

en.light.en.ment

1. the movement emphasizing reason rather than myth
2. a condition equating acceptance and detachment
3. the state of having insight into the true nature of things

a panharmonicon* with 150 pages of essays

**see ECLECTICISM*

from Reality Hunger, a manifesto by David Shields

Reality Hunger 38: "In 1830 (Ralph Waldo) Emerson wanted to find what he called 'a new literature.' A German con artist, Johann Mälzel, visited America with a 'panharmonicon,' an organ without keys. He would crank its lever three times, step off to the side and the machine would spit out an entire orchestra's worth of sound: flutes, drums, trumpets, cymbals, trombones, a triangle, clarinets, violins."

After seeing Mälzel's machine perform, Emerson called the new literature he had been looking for; "a panharmonicon. Here everything is admissible - philosophy, ethics, divinity, anecdote, jokes, humor, fun, mimicry, criticism, poetry, trilobism - all the breadth and versatility of the most liberal conversation, highest and lowest personal topics; all are permitted, all may be combined." Hear, hear!

CARSTEN BURMEISTER

150 pages
with more than 300 essays

FIRST OF ALL ... no man is an island. I would be floundering, was it not for the undying love and support from my wife Jan, and the love and affection of my children and grandchildren; I thank you with all my heart.

Then many thanks to my editor, who is a faithful believer in God and Jesus Christ. I'm a staunch atheist. How come we get along like a house on fire? I trust the answer lies at the heart of my writings: any belief is fine*.

**conditions apply: the belief must be tolerant and peaceful*

When I showed the above to Wendy (my editor) she said, "Just reading what you said, I find it fascinating that an atheist and a believer can't get along. How can that be the case? Can people really be that narrow minded?"

I responded saying, "When Jan grew up, as a small girl their neighbours were devout Catholics, the children were discouraged from playing with Jan and verbally accosted her, she would 'go to hell', they'd say.

"**T**here are many stories like that; but also think about how fundamentalist Islamists deal with 'apostates' ... they kill them. Much killing went on (and still does) in the name of religion ... think about the 30 Years War."

One more email from Wendy ... "You ask me how I can enjoy reading your essays about religion / God when I am a believer and the content you write is different to my beliefs. What I read does not change my views ...

"... **b**ut it educates me in what other people believe in and what their thoughts and opinions are. Knowing what other people believe is important to ensure that one stays grounded and has an open mind to everything.

"**O**ther peoples' points of view do not offend me. I am driven by curiosity to know things ... so I read and learn and keep believing what I believe in." Note to self:

Do not try to change other peoples' beliefs.

see also the footnote to FAITH

"One of the key qualities that made me so believe in what I was doing is that this was a book in which form was being given equal billing with content ... and that was no accident, since GEB is in large part about how content is inseparable from form ... how semantics is of a piece with syntax.

"Although I had always known of myself that, in many aspects of life, I was concerned as much with form as with content, I had never suspected how deeply I would get caught up, in the writing of my first book, in matters of visual appearance on all levels.

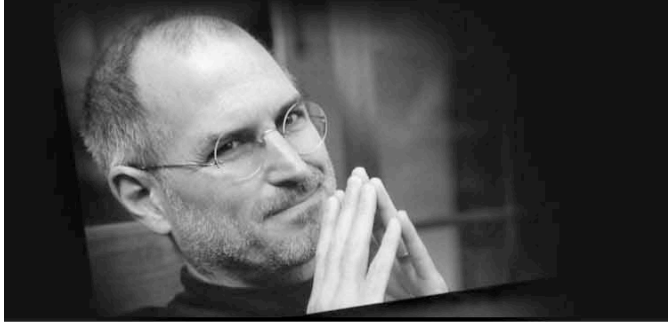
"Thus, thanks to the ease of using TV-edit (Microsoft Word for me, CB), whatever I wrote underwent polishing to make it look better on the screen, and though such control would at one time have been considered a luxury for an author, I was very attached to it and loath to give it up."

Douglas R. Hofstadter

author of Gödel, Escher, Bach - see also GEB, HOFSTADTER, I

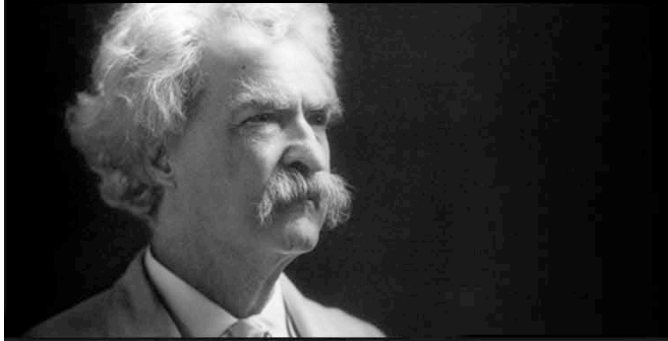
One of the ways that I believe people express their appreciation to the rest of humanity is to make something wonderful and put it out there.

Steve Jobs



The two most important days in your life are the day you were born and the day you find out why.

Mark Twain



If you know the WHY the HOW is easy.

Friedrich Nietzsche



Prologue

There is only one problem in the world:
People don't recognize reality, and once
confronted with it, they can't deal with it.*

One aspect of reality is the Truth: All hu-
mans are equal, all with the same rights ** -
there is no place for bigotry, abuse or war.

To grasp this principle and to live by it
is the noblest goal in life; the content of this
book is all but commentary on the above.

** after Confucius, ca 500 BCE*
*** what are the basic human rights?*
go to ETHICS as well as MORAL LAW
see also CONFUCIANISM, FACTFULNESS
FREE & PROSPEROUS, REALITY, THE TRUTH
go also to the appendix page a100: What is Reality?

“This book is for no one and everyone.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

MY QUEST as an artist is to document my world and to comment on life. I began writing my essays in 1987. From the start I've worked on them every day and night; in fact, all but every minute of every day and every night. **T**he book is not finished - it never will be*. “An essay (a poem) is never finished, only abandoned” (Paul Valéry) see p. a105; “has anybody ever finished anything?” (Leonardo da Vinci). Yet, I herewith hand my life's work over to you, dear reader. **M**y subject matter often is current affairs - is there an audience for it? No matter; it has been said many times, polemicists write predominantly for themselves. I second that notion. I thrive on controversial discussion. Writing about it feeds me. **T**his is my response to the likely criticism of my writings: (other than photography) I have formally studied nothing; I am a follower of nothing and I know nothing - except the indelible fact of my frivolity. My writings are frivolous by design; **I** prefer flippant succinctness over learned elaboration, controversy over predictability, the wicked over the banal. I work hard to be brief; I strive to get to the crux of a matter. And I copy and acquire with abandon, see ECLECTICISM. **I** quote selectively - often out of context; I may give a quote or a phrase a new meaning - to create a new reality. I may challenge, contradict or distort truths - to make a point ... while always bearing in mind the principle of uncertainty. **M**y quoting habit warrants elaborating on. Obviously I read a lot ... books, my newspaper, articles in internet publications (though I ‘speed-read’ a lot too); but above all, I owe a tremendous debt to my favourite website, Wikipedia. **H**owever, I try to be meticulous with listing the authors of the content I use. If no external sources are listed, that's an indication I wrote the piece on my own; for instance: BALANCE. A reader said, “wow, who wrote that?” Well, it was me. **S**o, yes, I quote a lot. This means I acknowledge my book is not just ‘mine’; consequently it is ‘open source’**. People more erudite than myself have said, ‘I stand on the shoulders of giants’; go also to PHILOSOPHY and to page XI. **O**ne of Bertrand Russell's commandments (p. 110) is most pertinent in the context of my writings: “Do not fear to be eccentric with your opinions.” I cherish that idea of ‘have no fear’; the saying epitomises the spirit of my work. **M**ission statement: I like to think things through thoroughly (see p. 48); I wish to inspire readers to think about things as they never thought about them before. I trust my writings are thought provoking and a conversation starter (see p. 76). **O**ne reviewer said (thank you, Melissa Wuske): “... the book presents a challenge, it urges determined exploration.” That is your cue: With anything I write, don't take my word for it; explore yourself. (Don't believe everything you read!) **M**y essays stand independently ... while they are nevertheless interconnected. The book is designed for them to be read one by one, with the bonus that there are links to related essays; open it at random and allow yourself to be surprised. **Y**es, do contact me - cb@carstenburmeister.com - with corrections of errors, they will be evaluated for the next edition; but please: Factual errors - yes; opinions - no. (Go ahead - write your own book!) **Carsten Burmeister**

**This is the reason why you're reading the 115th edition (a new edition every month or two). My book is a 'Living Book'; the essays evolve with each edition. And I started with 150, now I have more than 300.*

*** While I reserve all rights as per relevant legislation, you may use any part of my writings as reference for your own work ... but please mention this book and my website as your source.*



en.light.en.ment
all rights reserved
© Carsten Burmeister
carstenburmeister.com
edition 115 - Aug. 2024
ISBN 978-0-9872977-0-9
first published 2012 Lulu.com
many thanks to Lulu ... and their
ingenious self-publishing technology

AI. Artificial Intelligence is a buzzword eliciting both excitement and dread. The promise is that AI will improve human society with yet unimaginable future inventions and advancements. **B**ut seventy percent of AI researchers agree that advanced AI poses risks ... in the short term, the risks are not futuristic machines of science fiction movies, but software AI on the internet. **AI** power more and more is optimised toward inhuman values. With the use of 'bot farms' and trolls, 'truth decay' and 'post truth' become reality. Information warfare seeks to confuse the citizenry. **A**n example of citizenry confusion is the election of Donald Trump.

after The Precipice by Toby Ord, Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity

“With Artificial Intelligence we must get things right the first time, because it may be the only chance we get. AI would be the biggest event in human history; unfortunately it might also be the last ... the development of full AI could spell the end of the human race.”

Stephen Hawking

“If you invented Artificial Intelligence, that’s the last invention you’d ever have to make.”

D. Scott Phoenix

“I don’t understand why some people are not concerned about AI.”

Bill Gates

“Thou shalt not make a machine in the likeness of a human mind.”

Frank Herbert in his 1965 novel Dune

see also THE GREAT FILTER ... in the appendix a25 a38 The Future is Now and a39 Humanity’s Potential as well as a82 Will Humans and Machines become One? furthermore a83 We need to Shut Down AI Development

ALTRUISM. Altruism is the moral principle and practice of concern for the wellbeing of others, resulting in both material and spiritual quality of life; it is a core aspect of many religions as well as secular world views and a virtue in many cultures ... a synonym of selflessness, as opposed to selfishness. **E**ffective altruism is performing actions which are at a cost to ourselves but of benefit to others ... without expectation of reciprocity or recompense. Effective altruism encourages individuals and organizations to consider all causes and actions and to act in a way that brings about the greatest positive impact.

Effective altruism is a term used by the Australian philosopher Peter Singer. Altruism refers to improving the lives of others - as opposed to egoism, which emphasizes self-interest. Effectiveness refers to doing the most good with whatever resources are available, as opposed to only doing some amount of good; as well as determining what is the most good by using evidence and reason, as opposed to just doing what feels good or appears intuitively appealing.

It makes no moral difference whether the person I can help is a neighbour's child, ten yards away from me; or a Bengali whose name I'll never know, a thousand miles away. The moral point of view requires us to look beyond the interests of our own society. From a moral point of view, the prevention of the starvation of millions of people outside our society must be considered as pressing as the upholding of norms within our society.

Singer recalls a shocking video of a two-year-old girl in China who was hit by a van and ignored by passers-by as she lay dying. He asks: “Would you have stopped and helped this girl? Well, of course; but every day we don’t help others is like leaving this girl crippled on the road. In 2012, six million children under five died from preventable poverty-related diseases like malaria. Does it really matter that we’re not walking past these children in the street - that they are far away?” To Singer, there is no morally relevant difference.

see also ETHICS and in the appendix page a58

APHRODISIAC. The man down on his knees*
is a great, irresistible aphrodisiac for the woman.

**scrubbing the bathroom floor,
the toilet, bathtub and shower*

ARTISTS. Artists have a unique approach to their work. While labourers work with just their hands, and others work with their hands and minds, it is the artists who employ their hands, minds and hearts. But though artists put their heart into their craft, surety of expression develops only after much practice, study and observation. A story from the Orient shows how artists may go about perfecting their art. **O**nce a nobleman admired a famous painter's work and commissioned a painting of a bird. When he did not hear about the picture for a whole year, he went to see the artist - only to be told it was not yet finished. Another year went by and again the nobleman visited the artist, but the painting still was not completed. Finally - when this process repeated itself the next year - the nobleman impatiently demanded his painting. **T**he artist took brush and ink to paper and within moments - after not many brush-strokes at all - the work was presented to the nobleman, who was amazed: The painting was exquisite. **"W**hy didn't you do this years ago," the nobleman exclaimed, "it only took moments to paint the picture!" The artist replied: "Well, yes - but it has taken many years to observe the bird."

*"Has anybody ever finished anything?"
Leonardo da Vinci*



painting by
Chao Shao-ang

ATHEISM. Absence of belief in God;
or the specific belief, there is no God.

*An awkward dilemma in philosophy:
is atheism the absence of a belief,
or is atheism a belief in itself?*

ATHEIST SPIRITUALITY. A religion or a belief in
God are not required for a sense of spirituality in one's life.

see also GOD 5, REALITY 1, RELIGIOUS, SPIRITUALITY

ARETE. Arete is an ancient Greek term for excellence. It was the ultimate expression of human greatness - moral, physical, spiritual. **A**rete is what the Stoics were chasing; furthermore, it is what we are chasing today. Aristotle: "We are what we repeatedly do." **H**ence excellence is not an act ... it is a habit. In other words: Excellence is not this thing that you do one time; it is a way of living. **E**pictetus: "Excellence grows in its actions." Therefore, if you want to do something and you want to be great at it ... make a habit of it.

from The Daily Stoic, by Ryan Holiday; see also STOICISM

ATOMISM (from Greek ἄτομον, *atomon*, i.e. "indivisible") is a natural philosophy proposing that the physical universe is composed of fundamental indivisible components known as atoms. **R**eferences to the concept of atomism and its atoms appeared in both ancient Greek and ancient Indian philosophical traditions ... Indian Buddhists in fact developed distinctive theories of atomism. **N**ature is described as consisting of two essentials: atom and void. Clusters of different shapes, arrangements and positions of atoms create the various micro- and macroscopic substances in the world. **P**hilosophical atomism, though, is a reductive thesis, proposing that nothing really exists: the only things that exist are atoms ricocheting off each other mechanistically, in otherwise empty space ... a void. **B**ut the elementary particles of atoms are all just energy themselves.

Atomists are both wrong and right; atoms are 'divisible', they are made up of electrons and quarks; quarks make up protons and neutrons - the atomic nucleus - around which electrons revolve.

A quark is a fast-moving point of energy; so those building blocks are 'only' energy (see EINSTEIN) and one could say, 'nothing really exists' ... except for energy and cosmic forces - such as gravity.

see also the footnote to REALITY 4: So, what is real?

ATARAXIA. Ataraxia is a term in ancient Greek stoic philosophy for a state of freedom from worry or any other preoccupation. **A**taraxia is synonymous with true happiness; it is the detached and balanced state of a person who transcends the material world. **A**taraxia is a pleasant quietude that arises from suspending dogmatic attitudes while pursuing one's desire for continuing inquiry. **A**taraxia is a state in which one eschews biased opinions and instead savours the contentment and joy offered by philosophy.

There is no greater good than a state free from anxiety, suffering or pain, devoid of judgement or rigid beliefs; instead with tranquillity in one's life, requited love and inner peace ...this is happiness that can be learnt.

How then is it possible to learn happiness? One premise of this book is that our woes are created in the mind; most of our problems stem from the mental constraints and obstructions we create ourselves, chiefly our attachments. In that context this is a powerful stoic aphorism: 'what counts in life are not our circumstances ...

... but how we deal with our circumstances.' Accordingly it is clear that our mental disposition determines the degree of happiness we experience, rather than - for instance - whether we are rich or not. Furthermore, in everyday life it is important to assign the correct importance to the past as well as to the future.

Then we acknowledge that - while we learn from past mistakes - it is counterproductive to dwell on them; and the future - while careful planning is paramount - is uncertain and if overrated, likely to cause anxiety.

see also ATTACHMENTS, HAPPINESS, Q & A, STILLNESS, STOICISM

BELIEF. Asked for the most desirable commodity in life, one is likely to opt for happiness. How is happiness achieved? There are many answers - they may deal with the ownership of goods and assets, success, health and loving relationships. **A** great aid to happiness, though, is to have a personal belief we can trust; one that gives us peace of mind and comfort. And it is not important which belief it is - any belief will do. **H**owever, our belief must be ethical, peaceful, non-delusional and tolerant - it must not restrict other people and their beliefs.

see also HAPPINESS, MEANING, WHAT I BELIEVE

When deciding on a belief, it is wise to stay clear of ready-made belief systems that are inherently rigid and dogmatic. One ought to study other beliefs, be open to learn about opposing truths - and question everything. *So beware - our beliefs are often shaped by "truthiness"; they may be founded on false or irrational concepts. It is for that reason that some teachers advocate against beliefs - in fact to believe or dis-believe nothing*.*

see also TRUTHINESS

**Believe nothing ... ok, true. But our mind is designed for belief: beliefs are inescapable; and with so many negative, intolerant beliefs, for balance we need positive and supportive ones. Remember also: all beliefs are mind-constructs ... under our control.*

see also WHAT I BELIEVE, GOD 4, 5

Thus, as regards our own personal beliefs, an issue of great importance is in play. Beliefs are just that: Personal. We may try and find solace in the various belief systems prescribed by groups and tribes ... *... but the idea that having a belief involves group activities - as the various dogmatic religious beliefs do - is false. Our own deep, true beliefs are unassailable by outside influences, just as they can't be relayed to others.*

see also UNDERSTANDING

The Buddha said: "Become aware, become conscious, become courageous - but don't hide behind belief systems and theologies. All organised beliefs are poisonous, all belief systems are barriers ... since they do not allow free-thinking or doubt."

see also BUDDHISM

But does belief bring tangible benefits? In 2008, Professor A. Clark of the Paris School of Economics and Doctor O. Lelkes of the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy conducted a vast survey of Europeans. *They found believers record less stress, can better cope with loss and divorce, are less prone to suicide, enjoy higher self-esteem and greater 'life purpose' ... and report being more happy. See also HAPPINESS*

The tantalising proof that belief in God makes you happier and healthier, Tom Knox, Mail Online, 18 Feb 2011

Yet, it is known that among patients recovering from injury or illness, those who pray for relief often experience slower recovery rates - most likely due to them being more inclined to neglecting their medication, as they anticipate divine help.

after Born Believers
New Scientist, 7 February 2009

Here is a curious story that shows a profound misunderstanding of the concept of belief. A pastor performed a service that included handling a rattlesnake - to demonstrate the veracity of a certain passage in the Bible. *"Anyone who believes can do it" he said. Only, he got bitten and died. You may say, that is a tragic story, what's curious about it? Well, his father - also a pastor - had died previously, performing the same stunt.*

*This story is brought to you via the Fitz Files
The Sun Herald, 3 June 2012*

**Believe nothing ... it would be great if we were able to do that, a lot of harm could be avoided. In fact belief accounts for much of humanity's strife, like religious fundamentalism, homophobia, racism, indeed much of the intolerance in our societies.*

see also FAITH

** To belief nothing is a path to enlightenment ... see also REALITY 3
"All our beliefs are illusions, they have no validity at all." Jiddu Krishnamurti
see also KRISHNAMURTI, OPINIONS and in the appendix pages a15, a16, as well as X and XIII*

BILDUNG. In the German tradition of self-cultivation, philosophy and education are linked in personal and cultural maturation. This maturation balances the individual's mind and heart, in a unification of selfhood and identity within the broader society.

*Bild·ung (German)
cultivation, education, development, pedagogy
learning for learning's sake
see also GOETHE*

BAHAISM. The Bahá'í faith was founded in nineteenth-century Persia. It emphasises spiritual unity of all humankind. Bahá'í teachings stress the parallels of the major religions, as well as concerning themselves with social and ethical issues; service to humanity is valued as highly as prayer and worship. Religious history is seen to have unfolded through a series of teachers, who all established a religion that was suited to the needs of their time - these teachers included Zoroaster, Abraham, Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and Bahauallah. Bahatism is of Abrahamic religious lineage; and as humanity evolves, a new manifestation of God comes while science & religion evolve hand in hand (the principle of progressive revelation). In the Bahá'í belief humanity is involved in a process of collective evolution. The need of the present time is for the establishment of peace, justice and unity on a global scale.

see also the appendix page a90 and UNITY at the end of the appendix

*Defining principles of the Bahá'í philosophy are:
The independent search for truth - unfettered
by superstition or tradition. Equality of men
and women - oneness of the entire human race.*

*Abolition of the extremes of wealth and poverty.
Condemnation of all forms of prejudice, whether
religious, racial, class or national. Harmony
shall exist between all religions and science.*

*Introduction of a world tribunal to adjudicate
disputes between nations. Justice must be the
ruling principle in society. Establishment of
peace shall be the supreme goal of all mankind.*



the nine-pointed Bahá'í star

*The Bahá'í International Community had offices
at the League of Nations and now at the UN in
New York, the UHJ, Universal House of Justice*,
and representations to UN regional commissions.*

*While the Bahá'í community works on improv-
ing international relations, recently offices of
the Environment and the Advancement of
Women were established at its UN office.*

*In the 2000 UN Millennium Forum a Bahá'í
was invited as the only non-governmental
speaker during the summit. Bahá'ís are
persecuted in Islamic countries, especially Iran.*

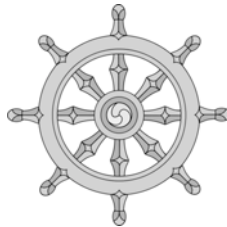
**go to universalhouseofjustice.bahai.org*

BUDDHISM. Siddhartha Gautama (563 - 483 BCE) was a spiritual teacher in India and the founder of Buddhism. He is recognized as the Supreme Buddha. However, the definition of Buddha extends to anyone who is awakened (enlightened); to disciples who have reached nirvana, a state of highest happiness. **B**ut this is not the sense-based happiness of everyday life; not the concept of happiness pursued in Western culture. Rather it is an enduring, transcendental happiness - which is induced by the calmness achieved through enlightenment. **O**ne concept in Buddhism is mindfulness, the process of keeping one's consciousness alive to the current reality ... on the path to nirvana, one abstains from pondering the past or the future. **N**irvana is a condition free from desire, expectation, anxiety or anger; once in nirvana, one lives in accordance with dharma. **M**indfulness meditation is an aid to attaining the state of nirvana.

see also MINDFULNESS

"The Buddha never preached the truth, seeing one has to realize it within oneself."

'Sutralamkara' - the Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras, from Aldous Huxley: The Perennial Philosophy, chapter seven, Truth



the Dharmachakra, or Dharma Wheel
denoting the Noble Eightfold Path

en·light·en·ment

Absence of desire, hatred & delusion. Recognition of reality, seeing the true nature of things. Acceptance, detachment and understanding.

dhar·ma

The truth about the way things are; the right way of living or religious living; the proper conduct or duty; the higher truth; the essential, characteristic nature of being. The word dharma literally means 'that which upholds - or supports - the cosmos'.

The term also refers to the Buddha's teachings, whose purpose is to alleviate suffering. Gautama Buddha's Four Noble Truths are: The Truth of suffering, the Truth of its causes, the Truth of the path to relief from suffering, the Truth of the end of suffering (nirvana).

see also DHARMA, MEDITATION 3, THE TRUTH 5

a·wa·ken

The Buddha said: "Awaken from the slumber of ignorance, delusion and unconsciousness. Awaken to truth, clarity and compassion."

In philosophical Buddhism, free-thinking was specifically encouraged by the Buddha: "It is proper to doubt. Do not go upon what is acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon an axiom; nor upon rumour; nor upon what is in a scripture."

non-self

Moreover, Gautama Buddha stated that our attachment to the existence of a concept of self/soul - or indeed God - was pointless. Instead he refers to the 'non-self'; however, it has been said that trying to intellectualize the non-self could make your head explode.

see also KNOW YOUR SELF

Robin Wright quotes monk Walpola Rahula in Why Buddhism Is True: "According to the teachings of the Buddha, the idea of self is imaginary, a false belief which has no corresponding reality. But the belief produces harmful thoughts of 'me' and 'mine', selfish desires, cravings, attachment, hatred, ill-will, conceit, pride, egoism etc. It is the source of all troubles and evils, from personal conflicts to wars between nations."

So adherence to the idea of a self is the root of attachments and desires. But Wright says about 'self', 'no self' or 'non-self': "Continue to entertain the proposition that within you there is an 'I'. Don't feel like you're committing a violation of Buddhist dogma because you think of yourself as being a self. However, be open to the possibility that - at the deepest level - your self is not what you have always thought of it as being."

see also the footnote with Thomas Metzinger's comment on
KNOW YOUR SELF

COMMUNICATION. Proper communication is a requisite for a functioning society; without it we can't run our economic, cultural and judicial systems, or - for that matter - our relationships. But surprisingly, we're ill equipped for adequate communication. **A**s we listen to others, we often only hear what we want to hear. We do not ensure that what we may think to be the core of an issue is indeed what the other party intended to communicate. **T**he point to bear in mind: of importance is not what you SAY, but what the people you are communicating with actually HEAR. **D**uring my divorce, our counsellor taught me a valuable lesson: My wife and I had to put in simple terms what we thought about our marriage; but once she had made her point I was not to reply - instead, I was to repeat what I thought she had just said. **I**t was extraordinary to realise how badly we communicated; it took a half a dozen repeats - a whole counselling session - for both of us to work out what the other wanted to communicate. **G**ood communication requires good conversation, attention paid, smart phones switched off ... and periods of silence and thinking.

An important concern with successful communication is to not mix issues.

If your partner says "you never do any housework," it could be tempting to reply, "and you spend hours on the phone."

This is not helpful - it is crucial to deal with just one issue at any one time.

see also ATTENTION, LISTENING, PRESENCE

COMPASSION. "I promote the value of love and compassion. Compassion and tolerance - especially towards our enemies - are a sign of strength; we should be grateful to our enemies. **O**ur enemies help us to a tranquil mind. My greatest teacher in life was Mao Zedong (the architect of the Tibetan holocaust). He taught me patience and understanding in the face of evil."

*Tenzin Gyatso (1935)
the fourteenth, current Dalai Lama of Tibet*

COMPREHENSION. For the life of me, I just cannot comprehend this: humans fight wars; we kill one-another. When asked about it, we say ... 'oh, it's human nature'. **A**nd from there it only gets worse: we justify killing. Our killings are just. As we fight a war, ours is the 'just war'. Worse still: some of us kill gleefully ... incomprehensible.

see also LIFE 2, NON-PEACE, SOLDIERS, WAR

also incomprehensible I deem faith, see FAITH; but wait, there's more: it is incomprehensible to me that in movies we see hideous acts of violence, yet, the display of nudity and sex is taboo, see PORNOGRAPHY

CONTRADICTIONS ... there are many of them in my book, inevitably so; on many issues I do not have a singular view. **O**ne truth may seem to contradict another ... this is due to my writings going back many decades. Views - truths - change. **T**hink of Jainism, where one truth or another or both may be true.

see also JAINISM, TRUTH, SIDDHARTHA

CONSCIOUSNESS 2. It appears consciousness - as a dualistic entity - is one with mind in one respect and one with soul in another. There is debate whether the soul exists at all - from a scientific viewpoint, there is no evidence for its existence *. Nevertheless, it is scientific research that now indicates consciousness may be an independent entity. **O**ver centuries there have been accounts of near-death, out-of-body or reincarnation-related experiences. People were brought back from the brink of death minutes after - in some cases as long as an hour after - life functions had ceased. It is perplexing to read accounts of what seems to be beyond the apparent conclusion of someone's physical life. **M**any people discount such experiences as 'the mind playing tricks' and adhere to the notion that consciousness and mind dissolve at the time of death. They are likely to disbelieve or ignore incidents that hint at consciousness as an entity separate of mind, incidents where someone died but came back and described the goings-on that occurred in the meantime, from a viewpoint other than their position in the physical reality.** **O**r the case where someone reported encountering - after their clinical death and subsequent return - an individual they did not know, and could not have known while alive, whose existence nevertheless is documented;*** or a returnee able to describe a place s/he had never been to. There are many unexplained propensities of consciousness; it plausibly is an entity outside our comprehension and beyond science's reference points.

** see also page a89 in the appendix: Life*

*** In hospitals and at crash sites many experiences have been reported where returnees said they hovered above the scene looking down; a great deal of them later accurately described their revival process.*

**** A boy died and was revived. He said he had visited a beautiful garden where he met a kind man, who sent him back to his mum. The man he described was his late father, whom he had never met.*

For more on Near Death Experiences, go to www.near-death.com or try the book Closer to the Light, by Dr Melvin Morse

According to The Human Consciousness Project some researchers propose that consciousness may indeed constitute a separate, so far undiscovered entity that is independent from functions of the brain.

www.mindbodysymposium.com/Human-Consciousness-Project/human-consciousness-project.html

"One could take a realist view of consciousness, where it's more on a par with electromagnetic fields than with life. Electromagnetic fields are regarded as real and independent parts of our physical world."

*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy/ Consciousness
(2.3 Consciousness as an Entity)*

"Consciousness has a hidden structure that lies beyond both phenomenology and physiology and while this hidden structure could bridge the gap, it is probably forever inaccessible to us."

*Colin McGinn, as he is quoted in
Consciousness Explained by Dan Dennett
Consciousness Explained by Daniel C. Dennett is the
most comprehensive book on the subject I have come across*

"One branch of panpsychism suggests that consciousness stands alongside other forces and fields that physics have revealed to us, like gravity, electromagnetism and the strong & weak nuclear forces."

*Annaka Harris in her book Conscious
see also PANPSYCHISM*

As I talk of consciousness, I talk in the context of philosophy & spirituality about mind & self and its relationship to universal consciousness. This investigation is in contrast to scientific analyses of consciousness.

For a scientific sense of what consciousness is and how to define it in the context of physics, biology and neuroscience, go to the TED talk by Anil Seth, and Sam Harris' podcast Consciousness and the Self.

see also KNOW YOUR SELF

DEATH 2. The Stoics gave us a reminder of our mortality, to remember all our lives: Memento Mori (Remember you will die).

see also MARCUS AURELIUS, STOICISM

DEATH 3. As an atheist, I do not believe in a God or an afterlife. However - without calling myself an agnostic - I will say that my atheism is not absolute; I mention in my conversation with my mother (DEATH 1) that I believe in a universal consciousness. That is the space where all of humanity resides, in a spiritual, esoteric sense, as spirit (spirit = soul): without a self, persona or ego; where our soul is at peace. This belief allows me to see all of humanity as one, and all humans as equal. For me, this is The Truth. For my mum ... this concept of death provided much comfort.

see also THE TRUTH, UNIVERSAL CONSCIOUSNESS, WHAT I BELIEVE

DEATH 4. Once a Master travelled in Northern India by the river Ganges, with a group of followers and one of his sons. Along the way his son became unwell. A doctor in the group attended to the young man - the diagnosis was that he was gravely ill and could not be helped. The Master's disciples were distressed and urged him to cure his son, believing he had healing powers. However, the Master - who appeared dispassionate - did not respond to their calls. Overnight the young man died. All the while the Master had been sitting in meditation. Without delay a funeral pyre was built, the body cremated, the ashes strewn in the river; soon the group was on its way again. This story is told as an example for acceptance, detachment and letting go. The Stoics say 'expect nothing, be satisfied to live in harmony with the natural progression of things' and 'how strange to be surprised at anything that happens in life.'

It is evident that for some enlightened individuals death does not hold the anxiety, terror or uncertainty it holds for others. The German writer and mystic Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 - 1832) said:

"The thought of death leaves me in perfect peace. I believe our spirit is a being of indestructible nature. It works in eternity; like the sun, which seems to set every day, but doesn't really - it shines perpetually."

see also GOETHE

In the context of death the notion of enlightenment, acceptance and detachment is not only the heart of our spirituality, but also the bedrock of our equilibrium; it gives us peace of mind in the face of our mortality.

The story above has enlightenment at its core. To be enlightened is to accept, detach and let go. It pulls into focus what Krishnamurti meant when he was asked about his enlightenment: "I don't mind what happens."

see also ACCEPTANCE, DETACHMENT
KRISHNAMURTI, STOICISM

DEATH 5. A thought in Zen philosophy is that "death is seen as the ultimate moment for the complete liberation of the mind from all entanglements, all sorrows and all separateness." (Joan Halifax) When we die we no longer feel separate from the world, nor worry about the fears that come from feeling inadequate; no longer will we try to control others, nor burden ourselves with judgment of others. Why not free ourselves of this today - instead of waiting for death?

after Leo Babauta, Zen Habits: The Tragedy & Liberation of Death

DEATH 6. Cicero says philosophizing is getting ready to die. All wisdom and argument is to teach us not to be afraid of dying.

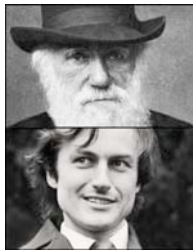
*Montaigne, essay no. 1-20, To philosophize is to learn how to die
go also to the appendix page a76, Montaigne, Essays*

DEATH 8. Whether death is the end of our conscious being or not, it is worth thinking about in a non-morbid way ... as we ponder the preciousness of life, and that we don't have unlimited life-time left. **We** may get inspired to wisdom and compassion; we may do those most important things, where we express our love to our loved-ones, relinquish hang-ups, bury hatchets, live consciously with mindfulness. **Thinking** this way will not depress us ... instead make us feel alive.

*after Sam Harris, the Making Sense podcast: #263 The Paradox of Death
see also in the appendix page a81: Lucius Seneca, On Old Age*

DARWIN. "The influence of the theory of evolution can be summed up thus: *We live in the age of Darwin*"*; the Darwinian revolution changed both science and culture in ways immeasurable. **Today** - February 12 - is *International Darwin Day*; Charles Darwin (1809 - 1882) was an English naturalist, geologist, biologist and writer, known for his contributions to evolutionary biology. **His** theory: All species of life descended from a common ancestor.

** Skeptic editor Michael Shermer*



DAWKINS. The evolutionary scientist and atheist Richard Dawkins (born 1941) is clear about the effect delusions have on us and outspoken about the detrimental effect religion has on society. **Dawkins** defines religion as derived from something supernatural: "you get your beliefs not from evidence but from faith, revelation, scripture, authority ... all of them bad reasons to believe anything." **Dawkins** abhors supernatural and mystical religious delusions.

*Richard Dawkins wrote The God Delusion; see also page a67: Human 2.0
for balance, read The Dawkins Delusion by Alister McGrath*

DELUSION. Delusion and ego are two of our greatest enemies. They prevent us from seeing the world as it really is - hence our wrong decisions, everyday calamities and worldwide disasters. **Delusion** leads us to consider others as inferior; to demand advantages we're not due; to grant unwarranted importance to religions; to enforce irrational cultural rules and unjust laws. **Delusion & ego** cause aggression, oppression, destruction & war.

EGO. Ego is the other side of the delusion coin. Our mind is dualistic. There is the subtle mind, versus the gross mind. Higher consciousness ... soul, versus lower consciousness ... ego. **Ego** is the aspect of our mind that is employed to run our day to day exploits; it motivates us to achieve, but also burdens us with limits: Our actions may be imbued with egotism, i.e. lack of consideration. **Ego & delusion** cause aggression, oppression, destruction & war.

see also ENLIGHTENMENT 3, MIND 2, REALITY 2, 3

ECONOMICS. "I ask the political economists and the moralists if they have ever calculated the number of individuals who must be condemned to misery, demoralisation, overwork, degradation, rank ignorance, overwhelming misfortune and utter penury - in order to produce one rich man." *
Economics is the science of how people interact with value.

**Almeida Garrett, 1799 - 1854
Portuguese poet, playwright, journalist,
orator, novelist, politician, humanist, revolutionary*

ECLECTICISM. Eclecticism was first practiced by ancient Greek philosophers who did not attach themselves to a particular philosophical system, but selected from existing beliefs what seemed most reasonable to them - out of this collected material they constructed their own philosophy.
The term stems from the Greek 'eklektikos': Choosing the best.

Some martial arts systems can be described as eclectic, in the sense that they borrow techniques from a wide variety of other arts. The martial arts method developed by Bruce Lee (1940 - 73), called Jeet Kune Do, is classified as an eclectic system; Lee used to say: "Use what works for you, take it from any place you can find it."

Eclecticism favours borrowing from other systems within a free-floating framework; it encourages practitioners to incorporate into their work what's useful to them, as in the house-music scene; indeed, many - if not all - artforms subscribe to eclecticism. Thus eclecticism applies to my photoart as well as my approach to my writings.

Quintessentially eclectic, Reality Hunger 'a manifesto', by David Shields, is my new favourite book. The publishers call it a "... rigorous and radical attempt to reframe how we think about 'truthiness', literary license, quotation and appropriation ..."*

Reality Hunger 38: *In 1830 (Ralph Waldo) Emerson wanted to find what he called 'a new literature.' A German con artist, Johann Mälzel, visited America with a 'panharmonicon,' an organ without keys. He would crank its lever three times, step off to the side and the machine would spit out an entire orchestra's worth of sound: Flutes, drums, trumpets, cymbals, trombones, a triangle, clarinets, violins.*

But eclecticism is eschewed by religions. Religions are rigid and not open to changes or influences from outside their doctrines. The knowledge inherent in religions is said to have been derived from revelation and ancient scriptures - inflexible and unalterable, but ultimately in many ways unsuited and inappropriate for our times.

There is a famous - often mis-interpreted - quote by Pablo Picasso, "Good artists copy, great artists steal." More from T. S. Elliot (I replaced 'poet' with 'artist'): "One of the tests of artists is how they borrow. Immature artists imitate, mature artists steal ... bad artists deface what they take; good artists turn it into something better."

After seeing Mälzel's machine perform, Emerson called the new literature he had been looking for "a panharmonicon. Here everything is admissible - philosophy, ethics, divinity, criticism, poetry, humor, fun, mimicry, anecdote, jokes, ventriloquism - all the breadth and versatility of the most liberal conversation, highest and lowest personal topics; all are permitted, all may be combined." Hear, hear!

**see also EMERSON, TRUTHINESS*

EPISTEMIC STUBBORNNESS ... or bad thinking; when relating to the validity of knowledge - for example: denying climate change or the benefits of vaccination.
This type of bad thinking is different to just simple stupidity; it is instead some sort of stubborn, rampant confirmation bias.
Countervailing facts and evidence are ignored or disbelieved.

after thenewdaily.com.au, Alan Kohler, 6 October 2022 about a book by philosophy professors Steven Nadler and Lawrence Shapiro, university Wisconsin-Madison: - When Bad Thinking Happens to Good People - go also to the appendix, page a60, for a full transcript ep-i-ste-mic relating to knowledge; Greek: epistēmē - epistemology: knowledge ... distinguishes justified belief from opinion

EMERSON. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 - 1882) was an American essayist, poet, lecturer and philosopher who led the transcendentalist movement of the 19th century. He was a champion of individualism and a critic of society's pressures. Emerson moved away from traditional religions and societal beliefs, and following his essay 'Nature' he gave a speech entitled 'The American Scholar' in 1837, which was deemed to be America's Intellectual Declaration of Independence. "Nothing is sacred ... but the integrity of your own mind."

*see also ECLECTICISM, TRANSCENDENTALISM
and in the appendix pages a41: Self-Reliance and a56: Nature*

ENLIGHTENMENT 1. The Age of Enlightenment / Age of Reason were 18th century stages in Western philosophy. The Enlightenment is linked with the scientific revolution. The period emphasised science, rationality and reason. Inspired by the upsurge of knowledge initiated by Galileo and Newton - and disaffected with repressive rule - Enlightenment thinkers believed that sensible, analytical thinking might be applied to all areas of human activity. The Enlightenment overturned the then accepted belief that religious revelation was the primary source of wisdom. In view of the status quo in world affairs - which is fraught with fundamentalism, fanaticism and irrationality - it is apparent the world needs a new Age of Enlightenment *. Then - once tradition is not allowed to impact governmental decision-making, once religion is removed from politics and patriotism is purged of excessive emotionalism - good sense, logic and enlightened compassion shall bring us peace.

*Inspired by the Enlightenment, Nietzsche coined his dictum: "God is dead." See also NIETZSCHE *this is a pertinent issue in view of Islamic fundamentalism, see JIHADISM and page a96: Jihadism, in the absence of Islamic enlightenment, Sam Harris endorses fighting militant Islamism with force; go also to the appendix page a38: The Future is Now*

The Russian-British philosopher Isaiah Berlin (1909 - 1997) noted that Enlightenment figures resisted arbitrary authoritarian rule and urged political systems based on natural rights and democracy. The Enlightenment made the human person sovereign, displacing the primacy of God, Popes and arbitrary tyrants.

The French philosopher René Descartes (1596 - 1650) dubbed the 'Father of Modern Philosophy' and of 'Cogito ergo sum' (I think, therefore I am) fame, was a major figure in rationalism and is often regarded as the first modern thinker to provide a philosophical framework for the natural sciences and the Enlightenment.

The 'Father of the Enlightenment' was Spinoza (1632 - 77), who is considered one of Western philosophy's authoritative ethicists. He was a great rationalist, who laid the groundwork for modern biblical criticism and held the position that nothing is intrinsically good or bad - it is just perceived to be that way by the individual.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 - 78) was another philosopher of the Enlightenment who also contended man was neither inherently good nor bad when in the state of nature (the condition humankind was in before the creation of civilization and social order), but is corrupted by society (Religion? Tradition? Nationalism?)

Voltaire (1694 - 1778) was an Enlightenment writer and philosopher known for his defence of civil liberties and freedom of religion; but he directed criticism towards the Bible and the Catholic Church. Voltaire deemed Indian civilization to be the ancestor civilization to Western culture and Hindus to be the first philosophers.

In a letter to Frederick II, King of Prussia, dated 5 Jan. 1767, Voltaire wrote about Christianity: "Our religion is assuredly the most ridiculous, the most absurd and the most bloody religion which ever infected this world." Voltaire was famous for his wit and his criticisms, including of slavery. He wrote more than 20,000 letters.

This phrase embodies the Enlightenment spirit: "I disapprove of what you say - but I will defend to the death your right to say it." These words were written by Evelyn B. Hall in her book The Friends of Voltaire to summarise Voltaire's outlook - but her saying has been mistakenly attributed to Voltaire as a quotation.

Deism is a philosophy of the Enlightenment that differs from theism in that God does not interfere with human life and the laws of the universe. Deists - like Voltaire - reject miracles, prophecies, divine revelations and holy books. They hold that beliefs must be founded on reason and observed features of the natural world.

ENLIGHTENMENT 2. The Vietnamese Master Ching Hai Wu Shang Shih equates enlightenment with acceptance and detachment. A fable from the Orient emphasises this point. **O**nce a young girl had a baby. Her parents were angry with her and demanded to know who the father was. The girl named the local Zen master. Outraged they took the newborn to the master and demanded he bring up the infant. Without a word of protest the master took the boy in and - most lovingly - brought him up. **A**s the years went by the young woman's guilt got the better of her and she told the truth. Embarrassed the parents went to the master, apologised and humbly asked for the return of the boy. **W**ithout a word of protest the master handed over the child.

*The Indian Jiddu Krishnamurti,
when asked about his secret
to enlightenment, simply said,
"I don't mind what happens."*

see also KRISHNAMURTI

ENLIGHTENMENT 1 is an essay on history, in view of how the times were changing as regards religion and other non-rational, myth-related concepts. ENLIGHTENMENT 3 lays out hypotheses that are potentially hard to grasp. After all we generally believe that the notions of 'reality' and 'truth' are fluid: it is only human for us all to have a different understanding of both. Enlightenment then is a highbrow undertaking, that, while worth aspiring to, requires a great effort to achieve.

ENLIGHTENMENT 2 is different. When we talk of enlightenment as acceptance, detachment and letting go, the bar is set much lower. These are ideals we all can aspire to and indeed achieve. This is the point where enlightenment meets stoicism. The Stoics tell us that we should change what we can change, but accept what cannot be changed. The next step then is to detach from the un-achievable, the un-desirable or un-wanted, and let go of any resentment we may harbor.

see also REALITY, STOICISM, TRUTH

So, what does it mean to live with an enlightened attitude to life? Is it difficult; is it challenging? And are there degrees of enlightenment? The last question is easily answered: Yes; to my understanding. My take on enlightenment is that it's not a destination, but a journey. To make the decision to aspire to enlightened conduct is the first step, that's the difficult bit. Then the challenge is to diligently stay on the path. In my view enlightenment is not a mystical, religious, esoteric or theoretical process; it is practical, though it may start in the mind (with meditation).*

see also BUDDHISM, DEATH 3, DETACHMENT, DHARMA DUTY, ENLIGHTENMENT 3, ETHICS, MEANING, MEDITATION 1 MIND, MINDFULNESS, MORAL LAW, PURPOSE OF LIFE, QUALITY REALITY 3, 4, RUSSELL, SPIRITUAL, SPIRITUALITY, THE TRUTH, VEDANTA WHAT I BELIEVE, WISDOM, WU WEI, ZEN, X - THINGS TO DO, a17 - THE PATH

**Enlightenment often isn't seen as a journey. I say in one of the footnotes to Meditation 3: "Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895 - 1986) - lecturer in psychology and philosophy and awareness of the nature of the mind - dismissed sustained, repeated mental training; he said a profound insight thoroughly changes the mind, not gradually, but instantly." My inkling is that here he talks of enlightenment. Yet, in literature the process is often referred to as a - potentially life-long - journey.*

An example is Siddhartha's exploits in the novel by Herman Hesse, where experience - the sum of conscious events in one's life - is shown as the best way to approach understanding of reality and attain enlightenment. Siddhartha's journey shows that enlightenment is gained not through intellectual methods, rather it's due to the completeness of these experiences. But remember: Siddhartha also says that for every truth there is an opposite one that is equally true.

see also SIDDHARTHA

ENLIGHTENMENT 3. One interpretation of enlightenment is knowing the truth; being aware of the true nature of the world; recognising and dealing with reality. Sogyal Rinpoche says in his *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*: “Enlightenment is realising the true nature of everything; knowing it as the absolute truth.”

● Ordinarily our mind is the source of delusion and confusion. This is where mind equals ego. We view the world from an angle that supports and confirms our agenda - we only hear what we want to hear, we refuse to look at issues from someone else’s viewpoint. The human mind evaluates natural occurrences and puts its spin on them. In nature nothing is right or wrong, good or bad, beautiful or ugly. It is only our mind that sees things in this light. This is the human condition.

■ Enlightenment is to go beyond this condition. Then we are free from the dictates of the ordinary mind - the ego is subdued. Our subtle mind sees the world as it really is; furthermore, it sees the duality of creation and spirit, mind and soul (... our inner God; God is not external). This awareness is a way of life and a path to inner peace.

To me enlightenment is a secular process, not a religious one. I like to think of enlightenment as acceptance and detachment, and as seeing the world the way it really is.

The enlightenment of world leaders is the one means by which world peace potentially will be achieved. Leaders shall treat all peoples equal, detach from the notion that other ethnic groups are inferior and get real about the nature and extend of their own aggression.

Furthermore, all resources have to be shared fairly; then - once all peoples are free and prosperous - the need for war will disappear. See also FREE & PROSPEROUS

en·light·en·ment

1. the movement emphasizing reason rather than myth
2. a condition equating acceptance and detachment
3. the state of having insight into the true nature of things

In Buddhism enlightenment is the absence of greed, hatred, malice and deception, as well as the state of perfect knowledge or wisdom, combined with infinite compassion.

While enlightenment is an understanding of both the relative view on reality and the true state of reality - unencumbered by personal biases - it is often said the true nature of reality is unavailable to us, that it is beyond human understanding; see also REALITY 4, REDUCTIONISM and p. a100 in the appendix.

Another definition of Buddhist enlightenment is that it’s the absence of delusion and a notion of ‘self’ (me, myself, mine); enlightenment then is ‘nirvana’ ... the end of suffering.

EPICUREANISM - the notion of pleasure as the chief good in life. Epicureanism can be seen as a form of hedonism, but the concept that the absence of pain and fear constitutes the greatest pleasure - and its advocacy of a simple life - make it very different from hedonism.

■ Epicureanism (307BC) is based on the teachings of the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus ... with its main opponent being Stoicism.

EINSTEIN. Albert Einstein (1879 - 1955) was a German-born physicist. He is known for his theory of relativity, which was deemed the greatest feat of thinking about nature, the greatest scientific discovery ever made. **O**f interest to me are this great thinker's views on religion and ethics. By his own definition Einstein was deeply religious, though he deemed religious beliefs "childish superstitions, the product of human weakness." **H**e believed persons who are religiously enlightened are those who have liberated themselves from the fetters of desire; they are occupied with ethical thoughts, regardless of whether they believe in God. * **E**instein did not believe in the God of religion: "If something is in me that can be called religious, then it is the unbounded admiration for the structure of the world so far as our sciences can reveal it."

** then religion is the quest of humans to be conscious of righteous values
see also pages a18 to a21 in the appendix and page XIV*

E = mc² Energy equals mass multiplied by the speed of light squared. The theory of relativity: Mass (matter) and energy are the same physical entity and can be interchanged; the mass of a body multiplied by the speed of light squared (multiplied by itself) is equal to the kinetic energy of that body.

en·er·gy

In physics, energy is the quantitative property that must be transferred to an object in order to perform work or to heat.

The law of conservation of energy states that energy can be converted in form, but not created or destroyed.

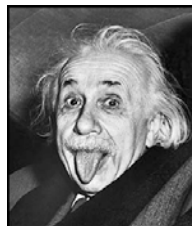
***E = mc²** has shown in real life just how much energy is released if it is converted from mass ... i.e. for atomic bombs.*

Einstein's beliefs are influenced by the thinking of philosophers of the Enlightenment, in particular the Portuguese/Dutch Baruch de Spinoza (1632 - 77). Spinoza contended that everything that exists in nature is one and there is only one set of rules.

He argued that God and nature are two names for the same reality - or energy - that underlies the universe. Spinoza's (and Einstein's) ethical doctrine is that the knowledge of - as well as the love for - God / Nature are dependent on reason and order.

Einstein's general theory of relativity describes the phenomenon of spacetime curvature - which explains gravity - and foresaw that massive objects bend light, which enables scientists to measure the enormous distances of galaxies in the cosmos.

Relativity also confirms the existence of mysterious, invisible black holes. However, I must say, since I am not shocked by these matters (theory of relativity, quantum mechanics etc.) it means (according to physicist Niels Bohr) that I do not understand them.



HAWKING. It was Stephen Hawking (1942 - 2018) who led me to Albert Einstein. He was instrumental in my awakening to science. His book *A Brief History of Time* is on a very short list of my very favorite books*. **N**ow it is followed by *Brief Answers to the Big Questions: Is there a God? Is there other intelligent life in the universe? Will artificial intelligence outsmart us? Will we survive on Earth? Should we colonise space?* **T**hese questions touch on issues raised in my essay THE GREAT FILTER.

** I know, I know ... the most oft purchased, rarely read and least understood book; but for me it never-the-less - looking at the superb illustrated, updated edition (with an added chapter on time travel and wormholes) - the book triggered my interest in science and the field of cosmology. Go to p. a93 in the appendix: Theory of Everything (TOE).*

*see also COSMOS, EXISTENCE, FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE
THE GREAT FILTER, UNIVERSAL CONSCIOUSNESS, WHY*

ETHICS. Ethics is the study and application of the values of a person or group - such as right or wrong, true or false, good or bad - in conjunction with responsibility; we have the responsibility to live an ethical life. All humans must strive to be sincere & committed in our efforts to do the right thing by fellow human beings. **T**hus the adherence to ethics must become a way of life - where freedom, peace (non-violence), prosperity, equality, respect and justice are guaranteed all humans; these issues must be valued above religious dogmas, customs, politics and arbitrary rules that may disadvantage those who seek to express their truths. **A**ppplied ethics concerns what a person is obligated (or permitted) to do in a specific situation or action.

Albert Schweitzer (1875 - 1965), German polymath, Lutheran minister, theologian, physician, writer, musicologist, organist, humanitarian philosopher and ethicist received the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize for his philosophy of *Reverence for Life*.

see also RENAISSANCE MAN

These words came to Albert Schweitzer while searching for a universal concept of ethics for our time: Reverence for Life ... the term is a translation of the German phrase: '*Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*'. In *Civilization and Ethics*, Schweitzer wrote: "Ethics is the Reverence for Life ... my principle of morality." **S**chweitzer made Reverence for Life the basic tenet of an ethical philosophy, which he developed and put into practice. He gave expression to its development in numerous books and publications during his life; with his main work being his (unfinished) four-part *Philosophy of Culture* (German: '*Kulturphilosophie*'). **S**chweitzer's principles of ethics consist of maintaining, assisting and enhancing life ... not to do so is evil.

With Virtue Ethics - described by Confucius as well as Aristotle - emphasis is on character.

One does what's right - not what one is expected to do by law or established traditions.

see also CONFUCIANISM

According to Aristotle ethics are to be studied to improve our lives - of primary concern is human well-being. Like Socrates and Plato he regards virtue to be central to a well-lived life, outside of religion. He considers ethical virtues - such as justice, courage, temperance, love, wisdom, patience, generosity - social skills. **W**hat we need is a proper appreciation of the way in which such goods as friendship, pleasure, virtue, honor and wealth fit together as a whole. In order to apply that general understanding we must acquire - through proper upbringing and habits - the ability to see which course of action is best supported by reason. **P**ractical wisdom is to be put into action by emotional and social skills - rather than application of rigid rules.

with content from: plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/... see also ALTRUISM, VIRTUE

The bedrock of ethics is the Golden Rule: 'Do to others as you want done to yourself.'

Importantly, we cannot rely on religions to provide us with a framework for ethics.

Religious dogmata often are in contrast to sincere striving for ethical thought and action.

Many religious dogmas are not only unethical, but evil and may lead to a breakdown of society.

Ethics, the moral principles governing our behavior, are secular, without need for religion.

Hence Christianity's & Judaism's manifesto, the Ten Commandments, can be reduced to three:

Do not kill. Do not steal. Do not lie ... with a fourth added: Keep your religion to yourself.***

Stated positively, ethical behavior encompasses understanding, forgiveness and compassion.

see also MORAL LAW, SCRIPTURE, RELIGION 1, 2, 3
***with apologies to George Carlin*

**However, considering the real dangers of AI, we may now want to add a fifth commandment:*

"Do not make a machine in the likeness of a human mind." F. Herbert, in his 1965 novel Dune.

see also AI

GANDHI. Mohandas 'Mahatma' Gandhi (1869 - 1948) was a political and spiritual leader of India. His greatest achievement was independence from Great Britain without the use of force. **A**fter assuming leadership of the Indian National Congress, Gandhi led campaigns for the alleviation of poverty, the liberation of women, brotherhood among differing religions, an end to untouchability and caste discrimination and for the economic self-sufficiency of the nation. He lived on a simple vegetarian diet. **A**s a student of philosophy he once replied, when asked whether he was a Hindu: "Yes I am. Also a Buddhist and a Sikh; and a Jew, a Christian, a Muslim." He believed at the core of every religion was truth and love, compassion, non-violence and the Golden Rule.

Mahatma Gandhi inspired Aung San Suu Kyi, Steve Biko and Martin Luther King in their civil rights and freedom struggles.

Suu Kyi (1945), at one time was a Buddhist pro-democracy activist, but for many years has been a prisoner of conscience in Burma.

Stephen Biko (1946 - 77) was a non-violent, anti-apartheid activist in the 1960s, 70s in South Africa; murdered by security officers.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929 - 68), leader in the American civil rights movement; 1964 Nobel Peace Prize ... assassinated.

King is regarded as one of America's greatest orators - his most influential address is the "I Have A Dream" speech.

In the 1963 speech he spoke of his desire for a future where blacks and whites would co-exist harmoniously as equals.

Sayings attributed to Gandhi: 'An eye for an eye will make the whole world blind', and 'be the change you wish to see in the world'.

The late singer Michael Jackson picked up the 'be the change' idea in his 1988 song Man In The Mirror, written and composed by Siedah Garrett and Glen Ballard:

*"I'm gonna make a change, for once in my life I'm starting with the Man in the Mirror
If you want to make the world a better place
Take a look at yourself, then make a change."*

see also PACIFISM 2, and in respect of 'be the change' REVOLUTION

GERVAIS. The stand-up comedian Ricky Gervais in a mock conversation with 'faux'-offended hecklers: "These are all jokes, ok. I don't even use that word in real life ... the R-word," he said. "You just used it, Rick.' Yeah, in a joke. That's not real life, is it? I'm playing a role. 'You sounded pretty convincing.' Yeah! **B**ecause I'm good."

"I was in a hospital for children with cancer ... for the Make A Wish Foundation. One child had wished to meet me. 'Why didn't you rather wish to be rid of your cancer? Are you also retarded?'"

watch his Netflix shows Humanity, Armageddon, SuperNature, After Life

GRATEFULNESS. Close your eyes; don't think of anything. Then imagine you were to die later today. Do not think that's preposterous, just do it. If you are at all like me, you'll wonder how your loved-ones will be affected ... that they would be devastated. **N**ow imagine you are given a reprieve; it feels like you are waking up from a bad dream. "I'm alive. I'll see another day, week, month, maybe years." Your family is spared the anguish of losing you. Wouldn't you be struck with gratefulness, counting your blessings? **G**ratefulness is a process you can control; it brings peace of mind.

*the Stoics say: Memento Mori ... remember you may die any time
see also DEATH 5, 6, 8, STOICISM*

A related concept to gratefulness and gratitude is forgiveness. Combined with universal love - the love for all by all - these qualities form a basis for an ethical lifestyle that one may consider superior to religions, with their dogmata, intolerance and violence.

see also FORGIVENESS, HAPPINESS

GEB. Gödel. Escher. Bach. The book by Douglas R. Hofstadter explores how consciousness emerges out of a system of firing neurons; it is an exploration of ideas at the heart of cognitive science, such as meaning etc. The book discusses how systems acquire meaningful context while made of 'meaningless' elements - and that likewise computers will attain intelligence.

Kurt Friedrich Gödel - logician, mathematician, philosopher

Maurits Cornelis Escher - Dutch graphic artist

Johann Sebastian Bach - German composer and musician

So: "What is this book about? The best I can come up with is that GEB equips you with mental models to contemplate philosophy." Mark Johnson

GOD 1. There is a God. There is no God. True. And also true. But this is my personal favourite - there are four kinds of God. The first is straightforward, it created the world - but only the Big Bang. This God is simply a physical law, as well as nature; at most it also provides us with the concept of a universal consciousness*. I like that idea. Then there is the second God - the (external) God of religions, which - as a matter of fact - is neither real nor true. I can't follow a religion; religious beliefs are mind-construed, delusional, manipulative and - when they become the devil's domain - evil. It is this God in whose name atrocities are perpetrated. The third kind of God (also a product of the mind) is at the heart of institutional beliefs which result in religious institutions that may form the civic bedrock of a society**; in regard to the number two and three kinds of Gods, I'm an atheist. The fourth type of God I can believe in: It is the seat in us of compassion, goodness & integrity - a belief that guides & comforts us and gives us strength.

1. God (non-religious, scientific), Einstein & Spinoza's God
the energy or physical law that underlies the universe
2. God (religious)
the supernatural agent - deemed our creator - who is actively interested in the affairs of human individuals
3. God (civic, social, communal)
the concept humans develop to provide moral laws as well as religion-based altruism for their communities
4. God (spiritual)
the device used by believers to find comfort and peace within - with prayer, contemplation and meditation
devil, Lu-ci-fer, Sa-tan; see also DEVIL
 1. *the being believed to be the enemy of God, who rules hell and as Satan personifies evil, sin and depravity*
 2. *the concept that epitomises irrationality and delusion, where the fundamentalist mind does evil in God's name*
 3. *the device used by humans to externalise evil, in order to avoid having to take responsibility for their actions*
re-li-gion
people's devotional beliefs about the existence of God and his divine involvement in creation and human life
a-the-ists - don't believe in the almighty God of religions
ag-nos-tics - believe it will never be known if God exists

All religions and concepts of God are mind-constructs. When mind is at its best they are benevolent, where they provide us with worthy, ethical ideals (... all of which, incidentally, are also available outside of religions).

*But when mind is at its worst, religions are a cesspool of ignorance and God turns into the devil. The results are fanaticism and war (... which, when perpetrated by atheists like Hitler, stem from religion-like fervour too ***).*

*Is it possible, then, to prove or disprove the existence of God? For the believer this is a rhetorical question - and seeing they derive so much comfort from their belief, clearly some sort of inner, personal God indeed is real. *****

There is no evidence that an outer God - one who is on hand to have prayers heard and acted upon - exists. But there is ample evidence for the non-existence of God: killings of innocents, cruel diseases, famines, plagues etc.

Every time a believer's plea for help goes un-answered, the existence of a caring God is in doubt. The most shocking examples are people who seek refuge from violence in a 'house of God', only to still get massacred.

Furthermore, I do suspect that if an outer God existed, we would live in a radically different world. Why would such a God give no evidence of his existence? To me non-existing evidence of God proves his non-existence.

**In his book The Self-Aware Universe physicist Amit Goswami elaborates on how consciousness creates the material world.
see also CONSCIOUSNESS 1*

***Regarding religion, there is its cultural aspect of wonderful architecture, art and supportive communities; I like all of that.*

**** One favourite slogan of the Nazis was 'Gott ist mit uns' (God is with us). Probably most wars are excused that way.*

***** The ontological proof: If we can conceive of God, then God exists; I think this proof is valid as regards our inner God.*

When asked, 'do you believe in God?' one obvious reply is another question: 'What do you mean by God?'

Once we have established that God has different meaning for everyone, we are on the way to a good answer.

GOD 3. God is good - or so the scriptures like to tell us. But when in the minds of fundamentalists, God is anything but good - in fact God turns into the devil. **T**hen he will send his followers to do atrocious things: Non-believers will be killed, homosexuals will be vilified, women disempowered, children indoctrinated. **T**his God is the manifestation of depraved human minds: Warped, intolerant, bigoted, rigid, cruel, evil. Beware the God of the pious, fundamentalist believer.

see also DEVIL

That children will be indoctrinated is one of the most despicable aspects of religions; as Richard Dawkins says in The God Delusion: "Children are too young to defend themselves against religious falsehoods and indoctrination."

People must be sixteen to drive a car, eighteen to go to war, twenty one to drink alcohol ... children should be at least fourteen years old to join a religion; they simply do not have enough maturity to make an educated decision any earlier.*

** I was fourteen years old when I decided about religion, go to MISSIONARIES in the appendix go to page a35, 'What shall we tell the Children?'*

Besides, while it is crucial that religion and state are separate, religion shall be removed from public schools; and if there are scripture classes at private religious schools, they shall not receive government funding. Instead all schools shall deal with all religions in ethics classes. Scripture could be taught at denominational Sunday schools ... to over-fourteen-year olds.

to this end I work on establishing a charity, go to the corresponding page in the appendix, on my website, click ABOUT then click the logo; and also go to pages a34 and a35 in the appendix



GOD 4. Humans have created God in their own image. Our first God is our father or mother - positive role models are important in children's formative years. **L**ater on in life we see persons of influence as god-figures: Philosophers, writers, leaders, revolutionaries, artists, teachers, film or sports stars and other celebrities. **F**rom there it was a small step to create God in their image: A great, authoritative, domineering, remote, unresponsive, put-on-a-pedestal and out-of-reach figure.

Austrian Sigmund Freud (1856 - 1939), neurologist, founder of psychoanalysis: "It would be nice if God existed - all caring and promising life after death. But since that's exactly what we crave, it is obvious we have created him."

The article Born believers - how your brain creates God (New Scientist, 7 February 2009) states: "Religion is an artefact of the wiring in our brain - it is a consequence of how our brains work.

"The mind has an overdeveloped sense of cause and effect, which primes us to see purpose and design everywhere; and people expect their God's mind to work very much like their own mind."

*If birds had a God, she'd be feathered.
see also* BELIEF

GOD 6. There is no God; if there was a God, we would know about it. There is, of course, the belief in God (... though that doesn't prove anything).

see also GOD 4, 5

... and all beliefs in God are OK, as long as believers don't coerce others to believe in their God. So these are the two believe-in-God rules: 1) Everybody is entitled to their own belief, 2) but their belief must be tolerant and peaceful. Thus proselytising or murdering 'infidels' in the name of God is not allowed. In fact, imposing one's beliefs on others or to force rules that are derived from some religious beliefs, their dogmas and restrictions, on the wider public, is one of the world's greatest evils. This is perhaps the strongest argument against religion.

'There is no God, but there is the belief in God.' This statement may seem like wicked wordplay, but its implications are profound. Most likely there is no factual God; for God's existence to be deemed fact, there must be proof - the definition for 'fact' is that there is proof - but since there is no proof God exists, it is clear there is no God. But this does not diminish people's right to the belief in their own concept of God - these beliefs often are the cornerstones of caring communities.

However, in public life the fact that there is no God is significant. One may say, my religious beliefs - derived from God's will - lead me to reject abortion; since this is a person's valid belief, one expects they won't choose abortion for themselves. But since there is no God as a factual entity, this rule cannot be elevated to a law equal to common law - it is a principle that does not apply to anyone who does not share that particular conviction, founded on that specific belief in God.

There is no God up in heaven who hears our prayers. However, if we believe in an inner God, that belief - in the Kingdom of God within - may give us peace.

I stated in the last paragraph of the footnotes to God 2: The ontological argument for the existence of God asserts: If we can contemplate a concept of God, then that God exists. This argument allows for an inner God. Jiddu Krishnamurti is said to have written (in 1910, when he was fourteen years old) an essay At The Feet Of The Master, a corollary of the teachings he received from his guru, which constitutes an initiation into the Path of living a righteous life. In it he said: "You must dig deep into yourself to find God within."

*the full text of the essay is in the public domain
for a transcript go to my page a17 in the appendix
see also WISDOM*

There is no God in scientific terms, but cardinal George Pell found a way to define 'alternative facts' and 'alternative science' to glibly debate this point ...

... as you can see in the Q & A session I refer to on page a34. The venerable cardinal was exposed as a paedophile and (temporarily) jailed in 2019. His historical arguments have been soundly trounced, namely in the 18th century Age Of Enlightenment - the Century Of Philosophy, when reason replaced myth. However, those who adhere to his alternative facts & ancient concepts of science are still living in the dark, violent Middle Ages. It was in those medieval times that the dogma of God as fact & reality bedevilled people and led to religious wars.

*Pell provided this narrative: "We don't deal in facts and reality, we deal in belief."
go also to pages a34, a35 and a92 in the appendix, and ENLIGHTENMENT 1*

GOD 7. "God is a stick." "By claiming to be following God's will, believers can concoct rules justified not by reason ... but by the threat of force; God then is the cudgel where morality has neither logic nor heart. **B**elief in God is like a cloak we can throw over all manner of atrocities, covering them in false sanctity; there is no room for consideration whether the rules are good or just, or should be upheld or changed."

after Adam Lee, blogger and author of Daylight Atheism; via Only Sky

KRISHNAMURTI. If there's a person we can learn from immeasurably - who by his own account is not a guru - it is Jiddu Krishnamurti. He talks to us from a position of enlightenment, where he sees the world as it really is, and he doesn't mince words: The world is cruel, full of violence and ignorance ... while always emphasizing he is in no sense a person of authority, i.e. he has no doctrine to impart. **Krishnamurti** (1895 - 1986) was an Indian-born writer and speaker on spirituality and philosophy, who had no allegiance to any nationality, caste, religion or philosophy and spent his life travelling the world, speaking to groups and individuals. His subject matters included psychological revolution, the nature of mind, meditation, inquiry, human relationships and bringing about radical change in society. **Krishnamurti** stressed the need for a revolution* in the psyche of all human beings and emphasized that such revolution can't be brought about by any external entity, be it religious, political, or social ... that change has to come from within and it has to occur in every human; consequently his supporters work through non-profit foundations and oversee independent schools based on his views on education.

"To observe without judgement is the highest form of intelligence."

Krishnamurti writes eloquently about life, truth and reality ... all in respect of the absence of religion, with its doctrines and dogmas, its delusions and falsehoods. The core of Krishnamurti's teachings is the realisation that our strongest longing is for freedom ... and that is not just political freedom, but Freedom from the Known. That is freedom from the contents of our overloaded mind ... our biases, illusions & disillusion, expectations, past experiences (good or bad), our rituals and traditions.

This is the conclusion to his book Freedom from the Known: "A still mind is limitless, it has no centre and no space, no time ... and that is the only truth, the only reality." "This state of mind is the true religious mind, in that state of mind you may come across truth, reality, bliss, love or God." "But it cannot be invited. It is like a cool breeze coming through the window ... you can not invite the breeze in, but you can leave the window open." Such a still mind we can achieve in true meditation.

see ENLIGHTENMENT 2, *REVOLUTION
I have often referenced Krishnamurti ... go to
my website and click ABOUT, at the top click Krishnamurti
in the appendix go to pages a15, a16 and page a38: The Future is Now



"I don't mind what happens."

"I don't mind what happens" was Krishnamurti's response when asked about the secret to his enlightenment. It would be a contentious statement in public life - surely great advances would not have happened and injustices would have been ignored, had people simply elected not to mind. But this axiom is profound in spirituality: Acceptance is not the same as fatalism. To accept the way things are is to stop resisting reality. Then acceptance is a pre-condition for change, not an obstacle to it.

"I don't mind what happens" ... that is the essence of inner freedom; it is a spiritual truth: release attachment to outcomes. And as you accept reality and see things as they really are, you'll feel good because you are connected to - you are one with - the power of the universe; that is the beauty of life. When you live with this awareness, this sensitivity and insight, life has an astonishing way of taking care of you. Then there is no problem of insecurity, as regards what people say or do not say.

With content from Jim Dreaver and Oliver Burkeman; see also ACCEPTANCE, MEDITATION

*One last thought: when reading K and listening to K's talks, it becomes clear that meditation retreats, courses, apps and techniques at best are superfluous ... at worst a hindrance.
Just meditate.*

LGBTTTINQQAHHLCGSWF. An altogether too frequently believed fallacy about the queer community is that to be gay is a life choice. **T**he reality is: the gender diverse - lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender etc. - do not have a choice in the matter ... they in fact are born that way. **M**any people - namely conservatives - cannot countenance that fact. Others know queers are to be accepted and loved the way they are. **I**mportantly, children may begin to feel their alternative sexual orientation at an age as early as five, four and even three years old.*

L - les·bi·an

a female who is physically, emotionally and/or spiritually attracted to other females

G - gay

a male who is physically, emotionally and/or spiritually attracted to other males

B - bi·sex·u·al

people attracted to persons of both the same and the opposite sex

T - trans·gen·der

a person whose gender identity is different from his or her anatomical sex

T - trans·sex·u·al

a person who has undergone - or is about to undergo - a sex change operation

T - trans·ves·tite

or rather crossdresser, mostly (but not only) men wearing clothes associated with the opposite sex

I - in·ter·sex·u·al

people who present a-typical sex characteristics that lie between definitions of male and female

N - non·bi·na·ry

also genderqueer, gender-neutral, pansexual; identities not exclusively masculine or feminine

Q - queer

the term for anyone who may identify as being either gender, sexually and/or bodily diverse

Q - ques·tion·ing, que·ry·ing

those who question their gender and/or express uncertainty or doubt about their sexual identity

A - an·dro·gyne

a person who relates neither to male nor female genders - also: asexual, without sex or sexuality

H - ho·mo·sex·u·al

a person - male or female - who is sexually attracted to members of the same sex

H - her·maph·ro·dite

a person who has both male and female genitals and secondary sex characteristics

L - la·dy·boy

Thai: Kathoey or katoey, a transgender woman or an effeminate gay male in Thailand

C - cis·gen·der, cis·sex·u·al, cis

having a gender that corresponds to the sex one has been assigned at birth; not transgender

G vs **S** - gen·der versus sex

sex are characteristics that are biologically defined whereas gender is a social construct

W - wom·an

an adult female as opposed to a male; the definition includes transgender females

F - fem·i·nism

the advocacy of women's rights on the basis of the equality of sexes and genders

** if you are unsure about issues regarding the queer community go to appendix pages a33, a99, a100*

NIETZSCHE. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 - 1900) was a German philosopher writer and culture critic, whose work has exerted a profound influence on modern intellectual history. He began his career as a philologist (philology, the study of language) before turning to philosophy. Nietzsche's writings span philosophical polemics, poetry, cultural criticism and fiction while displaying a fondness for irony. **P**rominent elements of his philosophy include his radical critique of truth in favor of perspectivism (the principle that perception of something is always bound to the interpretive perspectives of the observer; see also TRUTH). Nietzsche is known for his criticisms of Christianity and the famous phrase "God is dead" ... used to express his idea that the Enlightenment had eliminated the possibility of the existence of God. **M**y favourite Nietzschean saying, "if you know the WHY ... you can live any HOW.

In his fictional 'Also sprach Zarathustra', Nietzsche's 'Übermensch' ('Over-human', 'Beyond-man' or 'Super-man') represents a shift away from Christian values ... who instead encompasses the human ideal. The new values of 'Übermensch' bring a solution to the death of God.

see also in the appendix pages a72 and a73

NOTHING. Nothing is undervalued. Not many people care for nothing; few appreciate nothing; nothing has a negative connotation, better avoided. **N**othing can be done or owned. When nothing is owned we feel inadequate. Big business demands we accumulate stuff. Politicians and economists say without economic growth - brought on by consumption - our economy will slide into decline. **B**ut there is another way of looking at nothing. Those who appear to be doing nothing could be involved in contemplation or meditation. Even if we turn down those activities and truly do nothing, we contribute ... since we do not offend, abuse or deprive. **A**nd owning nothing can be an asset: If we own nothing, we do not have to worry about belongings ... those attached to nothing are free - truly free.

*The Tao Te Ching (book 1/27) puts nothing in a context that makes it clear not to underrate it:
'Knead clay in order to make a vessel.
Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and you will have the use of the vessel.
'Thus what we gain is something, yet it is by virtue of nothing that this can be put to use.'*

*see also MINIMALISM, TAO, WISDOM
and visit: [www.quantamagazine.org/
how-the-physics-of-nothing-underlies-
everything-20220809/](http://www.quantamagazine.org/how-the-physics-of-nothing-underlies-everything-20220809/)*

NOW. The Curse of NOW: A popular catch-cry of the New Age is to live in the NOW. To live in the past is counterproductive, one likely hangs on to resentment: Move on. **A**nd we are not to worry about the future, worrying is of no help, it may lead to depression and anxiety. Yet, the fact is, we have to live in the NOW; we can't live any other way; we don't have a choice; the NOW is a prison we cannot escape. **T**ime is linear and we are confined to this moment; bouncing forth and back is not an option ... though at times it may seem ever so desirable. But beware, other terms may apply to 'living-in-the-NOW': indolence and apathy; we must conquer those negatives. **W**hen living in the NOW we may resist change; the NOW suits us; all is ok, for NOW. However, climate change denialism is proof that living in the NOW can be disastrous.

PALESTINE. The relationship between Palestinians and Israelis is a great source of conflict. Rockets are fired from Gaza into Israel and retaliation is on its way immediately; Israel will not countenance terrorism. Neither will the rest of the world. Why, we ask, is there Islamic terrorism? Of many possible answers, one is immediately on my mind whenever the issue arises. **G**erman and European Jews were persecuted during the Third Reich in Hitler's Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945; six million Jews were killed. The leading powers of the post-war world looked to implement the idea (first mooted in 1917) of Palestine as a national home for the Jews; the United Nations adopted a Partition Plan for Palestine in 1947 (as per UN Resolution 181.II*). **T**he plan - recommending *two independent Arab and Jewish states* - was rejected by the Arabs. The 1948/49 war - begun and lost by a coalition of Arabs - saw Israel take over most of the territory. In the 1967 Six-Day War Israel occupied more territories, with illegal Settlements being built (illegal as per UN resolution 242*, re. the "*inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war*"). **S**ince the establishment of Israel and the confiscation of Palestinian properties, three generations of Palestinians grew up in refugee camps. Many see their situation - without their own state and an occupied East Jerusalem (their designated capital; Jerusalem was meant to be an international city) - as hopeless; negotiations do not seem to bring an end to what Palestinians deem a great injustice. **F**or some of them (the militant arm of Hamas) terrorism is a way of drawing attention to their plight.

But a resolution to the quandary will probably not be forthcoming from the Israelis or the Palestinians; both are too emotional - and indeed blinded to reality. A viable solution can only come from the United Nations.

A UN with wide-ranging, executive, enforceable powers, where the UNSC is either abandoned and rebuilt, or the veto rights of the five permanent members are abolished; the UN must be able to say "no more war; stop it, or else."

'Else' would be sanctions that bite: no more foreign or military aid; freezing of assets; blockading of borders. Until the fighting stops and UN Resolutions are enforced, everything stops. And no more UN 'Recommendations'.

**en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_Nations_resolutions_concerning_Israel
see also HOLOCAUST, TERRORISM, UNITED NATIONS, WASATIA, WAR 1 and in the appendix page a85: The case for recognizing Palestine; but also page a96: Jihadism*

PANPSYCHISM. In philosophy, panpsychism is the view that mind or consciousness is a fundamental feature of the physical reality; it is the doctrine that everything material has an element of consciousness. **P**anpsychism unites mentality and consciousness with the physical world as it offers an attractive middle way between physicalism on the one hand and dualism on the other; it promises a unified concept of nature.* **"P**anpsychism proposes that consciousness is intrinsic to all forms of information processing and stands alongside forces such as gravity, electro-magnetism and the strong and weak nuclear forces."** **P**anpsychism is one of the oldest philosophical theories; it has been ascribed to philosophers like Thales, Plato, Spinoza, Leibniz and can be seen in ancient philosophies like Stoicism, Taoism and Vedanta.

**Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
**Annaka Harris in her book Conscious*

Annaka Harris quotes Rebecca Goldstein in Conscious: "We know consciousness is integral to matter, we know it directly, since we are material conscious things."

Galen Strawson argues in Conscious that consciousness is the only thing in the universe that is not a mystery, it's the only thing that we truly understand first hand.

In fact it is matter that is utterly mysterious ... we have no understanding of its intrinsic nature; only mathematical relational properties are known of matter.

*see also CONSCIOUSNESS 1, 2 and the book
The Self-Aware Universe ... how consciousness
creates the material world by physicist Amit Goswami*

REALITY 5. It is said enlightenment is to see the world as it really is. Life is ruled by the mind. Humans are the only beings equipped with a mind. We use it - for better or worse - to create the mechanisms that run our lives: **B**eliefs and truths, traditions and religions, our concepts of justice and entitlement - in short, our egos. These aspects constitute our reality - which is different to an objective world-view; thus our disagreements and conflicts. **I**n our judgements we lack perspective and insight, we fail to see the world around us the way it really is and thus make wrong decisions; the vernacular invariably is, 'get real'! So what does it mean to see the world as it really is? **T**o know the true nature of the world is to know the true value of what we perceive our worldly needs to be, our possessions and our comforts - as opposed to the values of humility, kindness, equality and charity. **A** characteristic of our inability to face reality is that we take offence when we are confronted with it, where its nature does not suit us. We may see reality is in play, but we reject it, because our ego pushes our own agenda. **W**ars are often over territorial disputes, guided by cultural and racial misconceptions of superiority. The reality is: Superiority of one ethnic group over another is delusional; territories and resources can and must be shared. **D**iverse groups worldwide - which are separated by mind-construed cultural, traditional, religious, nationalistic and patriotic distinctions ... propped up by deeply entrenched, irrational belief systems - can and must live together. **T**he one all-important reality is this overarching Truth: All humans are equal - discrimination, racism and violence can and must make way to tolerance, understanding, forgiveness, acceptance, compassion, charity, love and peace. **T**o see that Truth, that Quality, as the Essence of Reality, is Enlightenment.

see also ENLIGHTENMENT 3, QUALITY

There are other aspects to reality, provided by the sciences, like mathematics & cosmology. Stephen Hawking says in his 2010 book The Grand Design (chapter three: What is Reality?): "Regarding the laws that govern the universe, we can say this: "No single mathematical theory can describe every aspect of the universe. This does not fulfil the dream of a single theory, but is accepted in the context of model-dependent realism." This may apply to physics and everyday-life ... but seen spiritually, reality is absolute.

see also REDUCTIONISM, TRUTH

So, what is real? Things with substance, i.e. a rock. What's in a rock? Not really very much. Science needs few ingredients to account for a rock: a handful of different particles, the forces that govern their interactions, plus some rules laid down by quantum mechanics.

The constituents of rocks (and everything else) are atoms - trillions of them. The nucleus of atoms are protons & neutrons - themselves built of quarks & electrons; a quark is a fast moving point of energy. Thus basically atoms are energy ... and otherwise empty space.

If an atom were scaled up so that its nucleus was the size of the Earth, the distance to its closest electrons would be 2.5 times the distance between the Earth and the sun. In between is nothing at all. So much for 'reality' in the realm of physics & quantum mechanics.

after Valerie Jamieson, Reality: The Bedrock of it all, New Scientist, see also ATOMISM as well as EINSTEIN and the section on $E = mc^2$... however, as ever, see Paul Davies' take on reality in REDUCTIONISM

Finally some wise words on reality from Jiddu Krishnamurti. He says in his book The First and Last Freedom: "You want me to tell you what reality is? Can the indescribable be put into words? Can you measure something immeasurable?"

RELIGION 3. Religions contain designated behaviors, practices, morals, beliefs, prophecies, worldviews, sanctified texts and places. They generally embody social-cultural systems or organizations, likely with supernatural, spiritual and transcendental components. Different religions may or may not contain elements ranging from the divine, sacredness and faith to a supernatural being, or beings. It's said there are more than a thousand ethnic religions worldwide.

A believer was told in a discussion: "You don't believe in 999 gods, as an atheist I don't believe in those either - and just one more."

RELIGION 4. What is wrong with religions? Dogmas. Lies. Control. Why do religions force followers to abandon thinking? Why threaten 'infidels' with hell? Why claim 'holy men' perform miracles? Why teach God cares for a minority only? Dogmas, lies and control of the faithful.

see also appendix page a62: Is religion good for humanity? No.

Nobel Prize winner, physicist Steven Weinberg said: "Religion is an insult to human morality and dignity. With or without it, you would have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, it takes religion."

Robert Pirsig, author of Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: "When one person suffers from delusions it is called insanity. When many people suffer from delusions it is called religion." Christopher Hitchens: "God is not Great ... religion poisons everything."

Blaise Pascal: "Men never do evil so completely and gladly, as when they do it from religious conviction."

Ruth Green: "There was a time when religion ruled the world - the Dark Ages." Douglas Adams: "Religion is interesting - I'm just stumped people take it seriously."

Voltaire: "The Bible: written by fools, commanded by imbeciles, taught by rogues - and innocent children are forced to learn it by heart." Seneca the Younger: "Religion is regarded by common people as true, by the wise as false, and by the rulers as useful."

Lucretius, Roman poet & philosopher, author of the poem: On the Nature of Things, said: "Life is too difficult, humanity too weak, labour too exhausting, pain too frequent, joy too rare - indeed, the world is too imperfect - for there to be a God."

In his poem Lucretius identifies superstition (religio in Latin) with the notion that the gods and/or supernatural powers created our world or interfere with it. He argued that the operations of the world can be accounted for entirely in terms of natural phenomena.

There is this story of the philosopher and the theologian in a discussion; says the theologian: "A philosopher is like a blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat that is not there." "Quite possibly," retorts the philosopher, "but the theologian would find it."

The antithesis to Western religions is Buddhism, especially Zen Buddhism. The Buddha denounced tradition, scriptures and dogmas, and replaced them with the teaching of ethics.

Buddhism is an educational system where everyone can achieve Buddhahood, but each person is responsible for their own progress, without the help of any gods, prophets or saints.

see also BUDDHISM

On the other hand, what is right with religions? At the core of all religions is a simple, universal message, which nevertheless is distorted by doctrines, scriptures and traditions:

"In principle every religion calls on its followers to live a moral and ethical way of life, to cultivate purity of heart, tolerance and peace, and to gain mastery over the mind."

S. N. Goenka, teacher of Vipassana meditation

One aspect of religion should not be underrated: A religious belief has the potential to give a person peace of mind and happiness. Letitia Wright, an actor, was suffering depression ... she stayed in her darkened room, stopped eating and refused to communicate with others.

When she was invited to a Bible study class, she became a committed Christian. "Ever since then," she said, "everything's just been really, really positive in my life." In that instance all dogmas, lies & control are irrelevant; all that counts is one's personal belief that brings peace.

The Wright Way, by Cosima Marriner, The Sun Herald, Sunday Life, 11 February 2018, see also BELIEF and p. a92 'An email exchange about God, Religion and Belief'

RELIGION 5. One of the most striking examples of the failings of religions is the competition within religions ... Catholics vs Protestants, Shia vs Sunni. It's not likely that one is true and the other is untrue. More likely is that both versions - both interpretations - are untrue.

RUSSELL. Bertrand Russell (1872 - 1970) was a British writer, philosopher, anti-war activist and populariser of philosophy. Russell strove to rid philosophy of meaningless assertions; he sought precision in argument by the use of exact language. Russell saw logic and science as the tools of philosophy; he believed one task of the philosopher is to remove confusion.

Ten alternative Commandments, after Russell ...

1. Do not be absolutely certain of anything
2. Don't proceed while concealing evidence, the facts or the truth
3. Never try to discourage thinking, for you are sure to succeed
4. On meeting with opposition, overcome it by argument, not authority
5. Have no respect for the authority of others
6. Don't use power to suppress opinions you deem dangerous
7. Do not fear to be eccentric with your opinions
8. Engage in intelligent dissent rather than in vacuous agreement
9. Be scrupulously truthful, even if the truth is inconvenient or hurtful
10. Don't be envious of the happiness of those who live in a fool's paradise

Russell, winner of the 1950 Literature Nobel Prize, said three passions - simple but overwhelmingly strong - governed his life:

*The longing for love
The search for knowledge
The unbearable pity for the suffering of man
The latter is the notion that motivated the Buddha to pursue his search for a path to nirvana ... a state free from suffering.*

go also to page a95 in the appendix: Why I'm not a Christian

It is interesting that Russell in his Nobel acceptance speech opposed the idea that we can avoid desires ... Buddhism's central tenet is that renunciation of desires leads to enlightenment.

www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1950/russell/lecture/

THE RUSSELL / EINSTEIN PEACE MANIFESTO.

The week that Albert Einstein died (in 1955) he endorsed with Bertrand Russell a declaration calling - in the name of science and common sense - for the renunciation of war in an age in which nuclear weapons are threatening 'the continued existence of mankind'. The declaration concluded with a draft resolution: "In view of the fact that in any future world war nuclear weapons will be employed and that such weapons threaten the existence of mankind, we urge the governments of the world to acknowledge that their purposes cannot be furthered by a world war and we urge them, consequently, to find peaceful means for the settlement of all matters in dispute between them."

*see also UNITED NATIONS
however, see also DISRUPTION*

SPIRITUALITY. Our spiritual home is a region other than the physical world. Before birth and after death we are with the energy that was there before there was anything. **C**an we go there now, without dying? Yes, that region is also within us. What do we need to get there? Meditation. **T**hus the pursuit of spirituality is internal - by the individual; as opposed to religion - which is an external group activity.

The concept of spirituality as an external entity, where it resides in nature, buildings, art works, music, books, etc. is rather alien to me. There is no doubt that one may experience rapture while taking in a picturesque landscape, inside a church, as one observes art, listens to music or reads a 'holy' book. But the experience is of one's own spirituality, as it is elicited by that 'sacred' object or activity. As Robert Pirsig said, "the only Zen you find on the top of the mountain, is the Zen you bring up there yourself."

see also QUALITY

spir·i·tu·al·i·ty

1. contrasts with humans' material or worldly existence
2. fosters independence from the egoistic, selfish self (the ego)
3. connects with one's soul, one's seat of peace & happiness
4. relates to the notion of Truth, the one-ness of all humanity
5. embraces the concept of spirit, or a universal consciousness
6. elucidates ultimate reality, or the true nature of the world
7. alludes to the human quest for meaning and inner peace
8. provides a sense of a 'higher power' we draw strength from
9. recognises ethics as the highest of all human attributes
10. reveals a 'supreme complete entity' (Alexander Solzhenitsyn)
11. denotes aspects of our existence we otherwise can't explain
12. yet, spirituality is a man-made reality, on par with religions; for a sobering reality check see Paul Davies' REDUCTIONISM

God, spirit, self, dharma, tao, spirituality, logos, soul etc. are expressions the mind employs in order to denote there is more than the material world. There is no physical proof of this energy and it is not accessible by scientific processes. Awareness of it is gained by bypassing the ordinary mind and accessing the subtle mind. The quest for it and its experience is in every human's scope of being; but - most importantly - it must be remembered that all these concepts - from God to soul - are mind-constructs.

see also BELIEF, BUDDHISM, DUALITY
ENLIGHTENMENT 3, EXISTENCE
THEORY OF EVERYTHING
FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE
REDUCTIONISM
RELIGION 1, 3
SATORI
GOD 1
ZEN

STILLNESS. In pursuit of enlightenment and inner peace, we are again and again challenged by our out-of-control mind. How then can stillness of the mind be achieved? Meditation. **B**ut since most of us are too busy for regular meditation, we can supplement it with other measures to tame the mind: One practice is to curb our desires ... *enough is enough !!!* **T**hen we lower expectations and bring gratitude into our lives. We embrace our circumstances ... we accept, detach and let go; and stillness - not anxiety - will settle in our heart and mind.

after Stillness is the Key by Ryan Holiday

To tame the mind is a big-order task. Meditation does not work instantly, but there are things we can do right now.

see also ALONE, ATARAXIA, BUSY, GRATEFULNESS
MEDITATION, STOICISM

THE BEATLES. I have never been very much of a Beatles fan, though I acknowledge, of course, that their songs are very, very good. **J**ust recently, the quality of Lennon - McCartney's work was pulled into sharp focus with the movie *Yesterday*, a quirky tribute to their oeuvre. **O**nce - in the early sixties - I sneaked into the Star-Club In Hamburg. I liked the band, all dressed in black leather ... no idea who they were.

THE ROLLING STONES. In 1964 - when I was seventeen years old - my parents sent me on a study tour to London; my school-English was so bad, my teacher used to yell at me, "Burmeister, you'll never in your life speak a word of English!" **S**o off I went; and I had a task: I was playing in a school band and we covered hit parade songs - my task was to bring back the latest Beatles record. That day the guy in the record shop did something to me: "The Beatles, sure - but listen to this ..."
He put on the first Rolling Stones album - and *Route 66*, *Carol*, *Can I get a Witness*, *Now I've got a Witness*, *Walking the Dog* were the first songs of what would come to be the soundtrack to my life; though I soon traded my drum kit for a camera. **T**he Stones: The blues, the rock, the country, the soul, the thrill. That honky-tonk voice; those biting, insane guitar riffs; the cool, inspired drum beats. Mick, Keith 'n Ronnie (& Brian, Bill, Mick), inimitable Charlie; only Bob, Jimi, Miles, Ludwig v. compare ... *but they're dead*.

And now Charlie too, R.I.P. Charlie Watts, 1941 - 2021

"Charlie is always there, but he does not want to let everybody know. There's very few drummers like that. Everybody thinks Mick and Keith are the Rolling Stones. If Charlie was not doing what he is doing on drums ... you would find out that Charlie Watts IS the Stones." Keith Richards, 1979

"Charlie is incredibly honest, brutally honest. Lying bores him. He just sees right through you to start with. And he's not even that interested in knowing, he just does. That's Charlie Watts. He just knows you immediately. If he likes you, he'll tell you things, give you things, and you'll leave feeling like you've been talking to Jesus Christ. They say he's a dying breed, but with people like Charlie, they must have always been rare. Genuinely eccentric in the sense of having his own way of doing things. Just to put it on a very physical plane: At the end of the show, we'll leave the stage, and the sirens will be going, limousines waiting,

but Charlie will walk back to his drum kit and change the position of his drum sticks by two millimetres. He has this preoccupation with aesthetics, this vision of how things should be that nobody will ever know about, except Charlie. The drums are about to be stripped down and put in the back of a truck, and he CANNOT leave if he's got it in his mind that he's left his sticks in a displeasing way. It's so Zen. You see what I mean about who the hell can I possibly play with after this guy, with such a sense of space and touch. The only word for Charlie is ... DEEP." Keith Richards, 1988
www.timeisonourside.com

Once, while on tour, a drunk Jagger phoned Watts in the middle of the night and asked, "where's my drummer?" Charlie got up, shaved, dressed in a suit, put on a tie and freshly shined shoes, descended down the stairs and pushed Mick in the chest: "Don't you ever call me 'my drummer' again; you are MY. Fucking. Singer."

THE TRUTH 1. The Truth - as opposed to the truth - is absolute. The Truth is that there is a force / energy, law, singularity, logos, tao, dharma, spirit, universal consciousness etc. This energy was there before there was anything, and it - inexplicably* - created the universe within itself, as a part of itself. Thus spirit and the world are at once one, as well as separate. That is our duality. All that exists physically will perish (including our gross mind, or lower consciousness), but spirit will always be there. While we use only our (rational, analytical) mind we cannot comprehend spirit. But spirit manifests in us - as soul (the subtle mind or higher consciousness). Soul returns to its home at the time of death. Can we go there while alive? Yes, in meditation. On that level, where human beings merge with the higher / universal consciousness, it is true to say that all of humanity is one. This Truth ought to bring humankind together, where they unite in their desire for peaceful co-existence - without there being cause for disrespect and bigotry, insult and injury, killing and warfare.**

**Sciences were not able to explain the process before Einstein's insights and subsequent discoveries in Quantum Mechanics; scientists like Stephen Hawkins and Brian Cox have shown that the universe came into existence from a singularity. In his book The Self-Aware Universe physicist Amit Goswami elaborates on how consciousness creates the material world.*

see also DUALITY, EINSTEIN, FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE

***These core principles of The Truth are spelt out in the second sentence of the 1776 Declaration of Independence of the USA: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and that all people should be treated accordingly.'*

It's astonishing to think that this Truth and its implications for human conduct had been acknowledged at the highest level of Government for hundreds of years - yet, segregation, dehumanisation and versions of apartheid are common to this day.

force / en·er·gy

a ubiquitous power that binds the world together, possibly quantum gravity, as per quantum mechanics

law

a scientific fact or phenomenon that is invariable

sin·gu·lar·i·ty

1. *something that is unique, distinctive, remarkable*
2. *an unusual, exceptional or extraordinary quality*
3. *a state of zero volume where space/time is infinite*
4. *a point where a complex function is undefined*

lo·gos

the source or fundamental order of the cosmos

high·er / u·ni·ver·sal con·scious·ness

1. *the collective of all souls and/or subtle minds*
2. *the primary 'stuff' of creation, its source or its cause*

tao

the energy within which all is located or happens

dhar·ma

1. *(Sanskrit) natural law, order or reality*
2. *(Hinduism) the way of the higher Truth*
3. *(Buddhism) the truth about the way things are*
4. *refers also to the teachings of Gautama Buddha*

spir·it

the essence of an organism or an abstract concept

Many people consider The Truth not a reality, since they don't think there is tangible proof of it. To me proof of The Truth is our very existence - since we are here, Truth is real. Weren't we here, one could argue that The Truth does not exist.

In philosophy this argument is called the Cosmological Proof ... in which the existence of the contingent universe proves the necessity of an energy that is the cause of the universe; i.e. a necessary energy that cannot not exist.

in the appendix go to page a64: The truth

see also CONSCIOUSNESS 1, EXISTENCE, FIRST CAUSE, MIND 1 (the reality check in the footnote), REALITY 4 REDUCTIONISM, THEORY OF EVERYTHING

THE TRUTH 2. A spiritual energy unites humankind.

Thus all of humanity is one, and all humans are equal.

THE TRUTH 3. The highest form of love is the love for humanity: One Love ... that is The Truth.

The One Love sentiment was expressed by Jamaican singer Bob Marley in a song conveying a vision of harmony and solidarity among all people regardless of race, religion or nationality.

This notion was also expressed in Friedrich Schiller's 1785 Ode to Joy; set to music by L.v. Beethoven in his 9th Symphony: "Alle Menschen werden Brüder - all people become brothers".

see also LOVE 2

WASATIA. The term means moderation, mid-ground, justice and balance; the Prophet Mohammed said, “the best way to run affairs is through moderation.” **Wasatia**, launched in Palestine in 2007, is an Islamic movement that endeavors to bring about peace and prosperity through a deeper and more rational understanding of Islam. **Wasatia** strives toward ending the Israeli military occupation through negotiations and peaceful means, by mitigating religious radicalism and reducing political extremism. **Wasatia’s** goal is to teach creative and critical thinking and open-mindedness, to use dialogue and education to deconstruct mythologies, distortions and misinterpretations.

The founder of the Wasatia movement is peace activist and former PLO member Professor Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi ...

“Palestinians must overcome victimhood and move to reconciliation; it is time for both peoples to seek peace & reconciliation.

“It used to be Palestinians against Israelis, now it is Palestinians & Israelis for peace against Palestinians & Israelis against peace.

“The radicals want to have an exclusive ownership of the land ... while we are seeking a shared ownership of the land.”

However, for a starkly contrasting view on Islam, Islamism and the teachings of Mohammed, go to JIHADISM and page a96 Jihadism

WAR 1. Israel was established for the Jews in Palestine, a land that was Jewish about 2,000 yrs ago, but had been majority Muslim for some 1,200 yrs *. They won the 1948/49 war for their independence, started by a coalition of Arabs. **S**ince then Palestinians who - robbed of their land and living in refugee camps - deemed their status quo unjust and humiliating, have fought back as suicide bombers; undertakings that morphed into world-wide Islamic terrorism. **T**ell me what you want to be,” a child was asked. “A martyr.”

**The history of ‘Israel’ and ‘Palestine’, [The Conversation](#) see also HOLOCAUST, PALESTINE and p. a96: Jihadism*

WAR 2. Chris Hedges writes in his book **WAR is a FORCE THAT GIVES US MEANING**: “War is a drug. It is peddled by mythmakers: Historians, filmmakers, novelists and the state. **T**hey endow it with qualities it often possesses - excitement, power, exoticism - and allows us to rise above our small stations in life. It dominates, distorts and corrupts culture. **T**he enduring attraction of war is this: Even with its carnage it can give us what we long for in life. It can give us purpose and resolve, it gives us a cause ... it allows us to be noble. **B**ut questions about the meaning - or meaninglessness - of our place on the planet are laid bare as we watch those around us sink to the lowest depths ... evil lurks in all of us.”

see also the footnote to WHY

WHY. I have three elementary questions on my mind:
Firstly, why is there something rather than nothing?
Secondly, why is there the delusional belief in a God?
Thirdly - and most urgently - why do we have wars?
There are no easy answers ... but we must keep asking.

1. asked by the 17th century German philosopher Leibniz
2. in this context read Richard Dawkins' The God Delusion
3. Krishnamurti repeatedly talks about this issue

1. There is the wonderful book *A Universe From Nothing*, why there is something rather than nothing by physicist Laurence M. Krauss. Early on Krauss makes the point that WHY is the wrong question in the context of science. Asking WHY alludes to purpose, but science - and nature - just are, the universe is the way it is, whether we like it or not, without purpose*. So, that leaves us to ask HOW is there something from nothing.

To find out, the next step is to define nothing. There is a big difference between the nothing of philosophy and religion versus the nothing of science. In science nothing still contains energy and/or gravity**. And that is the crux of the matter: Krauss' book lays out how the something we live in can be 'created' by confluences of energy and gravity. Thus something from nothing likely is the basis for the universe having come into being.

*Religions have a problem with the notion of the universe existing without purpose. The credo of religions is the belief the creation was created for a purpose, namely the doctrine God is the creator and the ruler over His disciples' lives ... furthermore, to chronicle His omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience.

**see also the book *The First Three Minutes*, by Steven Weinberg
 see also EXISTENCE, FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE

2. We know there is no God, there is only the belief in God*, and while any belief is ok - as long as it is tolerant and non-violent - it is a big problem that not many religions fulfil these requirements. Religions wallow in dogmata and it is a small step for followers to wish to convert infidels, otherwise to fight them or to indeed start a holy war in the name of God. Hence it is paramount that all governments are independent of influences from religions.

3. However, religions and the dogmatic belief in their version of God result in tribalism. When combined with the notion that God bestows certain privileges on His followers (like the claim their religion - their God - awards them ownership of the 'Promised Land') warfare is all but inevitable. While obviously many issues lead to war ... all of them can only be resolved by an all-powerful, just, democratic and secular world government.

*see also GOD 4, 5, 6
 RELIGION 3
 BELIEF

see also SCRIPTURE
 WAR, WEAPONRY
 UNITED NATIONS

Indeed, WHY do we have wars? In his book, *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, Chris Hedges says, "Love alone gives us meaning that endures". Joanna Bourke: the book is, "bitterly poetic and ruthlessly philosophical", *The Los Angeles Times*: When the Terror of Battle gives Way to the Love of Combat.

She quotes Capt. Julian Grenfell, writing to his mother in England in 1915, just before he was killed: "I adore war; it is the best fun. It suits my ... barbaric disposition. I have never been more well, or more happy, or enjoyed anything so much. One loves one's fellow-man so much more when one is bent on killing him."

see also SOLDIERS, WAR 2, WAR/PEACE CONSCIOUSNESS

see also CONFLICT, ENLIGHTENMENT 1, FACTFULNESS, THREETHOUSAND, THE GREAT FILTER and the appendix pages a38 The Future is Now, a39 Humanity's Potential

ZEN. In Zen enlightenment is achieved by contemplation of one's essence. Zen has neither god nor ceremonies. Zen is free of religious encumbrances. Zen rejects authority. **Zen** is the spirit of man ... man's inner purity and integrity.

“Before a man studies Zen, mountains are mountains to him. When he obtains a glimpse of the truth through Zen, mountains no longer are mountains. When he later reaches satori (enlightenment), mountains are again mountains.” Once a Zen master was asked: *“With what frame of mind should one discipline oneself in the truth?”* Said the master: *“There is no mind to be framed, nor any truth in which to be disciplined.”* When this dialogue took place between student and master, the student said: *“I cannot follow your reasoning.”* Said the master: *“Neither do I understand myself.”* Another Zen master pointed to a pitcher and asked his students, *“do not call it a pitcher but tell me what it is.”* One student came forward, lightly pushed the pitcher and just left the room. In Zen there is no place for time-wasting philosophical discussions. Zen often appears to be nonsensical and contradictory*, but Zen recognises facts as facts, while words are words and nothing else. So what does Zen teach? Zen teaches nothing - whatever teachings there are in Zen, they come out of one's own mind; personal experience is everything in Zen. What is the Tao (the truth) of Zen? Your everyday life. A monk asked his master, *“it is some time since I came to you to be instructed in the holy path of the Buddha, but you have never given me even an inkling of it. I pray for you to be more sympathetic.”* This was the answer given: *“What do you mean, my son. Every morning you salute me - do I not return it? When you bring me a cup of tea - do I not accept it and enjoy drinking it? Besides this, what more lessons do you desire of me?”* Zen catches life as it flows, in Zen there is no distinction between ordinary life and religious life; besides, Zen is against all religious conventionalism. Zen does not want to exclude anything from your life - Zen is all-inclusive. Zen is not a path of renouncing the world. Zen emphasises the attainment of freedom - freedom from unnatural constraints.

*So what does it all mean - what does Zen mean to me on a daily basis? Zen is not a religion, but a spiritual practice, a philosophy and a way of life. To me, Zen is not going to a one-hundred-dollar concert, but to stop and listen to a busker in the street. Zen is not to strive for perfection, but to see perfection in what occurs naturally. Zen is not travelling halfway around the world to see the Great Pyramids, but to observe a building detail here. Zen is not to believe the hype, but to be real. With Zen one may well aspire to riches, but one knows their true value. Zen is not to give presents, but to give presence. Zen is not to adore celebrity, but to celebrate humanity. Zen is not to judge, but to feel compassion. Zen is not to react, but to reflect, accept, detach and let go. Zen is to walk and be on the way, rather than rushing to get there (OK, I admit this is easy for a street-photographer). Zen is to use the brakes rather than the horn. Zen is not the big buzz, but quiet contentment. Zen is now, rather than yesterday or tomorrow. Zen is not to talk, but to listen. Zen is clarity, not conjecture or truthiness ... living in Zen one aspires to the truth; Zen looks past perception and recognizes reality. Zen is simplicity rather than convoluted. Zen is genuine as opposed to pretence. Zen is the way things are - the truth of Zen lies in the reality of our daily lives; Zen is man's everyday thought. You still ask what Zen is? Actually, language fails to convey the meaning of Zen. Says D. T. Suzuki: *“How hard and how easy it is to understand Zen. Hard, because to understand Zen is not to understand it; easy, because not to understand Zen is to understand it.”* Can we ever understand Zen? A master was asked, *“do you ever exercise yourself in the truth?”* *“Yes, I do.”* *“How do you exercise yourself?”* *“When I am hungry, I eat - when I am tired, I sleep.”* *“Well, that is what everybody does.”* *“No, when people eat, they think of other things, and when they sleep, they dream of other things.”**

After (and with quotes from): An Introduction to Zen Buddhism, by D. T. Suzuki (1870 - 1966). Zen students may well argue none of my principles are traditional Zen. I would like to think their Zen is their life, my Zen is my life and your Zen is your life.

*see also KOAN

禪

I thankfully acknowledge these reference sources: My daily newspaper, the **Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)** (Independent. Always. Since 1831). My favourite website, the ubiquitous **www.wikipedia.org** (the free encyclopedia); I may use whole passages from Wikipedia, i.e. for PACIFISM 2 (yes, I copy & paste; see ECLECTICISM), or use it for definitions. The **New Oxford American Dictionary** and **Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus** on my Mac. **Universal Wisdom** by Dom Bede Griffiths, 1994, Harper Collins, Great Britain (a journey through the sacred wisdom of the world). **Everyone is Right** by Roland Peterson, 1986, DeVors & Company, USA (a look at comparative religion and its relation to science). **The Perennial Philosophy** by Aldous Huxley, 1945, Harper & Brothers, USA (a comparative study of mysticism). **The Quiet Revolution** by Peter Kirkwood, 2007, ABC Books, Australia (the emergence of Interfaith Consciousness). **Buddha** by Karen Armstrong, 2000, Phoenix (Orion House), Great Britain (an introduction to the Buddha's life and key tenets of Buddhism). **Why Buddhism Is True** by Robert Wright, 2017, Simon & Schuster, New York (everything we need to know about the science, practice & power of Buddhism). **Essays: Montaigne**, (1580) 1994, Penguin Classics, UK (a survey of one of the giants of Renaissance thought). **Ecce Homo**, by Friedrich Nietzsche, (1888) 2009, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK (an autobiography like no other; deliberately provocative). **The Miracle of Mindfulness** by Thich Nhat Hanh, 1975, Random House, London, GB (a manual on meditation & concentration). **The God Delusion** by Richard Dawkins, 2006, Random House, Australia (focuses on the irrationality of a belief in God and the grievous harm it has inflicted on society). **God is not Great** by Christopher Hitchens, 2007, Allen & Unwin, Australia (how religion poisons everything). **The Book of Atheist Spirituality** by André Comte-Sponville, 2008, Bantam Press, Great Britain (an elegant argument for spirituality without God). **Waking Up** by Sam Harris, 2014, Bantam Press, Great Britain (a guide to spirituality without religion). The **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy** <http://plato.stanford.edu> (Center for the Study of Language & Information, Stanford University, USA). **Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy** 2000, Routledge, GB (a reference guide for a new generation, ranging from abstract objects to wisdom). **The Oxford Companion to The Mind** edited by Richard L. Gregory, 1987, Oxford University Press, USA (contributions of Western and non-Western traditions to concepts of the mind). **Consciousness Explained** by Daniel C. Dennett, 1991, Little Brown & Co, USA (taken from psychology, neurology, computer science, it is philosophy at its best). **12 Rules for Life** by Jordan B. Peterson, 2018, Penguin, Random House (an antidote to chaos). **Sapiens** by Yuval Noah Harari, 2011, Harvill Secker, Penguin, London, UK (a brief history of humankind). **The Precipice** by Toby Ord, 2020, Bloomsbury Publishing, London, UK (existential risk and the future of humanity). **What We Owe The Future** by William MacAskill, 2022, Oneworld books (a million-year view). **Dark Emu** by Bruce Pascoe, 2014, Magabala Books, Australia (re-examines colonial accounts of Aboriginal People in Australia). **Conscious** by Annaka Harris, 2019, Harper (a brief guide to the fundamental mystery of the mind). **Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance** by Robert M. Pirsic, 1974, Harper Collins, New York (a modern epic of a man's search for meaning). **GEB** Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid, by Douglas R. Hofstadter, 1979, Little Brown & Co, New York (addresses the fundamental notion of meaning, Pulitzer Prize winner). **Siddhartha** by Hermann Hesse, 1922, Picador, GB, (a novel of great beauty; a distillation of wisdom). **Cosmos** by Carl Sagan, 1981, MacDonald & Co, London, GB (how science & civilisation grew up together). **God and the New Physics** 1984, **The Mind of God** 1992, **The Big Questions**, **The Fifth Miracle** 1998, **What's Eating the Universe** 2021, by Paul Davies, Penguin Books (science and the search for ultimate meaning). **The Self-Aware Universe** by Amit Goswami, 1995, Penguin Putnam (how consciousness creates the material world). **The Physics of Immortality** by Frank J. Tipler, 1994, Macmillan, GB (with arguments from physics to reconstruct religious beliefs). **The World as I see it** (Mein Weltbild), by Albert Einstein, 1956 Citadel Press, NY, USA (essays covering topics like the meaning of life, religion & science, good & evil). **A Brief History of Time** 1988 (for best understanding: indulge in the illustrated version, 1996), **The Grand Design** 2010, **Brief Answers to the Big Questions** 2018 (his final book), by Stephen Hawking, Bantam Press, GB (cosmological physics explained). **Why does E=mc²?** 2009, **The Quantum Universe** 2011, **Human Universe** 2014, **Universal** 2016, by Brian Cox et al, (you don't need a telescope to explore the cosmos, just these books). **The Elegant Universe** by Brian Greene, 1999, Random House, GB (matter is generated by the microscopic vibrations of strings of energy). **A Universe From Nothing** by Lawrence M. Krauss, 2012, Simon & Schuster, New York, USA (why there is something rather than nothing). **Peace With Honour** by A. A. Milne, 1934, E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc. Publishers, New York, USA (war is wrong). **WAR is a force that gives us meaning**, by Chris Hedges, 2002, Public Affairs, a member of the Perseus Books Group (bitterly poetic war journalism). **Factfulness** by Hans Rosling, 2018, Sceptrebooks, GB. (we're wrong about the world - things are better than you think). **Enlightenment Now** by Steven Pinker, 2018, Viking, New York, USA (the case for reason, science, humanism, progress). **The Sacred East** by Scott Littleton, 1996, Duncan Baird Publishers, London, GB (a guide to major spiritual & philosophical traditions of Asia). **The Wisdom of Zen** compiled by Marc de Smedt, 1996, Abbeville Publishing, USA (Zen means 'meditation'; these teachings come down to a single formula: Letting go). **An Introduction to Zen Buddhism** by D.T. Suzuki, 1964, Grove Press, USA (a complete vision of Zen; a framework for living a balanced & fulfilled existence through Zen). **The Daily Stoic** by Ryan Holiday and Stephen Hanselman, 2016 (a richly rewarding spring of practical wisdom), **Stillness is the Key** by Ryan Holiday, 2019, Profile Books Ltd, London, GB (in order to move forward, we must learn to be still). **Meditations** by Marcus Aurelius, 2006 (first published 180), Penguin Books (spiritual reflections to make sense of oneself and the universe). **Letters from a Stoic** by Lucius Seneca, 2020 (first published 1475), William Collins, London, GB (a handbook of philosophical meditations). **At the Feet of the Master** by Jiddu Krishnamurti, 1910, the Theosophical Press, Chicago, USA (an initiation to the Path, a guide to righteous living). **Freedom from the Known** by J. Krishnamurti, 1969, Random House, GB (the truth is found with an empty mind). **The Spiritual Path** by Osho, 2007, the Ivy Press, UK (a journey of understanding Buddha, Zen, Tao, Tantra). **The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying** by Sogyal Rinpoche, 1992, Random Australia (a lucid introduction to the practice of meditation, karma, rebirth and the trials and rewards of the spiritual path). **The Path of the Masters** by J. Johnson, 1939, Radha Soami Satsang Beas, India (a statement of Sant Mat, the teachings of spiritual masters; visit also: **www.rssb.org**). **Tales of the Mystic East** by Huzur Maharaj Sawan Singh, 1961, RSSB (tales of Eastern wisdom from India and Arabia). **Die to Live** by Guru Maharaj Charan Singh Ji, 1979, RSSB (about vacating the body during meditation). **Radha Soami Greetings** spring 1991, Radha Soami Satsang Beas, USA, pages 47 – 48 the full transcript of my Q & A with Charan Singh, March 1987. I also went to: **www.religioustolerance.org** and **www.sacred-texts.com/hin** ... the Hindu text The Upanishads elaborates on how soul can be united with the source of creation in meditation. **Many thanks** to my editors, first Campbell Aitken, Melbourne, Australia and since 2019 Wendy Shopov, Sydney, Australia. **Special thanks** to my writing coach, the late poet **Richard Deutch** (Heart with Piano Wire, 2000, Brandl & Schlesinger, Australia). **Carsten Burmeister**

WHO AM I? I have come to the end of my 'panharmonicon'. I just read the whole lot again, probably for the hundredth time. As always I made dozens of little and not so little changes. I may have replaced a word or a phrase with a better one ... or added a footnote, a reference. I also may suggest you read other essays in the context of the one you had just been reading. **Jacqueline Maley**, in the SMH, 'The world is falling apart. Over to you Tay-Tay ... No pressure': *"When the world demands we take a stance, for writers this means the constant editing of what you have already done, recasting of past words according to the instincts of the present moment. Reconsidering things about which we're unsure, not having fixed positions, is the work of artists."*

I often send you to the appendix, with its cornucopia of additional wisdom, as distilled from other writers' outpourings; or indeed more of my own writings, to clarify points in my essays that need elaboration. Some subjects veer from philosophy into current affairs, like the ones that we are forced to deal with right now, at the times of war, toward the end of 2023: JIHADISM, PUTIN. **RELIGION** and related topics appear in the appendix too. I was asked why this subject matter is so prominent in my writings. I responded saying that religious indoctrination, their intolerance and falsehoods - alongside war - are the most loathsome undertakings curtailing human wellbeing. So, in short: I am an atheist and a pacifist; and a believer in pluralism and open-mindedness.

Of all the '*isms*' I refer to in my **PHILOSOPHY** essay, which is the one that I relate to the most? Well, it is **EXISTENTIALISM**. If anything, I'm an existentialist. While I follow many **BUDDHISM** principles - especially **ZEN** ones - I wouldn't call myself a Buddhist; indeed, as interested as I am in all of them, I'm not an adherent to any religion or philosophy - though **STOICISM** appeals to me.

To clarify my position I wrote **WHAT I BELIEVE** ... but there is probably more to What One Is, than one's beliefs. On page XIV I evoke Jiddu **KRISHNAMURTI** and **Albert EINSTEIN** - to me the greatest men ever. So, once I was asked, *"what do you think, is there merit in any belief?"* I responded with quoting both Krishnamurti and one of my favorite science writers, **Paul DAVIES**: **REDUCTIONISM**: *"True reality lies with the fundamental building blocks of the world; and the great edifice of human achievements, of values and culture is - at rock bottom - no more than illusory embellishment ... to maintain otherwise is sentimental twaddle."* **K** elucidates: *"To find the truth you need an EMPTY mind."* My favourite **K** book is, *"Freedom from the Known."*

Krishnamurti said again and again, humanity needs a **REVOLUTION** ... of all human minds. That revolution begins with us getting real about our **BELIEFS**. **K**: *"All our beliefs are illusions, they have no validity at all."* This means we have to free ourselves of all that we know ... all our opinions, our biases, prejudices, misconceptions and especially mis- and dis-informations.

That is how we find **THE TRUTH**. **K** again: *"The truth is a pathless land."* Do not follow a path laid out by the gurus of this or that religion, or any other '*influencer*'. The last entry on my '*To Do List for this life*' reads: *"Do not follow a system - or a leader. Make your own way. Be free."* While you're on the List: *"Maintain doubt. Don't be certain about anything. Question everything."*

MONTAIGNE's declaration that, *"I am myself the matter of my book"* at the time was viewed as self-indulgent. Be that as it may, I probably also can be described as self-indulgent as I keep referring to my own writings for a guide to understanding who I am. Is it self-indulgent for me to keep reading my book and - while I apply updates - have my principles, my values confirmed?

The last pages are designed to be torn out ... go ahead, use them as a fridge chart or give-aways to friends, colleagues. The '*To Do List*' may be an inspiration ... subscribing to just a few points, things may become more clear: **TRUTHS** more true, or less so; dogmas may appear debatable, or downright false; beliefs may be easier to question, to re-evaluate ... potentially to reject entirely.

So this is what I am: A seeker of truth and an aspirer to **ENLIGHTENMENT** ... whatever that is; one who tries to get a grip on what **REALITY** is. That requires this point on the List: '*Don't Lie*'. Getit? It's said we lie many times a day. All of us. No exceptions. To most lies we assign a colour: White. They're white lies, trivial, of little consequence. We may get asked, "How are you?" "Good."

What a lie! Ok, moving right along: Perhaps more pertinent is: Get Real. **KNOW YOURSELF**. Well, it turns out I am a lot more than what I've talked about so far. I am a lover, to my wife and a lover of my children and grandchildren. And besides being a lover of truth, I'm a lover of humanity. I walk around, I look: I love the diversity of humans I see ... colours, races, traits. All and sundry.

So, Who Am I? I am all of the above; but above all of the above, I am a lover ... a lover of life.

To Do List for this life

support pacifism

spend time alone in quietude,

think, meditate

show compassion

LEARN TO LIVE WITH CONFLICTS

welcome egalitarianism

(... all human beings are equal)

communicate, listen, reflect, understand, accept, detach, let go

live in balance

do not believe everything you read

RAISE CHILDREN, TEACH THEM WELL, LEARN FROM THEM

abide by the moral law (the Golden Rule)

love and be loved

be kind

ACKNOWLEDGE OTHER TRUTHS

practice yoga

embrace zen

examine reality - get real

have no respect for the authority of others (except where it regards the law)

MAINTAIN DOUBT ... DON'T BE CERTAIN ABOUT ANYTHING QUESTION EVERYTHING

do not fear to be eccentric with your opinions

have a belief but beware truthiness

don't have your duty

your duty

EXPLORE THE MIND

become aware

conduct yourself ethically

ACCEPT THE CONCEPT OF HIGHER JUSTICE

don't have expectations (adopt stoicism)

be attached to nothing

avoid killing (go vegetarian)

OPPOSE WAR

DO NOT FOLLOW A SYSTEM - OR A LEADER. MAKE YOUR OWN WAY. BE FREE.

think about death - memento mori

science trust in

study various philosophies and religions

HAVE NO FEAR

of spirituality true meaning - explore the spiritual

BE FAIR

love and be loved be kind ACKNOWLEDGE OTHER TRUTHS practice yoga embrace zen

expand your consciousness, become aware

ACCEPT THE CONCEPT OF HIGHER JUSTICE

don't have expectations (adopt stoicism)

EXPLORE THE MIND

this to do list is from my book en.light.en.moment carstenburmeister.com