Recalling our failings counterbalances the ego thrust with an ego restraint grounded in humility, with the intent of arriving at neutrality.

Curiously the "win/win situation" of human relations comes about as the result of ego neutrality. Neither self-aggrandizement or self-abnegation is a successful strategy. Arriving at neutrality brings us to peace and its attendant happiness. In addition, on hearing something like Nitya's admission, the hostile party might wonder, what don't I know about this fellow? Is he even worse than I thought? And then it should become clear to them that they don't know anything at all, their whole argument is merely presumption. In a reasonable person, it will almost certainly deflate their animosity, while there is no point in arguing with an unreasonable person anyway.

So for yoga to be successful, it has to be based on keen insight into the subtle reality of a situation, rather than the outer, more obvious trappings.

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Jake's commentary:

In many ways, verse 37 repeats the lessons the Guru has taught in many of the preceding ones. By connecting with our internal light, he reminds us, we can eliminate the dualities that interfere with us daily in our attempts to negotiate our world of necessity. In this specific verse, however, he approaches the principle from a slightly different trajectory indicating that we need not accept those dualities as they have been and continue to be distorted by the many forces at work in our contemporary condition.

As Nitya goes about unpacking the Guru's verse, he presents the notion that a number of things or states are natural and whole in and of themselves, and that they are outside our control. Deep sleep, love, concentration, and peace, writes Nitya, are all examples of non-dual whole natural experiences that we cannot force or will to take place. Deep sleep, for instance, occurs when the mind settles down enough from the inside for the state to manifest. Using drugs to induce sleep, he notes, attacks the condition from the outside, but this artificial approach in fact kills the system with a little "poisonous medicine for awhile" (256). If one were to increase the dosage, he continues, one could commit complete rather than partial suicide. It is this distinction between internal and external control that points to a fundamental element concerning death itself: "You cannot die at will, although you can kill yourself at will." Likewise, forcing the idea of love onto someone else is a notoriously bad idea because such an effort cannot but fail, and the same characteristic applies to the efforts at concentration and peace. As Nitya points out, just straining the eyes does not translate into concentration no matter how expert the instruction, and one's peace in the world is constructed of the same timber.

It is with the subject of peace that Nitya opens his commentary. By our nature, we seek the unbroken happiness of peace. The two are intertwined and must be founded on truth in order to come together. (The Guru and Nitya covered this notion of happiness being our major incentive to life in earlier verses, a principle shared by Buddhists and others.) Truth, in its turn, can only be so when it obtains in all conditions; it is that which is constant and not changing. This core truth that we all know as that unlit lamp, the Karu, has its own “inner homogeneity” that, when we experience it, places us in a state of harmony, of oneness. (p.253). It is in this state that natural rhythms and pure conditions, such as sleep, love, and so on, become known to us and can operate as they are as states of harmony that can open up for us the happiness we seek as manifest entities.

As a matter of necessity, however, we dichotomize almost the minute we arrive in order to adapt to the very real demands of physical life. Learning about the world requires that we divide it into *I* and *not I*, and the latter quickly multiplies into numberless possibilities. As Nitya points out, conscious awareness *is* dualities, a condition about as far away from oneness as we can get, but the process does not stop with this simple bifurcation. As we continue to exist here, we build on the notion of *I* and *this* (or other) and mistake it as being the nature of everything. In so doing, we construct our social ego to replace the *I* and with which to relate to all the “others” we interact with in one way or another. The ego in turn, writes Nitya, is “monitored by our changing moods,” the *gunas*, that direct the ego to a state of tranquility, passion, or depression (or any combination thereof), further exacerbating any remaining balance or peace.

In our consumer culture, this ego-centered world of dualities offers those so inclined a golden opportunity to capitalize on our “tendency of proliferating otherness” (*anya*) and to find any number of opportunities for material gain. Our bodies are bombarded with stimuli constantly aimed at our maintaining this distinction, in camouflaging it, because the solution to the entire

dilemma lies in overcoming it, in recognizing the other as ourselves and not in privileging the egoic construction as primary. In addition to our biological narrative that required our objectification of the outside world in order to survive, that is, as we grow we face the added task of dealing with the collective onslaught of a world populated with those equally convinced (or perhaps more so) that duality defines the world wholly.

Healing this split of other and self “is not as easy as it sounds” (p. 257). Having lost connection with the one truth within, the body and mind operating in a social nightmare of projection easily spins our of control and begins to believe many of the snake oil remedies continuously being improved and “discovered” as chemistry and technology march on. Exposed to endless propaganda, “the mind gets into certain whirlpools . . . called worries” (p. 258).

Nitya divides worries into two types: retrospective remorse and prospective anxiety. Regretting the past and fearing the future constitute the base on which to proceed, and in many cases, the fears are founded on real conditions. The world may explode in war in a few years or sooner, for instance, and you made a mistake in taking up cigarette smoking when you were fifteen years old. In addition to worry, Nitya presents another “category of difficulty” in our deep urges and passions, such as physical hunger, sexual drive/frustration, and disease generally. The catalogue of maladies or imagined ones is endless, and when it is combined with worries and their limitless manifestations, we are faced with a hopeless condition. As long as *anja* is given free reign, as long as we insist on holding fast to the false dualities constantly arising and receding we are damned to this hell of our own design.

Nitya began his commentary by discussing happiness and our drive to produce as much of it in our lives as possible. It is with this same subject that he wraps up his discussion—but with one distinction. True happiness, he concludes, is a natural condition that manifests on its own within and can be known to us as that which is eternal and does not arise and recede. Our true Self, in

short, is the source of all happiness and does not exist anywhere else. Projecting that happiness onto something or someone else is the beginning of all the misery—because they or it will always fail. They must fail because they are not eternal or constant. “Once you think, ‘without this thing I can never be happy,’ you have already alienated your happiness. You have created a chasm between your present state and prospective future where happiness can be encountered” (p. 259). The irony in all this is that the present is the only tense that exists, so by projecting happiness we guarantee a state of suspended animation, so to speak, a position necessary for our current American culture to exist as it does.

In his concluding comments, Nitya offers an alternative route for our handling of happiness, one that does not simply damn our present situation as evil or that trots out a new world order by reversing roles, placing the victims on top and the victimizers on the bottom in some kind of secularized morality play. He suggests we look within and back to the very first verse in which the Guru asks us to find that divine light within and to prostrate ourselves before it and by so doing withhold our senses. In this continuous exercise we can come to know ourselves and take control of ourselves, take control of what we include in our happiness and not mindlessly project it onto the illusory. By discriminating, by deciding what we wish to include in our happiness—not in placing the power for it in some *other* and thereby alienating it from ourselves—we open up the world to ourselves as one in the same. In this project is our life’s work, one that we partake in daily as we encounter others and endeavor to re-establish our own inner and external connections.

Part IV

Susan wrote:

Dear Scott,

Great notes and follow up notes. I can really relate to the ego surge. I see the image of a ferocious beast rising out of my chest. Where on earth did it come from? It has been with me since I was a very young girl. As you mention, it must be related to our cultural and personal upbringing which takes us far from ourselves. But it seems that the ferocious beast is not protecting who we really are but rather who we think we are – the persona to which we cling. We are afraid. We are afraid of not mattering or not having a place. Perhaps the biggest lesson I am learning is that we already have a place just by being. This needs no justification or defending, only acknowledgment and a beautiful lifetime (or what's left of it) of settling into oneself – feeling comfort there and a vast world of possibility.

When does the ferocious beast come out for me? When I am corrected or when I am challenged – this would be when working on a problem on my own or with someone else. Interestingly, the ego surge happens and then the self-deprecation follows. Jeepers! One is bad enough but the other is worse. I am aware that this happens and I am also aware that the cycle has decreased in intensity over the years. Also, I really welcome challenges and corrections because I know they help me, despite the reactions I inevitably have. Maybe because of the reactions. I really don't like that ferocious beast – feels ugly and draining.

I can also feel the beast when I am in a conversation about something controversial. I have never been good at thinking on my feet and I am no good at arguments. In such situations, I find myself at sea. I can say nothing to keep myself afloat and the words of the other person are a perfectly constructed yacht, under full sail. I grasp at the shreds of the raft I may have started with and my ego is perhaps a sea monster in this situation, trying to save me from drowning. Often, I get very quiet or just give up. I used to fling back anything I could – nasty words, guilt trips, tears. Now I seem to be in more of a place of observation. Perhaps that is better.

Generally, after one of these confrontations, I go home and write the person a letter to straighten things out in my mind and maybe theirs too. It may not help the situation but it at least helps me find dry land again. But I can see from this commentary and the class notes that this kind of thing is an opportunity for “an undefended openness,” as Scott calls it. I may not have a way to articulate my feelings or make any headway in the conversation/argument but certainly the answer is not to defend more strongly (and diminish myself in the process) but to open to the moment and to the reality. Perhaps this would take the form of saying what I am feeling and how the conversation is striking me. Or maybe I would just reflect back what the other person has said. Debbie said something in class about being in a “vulnerable listening position” and maybe that’s what I’m thinking about. Instead of charging ahead into the conversation, I could take a step back and not need to “win” so much. Not see it as a contest.

There is a great concrete example of this. When I was about 12 or so, I was up at a lake one summer with my friend, Liz. We were on a raft (wow, this is even more connected than I thought!). We were standing and talking and all of a sudden we started to try to push each other off the raft and into the lake. We weren’t wet at that point. It was playful at first. Then Liz pushed me in. I was not only cold and wet but I was also humiliated. I got back on the raft and spent the next half hour or so trying to push her in but I never could. I remember how I was feeling two things simultaneously – one was that I had to get her back so that I could get rid of the humiliating feeling and the other was that my determination to do this had spoiled our time together and it had turned it into a dark and miserable time. I’ve thought about that incident many times through the years and have been appalled at how obsessed I became. Now I see it as bald-faced ego. Suddenly, my whole being and self worth depended only on besting someone else. Yikes! How great it would have been if I could have just laughed when I fell in the water and continued to see Liz as my friend and what

had just happened as a game. She certainly didn't see anything else. But when I continued to hold on to the need to push her in, she grew more and more frustrated. Eventually, we walked away from this but it took me a long time to calm myself.

I think this is also about letting things go and also not anticipating outcomes. When we are open and not investing our ego in something, we do not think about winners and losers. We can be on the same side, which of course is no side. We are just opening to the possibilities.

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For your delectation, here's a bit more from Sci Am about the effect of metaphors. You probably recall the experiments where participants held a pen either under their lower lip (which caused them to unwittingly frown, or clenched in their teeth (which produced an unintentional smile). The frowners' responses were much more negative than those of the smilers. Here are a couple more examples, framed in paragraphs taken from my current Yoga Sutras response to the online class, now nearing the end:

Psychologists are well aware that our mental framing affects how we perceive the world, and it's a fascinating study. For instance, the latest Scientific American Mind (Nov/Dec 2013) has several articles touching on the subject, including *Hidden Metaphors Get Under Our Skin*, by Tori Rodriguez. She describes an experiment to examine the effect of the belief that the heart is warm and emotional and the head is cool and rational, in which participants were instructed to point to their head or heart with their non-dominant hand, but were not told that the pointing was part of the experiment. Rodriguez writes:

Participants who pointed at their head answered test questions more accurately, and those who pointed at their heart

were more likely to let emotions sway their decisions in a moral dilemma. The finding adds to a rapidly growing list of metaphor effects: past studies have found that seeing forward motion can propel us to “move forward” in a metaphorical sense and that feeling smooth textures makes a difficult social interaction feel easier (or go more “smoothly”).

In all these studies, the influence of the embodied metaphors evaded conscious awareness—the study subjects did not notice the connection between their sensations and their subsequent decisions or feelings. Yet researchers think we might be able to wield this effect by altering our surroundings and habits....

In a similar vein, freeing yourself from perceived constraints may indeed facilitate “thinking outside the box.” In a series of experiments published in May 2012 in *Psychological Science*, scientists tested participants’ creative thinking while they literally sat inside or outside a cardboard box. Other participants either walked freely or along the path of a rectangle. Subjects who were outside the box in either sense scored higher on standard measures of creative thinking. Study co-author Angela Leung, associate professor of psychology at Singapore Management University, says you might be able to encourage your own creativity by eliminating constraints to movement, such as by roving around a room or wandering through a park. The key is variety and spontaneity: “If you want to be more creative, run freely outside and do it randomly for the day. Get away from your typical route, time of day, music or even your pace,” Leung says.

In any situation, consider your surroundings, sensory perceptions and actions—they might be influencing your thought process via the subtle metaphors embedded in daily life. (16)

Our long practice of yoga study has been aimed essentially at discerning the kernel of truth nested in the metaphoric buffering that surrounds it. All too often humans are satisfied with the

trimmings, and ignore the valuable kernel. We believe what we prefer, not what is. A cliché has arisen that our prejudices are “sense impressions,” and we can free ourselves from them by tuning out the input, but that isn’t quite right. Our road to mastery began with doubt about our perceptions, but it led us to confront our faulty wiring, and to rectify it and also look deeper for a more coherent basis for understanding. Unless we undertake such a course of correction, we can never begin to call ourselves adults, much less yogis.

Part V

Jake and I had an exchange today that he addressed to everyone. He’s currently back in his home in Hawaii, but does come to the class now and again:

Scott & Every Self:

Aloha!

I apologize for not reading everything Scott has made available, but I did manage to peruse Susan and Scott's latest documents.

Thank you both for making your thoughts so clear and direct.

We're all on a path to somewhere and that alone is enough, I think I think.

I just finished The Gospel of Ramakrishna by M and it seems that it put me in a different place. He never read much of anything and was a product of his 19th century Indian culture. What he had to say about Vedanta gave me a different perspective on just what we are all about in Portland. The work of the gurukula has definite value and offers possibility--and all that is no small matter.

On the other hand is the basic of "knowing" that escapes the province of words or mind. We touch on this dimension briefly with times of silence and mantras, and I am not suggesting more of them--or less. Or am I?

If I knew anything, I would be the first to say so.

Jake

Good morning Jake!

Obviously, The Gospel of Ramakrishna has struck a nerve with you. As we've often argued in the Gurukula, words can bind or they can liberate. The words you've recently read led you to look beyond words to a nonverbal depth. Without that kind of instruction, we tend to stay bound within the (more or less) comfortable parameters of our verbal constructs.

Words *are* mantras, and they emerge from silence. We are trying to bring the silent ground back into the expressive play of our words, to reestablish the intimate connection that so often gets lost in the desert of transactional actuality. We should not be satisfied with only the verbal aspect, but look also at what it refers to—to make it real, as we used to say. Only then do our words have meaning.

Academic life is the sport of word play, but it can become dry and detached from meaning. At its best it's an entree into meaning, but not always. I have seen that meaning is viewed with suspicion in academic circles nowadays. It can certainly be very deceptive, when it's based on wishful thinking rather than direct experience, so the suspicion is justified, but it shouldn't block us from seeking truer value behind the surface play.

I commend your dive into the nonverbal depths of the psyche, which is simply the inversion of the outer universe. It will help make your words bountiful with significance.