

5/13/14  
Verse 59

Without knowledge I do not exist;  
without me there is no knowledge; light alone is;  
thus, both knowledge and knower, when contemplated,  
are of one substance; there can be no doubt.

Free translation:

I do not exist without my having any knowledge of it. Without me, my knowledge cannot exist on its own. The light that shines is the same, both in the knower and in the knowledge. When contemplated it will undoubtedly be known that both are the same.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

Apart from awareness I have no being:  
As distinct from me awareness cannot remain  
As mere light; both knowledge and knower, contemplation  
Reveals beyond doubt as of one substance alone.

We are in the thick of a stretch of verses that invite us to redefine our psyche, to give up the tentative hypotheses we have promulgated since infancy and substitute one grounded in intelligence. I think we are all ready for that. Most of us have done this a few times already, but the old paradigms keep creeping back. We have to renew our dedication on a regular basis, lest our mentality slip back into ordinariness.

Knowledge here means the whole context that is the basis for how we perceive the world. Usually we think of knowledge as the agglomeration of specific, more or less factual items we have accumulated during our tenure here, but those are very much subsidiary to what could be called our general outlook, which is what is meant in this verse. Paul linked it with our DNA, in the

sense that everything becomes itself because there is information for it to become itself. We are humans with certain innate limitations. The information we consciously know has almost no impact on that type of knowledge.

Deb brought up a paradox: that this verse proclaims the unity of knower and known, but then Nitya spends a long time demonstrating that our simplistic conception of unity leaves out almost all of what we are really made of. He wants us to take into account all the threads of our psyche that we take for granted, and so force into the background. Such kind of blocking out is pretty much the opposite of the dynamic neutrality the gurus are struggling to present us with. So Nitya begins by deconstructing the unity we perceive to demonstrate its falsity. This is a necessary preliminary to reconstructing our unitive awareness on a firmer basis.

By now we should be familiar with the Indian conception that seer and scene arise together out of a unitive source point, becoming naturally bifurcated, with awareness flashing back and forth between the two poles like the fluttering wings of a bee, or in a more modern analogy, like the 60 cycles per second of electric alternating current.

There is nothing wrong with this duality! It's how things have to be if you are going to have a universe.

The problems come when the seer forgets their unity with the scene and view it as a series of isolated phenomena outside themselves, phenomena that provoke judgments, defenses, and corrections. Then we "come to blows" with our environment. The counterpart is an equally false vision of the seer, either as an impossibly virtuous entity disconnected from the moil or, as most children believe, the source of all the trouble and deserving of equal or greater judgments, defenses and corrections.

Once the seer and scene are out of touch with each other, an endless chaos is engendered, because the true cause of our problems is never addressed. We forget we are operating on the merest whiff of knowledge and projecting everything based on an

impoverished template, because what we see looks so real, so permanent. It's the crucial part of the illusion. Historically speaking, we'd be pretty miserable if we doubted everything we saw, and would probably get eaten by a saber-toothed tiger or something comparably terrifying. So we have to believe our senses, even though they are demonstrably defective. What a contemplative does is take time to sit still and question the validity of the flicker of incoming lights. Jake put it very simply: unless we slow down in some type of meditative discipline, our enchantment will continue. When done right, slowing down and detaching from the scene is an ultimately radical and transformative act.

The gurus are showing us how to have a meaningful effect on our dilemma, which requires groping down to our essential core, our Karu, where unity persists. When we bathe in unity, it corrects the perversions we have developed enduring the battering winds of a life of isolation. Nataraja Guru called this "normalization." We become normal again. Normal is a very exalted state, bearing little or no resemblance to what passes for normal in polite society. Once we have normalized (there are degrees of this, of course), when we reemerge into duality after our meditation we are more harmonized, more cured of our manias and madneses. By regularly re-attuning ourselves through contact with our core, real change begins to permeate our being.

Nitya was talking a lot about madness in this section, because we had been saturated in the study for over two months, with daily immersion. These talks in the book were only part of the morning event, after chanting the verses and having each word explained to us. Then we thought about the ideas all day and came back in the evening to contemplate and discuss their significance to us.

When you dive deeply like that, the "monsters of the id" become uncaged and come to the surface, side by side with some very beautiful states of mind. It's a challenging but highly therapeutic part of the Self Instruction. With a normalized anchor like Nitya to hold everyone together, we had the option of not going crazy. He expressed it this way:

In spite of all this dirt that is coming up and madness that is aroused, we still have to find our way, gradually and steadily, to our own inner core, where we can finally discover and discern for ourselves the fountain-source of all peace and happiness. Nothing should stop us.

It is helpful and perhaps crucial to have a calm head anchoring you like this to a solid foundation, because it is easy to become seriously disoriented in the midst of this kind of intensity.

Part of the intractability of the madness is that humans tend to pay lip service to ideas, to pretend we are acting with determination, but really we're faking it. If we actually connect with our full self we are flummoxed for a while. Usually we substitute a better pretense that deflects everybody more successfully, and then carry on, but we do have the option of relinquishing the pretense entirely. Nitya reminds us here that "Very soon we will be told that the mere saying of it won't bring it." In other words, we aren't simply trying to substitute a better description that will fool everyone, but to actually dig down into our ground of peace and happiness. It is hard work. But isn't fakery pointless? We should not let it stop us, divert us from real progress.

The most basic thing we have to realize—and it remains very well veiled—is that the world we encounter is colored by our mind set. Not that it is *created* by our mind set, but how we interpret the world has a tremendous and important impact. Nitya puts it this way:

Sankara finally comes to the conclusion *yatha drsti tatha srsti*, how your eyes are, so your world is. If you are pure, you see purity everywhere. If you are voluptuous, you see voluptuousness everywhere. If you are an egotist, you see the egotism of other people around you. If you are mad, you see madness in all. If you are peaceful, you see the occasion to have peace everywhere. If you are harmonized, the world is harmonized with you.

The advantage of this study is simply this: self-correction. When you correct yourself, the world is also corrected for you. That correction is possible only through seeing this oneness, this union.

Kian thought we can change the actual world by harmonizing our self, but it isn't quite that simple. Harmonizing ourself makes us capable of acting well, but we might still remain isolated in an ivory tower if we don't put our harmony into practice. His example was Fukushima, the destroyed nuclear reactors in Japan that threaten to annihilate sentient life in the Northern Hemisphere if they are not successfully dismantled. He thought accepting blame for the disaster would somehow cure the problem by itself. But dismantling broken reactors requires a delicate sequence of very complex actions to be undertaken, and you've probably heard about all the prevarications and diversionary lies, how the Japanese government has banned public discourse and drawn a veil of secrecy over the site, with harsh punishments for trying to bring light to bear. That is how humans traditionally deal with our problems—how almost all of us deal with our problems, though usually on a lesser scale, thankfully. We sweep them under the rug. The change we *can* make in our hearts is to begin to model a different kind of behavior, one that may evolve us into a more responsible species before we eradicate the higher life forms. This is a daunting challenge that merely begins with us harmonizing ourselves and becoming aware of the unlimited liability we have to the cosmos we live in. Changing our attitude promotes the necessary actions to take place, actions we are fully capable of if we don't actively deny their necessity.

I've used a favorite phrase of Nitya's, unlimited liability. When you realize that we as seers have arisen as a paired compound with the scene around us, you no longer feel like escaping. The more disjunct we become with our environment, the more emptiness and desolation seep into our bones. By accepting the bad along with the good, we are performing the dialectic (yogic) practice that restores us to unity. As Bill said, how we understand our reactions is the thing that will liberate us. Many in the class have told stories about how this has played out in their lives. None of us has recycled a crippled nuclear reactor, but we all have

made positive differences in our immediate circle of contacts. Those little victories have a ripple effect, just as our failures do. The least we can offer the planet we live on is to send out positive and helpful ripples.

Speaking of victories, we are reminded that expecting to be victorious can make us aggressive and intolerant. Visitor Ann was injured physically by competing for victory in sports, and has converted to more salubrious physical activity. A yogi aims for a non-victorious victory. Nitya relates a classic element of his training in this verse:

When I first came to my Guru, I had plenty of trouble with people, with my fellow disciples. Guru called me and said, “I shall give you a secret: allow the other to be victorious. If somebody fights you, let you be the vanquished and not the victor.” I found there is nothing more helpful than this, to be vanquished and not to become victorious. Just say, “You have the upper hand. Let all the glory be yours. I shall lie in the dust.” It is very difficult, but it works. You don’t make any claim. You don’t indulge in any feelings of martyrdom. You just give up.

This is not a call to self-abnegation, abject surrender, but only to normalization, to counter our tendency to want to win all the time. It turns out we want to win because our ego is insecure. Nataraja Guru’s brilliant advice is to stop fighting over who is better and accept our common lot as flawed but hopefully progressing human beings. Our pose of perfection is a lie we swear by. Nitya underlines this with a potent quote: “Henri Bergson, in his *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, says ‘When you point your finger at another and denounce him, you know in your heart of hearts that you are no better.’”

The commentary closes with a very practical paragraph that empowers us right where we sit:

The basic truth rests on this: there is only One and not a second. If there is someone to be punished, it is only you. If there is someone to be corrected, it is also just you. ‘You’ means ‘me’. In my personal life I correct the other by correcting myself. I punish the other by

punishing myself. I silence the other by going into silence myself. I bring peace to the other by making myself peaceful. I bring happiness to the other by making myself happy. It is a very intimate experience, to work with one's self. And it is the one place where you can conveniently work, where your volition, your knowledge and your feeling are all at hand, at the very source from which the idea 'I' comes.

After our brief quiet time, the class streamed out into a rare Oregon evening of warmth and bright moonlight, carrying renewed resolutions to love our universe and our selves more than ever.

## Part II

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

Everybody says "I know" or "I do not know." In the context of knowledge there is an "I" and the field in which "I" operates. Although vague, there is an inevitable demarcation drawn between the knower and the known. That which is known has already been mentioned as the measured, counted and categorized. The knower is like the eye of the known knowing itself. Hence, Shankara equates the knower to the eye, drk.

The eye, as the "seer," combines in it the quality of the light that illuminates and the quality of the eye that sees. The light of the Self reveals not only form but also name, context, meaning, relationship, the past, the present, and the possible relationship that can be established with the future. If the light is withdrawn, there will be a sudden and total effacement of the conscious knower "I" and anything that is associated with the knowledge of the knower.

The eye does not see itself and the light does not reveal the light to itself. But the I-consciousness is conscious of the "I" that knows and the "I" that does not know. From this fact, it is deducible that the subject of the individual awareness is also an object of awareness. What is common to the subject matter of

awareness and the object matter of awareness is an undifferentiated light.

If pure Self is an undifferentiated consciousness, why should we bother to know the difference between transcendence and immanence, pure knowledge and empirical knowledge, analytical judgement and synthetic judgement, cause and effect, and concepts and percepts? The answer lies in a more fundamental question. Are you convinced that there is only a non-differentiated consciousness? Can you dismiss your experience as non-existent? If your honest answer to this is in the negative, you are remaining in a world of variegated forms and changing patterns, and you stumble on all the anomalies of the phenomena which can make you howl with exasperation, revel in the pleasure of the phantom, and become tongue-tied with the enigmas that haunted the conscience of a bewildered Hamlet. When you are caught in this context you have only two choices. One is to accept the dual validity of the knower and the known and accept the irreconcilable paradox of treating each as the byproduct of the other and hit your head against the irrational wall of life's meaninglessness, variously described by the existentialists as nauseating or nothingness. The other alternative is to turn away from the duet of the knower and the known, dismissing their passing show as phantasmagoria, and to give up your identity in the all-effacing Beingness, the truth of which you will never be conscious of to verify.

\* \* \*

Nataraja Guru's commentary:

THE relation between the 'subject-matter' and what we might call the 'object-matter' of consciousness is subtle and dialectical. There is an ambivalent bipolarity or dichotomy between the self that is the knower and the self that is known.



Both of these are linked by pure knowledge, conceived as a neutral abstraction, which has been variously recognized, both in Eastern and Western philosophies, under different names and in the context of differing philosophical points of view.

Fichte's division between the self and the non-self may be said to divide correctly these two aspects. Kant's division between 'pure reason' and 'practical reason' also recognizes this same ambivalence. Mind and matter have been treated unitively or dualistically by Descartes and others. Whether mind and matter are linked together by the principle of 'occasionalism', as Descartes would put it, or through the intermediary entity called the 'substance that thinks', as with Spinoza, or through the notion of the monad as with Leibniz, rationalistic philosophy recognizes the neutral common ground between these evidently dual aspects.

Extreme dualism grades into forms of solipsism with different writers or thinkers, serially reviewed. Whatever the degree of unity or duality may be as between different schools of thought in the East or West, we can discover a common methodology implicit in all of them. In fact the relationship is dialectical and dialectical methodology would permit of the two factors being treated in various degrees of unitiveness or duality.

Human consciousness alternates between the poles of the self and the non-self. When we look upon this alternation from the core of consciousness itself, the alternating process becomes effaced into the unitive light of absolute consciousness, abolishing all duality. In the workaday, realistic or pragmatic sense no one can deny that mental and bodily phases constantly succeed each other as we observe our own daily life and actions.

In the present verse the Guru recognizes the ambivalent interdependence between the self and its dialectical counterpart, the non-self. In verse 68 below, the same idea is taken up again

and treated more dualistically, so as to reveal the mechanism of the self in its operational sense. Here the solipsistic regulative principle is just enunciated, to start with, to form the basis of the further elaboration of the same theme in later verses of the second half of the work which will have more to do with the positive or known than with the knower- aspect of the self. Sankara himself divides consciousness into 'drik' (seer) and 'drisya' (the seen) for an analysis of self-consciousness to reveal to inner structure of absolute consciousness.

Such an analysis of consciousness is highly necessary for the student to avoid the philosophical puzzlements and confusions with which books abound. The Bhagavad Gita speaks of 'jnana' (knowledge) in contradistinction with 'jneya' (the known) which belongs to the 'vijñana' (specific wisdom) aspect of wisdom rather than to the mere 'jnana' aspect, which can be negative in its implications. Avoiding grades or classes of error is the 'jnana' aspect, and building up positive notions and doctrines about reality is the second stage of the same ('vijñana') process of knowing. Wisdom gets finalized in its own neutral glory in the end of the search when the self and the non-self unite.

The solipsistic form which might be considered an objection to this way of looking at the problem of reality is not really an objection because, at least methodologically, solipsism in some form or other has to enter into the contemplative way of reasoning which is the domain proper of higher wisdom. Just as pantheism has to enter into theology when God is described as omnipresent, the very unitive basis of absolutist philosophy can hardly avoid this position, and by itself it is no drawback of the teaching. Just as axiomatic verities exist side-by-side with verities that grade from tautology to the extreme position of contradiction in various steps of logic merging into the highest form of logistics or of dialectical reasoning, so solipsism as a basic epistemological law is fully legitimate and admissible. The philosopher must only take care

that he does not get stuck mechanistically in the solipsistic position, and make a fetish of the doctrine. The Guru here, as we shall see, after stating the law of the reciprocal interdependence of the knower and the known, passes on to its theorems and corollaries in a graded and methodical fashion.

### Part III

I promised to include the poem Deb and I heard at a recent reading, which I read for the closing meditation. The connection is that many of the ways we frame the world and our place in it are severely binding. The poet calls us to free ourselves from our self-imposed and self-justified state of bondage:

#### A MESSAGE FROM THE WANDERER

William Stafford

Today outside your prison I stand  
and rattle my walking stick: Prisoners, listen;  
you have relatives outside. And there are  
thousands of ways to escape.

Years ago I bent my skill to keep my  
cell locked, had chains smuggled to me in pies,  
and shouted my plans to jailers;

but always new plans occurred to me,  
or the new heavy locks bent hinges off,  
or some stupid jailer would forget  
and leave the keys.

Inside, I dreamed of constellations—  
those feeding creatures outlined by stars,  
their skeletons a darkness between jewels,  
heroes that exist only where they are not.

Thus freedom always came nibbling my thought,  
just as—often, in light, on the open hills—  
you can pass an antelope and not know  
and look back, and then—even before you see—  
there is something wrong about the grass.  
And then you see.

That's the way everything in the world is waiting.

Now—these few more words, and then I'm  
gone: Tell everyone just to remember  
their names, and remind others, later, when we  
find each other. Tell the little ones  
to cry and then go to sleep, curled up  
where they can. And if any of us get lost,  
if any of us cannot come all the way—  
remember: there will come a time when  
all we have said and all we have hoped  
will be all right.

There will be that form in the grass.

\* \* \*

One of the important ideas that didn't make it into the first set of notes on this verse was Nitya's distinguishing of two types of withdrawal: paranoiac and enlightened. The unexamined version of withdrawal is the more common, where cutting yourself off from threatening input is the sole objective. You just shut out what

you don't want to see or hear. Nitya wants to remind us that this doesn't accomplish anything in terms of spiritual growth, but is numbing and isolating. It may begin as a plausible reaction to hostile forces, but because of its static basis its effect is negative. We see this kind of withdrawal everywhere. The mature way to deal with conflict is to remain grounded in our center, our Karu, from which vantage point we can take whatever steps are necessary to ameliorate the situation. To accomplish this, Nitya takes us one step further than pure witnessing, to the synthesis of both aspects of withdrawal. In other words, we overcome our negative reactions to threats by initiating a positive interest, and discover the place of neutrality at the heart of the two impulses. Because of its overarching importance I want to reprise Nitya's comments on this subject:

We should retrospectively see the implication of all that has been built up in this section of the work. There is inevitable misery there. Detachment from that misery is only possible through the unification of our knowledge. This is done contemplatively, by practicing withdrawal.

Of course, there can be a pathological withdrawal as well as a therapeutic withdrawal. A pathological withdrawal happens when you are afraid. You see a threat, you exaggerate the threat, you exaggerate the fear that is initiated in you, and so you want to run away from the situation and get back into the womb, so to speak. You become paranoid. This is a pathological reaction taking the form of a withdrawal. When it expands to all its seriousness, it benumbs your faculties. Doors that are once closed you are unable to open again. Thus you become self-imprisoned, trapped in your own emotional state and locked in your own confused reasoning. The volitional element in you is so crippled that it has no initiative with which to break out.

The other withdrawal is that of the saint. It assumes the position of the witness rather than the actor. Here the agent of consciousness does not run away from any situation, but instead decides to go into an active form of silence. It is a silence not born of fear but of fearlessness. You

are not escaping from someone, but at the same time you are not holding yourself obligated to anyone, either.

Then you should go one step further. On one side is the silence to which you go as a pathological trait; on the other side is the therapeutic silence. Through a dialectical synthesis of these two aspects you can come to your own natural Self, pure consciousness. Then you are the value or meaning of your own self. In this way the world show is all wound up and you remain steadfast in your own beingness.

\* \* \*

Jake's commentary:

In this verse, the Guru reinforces again the necessity of our assuming that position of balance founded on our knowing that which is the unchanging Absolute. Being in that position offers us the opportunity to experience the world without becoming so lost in it we mistake it for that which *is* and in so doing exercise ourselves in a continuous cycle misery/elation/misery as that which we assume is lasting always fails us. In outward appearance, writes Nitya in his commentary, those acting out their lives but who also know its temporary arising and receding and those acting out their lives ignorant of that which is true may appear to be the same, but it is in the case of the latter that the anguish and terror that person experiences have no remedy. For them, life is a veil of tears. Without that unifying factor, we are caught in the possibilities the mind creates and have no way out of its endless and necessary job of servicing the ego and its centralized experience. It is in his commentary on this verse that Nitya explains this process in psychological terms, in terms that go a long way in illuminating a common dilemma.

Isolated in our unstable mental constructs, that which is not, and persuaded to be convinced that the Absolute is an irrelevant hallucination at best or a superstition at worst, a large percentage

of Americans (as suggested in what is acceptable as serious public discussion) have little choice in terms of public policy alternatives beyond “more of the same.” The mind is well designed and efficient in performing the duties of its office, and, as Nitya adds, it operates first of all according to the information it receives. It then applies its reasoning capacity to that sensory input and acts on that combination. These “three fundamental aspects” of the mind work together in forming how we act in the world of necessity, which, like the mind and its ego, will dissolve sooner or later like all things manifest. In this fundamental mental process, our *I* is divided into that which first experiences sensation, the emotional foundation that precedes reason (the reasoning *I*) and finally the volitional *I* (that may decide to act or not).

In this tripartite arrangement is the sequence of feeling-thinking-willing in which our three domains of existence here present themselves. The first is the emotional element founded on body sensations. In this interior universe are our sense of aesthetics and taste. Also part of this domain is the source of all energy arising from our various moods such as anger, humour, grief, heroics, peace, hatred (the nine moods mentioned in an earlier commentary). As Nitya writes, “all the moods are games of energy from the side of feeling” (p. 401). Emotional, pre-rational energy animates us, but before reaching that third volitional stage the mind moves the sensations through the reasoning function. The point where sensation ends and reason begins cannot be firmly identified and often leads to distortions between the two, but the fact remains that feeling and reasoning emerge as distinct functions. “The third aspect, volition,” denotes that my *I* allows itself to be compelled to act or not act (p. 399). The *I* element exists both in that which compels and that which is compelled, a condition also applicable to the other two functions: “these three aspects, feeling, thinking, willing, all have one centre: the *I*. ‘*I* feel,’ ‘*I* think,’ ‘*I* will’” (p. 400).

This process takes place in a mind determined to preserve its egoic existence to continuously seek happiness, often restricted to



the body and commonly understood as pleasure. And the possibilities for miscommunication among the three aspects are legion. Sensory input can and often does present pain and misery and when they are combined with undeveloped or distorted reasoning function can lead to the mind manufacturing a perceived threat that puts the volitional faculty in a position of the enemy of the first two. In short, the possibilities of our *I* warring with our *I* is multiplied exponentially as the energy for it all wells up in the form of emotional impulse driving the system at its core, a system bent on our surviving in a world of necessity.

In the American experience, it is this out of awareness system that constitutes the bedrock on which our economic, social, political, and therapeutic industries all rest. An endless ministering to the terrors built into this structure make commercial capitalism (and its mirroring Marxist equivalent), psychotherapy, and chemical dependence so attractive. They all address the very real fear and misery the mind creates as it mindlessly goes about its business in the only world in which it can allow the *I* to participate. The irony is that this last prohibition is itself but one more example of the *I* at war with itself. As was the case when the US invaded Viet Nam or when the South seceded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, wherever we go, we take our minds with us.

In this verse and commentary, the Guru and Nitya point to a solution that becomes more and more undeniable as history continues to document our circular journey in a world of our own design. The original principles used to organize the US, located in its Constitution, were designed to address the practical circumstances we encounter in this world. That document also assumes these circumstances will continue, so its provisions for divided government, continuous elections, and so on, tend to retard the privileging of any one faction at the expense of the many others. As Franklin noted, if society were populated with angels no Constitution would be required in the first place.

Error, miscommunication, and fear rule the day in the samsaric world that cannot get out of its own way as it bounces

from “I enjoy” to “I know” to “I will.” By standing on the firm foundation of the Absolute, says Nitya, ”the knower and the known are to be pieced together on the grounds that without the knower there is no knowledge, and without knowledge there is no knower.” The nature of that oneness is a “pure light,” and “the advantage of knowing it is a pure light . . . is the very meaning of life (p .401).

It is to that very issue of meaning that our national interest and purpose is not directed. They were never meant to be. We are a nation of sense bound reasoners volitionally at war with our emotional and rational selves. Those bent on “doing good” quarrel with those “doing what commonly works,” and both stand on the shifting sands of a fractured self desperately championing a cause of life and death in a mental construction terrified of both. The answer lies within, concludes Nitya, the only domain where self-correction can take place: “when you correct yourself, the world is also corrected for you” (p. 406). To demonize another is to project that which you deny because you cannot yet recognize it in yourself.

#### Part IV

Eugene sent a musing on sublimity:

sub·lime  
s??blīm/  
*adjective*

1.

**1.**

of such excellence, grandeur, or beauty as to inspire great admiration or awe.

"Mozart's sublime piano concertos"

synonyms:

*verb*

1.

**1.**

## CHEMISTRY

(of a solid substance) change directly into vapor when heated, typically forming a solid deposit again on cooling.

2.

**2.**

archaic

elevate to a high degree of moral or spiritual purity or excellence.

I have gastroparesis. My digestive system shuts down from time to time. It can be very painful. When I was in California a few weeks ago, I had a particularly painful moment that made it difficult for me to get out of bed. My sister asked me how my stomach felt. I told her the experience was strangely sublime. She was shocked. I guffawed.

I remember watching a documentary about scientific achievement and war. A few of the pilots, engineers, scientists, and soldiers used the word "sublime" to describe the enormous power of destruction born from scientific insight and execution. These people were well aware of the sublimity of war. This life experience isn't about everything being nice or good or beautiful all the time. If we truly understood what that shiny ball of light in the sky really was at its core, its essence, we may never want to go outside again! Such power! Such energy! Is it not a mystery that we are born of the same power?

\* \* \*

I'm sorry we didn't talk in class about the three aspects, feeling, thinking and willing, that are woven into the commentary.

Nitya talks about them in a general way, but doesn't lead us very far into the mystery yet. There is a lot to it! He sums up:

When you first say "I" it looks very simple, but it is not as simple as it seems. The simplicity is there because "I enjoy," "I know," and "I will" all spring from the same source.

He follows this with "In this verse we are asked to tie all the loose ends up in one single knot," so it sounds like there isn't a problem here, that the I is the tie. But it isn't. It is certainly a knot, though, or a bundle of them.

In a way we have been looking at this malaise all along, but not always making the connections Nitya wants us to make.

I have been musing a lot lately about what happens to people when these three aspects of the psyche are out of joint in a traumatized ego. (Traumatized ego is a redundancy—they are all damaged to varying degrees.) We know plenty of people who can't enjoy life on any level. Their knowledge base seems irrelevant or strangely skewed into bizarre tangents. When that happens the will is immobilized or misdirected, leading to an ever-increasing bondage to the aberrations the person is suffering from.

Why is it that when a simple course of action is envisaged, so many of us are incapable of executing it? This goes to the heart of our dilemma. There are a number of factors involved, many of which are curable with effort. The sad fact is that confusion sabotages our effort from the beginning, so unless the confusion is lessened, the condition will persist.

When we are young, our training consists very largely of being forced to restrain our thoughts and actions. Very central to our development is a colossal "NO!" that becomes a kind of post-hypnotic suggestion. We don't hear it any more, but it's there nonetheless. A major portion of our self-correcting work is to face up to such kinds of buried land mines in our psyche, because once we know they are there we have a shot at neutralizing their

influence. If we continue to ignore them, they will keep on working perfectly, preventing us from breaking their grip on us.

I could write a lot about this (I already have!) but I invite others to weigh in. This is important stuff! I know many friends who live as if they are at the bottom of a well, looking up longingly at the sky, but unable to take any steps to come out. They have become convinced that where they are is exactly where they deserve to be. As in the Stafford poem in Part III, we tune out all the means at our disposal to shinny up the walls. Even when Narayana Guru and Nitya stretch their arms down into the depths of the well, gently urging us to take hold a pull ourselves up, we can't manage to do it. It's maddening!

If acting was really as simple as it seems, we could easily accomplish whatever we decide to do. The fact that we can't shows us that there is a lot of clogged machinery beneath the surface. The question is, do we capitulate? Society wants us to. Just put up and shut up. The gurus suggest there is a much better option available. What do you think?